

LIFE

May 2022

Christ Church
Eccleston
magazine



The search for Superman

Given Superman isn't real, who can we count on to save us? asks The Bishop of Warrington, Reverend Bev Mason, in her recent Easter message.

"Here in England, Easter coincides with spring with so much colour and life bursting through. It's as though the song of creation is celebrating with us the Easter joy yet for so many, that Easter joy has become muted by the horrors of the war, desolation, dispossession, despair and death. Millions are displaced and seeking refuge and sanctuary in other lands. People are starving.

In Ukraine people are living in the dark, cold terror of tombs to escape the bombing. Covid is still with us and the trauma of the last two years is taking its toll. Many are struggling with unemployment, stagnant wages, fuel and food poverty.

The question so many people are asking is, 'Has God deserted us?'

I was watching a Superman film, the other day with a little friend, and there was a throwaway line when Superman asked, 'do you believe in God?' His response 'There is no God!' And for the remainder of the film, he presented himself as the saviour of the world - It's as though he's saying, 'Jesus isn't the saviour - I am!'

Now as much as the kids love Superman - he isn't real! But I did wonder how many children and adults have been drawn into this fictitious narrative - that there is no God, and we need 'Superman'! And when I was a child, I remember controversy about actors playing Jesus notably through a film called, 'The Greatest Story Ever Told'.

It's the story of God the maker of the entire universe, coming to live among us and showing us how to live in love, peace and friendship with one another. In it God shows us what love looks like. It tells us that while we all know that we live and so we shall die. But thanks to Jesus, death isn't the end of the story for us. Death becomes the gateway to Heaven.

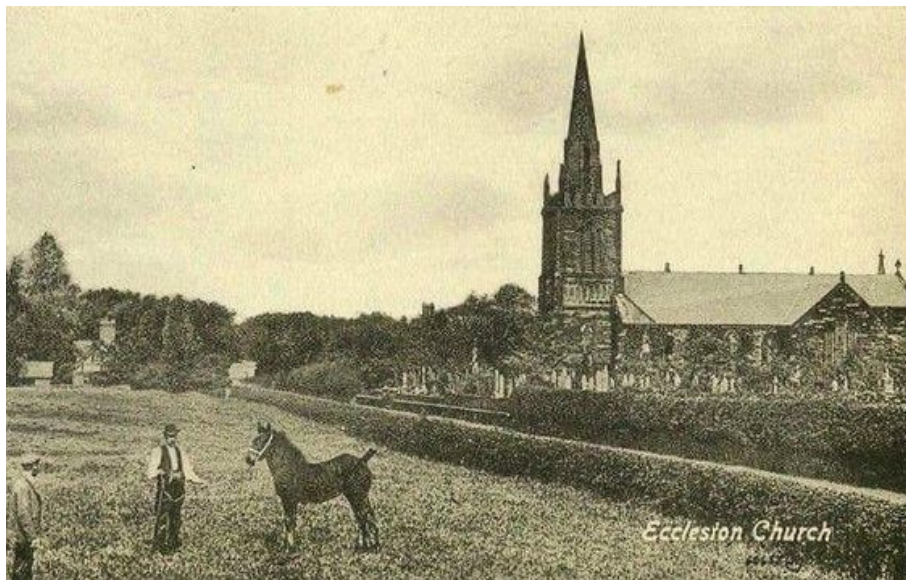
In the manmade story of Superman, Superman goes to the ends of the earth to set us free. In the God-given story of Jesus, Jesus goes to the very depths of hell in order to ensure the salvation of our souls. That's the promise of a God who doesn't desert us

When you smash open your Easter egg this Easter, imagine it's like your heart that needs filling up with the Spirit of God, and take a moment to simply ask 'Please, Lord Jesus, come into my heart today!'

Bishop Bev

As a Church community we continue to hold Rev Sonya Doragh and family in our prayers. Rev Sonya's bereavement leave - following the passing of her beloved son, Harry - has been extended, and as a Church we continue to support her during this very difficult time.

Christ Church: Fit for mission, fit for the future



As these pictures show, the community of Eccleston has changed a lot since Christ Church was built back in 1838. Indeed, so has the world around it. And as times have changed, the challenges faced by Churches in the modern world have changed also. People's attitudes, the range of activities available to them, and the technologies and choices we are presented with mean Churches must compete for attention - and attendance. Indeed, Church attendances are far lower than they were in the past, and with financial pressures and other burdens this brings, the Church of England has formulated a proposal to help parishes get fit for the future. Here, Christ Church's PCC explain what that proposal is, how they - and other members of St Helens Deanery - have carefully considered it, whether they have decided to adopt the proposal, and what it means for Christ Church going forward.

A message from Christ Church PCC

Many of you will have heard people talking about Fit for Mission 2 (FFM2) or will have gleaned information from the leaflets available in church. The main goal of the proposed change is to enable parishes to flourish. Training and support will be offered to develop a leadership programme. New support services will be created for extending mission and guiding leaders. Teams of lay and ordained people will lead new developments to extend our Christian mission.

The FFM2 proposal is to join together to form one larger parish to centralise administration and governance to better enable local ministry and mission. A 'Right Buildings' team will also take on the responsibility for checking buildings are fit for purpose, and a 'Navigation Team' will take us through the process of change. The reasons for these suggested changes are very clear. Figures provided reveal a 55% decline in church attendance nationally and make it clear that action is needed. The PCC recognise this concern at Christ Church. The age profile of our congregation means that there are fewer people available to be involved in the wider aspect of church life regardless of how much they are committed to their faith and our church.

The PCC, guided by local clergy and advice from the Diocesan FFM2 team has given many hours of thought and prayer before making a decision that will affect the future of Christ Church. From the start members of the PCC were all in agreement that change was essential. The PCC embarked on a journey of collaboration to decide what actions were best suited for the well-being of Christ Church. The PCC has at the forefront of

Fit for mission cont'd

their thoughts our plans and hopes for a rise in numbers and support through the extension of activities at the new church hall (the Orchard). This future thinking was balanced with the need to maintain the identity and rich heritage of Christ Church. The PCC sought out additional advice about keeping the uniqueness of Christ Church if it was seen as a part of a larger parish. At the end of the day worship at our church will remain the same. Over the last few months, we have seen the benefits of belonging to a team. The PCC has had help from Rev Helen Coffey guiding meetings. Rev Gareth Banton and Rev Gregor Stewart have supported our worship and we have welcomed and enjoyed their visits. Concerns over finance and the assets of Christ Church, including Church House, have been followed up thoroughly. The church's income, expenditure and assets will be completely visible and managed for us by a central financial team. This would not affect the day-to-day running of the church. The PCC was assured that local history, around the source of any asset, will be seen as very important to ensure good decisions are made.

Initial concerns over the role of the PCC as trustees for the church were quelled as members of the PCC recognised the value of a representative committee that gave our PCC more time for local matters. Based on our findings and prayerful discussions the PCC voted for Christ Church to be part of Cohort 1 for Fit for Mission.

This is only the start of the process. The Mission is a six-year project led by lay and ordained leaders. Updates will be available as the process gets under way based on a culture of growth and support.

"It is a reflection of our existing teamwork and good relationships across St Helens deanery that we have been offered the exciting privilege of being the first cohort of Fit for Mission. I am delighted with the decision, grateful to those that have worked hard to put the proposal together and all the PCC members for their prayerful consideration. Whilst some organisations seem to restructure on an annual basis, our governance and administrative structures have not changed on a local level in living memory and this change will better support our current levels of membership, mission, and ministry."

Rev Sonya Doragh

"By trusting in each other and walking together, I believe these changes will enable us to make an even bigger difference."

Rev Chris Daniel - Area Dean for St Helens.

"Fit for Mission 2 is about courageously addressing the issues that prevent us in mission, and truly releasing people to their God given calling for the sake of the gospel and of Christ's Church."

+ Bishop Beverley (Fit for Mission: an introduction)

Signed PCC

Annual Church Meeting (APCM) date change

Christ Church's APCM will now take place on Sunday 22nd May, not Sunday 8th May as previously advertised - and will take place after our morning service. It's the ideal opportunity to find out more about Fit for Mission and what it means for us. We're pleased to say that since we invited readers to consider joining the PCC last month, one person has already come forward to enquire about doing so which is wonderful to hear! If you would like to consider joining the Church committee (PCC) too, please consider making yourself known so you can be nominated prior to the APCM. A warm welcome is guaranteed.

A historic tour of Christ Church

As well as being a place of worship, Christ Church is also a place of history. From its beautiful stained glass windows to its ornate pulpit reputedly carved by the world famous Grinling Gibbons, Christ Church has a plethora of impressive architectural features. Even its pews are noteworthy, being a form of the rare box pew - 'box' denoting the fact that the pews have doors on so are boxed in.

With this - and many more features to admire - Thursday fellowship have enlisted the help of Grattan Williams - a local expert on the Church's historic features - to host a guided tour of Christ Church. Taking place on Thursday May 12th the event will take place in Christ Church at 7.30 pm, when Grattan will pass on his considerable knowledge about the Church's stained glass, wood carvings, organ and clock. The event isn't just open to Thursday Fellowship regulars - all are welcome and encouraged to come. The event is free to attend, no booking is necessary, simply come along on the night. For more information on the event, please ring Brenda on 07729 800752. We look forward to seeing you there.



Showing support for Ukraine

Jennie Platt spotted this show of solidarity for Ukraine while on an outing at Arnside in Cumbria recently.

While Ukraine remains very much in our thoughts and prayers, it's good to hear - as Jennie tells us - that the ribbons in the Ukrainian colours which have been made and placed at the Christ Church Lych gate for people to take and wear - are still being made use of. If you would like one of the ribbons please help yourself.

Also, if you or anyone you know are registering to possibly host a Ukrainian family please consider letting the clergy team know. It would be great to be able to link hosts and refugee families together across the St Helens Deanery.

A GOOD Good Friday

We're thrilled to report that the Eccleston team's Good GOOD Friday event for families was an enormous success - as these wonderful pictures show. Organised by April Banton (who runs Christ Church's Toddler Time along with the other toddler groups throughout the team), the event took place at St Johns, offering a range of crafts, snacks and celebrations. Parents were full of praise for our volunteers for putting on such a lovely event to help children engage with Easter in a way that was tailored just for them.

April was delighted with how the event went. "We ended up with 75 children and 54 adults!" she reported, "amazing!! Both halls were full and busy with activity! The crafts and activities were wonderful (thank you to our volunteers from Christ Church for your help preparing and helping with them). Thank you also for the many hot cross buns that were toasted and shared out and the hot drinks served. It was a huge success and above all things we got to share the Easter story with all the families and it was lovely to see the children enjoying the action songs and dancing too! Thank you making this happen and for serving the families!" Well done to April and all involved, it looks like everyone had a wonderful time.



Pictures show the busy craft tables (above), Easter display (left) and April sharing an Easter story with the children and their grown ups.

The Orchard: an update

Work on our new Church hall, The Orchard, continues apace. As our latest pictures, below, shows, the walls are now well underway which means the building's 'envelope' as it's called will soon be complete. Our thanks to Jennie Platt for the picture.

As explained last month, however, due to delays in the availability of some materials the construction team are a little behind schedule. While we were initially expecting handover of the building this month, we now expect it to be the end of June before the building is ready.

Jennie Platt, who organises our annual Spring Fair, is therefore holding off organising a Spring Fair this year - and wants us to have a Summer Fair instead - which can be held inside the new hall! So for those of you wondering why we haven't mentioned our Spring Fair, this explains it!

We will of course keep you updated next month, when we hope to have much more progress to report. We look forward to revealing The Orchard - and plans for our Summer Fair - soon. Watch this space!



St John's Spring Fair

While plans for Christ Church's Spring Fair remain on hold other Churches in the team have Spring Fairs in the offing. St John's have their Fair on Saturday May 21st, with activities for children, stalls for browsing and refreshments on offer. The event opens at 2pm.

St John's
**Spring
FAIR**

Face Paints, Lucky Dip,
Tombola, Story-Book Princess,
Local Businesses, Pre-loved,
Refreshments and more!

May 21st - Opens at 2pm

St John's Church
Crossley Road
WA10 3ND

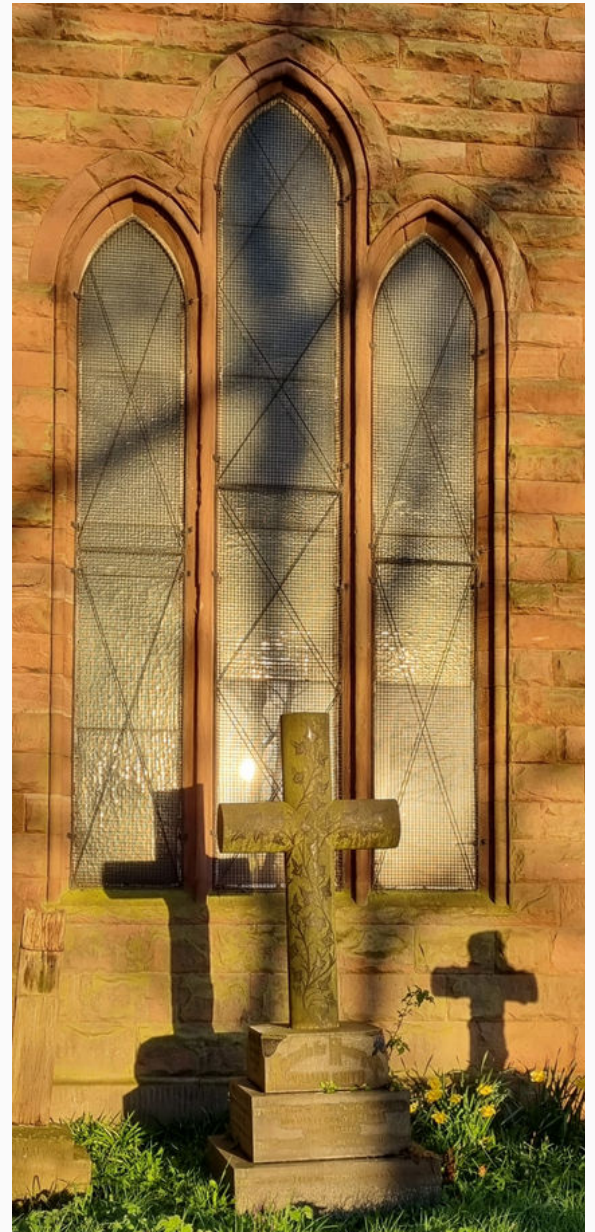
Special Moments with Jennie Platt

While daffodils and tulips slowly fade bluebells and violets burst into life. Dramatic changes in colours echoing the glorious blossoms we have had this year. A hint of garlic is already starting to waft across the churchyard. All seems to be well with the swans although no cygnets yet. Chris Hoyle sent me a picture of a delightful group of ducklings swimming along the ditch in Houghtons Lane.

Sometimes communications can be complicated and not easily understood. I had to smile at a fishing notice that made little sense to me but I am sure the meaning was clear to the fishermen. The booklet called 'Hope for All' given out in Church at Easter includes an article that discusses the point about wearing a cross as a 'fashion trend but that for a few it has more to say' (reported by Fiona Graham). The focus on the cross and what it symbolises for several well-known people is fascinating. The current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, wears a Cross of Nails as a symbol of hope and friendship. This history of the original Cross of Nails links to the destruction of Coventry Cathedral in 1940. Two burnt roof beams had fallen in the shape of a cross. They were placed where the altar had been and three medieval roof nails were formed into a cross. Mike Horton and I turned to nature again to capture some unexpected images of the cross. Mike contributes a beautiful moment of the morning sun throwing shadows of a cross on the Church. My effort was more down to earth. The sun coming through the kitchen window casting shadows from the grape stalks in the fruit bowl. They resembled prickly thorns to me. I enhanced the image, using straws to make a cross, and created an illusion of the Crucifixion. Both pictures capture unexpected spiritual moments.

Try to pause and catch a quiet moment, like this heron in the stream, teaching us to remain calm and patient.

Best wishes, Jennie





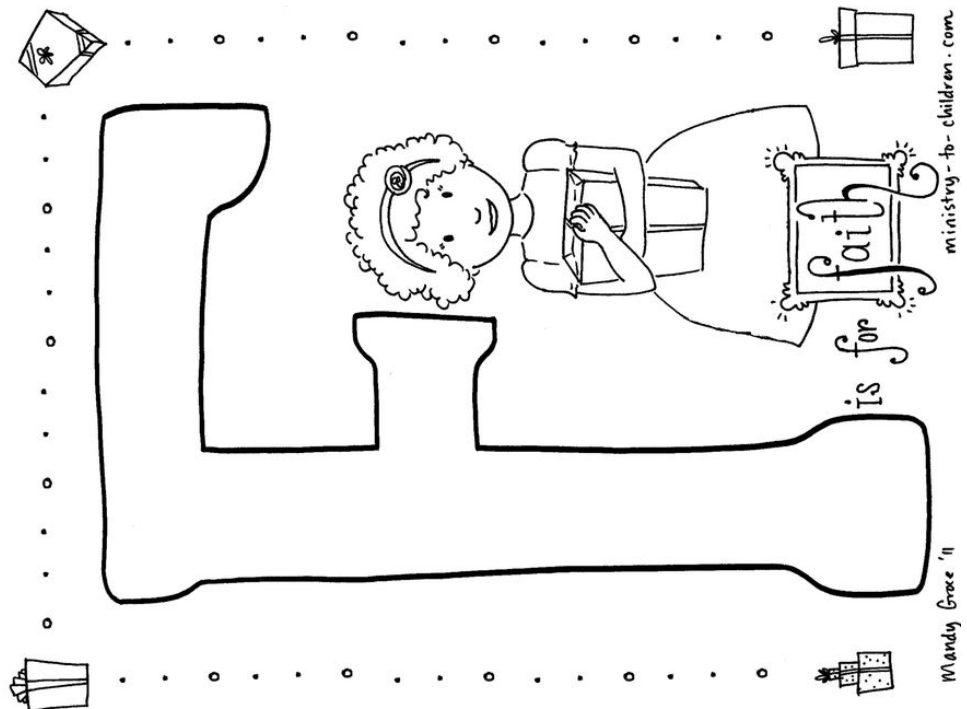
New Testament Books

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- EPHESIANS
- JUDE
- PHILEMON
- TIMOTHY
- CORINTHIANS
- REVELATIONS
- PHILIPPIANS
- TITUS
- MARK
- JOHN
- ACTS
- GALATIANS
- ROMANS
- MATTHEW
- JAMES
- HEBREWS
- PETER
- LUKE

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/2859/>

This month's wordsearch features the books of the New Testament - see if you can find them in the grid! See if you can add some colour to our picture below, too. Have Fun!



ministry-to-children.com

Mandy Grace '11