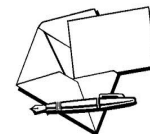




**St. John's Methodist Church
Whitchurch**

**April 2025
Newsletter**

Message from the Manse



Hello Friends

Empathy is a word that is in the news quite a bit these days.

Certain American oligarchs have stated that empathy is the downfall of western civilisation and have been quite happy to order the redundancies of many fellow citizens from government posts and to deport undocumented migrants who may have spent years living in the country and contributing to the US economy.

If too much empathy is for them the problem, other notable historians have written that lack of empathy marks the downfall of civilisation and libertarian values. Lack of empathy characterised to tyranny of the Nazis and the communist regimes of the last century as millions of ordinary innocent women, men and children were murdered in the name of political dictates.

I for one believe that empathy is vital to all civilised societies and communities. To see life from another person's perspective, to stand in their shoes, to understand how they feel and not simply how I think they should feel is the basis for all caring, kind, secure and inclusive relationships.

This month of April sees the celebration of Easter,

the story of how God sent his Son Jesus to stand in our shoes to take our flesh to experience life from our side, to be one with us and to share our vulnerabilities. Laying aside all but love, Jesus lived amongst us, Jesus showed us what compassion meant as he healed and forgave, as he gave people dignity, hope and new beginnings. This was empathy at its greatest.

In an intolerant and judgmental world empathy can be costly and this we also see in Jesus when he was nailed to a cross because of it.

But the story doesn't end on Calvary. Empathy wasn't destroyed at all, empathy defeated death, empathy rose again triumphant.

In our troubled world where nations are returning to the vainglories of war and nationalistic slogans, when death rains from the skies in bombs and missiles, only empathy offers us hope and the best example of empathy for me is to be seen in Jesus the Christ risen, victorious and alive for all generations. The hope of resurrection is for each of us in our troubled world, let's make it part of our lives and be the people who not only tell the story, but live it day by day.

Rev Jon Chesworth

During Rev. Donna's absence on sabbatical, Rev. Jon Chesworth is caring for her churches

A special Lenten fast

Give up harsh words: use generous ones.

Give up unhappiness: take up gratitude.

Give up anger: take up gentleness and
patience.

Give up pessimism: take up hope and opti-
mism.

Give up worrying: take up trust in God.

Give up complaining: value what you have.

Give up stress: take up prayer.

Give up judging others: discover Jesus within
them.

Give up sorrow and bitterness: fill your heart
with joy.

Give up selfishness: take up compassion for
others.

Give up being unforgiving: learn reconcilia-
tion.

Give up words: fill yourself with silence, and
listen to others.

*A prayer for Lent from Cafod Lenten Reflections—
things to consider giving up instead of chocolate!*

STEWARD'S LETTER



It was with much sadness that I learnt of the death of an old school friend of mine several weeks ago. In actual fact I don't think I'd spoken to Gareth in the last thirty years, but nevertheless during my boarding school years along with a couple of others he was a big part of my life.

For many years Gareth lived with his parents in Nigeria, and after returning to school from the summer holidays after a few days he became increasingly ill. Suddenly, and without any warning we learned that he'd been whisked off to hospital where after several more days he was found to be suffering from typhoid.

Many weeks passed until he joined us once more, having lost over two stone and looking particularly gaunt. But steadily over time Gareth made a full recovery and was back to his old tricks in no time.

He was a talented rugby player although his tactics were often rather questionable; having a short fuse if things didn't go quite his way Gareth would often resort to sinking his teeth into flesh if the opportunity allowed, and in the midst of the ruck with bodies all over the place he often got away with it. That was until he tried it in a training session, and on no other than the head of PE who regularly worked along side us. The altercation that followed has stuck in my mind ever since, a

strange blend of shock and hilarity that was retold for years after.

It fascinates me that our personal lives are packed with anecdotes unique to us, often built on personal relationships of times gone by right back to our childhood, personal relationships that make us humans what, and who we are today, and should always be cherished.

Andrew Fawcett

A Visit to Lee Abbey

Lee Abbey in Devon is a residential Christian Community situated on a beautiful 280 acre estate in Exmoor National Park on the North Devon coast. It is only 3-4 miles from Lynton and Lynmouth and there is a scenic coastal path if you feel like walking. The Estate is well managed and farmed and most of the meat served in the dining room comes from the cows, pigs and sheep reared on the farm

On Monday 17th March three of us set off at 11am for the Abbey, making two stops on the motorway. On our arrival at 5pm we were greeted by a very friendly and helpful team of people. There were about 60 people on this particular course and the main speaker was Elaine Storkey, a well known philosopher, sociologist and theologian. (It is worth googling to learn about her remarkable life). Not knowing in depth about the first gospel, Matthew, Elaine was pursued by the Bible Society to write a book about this first Jewish Gospel. She discovered amazing facts in her research and it was this Gospel that she explored with us.

It is the only Gospel that starts with Jesus's genealogy and, with amusement she pointed out that shady characters in the family tree had not been missed out! We looked at Matthew's use of Old Testament prophecy, who he was and who he was writing for. She compared the overlaps with the

other synoptic gospels and also things that only Matthew recorded.

Elaine welcomed comments and questions, which were many and the sessions overran a bit—but it was so interesting. We had 2 sessions each morning and the afternoons were free although activities were arranged. We joined a strenuous walk the first afternoon! Other afternoons we got the car out and went to Arlington Court (NT), and explored Lynton. After the evening meal there was some entertainment—a film, or board games or just chatting and getting to know others in the group.

We met people who regularly came to Lee Abbey as well as some first timers. Many had come because of Elaine Storkey. Her husband, Alan was taking another group entitled "30 Problems for Atheists".

It is good though that the Christian spirit can encompass opposing views within the faith. We had an interesting conversation with a couple who did not share our "Shropshire enthusiasm" for being the birth county of Darwin! We had a long conversation about evolution and creationism but in the end had to agree it was each to his own.

All in all it was a very enjoyable week and we look forward to our next visit.

Elaine, Chris and Diana



ST. JOHN'S METHODIST CHURCH

present

Whitchurch Brass Band

in Concert



**On Saturday,
26th April at 6.00pm**

Tickets £10.00

(including refreshments)

**Available from 'Barlows' on High Street
or you can pay on the door**



Maundy Thursday Service

Theme: "Servant Leadership: Remembering Jesus' Love"

Date: 17th April Location: Watergate Centre.

Time: 7pm

All welcome.

This will be followed by a vigil at St. George's for those who would like to take part.

From the "Wit & Wisdom" column in The Week publication...

"One useless man is a shame, two is a law firm, and three or more is a Congress."

Robert Frost, quoted in the Gunnison Country Times

"The trouble with tariffs, to be succinct, is that they raise prices, slow economic growth, cut profits, increase unemployment, worsen inequality, diminish productivity and increase global tensions. Other than that, they're fine."

David Kelly of J.P. Morgan, quoted on Morning Brew

"I'm a big fan of the Irish goodbye. Which goes without saying"

Comedian William Stone, quoted in The Times

Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry now

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

A. E. Housman

Children's Clothing Swap Monday 14th April

We're excited to announce our first Clothes Swap Shop for Children's clothes at church on Monday 14th April 10am to 11.30 am. This event is designed to promote sustainability and help reduce waste by encouraging the reuse of used clothes.

A swap shop is a fantastic way to refresh your child's wardrobe without the need to buy new clothes, helping us all do our bit for the environment. We encourage all parents to have a good look through the items available and take anything they would like for their children.

By participating, you'll be supporting our efforts to promote sustainability while providing useful clothing to other families in our school community.

If you have any items of clothing, or uniform, you would like to donate – please drop them off at church on Monday 7th am or pm or Thursday 3rd am or bring them with you on the morning.

If our Children's Clothing Swap Shop is successful we will hold another one at the start of the summer holidays.

Extracts from a letter from Elizabeth Jennings to Chris Crowther—she is now living at **Shelley Care Home, 54 Shelley Road, Worthing, BN11 4BX** and would appreciate hearing from you. I can give you her email if you would like it.

“However, having at last made a stock of my real situation, I realise I couldn't have been put in a better place. It is very free compared to any other home and I see has the reputation of being one of the best homes in Worthing.

The food is excellent, and I am thoroughly enjoying it, not having to get provisions and then cooking! Unfortunately, it's so good I will have to keep an eye on my size! The downside is the difficulty of getting anything done they are not used to doing, but fortunately a very competent and sensible women is going to be in charge, and I can see that once that happens the rather over complex arrangements will be straightened out, which will be for every one's comfort.

The care staff are very helpful, and we get on very well together. I am getting to know some of them very well indeed and we enjoy each other's company. I am still finding it very difficult to get to know the people who are here to be looked after, that will need a lot of working out how to best be friendly, but I shall gradually get to know many of them. I'll take some time to suss it all out...

All the very best.
love from Elizabeth”

BBT@St Johns

Please join us at Bumps Babies & Toddlers from 9.30-11.30am for craft, toys, singing, stories coffee and chat. A children's clothing hub is also available so come and find some new outfits for your growing children. We are keen for more people to join our rota of helpers so if you would like to help or just want to come and say hello, please speak to someone on the rota.

	Leader	Open up	General & Craft	Tea
31st Mar	Briony	Briony	Chris Elaine	Sarah
7th April	Kathryn	Briony	Brenda Chris/Elaine	Sarah
14th April	<i>Children's Clothing Swap as No BBT as Easter Holidays</i> Briony Brenda Sarah plus anyone else			
21st April	<i>No BBT Easter Holidays</i>			
28th April	Kathryn	Mike	Chris Dot	Hazel
5th May	<i>No BBT Bank Holiday</i>			

Hope Journey for Easter-Friday 4th April

Children from Year 4 at Whitchurch Junior Academy will be visiting St Johns in the morning on Friday 4th April to learn more about the Easter Story. If you are interested in being involved by telling the Easter Story, serving refreshments, helping with a craft or welcoming children and guiding them around our Church, please speak to someone on the BBT Rota to find out more.

Preachers for April

6th LA—Rev Edna Perry
13th Rev Frances Bisecker
20th Rev Helen Stubbs (HC)
27th LMA at Brown Knowl
4th May Mrs Sue Tyson

Stewards for April

6th Brenda Aumeer & Chris Crowther
13th Andrew Fawcett
20th Hazel Nimmo
27th LMA at Brown Knowl
May 4th Dot Charlesworth

Tea & Coffee Rota for April

6th Avril & Nancy
13th Brenda & Sarah
20th Briony & Linda Weston
27th LMA at Brown Knowl
May 4th Chris & Elaine



Zoom Services

The next Zoom services will be on Sundays 27th April and 18th May at 4.00pm. Everyone is welcome for a short service and time of fellowship.

Contact Avril for the link.

A Whisper of your Love

How hard it can be to pray!

I bring
The chaos of my jumbled thoughts
To you in prayer;
Thoughts rattling round in my head
Like marbles in a tin,
Crashing, banging,
Vying for attention
As I haltingly, falteringly try to let them go.

I long
To settle into stillness

But intrusive thoughts collide
And crash
And make me wonder if I have the patience
For this time in prayer,
Until,
When all seems lost...
Quietly, unexpectedly
Into the noisy confusion of my thoughts
Breaks through
A compelling, beckoning whisper
Of your love.

Soft and gentle
Tenderly whispered

Your love
Floats down to me
Like billowing duckling down
Carried on a summer breeze,
Like the fragile beauty of butterfly wings



Lent Lunches for Christian Aid

St Johns will be hosting the Lent Lunch on Wednesday 2nd April at the Watergate Centre from 12 to 2pm .

There will be homemade soup, a roll, tea and coffee and fruit with a suggested donation of "£5 or give what you can" for Christian Aid.

If you are able to help please speak to Briony or Brenda. We hope as many as possible of you will be able to attend.

The final Lent Lunch will be hosted by the Christian Aid Committee on Wednesday 9th April.



Thank you for supporting the lunches so far.

PRAYER REQUESTS



Pray for those known to us who are ill, housebound, in care, lonely, bereaved or in any other kind of need.

St John's

Help us to be a loving, caring community and to respect differing viewpoints. Let God guide our thoughts, speech and decisions. Ask for God's blessing on the Hope Easter Journey for 90 Primary school children taking place at St. John's on 4th April.

Our Town

Pray for the school children as they come to the end of a school term. Let the holiday be a time of physical and mental renewal for them.

Our Nation

Pray for wisdom for our leaders as they make decisions on our behalf in the current world-wide crises. Help them to be respectful of one another even if they disagree with policies.

Our World

Pray for the people of Ukraine and the current situation. Give them hope of life returning to some kind of normality in the coming months. Pray for the terrible situation in Gaza.

Don't forget to pray for other areas of the world where there is suffering from war, drought, flooding and persecution.

Dates for your Diary—April

Weds. 2nd 12noon—2pm Lent lunch at Beacon Centre

Fri 4th 9am -12 noon Hope Journey

Thurs. 17th 7pm Maundy Service—Beacon centre

Fri. 18th 11.30am Walk of Witness starting outside Tesco

1.00pm Organ recital St. Alkmund's

Sat. 26th 7pm Whitchurch Brass Band Concert- St.
John's

Sun. 27th 10.45am Hub Service at Brown Knowl

Tues. 29th 7.45pm Churches Tog. Committee Mtg. at St.
Alkmund's

May

Sun. 11th 10.30am Christian Aid service at St. Alkmund's

Regular Activities

Mon's. 7th, 28th 9.30—11.30am BBT

Mon's. 7th, 14th + 28th 12 -4.00pm MORE

Thurs. 3rd, 17th + 24th 1 -4.00pm MORE

May 2025 Newsletter

Please let Dot Charlesworth have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by 21st April



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Whitchurch 10K walk—Sunday 6th April.

Please be aware that roads around town will be shutting around 9.30—9.45am. We hope to be out on the steps to cheer the participants as they run past church—a good way to show that our church supports the community.

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For anyone needing to complete the Advanced Safeguarding training....

Sessions are on zoom 7.30pm, Monday 14th April or Wednesday 20th May, participants need to enrol for the online course on MCBX and complete the work before the zoom session. Helen Robertson, the District Training Officer, can register people and just needs name, email, details of church and roles held. For more information contact Brenda Aumeer.