

# **THE HERALD**

**OCT 2020**

## ***Telling you all you need to know in our Benefice***

Even in the midst of lockdown life moves on for many.

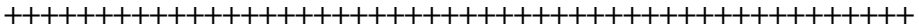


Sadly we have to tell you that Val, who has faithfully edited and published The Herald for such a long time, is to move out of the area to Lincolnshire to be nearer her family. She and her husband have yet to go through the process of selling and buying, but their decision means we will be losing Val from her role with The Herald in due course. This will be the last edition of The Herald that she will be involved with.

Someone moving from their home to somewhere new reminds me of the story of Ruth. She, along with her mother-in-law, travelled from her native Moab to the land of her in-laws, Israel. Her motivation to move lay in her dedication to her family – much like Val and Jim – and that move proved to be of immense blessing to her. In the same way we pray that their move will prove to be a great blessing to Val and Jim. Ruth's story – which you can read in the book of Ruth in the Bible – also shows us that when someone is dedicated to following God and his leading, even though times are tough and uncertain – it was a famine that starts the story of Ruth and the search for sustenance with God's people that prompts

her move – he will come to our aid in ways that surprise us. Ruth ended up becoming part of the story of God’s people by becoming the great grandmother of King David and so to becoming the lots-of-greats grandmother of the King of Kings, Jesus. She followed her Lord and he blessed her.

We thank you, Val, for serving God through the work you have given to our churches in many different ways, but particularly for your service on The Herald. May you be blessed in your new life.



### **St Nicholas Church – Stretton in Rutland**



Stretton’s St Nicholas church has just been awarded a £100,000 grant from FCC Community Fund to enable it to be refurbished and upgraded to provide a

combined church and community hub.

The St Nicholas project, under the chairmanship of Greg Harker, has been working hard for the past couple of years to raise enough money for this project. Bats and Covid-19 have sought to delay us, but we have battled on!

The plan for the church is to leave the Elizabethan pews in the transepts but remove the Victorian pews in the nave. This will create a large space which will still be used for worship, but additionally will be able to be used for many other events and functions. A new wooden floor, much need loo (with baby changing facilities) and servery will

also be installed. The whole space will be wheelchair-friendly. The organ will be refurbished and relocated and the font will also be relocated to create an intimate area for christenings.

A modern and flexible heating system is also to be installed, and stackable seating will be provided. Services in the church will certainly become more comfortable!

Whilst St Nicholas will remain primarily a place of worship, the much improved and flexible layout will give the village of Stretton a place to hold concerts and show films, host clubs, children's parties and many other activities. The church will also become a centre for the heritage of the local area.

St Nicholas is reputed to be the oldest church in Rutland with history dating back to 11th century. The last major refurbishment was in 1881. Details of the project can be seen on [www.stnicholasproject.co.uk](http://www.stnicholasproject.co.uk). This website will be updated regularly during the refurbishment project.

In addition to the £100,000 grant from FCC Community Fund, a further £105,000 has also been raised, mostly from other grant giving bodies, including £35,000 from Mick George Ltd and The National Lottery.

The project starts in mid-October with roof work, which is why there are currently no services in the church, but we are hoping to hold a couple of services around Christmas before the pews are removed prior to laying the new floor. (If you are interested in buying one of the pews you will find contact details on the website.)

We look forward to welcoming everybody back to St Nicholas in 2021.

In the meantime, if you would like a last visit to the church in its current state please contact us.

Keep safe.

Jonathan Pattison

## Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Appeal -

### Love Isn't In Lockdown



We are living through very strange times but Operation Christmas Child is still running this campaign and feels that it is probably more important than ever that we can "Give A Child A Reason To Smile In A Time Of Crisis".

If you would like to take part please pick up a leaflet from the porch of either Cottesmore or Greetham churches or contact me.

If you have not taken part before and would like more information then again please contact me.

**Completed boxes will need to be with me by Sunday 8th November at the very latest** and as our churches are not open at present it is not possible to leave boxes there but they can be delivered to me or I will collect if you contact me. If there are any knitters out there then I have a pattern for a "beanie" hat, an item we like to include in every box.

Patricia Hagger  
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Exton

## **Is your God too small?**

What pictures do we have of God? Is it that semi-naked male about to die? Is it the long haired old man dressed in a frock? Is He up there or really next to us when we are praying? The only way to get at the truth is to look again at what Jesus says and did in the Bible because He is the voice of God. He is one being because He says clearly that “I and my Father are one” Jn 10:30 Now we cannot physically see God because it says “No one has ever seen God but God the only Son who is at the Father’s side has made Him known” Jn 1:18. Also it says “We know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”. ! Jn 3:2 Paul explains Jesus as being in very nature God was made in human likeness in appearance as a man in Phil 2:7. Then there is that Spirit personality who came at Pentecost didn’t He? Well no, actually in Genesis 1:2 it says “the Spirit hovering over the waters”. So can we get confused?

## **Would I know Him if I saw Him?**

What do people in the Bible tell us about what He looked like? Ezekiel talks about seeing the “appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” (poor fellow, he was lost for words) because he says “I fell face down”. John says similar when he “fell at His feet as dead” even before hearing Him say that He is the one who was dead but alive for evermore. So there is a picture of awe and majesty. Thunder and lightning on mount Sinai seen by the people but clear words to Moses. Then we read that Cleopas and his friend thought they were just chatting to a neighbour on that walk to town after the resurrection. Then He went and disappeared when they recognised Him during supper. The quiet words with Mary outside the empty tomb. When the disciples had locked themselves into a room Jesus appears to them twice. The second time to make sure He was not just a ghost He tells Thomas to put his fingers into the nail marks. And yet Jesus came through locked doors so must be something more than human as we know human. He must have been human to have scars on His hands and side. Then again He “saw” Nathaniel sitting under a tree before

they had ever met. Jn 1:48. Matt 9.4 says that He knew the thoughts of all the officials. That He knows all our thoughts is repeated in several other places. So what do we conclude?

God wants us to know Him but our minds are not big enough to see. Try explaining to a person born blind the difference between red and blue. You can't because it is outside their experience. You can explain to them the difference between salt and sugar because although they may feel the same they taste rather different. God made man so He knows us. He knows our tiny minds with their limitations and so shows Himself to us progressively first in a human form in actions and pictures that we can visualise if not understand. We can feel His presence if not physically seeing anything.

For God to show much of Himself to our limited brains it would be overwhelming like to John and Ezekiel. Paul had the same on his way to arrest Christians in the northern towns when the voice says to him "I am Jesus" and Paul knows that "I am" is the name for God and is coupled with the name of the man who he knew had been killed a few weeks before. No wonder he fell on his face too. God gently calls people by name like to Mary when she was in tears by the empty tomb. That she could cope with. He comforted Martha and Mary after their brother died. He reasoned logically with Nicodemus who was a university professor. Some of the stories He told to the crowds would have raised a smile. God is starting where we are and with what we know to teach us about Himself. Think of things we now take for granted but were incomprehensible a few years ago like wireless, telephones, cars, TV, atom bombs. If our expectation of His personality is a human format then God will show us Himself in that form so we can start to understand Him.

### **What is He like?**

So the picture God gives to any of us may be different depending on ourselves and our experiences. How He appears to a child may be very unlike His contact with an old woman. He makes Himself small enough

for each of us to understand a bit more as time goes on and we are capable. Towards the end of his life my father did not recognise me and muttered rubbish until I said I would have to leave. Then he would say “Let’s have a prayer” and he was logical, direct and clear as if he were talking to someone in the room. After the amen he would look at me and ask who I was. He could see Jesus. God speaks to us in different ways, Ezekiel had to pass on His message through silent drama. Jeremiah says so many times that I have lost count “This is the word that came from the Lord”. We are told repeatedly to fear God and even “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”.

God shows Himself to us according to the limits of our understanding. Because He wanted to teach us about Himself He appeared as a human and got people to write down the things He said and did. Ever noticed that His teaching is almost all by parable except occasionally to the disciples? He starts where we are. You can explain to the blind man the difference between salt and sugar. He can taste that. Red and blue, sunsets and light are academic.

Now the question must be asked “Does it matter what picture we have of God?” and the answer again is simple. It is clearly no. Two people may marry each other even though others may have similar human formats. So real love for another is more than optical or even physical attributes. Is it not the epitome of pride to think that we could ever understand or even depict our designer and maker? So think of God as a personal friend or as a judge on a throne or personified power when you are talking with Him. He is still God and bigger than anything we can imagine if the accounts He has given us in the Bible are true. What we do know is that He knows all about us and still loves each of us. That we may never understand. He is too big.

*A Benefice Parishioner*

## Message about Madagascar: September 2020

Dear Friends,

*"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever." Psalm 107:1*

It's good to be in our own home again in the village of Mawsley. How beautiful our land is! Our special joy has been getting to know our 10 month old granddaughter, Rose. Truly the Lord is good!

We have left a part of ourselves in Madagascar and our friends there are much on our hearts. So we invite you to continue praying for them. COVID-19 numbers are increasing and there have been more cases in Toliara Diocese. Because testing facilities are limited it's hard to get a true picture but it does seem that the increases are slow and numbers relatively small. So far the secondary impacts of the disease have caused more harm: e.g. stopping of vaccination programmes, closure of schools, rising food prices, lack of employment. Please pray for God's hand to stay this disease.

Here are three people for your prayers.

Bishop Todd: He and his wife Patsy plan to return to the US at the end of this year. Please pray for them in their last months in the Diocese. Pray for the choice of his successor.

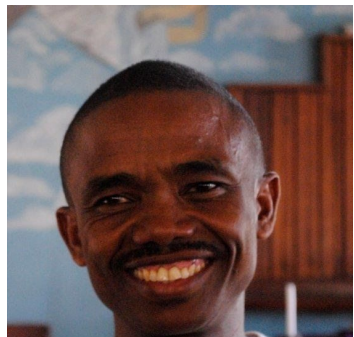
Bishop Samy: As assistant Bishop, he will take temporary charge once Bishop Todd leaves. Pray for much grace and wisdom for him.

Rev. Florent: Our dear colleague is now the Discipleship Coordinator. He has done some training using Zoom (a first for the Diocese) for parishes far from the city of Toliara and some locally in person. The aim is to consolidate the Rooted in Jesus groups already begun and to stimulate the start of new groups. There are around 40 groups at present. Pray for the growth of disciples of Jesus through these groups.

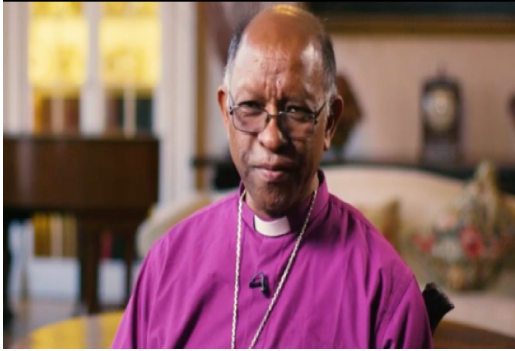


### GOD WAS MOVING, SO WE FOLLOWED

Bishop Todd and Rev Patsy are frequently asked the question "why did you decide to go into missions?" Well the answer is pretty simple. God called us to go. There was a need so we tried our best to fill it. At age 18, Bishop Todd traveled to Nepal on a mission trip. This trip changed his life and made him realize he had a calling for missions and a calling for priesthood. Even with that calling, Bishop Todd was focused on his calling. On his first date with Rev Patsy, he asked her what her goals were in life. Once they were married they moved to Chicago to attend seminary. Post seminary, they applied to be missionaries with the World Mission. When given an option on where to go they asked "where is the greatest need?" And that's how they ended up in Madagascar. Now it has







We complete our service with CMS on December 31<sup>st</sup> and then plan to retire. Before then we hope to “visit” as many of our supporting churches as possible, either in person or virtually. We will send dates once they are known and hope that you will be able to join us at one. Your support and prayers fill us with much gratitude to the Lord.

Thank you. **Derek and Jane**

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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## **Websites**

Benefice:      [www.northrutlandchurches.org.uk](http://www.northrutlandchurches.org.uk)

Greetham:      [www.greethamchurch.org.uk](http://www.greethamchurch.org.uk)

## **The Herald is to undergo a change of format and distribution**

With Val leaving, we thought it the right time to think through how we communicate with the benefice in a printed form. A regular news and information update is needed, some would say essential in these days, so we hesitate to say it's stopping, but there will be a gap as we work on a replacement. Meanwhile watch the web sites and Facebook page for updates.