

BANYULE BABBLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF BANYULE

HOLY SPIRIT WATSONIA ❖ ST ANDREW'S ROSANNA ❖ ST JOHN'S HEIDELBERG

OCTOBER
2022

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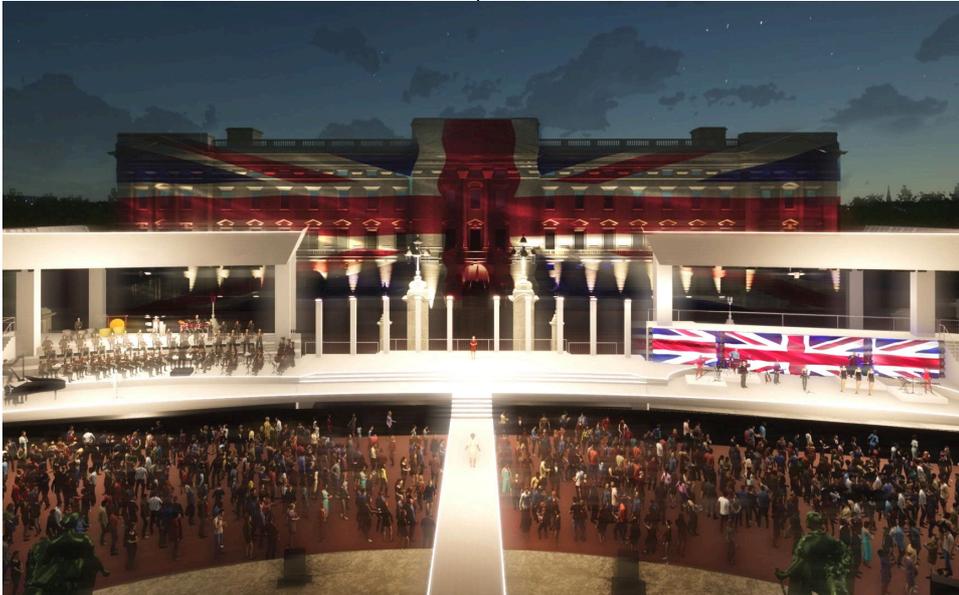
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J IS FOR JUBILEE

2022: the year of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee.

You might recall that this is the year we celebrated her 70 year reign as Queen and the UK celebrated that with having various performances and parades at Buckingham Palace. (Picture below)



I may have only heard the national anthem of Britain a few times before Rachael and I spent our time in the UK. I never really took note of the words until I was asked to go to the Cenotaph monument in London on Remembrance Day 2015, which was just a walk away from Lambeth. I did not know what to really expect coming but I was told the Bishop of London, who was then Richard Chartres, would be there so I came for that reason. I did not expect to see Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth laying a wreath and for the national anthem to be sung: 'God save the Queen' which was all part of the tradition.

The next time I would see the Queen was at Westminster Abbey at the beginning of the Church of England's general synod meeting which began with a worship service in the church. The Queen processed in and then I noticed how petite she was. We were asked, as a community, to be there perhaps because we were the first cohort of Community members to be part of the community of St Anselm – an initiative started by the Archbishop of

Canterbury – Justin Welby. In the Queen's address to synod she noted the newly formed initiative of the community that she believed showed the progress and future of reconciliation in the world and Christian unity. I recall in this address she used a phrase that struck a chord with me.

As she charged the leaders of the church she used the image of placing our hand in the hand of God.

Picture below of the Queen at CofE general synod 2015 cracking a joke back at Archbishop Justin Welby for setting the proceedings in a 'wider historical context' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMb1mLWtYsl>)

There are many tributes that have noted the varied and generational trials she has endured. Notable on the BBC's live coverage of Queen Elizabeth's death was The Archbishop of Canterbury's reflection on her nature – she was a confidant of many leaders and remained engaged and present to leaders sharing their experiences with her – they trusted her. As we reflect on the various experiences of Queen Elizabeth and what stood out to you about her life let us give thanks that in a world where leadership is scrutinised we can look at positive examples of leaders who have put their hand in God's.

Jonathan



This Month – October

Sunday 2nd Pentecost 17: 9 am St Andrew's; 10.15 am St John's; 5 pm Holy Spirit

Habakkuk 1:1-4,2:1-4; Psalm 37:1-9; Luke 17:1-10

Wednesday 5th: 11 am Iris Grange; 3.30 pm Strathalan

Sunday 9th Pentecost 18: 9 am St Andrew's; 10.15 am St John's; 5 pm Holy Spirit

2 Kings 5:1-3,5:7-15c; Psalm 111; Luke 17:11-19

Sunday 16th Pentecost 19: 10.15 am Combined, St John's

Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 121; Luke 18.1-14

Sunday 23rd Pentecost 20: 9 am St Andrew's; 10.15 am St John's; 5 pm Holy Spirit

Jeremiah 14:7-10,19-22; Psalm 84.1-7; Luke 18:15-30

Wednesday 26th: 10 am Holy Spirit Mothers' Union; 11 am Streeton Park and general mid-week service at St John's; 3.30 pm Regis Macleod

Sunday 30th Pentecost 21: 10.15 am Combined, St John's

Isaiah 1:10-18; Psalm 32:1-8; Luke 19:1-10

Wanted

- Donations to help with repairs to St John's
- New wardens and Parish Councillors

Money: August

Income:	Giving:	\$13,391.00
	Other:	\$24,269.78
	Total:	\$37,660.78
Expenses:		\$52,292.72
Deficit:		\$14,631.94

Giving was up, due to generous donations, thank you. Expenses were high, partly due to maintenance and rates, and partly because the Community Garden spent some of their money.

STOP PRESS: The Editor wishes to express his thanks for the kind prayers and offers of help from parishioners during his recent illness from Covid, and begs to inform members that the disease, though not fully dissipated, is now much ameliorated.

Holy Spirit Mothers' Union

10 am Wednesday 24th August 2022: After our usual '3 Cs', Val led us in the first part of the M.U. Wave of Prayer. The theme was *'Transformation – Now'*. Then we continued with the MU Service. For our speaker for today, Barbara read out the second chapter of our 60-year history.

Continuing on our MU journey, in the mid-1970s, Margaret Polglase was President. In the first part of her term, the working world changed, to allow married women to have full time employment. With this change, instead of day time speakers, we had them in the evening.

Some of the speakers: Steps Ministry for the Homeless, Lady Nell Seeing Eye Dog School, the Mission to Seafarers—the speaker didn't come, but Mike Terry from St John's spoke, who was a retired seafarer (he was a seafarer at the age of 15). Another speaker, from the Prison Fellowship, couldn't come: Les Coleman spoke as he worked as a prison officer. An electrical engineer returning from the Antarctic spoke on his six-month tour there. He was raising money to transport Huskies to Canada: he was hoping to collect enough money for one husky but instead they could transport three.

Two members, Beth Jones and Joyce Ross, were commissioned to serve Communion to the house-bound and sick. Bill White donated a Communion Travelling set in memory of this wife Sybil for them to use. Jean Benison sent out anniversary of Baptism cards each year.

Also Jean and Beth Jones volunteered their help with the Anglican Free Kindergarten Project.

In February 1996, our next President, Hilda Legerton, came up with the idea we could visit an age care home: this was Dowell Court.

Elsie Storr started a cooking afternoon, one time cooking a sponge with an emu egg (it came out no different than with four hen's eggs).

Then with Marie Pluckhahn from St James' Ivanhoe, they ran a Word-Building afternoon once a month, from 2001–2006.

Our meeting ended with Midday Prayers, praying for All Saints' Footscray MU, our Link Branch St Mary's Broughty Ferry, and in the Defence Anglican Chaplaincy, the full-time Air Force Chaplains.

Elsie Storr

mainly music: October 2022

What a wonderful Father's Day celebration we had! It seemed that all the families were ready to bring their special person to a *mainly music* session and a special morning tea afterwards. It was fortunate that we requested numbers beforehand to help with catering for we then expected 21 adults (plus the team) for the day. This from 12 families! In the event another mother arrived to try out *mainly music* for the first time, not something we recommend on such a chaotic morning, but she came back.

We have now put aside all thoughts of advertising! We may even have to resort to a waiting list ... something we have not done for a very long time! Truly, God answers prayers!

Rosemary Bellair

P.S. In case you are wondering about the Excluded Communities groups I mentioned last week, this came in the mail. They are now 'Supported Groups'.

Supported Groups

These sessions exist to foster healthy parent attachment, and community connection, while providing educational fun in language, literacy, and emotional development.

Through music and play, sessions encourage parents and children to strengthen the love and trust so essential for healthy development and happy lives.

These sessions occur

- In remote childcare facilities in Queensland
- In a women's prison where young ones live with their mums in Queensland
- In a remote school where children arrive with no readiness for school in NSW
- In a women's prison where mums enjoy *mainly play* in Victoria.

Rosemary Bellair (9459 5394)



Denise reflects on the funeral of Elizabeth II

The thing that struck me most about the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 19 September was the frequent reference to her as ‘our sister Elizabeth’. In a Christian funeral, we remember that all who trust in Christ as Lord, no matter our age, language, wealth or station in life, are sisters and brothers in the family of the Lord God Almighty. Despite her being one of the most recognizable people on earth, in her funeral, she was spoken of simply and profoundly as a sister in Christ, a daughter of God, a Christian soul. It was so moving.

The Archbishop of Canterbury in a FIVE-MINUTE SERMON (Yes, I will try to emulate him!) spoke of the Queen as a woman who first and foremost, served her Lord Jesus Christ, who drew her strength from Jesus and emulated his servant attitude. This trust in Jesus her Lord was beautifully reinforced by the hymns and Scripture readings The Queen chose for her funeral.

Another thing that struck me was that this funeral had been planned and practiced for decades. As well as the practicalities of the pomp and ceremony, it is a powerful reminder for us all the live with our death in mind. This is not to be maudlin, but for those of us who know and trust Jesus, it means that we live in hope, and that we can REALLY live an abundant, life, characterized not by fear, but with HOPE. For Jesus said, ‘I have come that you may have life, and have it abundantly.’ (John 10:10b).

Denise Nicholls

A prayer on the passing of Elizabeth II and the accession of Charles III

Denise used this prayer at church on 11th September, and the *Babble* has been asked to reprint it.

Denise obtained the prayer from PrayerMate, a prayer mobile phone app:

Andy Geers and the team at PrayerMate have distributed this prayer you could use:

Almighty God, Heavenly King, thank you for the long life of your servant, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Thank you that she was a symbol of such stability through the huge changes seen during her seventy year reign. Thank you that throughout her life, her hope in you remained steadfast, as the true King who remains the same yesterday, today and forever. Thank you for her life of dedicated service to others, pointing us to Jesus, the Son of Man, who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Comfort all who mourn her death: her family, her subjects, and all who admired and respected her.

Lord God, grant her son, His Majesty King Charles III, great wisdom and humility as king. May he know that he submits to a higher authority, that you are the one “who changes times and seasons; that you remove kings and set up kings;” (Daniel 2:21) May he reign with integrity and dignity just as his mother did before him. May he share the same hope in Christ, in whom there is forgiveness and reconciliation. Grant us all to keep our eyes fixed on you as the source of all hope and comfort in times of change, as the one who “will reign forever... to all generations” (Psalm 146:10). In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Crossed lines

Crossed lines used to be quite common in the old days of telephony, when you would get to hear, and sometimes join in, someone else’s conversation.

It seems that crossed lines can occur with emails too, and sometimes unexpected messages pass across the Editor’s screen . . .

To: The Right Reverend Bishop Alistair Wimshurst-Smythe
From: Archdeacon the Venerable Gilbert Dullage

My dear Lord Bishop,

I am pleased to report that my idea of engaging Susan Sharp to lecture on your wife’s behalf around the diocese is bearing much fruit. All reports are that the lecture is being very well received in the parishes, redounding great glory on your wife and on the Diocese and the leadership of its Bishop.

It is indeed fortunate that the Diocese is so well led. While the ideas and push-through were entirely my own, the superlative organisational skills and example of Your Lordship, which are well known everywhere, were of great assistance in conceiving and arranging this particular scheme to enhance the prestige and eminence of the Diocese while facilitating the work of Your Lordship’s wife.

I should be glad, if at all possible, to be of further assistance to the Diocese. I have heard slight rumours that there might soon be a vacancy in the list of canons, and if Your Lordship felt I could be of service in Chapter, I would consider it a signal honour.

In His service,
Gilbert

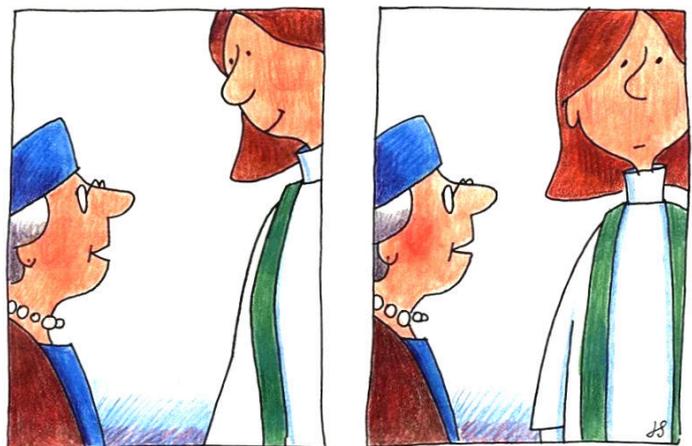
To: Rev’d Susan Sharp, St Swithun’s
From: Mother Fortitude, Convent of St Swithun and St Jude

Dear Ms Sharp,

Very good news! I am very pleased to report that, thanks to the work of Constable Plodder, and much hard work and sacrifices within the Convent, it has finally been represented to me that we can restore to you once again your Vicar, the Rev’d Horace ffoulkes! Once the Diocese provides us a letter addressed to the Chief of Police certifying that Horace ffoulkes is mentally sound and the Diocese will receive him, the convent will go and pick him up without delay.

You will be so glad to have your Vicar home!

Kindest regards,
Mother Fortitude



RECTOR, I WANT YOU TO KNOW I'M 100% IN FAVOR OF YOUR PLANS FOR CHURCH GROWTH

JUST AS LONG AS NONE OF THESE NEW PEOPLE SIT IN MY PEW.

Betty (Elizabeth) Kettle

24 June 1931 – 22 August 2022

(Please note correction from last month's issue)



Betty's funeral was held on Friday 9th September at St John's. (It was at St John's rather than St Andrew's for convenience of catering.) Jonathan took the service and preached, Mavis Lean read the readings (John 14:1–6 and 1 John 4:16–19) until her eyes could cope no longer, and the Editor led the prayers.

There were three hymns: *Jerusalem*, *The Cross* (words by Betty Kettle), and *The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended*.

The eulogy was given by Michael Bull, Betty's second cousin once removed:

Hello, I am Michael Bull. I am Betty's nearest family relative in Australia.

Elizabeth was born on 24th June 1931 to Harold and Norah Lewis at 112 Sycamore Rd, Smethwick, which Betty told me was about three miles from the centre of Birmingham. I checked on Google: the row of terraces appears to still be there.

Just a little aside: Betty has left behind three handwritten versions of the important and significant things in her life, and the last time I was able to visit Betty, at the beginning of August, she had been very unwell and had been moved to palliative care at the Austin Hospital. As I sat with her for a number of hours over two days, Betty chatted about all sorts of events during her life and I have added these in as well.

It sounds as though things were difficult when she was a small child. Betty mentioned a two-room council cottage with her parents and Janet and Tony, her sister and brother. Betty's note just says 'No Father Christmas'.

Betty's next mention is World War 2. The children were all christened together in case they were bombed. The family stayed in the house, sheltering under an Anderson shelter, as Tony was very unwell. He had mastoiditis which developed into meningitis. Considering the conditions at the time he was lucky to survive, and had a permanent disability.

Betty's quote about the war: 'Too damp, gas masks, barrage balloons, anti-aircraft

guns, bombers overhead, Coventry ablaze, the sweetest sound: "all clear" confirmed'.

Betty completed school, was in the Girl Guides, and started work, aged 16, in 1947.

Betty mentions through all her notes to us how much travel both she and Roy did, and how much she did after Roy passed away. She obviously loved her travel; she also mentioned flying business class, especially on trips home to the UK.

Betty took her first overseas trips in 1952 and 1953, including Holland, Belgium and France; and on the second trip Italy by train.

Betty met Roy at the West End Ballroom in 1952. They looked to get married two years later; however Roy was divorced, and 12 years her senior, which may have raised some eyebrows at the time. They were married in the registry office in Birmingham on 27th March 1954. On some of the documentation we found it noted that Roy's first marriage had been annulled; later on there was a church service as well.

Two years after they married, Roy became very ill with bronchial pneumonia and nearly died. This single event would play a significant part in the rest of their lives. Roy ended up with chronic lung issues: bronchiectasis. A lot of their future movements were to try and find a healthier climate for them to live and work.

They live in South Wales until 1957: Betty describes the weather as 'the worst in the UK'. An opportunity then presents itself: Roy is offered a job in Denver, Colorado, the 'mile-high city', designing snow ploughs. They give it a go there; however, the conditions at altitude are too dry and so they move to the west coast of the US, to San Carlos near San Francisco, and then to Seattle where Roy worked for Boeing.

While they were in Seattle John F Kennedy was campaigning to be President. They heard him speak on TV, and liking his message they went to a campaign rally where they both shook hands with the next US president.

Roy at this time was laid off from Boeing. They decided to come home the long way by ship: Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore, Colombo, India, Aden, the Suez Canal, Cairo, Naples, Gibraltar; and Betty mentions that the last night before they docked at Tilbury there was a show: passengers got dressed up and performed. Roy, dressed in raincoat, cap, galoshes, gloves, umbrella, scarf and a life jacket sang 'London here I come' and won first prize.

Betty also mentions the rain as they head into Tilbury docks.

Roy returned to work at Jaguar in Coventry, living in Kennilworth. Betty thought they were at last settled; however in 1965, after four years of cold and damp, they answered an advert for design engineer at Ford in Geelong. They came to Australia as 10-pound Poms. They lived in Geelong and made firm friends. Betty until just a few years ago would visit friends in Geelong for Christmas. In the late 1960s they moved to Melbourne and purchased a new house in Yallambie. Roy also worked for the Australian Army designing military vehicles. Betty and Roy visited the UK in 1973 and Betty's father passed away in 1978. During this time Betty worked for Shell, and Roy Morgan the market research company.

Roy's health continued to deteriorate and he took early retirement in 1980 and went onto an invalid pension in 1981. Betty left work to care for Roy. Betty was closely involved in Roy's care and was taught how to do his physiotherapy to help clear his lungs. Betty was a dedicated and caring wife.

In 1987 Roy had a major health issue; he passed away in the Austin Hospital with Betty at his side.

Betty and Roy had holidayed in Tasmania and found a beautiful church. They decided that both their ashes would go there so they could be together.

Roy's ashes are at St Mary's Church in Hagley in Tasmania: it is also where Betty's ashes will go to be with Roy.

In Betty's words, at this point she had a decision to make: 'stay in Australia or return to the UK'.

The decision as you all know was made to stay. I believe a small part of that decision may have been the English weather. And of course she could always visit home regularly.

Betty instigated a number of things to be involved in the community. She started working part-time at the pharmacy on weekends; volunteered at the Austin Hospital; joined the Mothers' Union, YMCA, Pryme Movers, and Probus; and of course became part of the congregation at St Andrew's.

Apart from becoming part of her community and making friends, she also regularly visited her mum and brother Tony in the UK.

Betty's niece Anna has had a long and close relationship with Betty, and she feels Betty was an amazing person. However there are attributes of Betty that not only Anna, but also her close friend Mavis and her COVID buddy Patricia related to me: she had a wonderful smile, an incredible memory, a great mind—she was very good at crosswords and Sudokus—and she was very generous.

I have been a regular visitor to Betty over the last 20 years or so: trips out to the Yarra valley or locally for lunch. There was often a competition to see who could sneak off and pay the bill.

She was caring, and valued friendship.

Betty's health slowly deteriorated with time: her heart issues, and, I think, in spite of others' best efforts, the isolation we have all had to cope with due to COVID, had a significant effect on Betty. I spoke to Betty just after Yvette and I were married in March—she sounded absolutely fine and as well as ever. Her last five months were really tough for her, from one hospital to the other, surgery, heart and circulation issues. However, all the time her mind and her brain were great. To put it in a lighter mood, like my mother—who was Betty's father's first cousin—all she needed was a body transplant. It seems to be a family trait.

Betty, like Roy, passed away at the Austin Hospital. One of the last stories she told me was being at the opening of the Olivia Newton-John Wellness and Cancer Centre, hearing Olivia sing and I think shake her hand, and then she passed away within a short time of Olivia's passing.

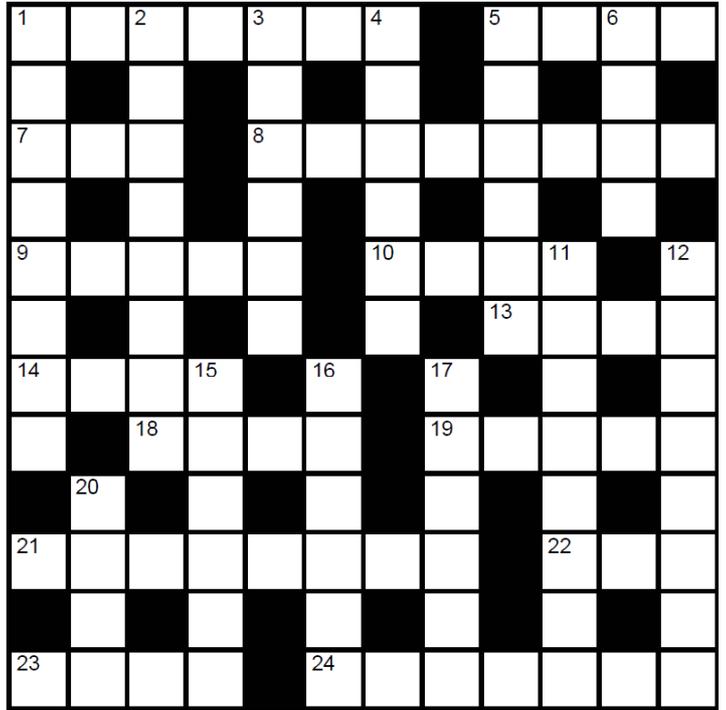
I know we will all miss, and continue to remember, the part she has played in our lives.

Across

- 1 Cleansing ritual (7)
- 5 Fair (4)
- 7 Listening device (3)
- 8 Taken into custody (8)
- 9 Deal (5)
- 10 Leader (4)
- 13 Locks (4)
- 14 Left-handed (4)
- 18 Naomi's bitter name (4)
- 19 Provided by the sun (5)
- 21 Seller (8)
- 22 Commandment count (3)
- 23 Happy (4)
- 24 Bears (7)

Down

- 1 Lived (8)
- 2 One of the seven churches (8)
- 3 Visions (6)
- 4 Bethany resident (6)
- 5 Idolatry abolisher (6)
- 6 Offspring (4)
- 11 Keziah, to Job (8)
- 12 Collected works of an author (8)
- 15 Moved to the music (6)
- 16 Royal home (6)
- 17 Joyful (6)
- 20 Drawing place (4)



by Philologus

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Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

Noah's Ark Anagram

www.dltk-kids.com



F E E B L E J E R U S A L E M
 H A S M M O C K E D W N S N S
 H A A E E E J E W S A E S I M
 I B N N R R S O O T T R E A A
 G E B A O H C H T H E H L T L
 H S A L N I C H E E R T E N C
 P O L J O E T L A Z G E H U H
 R D L E T O E A U N A R T O I
 I E A R H C P L N P T B R F J
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 D E Y A C E D A U G H T E R S

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aailmns _____

eilppssu _____

eilv _____

hmnost _____

abinorw _____

eimoprs _____

aenrv _____

aalrt _____

Bible Word Search – Nehemiah 3

All the words listed below are in the puzzle – left, right, up, down or diagonally. Find each word and circle each letter of the words you find. After you have found all the words, the leftover letters form the **mystery answer**.

https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws_Nehemiah3_0.htm

- Besodeiah, Brethren, Daughters, David, Decayed, Feeble,
- Fountain, Goldsmith, Hananeel, High priest, Hur, Indignation,
- Inhabitants, Jericho, Jerusalem, Jews, Malchijah, Meah,
- Merchants, Meronothite, Meshezabeel, Mocked, Nevertheless,
- Pool, Sanballat, Sanctified, Sepulchres, Sheep gate, Tower,
- Water gate

Answers to last month's puzzles



Bible Word Search mystery answer:
GOLDEN RULE

Last month's anagram:

adgilopr _____ prodigal

aefhrt _____ father

aceehiinar _____ inheritance

afilmy _____ family

ghnrui _____ hungry

gips _____ pigs

ehmo _____ home

abceelrt _____ celebrate

eefginorssv _____ forgiveness

dfnou _____ found

Nehemiah 5:1–13

28th August 2022

by Jonathan Lopez

5 Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews. ² Some were saying, 'We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.'

³ Others were saying, 'We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.'

⁴ Still others were saying, 'We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. ⁵ Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.'

⁶ When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. ⁷ I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, 'You are charging your own people interest! So I called together a large meeting to deal with them ⁸ and said: 'As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!' They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

⁹ So I continued, 'What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? ¹⁰ I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest! ¹¹ Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.'

¹² 'We will give it back,' they said. 'And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.'

Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. ¹³ I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, 'In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!'

At this the whole assembly said, 'Amen,' and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

Intro

Thinking and praying about the last three sermons on the Nehemiah series:

What has stuck out for you in Nehemiah so far?

Over the past three weeks:

- TESTIMONY:** *Is our God the God of heaven AND of earth? (Neh 1)* – Nehemiah is saddened by the state of affairs in Jerusalem and prays for favour as cup bearer to the king Artaxerxes. This is the beginning of N's journey (God's plan) to restore the testimony of God. Do we want to be part of God's plan in revitalising HIS church? How did God stir your heart at the end of these sermons?
- PRAYER (Neh 2:1–8)** – through N's example of asking for God's favour, despite the risk that this man, this Persian King, would not grant a reversal of government policy, to resume the repairs to Jerusalem that he himself had stopped. DN encouraged us: *Our best players are our prayers!* How will you be praying about church revitalisation?

- TRUST** in God (*Neh 2:17–20*) – N faced opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah, which just before our reading today (if you've been reading Nehemiah personally) are scheming to kill N. N trust's in God despite opposition.

Today we know all too well there is certainly opposition to the church from various parts of society. DN provided us with a few examples last Sunday.

Well today we see N face another challenge. N faced external opposition but TRUSTED in God, but now he faces internal challenges amongst his very own people – the Jewish community.

So what did the Jewish community look like in Nehemiah's time, you might be wondering?

- We can trace some elements of this by the way the community responds to the call to work in rebuilding, which Denise highlighted for us last week. *Neh 2:17–18:*

Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

There seems to be a real unity amongst the people. However the pressure mounts from the threats of Sanballat and Tobiah, and in response the Jewish community take shifts day and night to either build or guard against attacks. It was inevitable that people would feel over-worked and thus today we have in our Nehemiah reading this issue.

- There are certain principles taught by the books of the law—the Torah—about community equality, the importance of covenant, and being 'a people of God' as a community (*Lev 26:12*).

So what should the Christian Community look like?

- Jewish roots – what are traditions and principles we can apply to our context?
- Now and into the future – how will God restore unity?

Part 1: Jewish roots (vv 1–8)

The remnant and the exiled Jews of Nehemiah's time were being drawn back by God not just to rebuild walls and buildings: *there was something deeper God was doing, something MORE significant:* God wanted them all to realise who they really are: a community set aside by God himself. It says:

Lev 26:12: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people"

'My people', plural (as expressed in today's psalm). However, in vv 1–8, *some* people have different agendas: there was a social class that took advantage of the poor. BUT:

- Lev 19:9–10, Deu 24:19–22:* when there is a harvest (fruit, grain, oil) they are to set aside excesses for the poor and the alien
- Exo 23:10–11:* the seventh year of harvest fields are not to be ploughed but given to the poor to harvest

These are commands of God... why? Because God cares for the poor Jew as much as he cares for the wealthy Jew. (In today's Gospel reading, *Luke 14:1–14*, Jesus encourages the rich to be concerned for the poor.)

To further drive this point, Deuteronomy refers to all Jews in family terms: brothers and sisters; and regardless of tribal divisions or class: priest or king.

This UNITY, this spiritual bond of God, is explicitly stated here also in v 5.

We are:

- Of the same flesh
- Our children are as good as theirs

POINT 1: Relations between (the family of God: Jews) 'should never be treated purely as business transactions, but rather as spiritual service that is pleasing to God and blessed by Him'. (Breneman)

APPLICATION: What principles are transposed onto the church?

Do we judge our Christian brothers and sisters who are wealthy?

Do we share our wealth freely?

I was at Holy Trinity Brompton, UK in 2015 on a Sunday when they were explaining the financial reports of their ministry. From the outside we might think they must have lots of money saved to do all this ministry—Alpha, church planting, conferences—but you'll be surprised. Their financial strategy is to spend everything in one financial year for the work of ministry. I was so surprised because I volunteered as church Treasurer in the past and found that I needed to save constantly.

Do we see other churches as competition?

1 Peter 2:5–6 says:

⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Part 2: Now and into the future (v 9–13)

N had a very awkward task ahead of him: knowing the wrong the wealthy are doing (nobles and officials), he needed to correct and remedy their behaviour.

What we can gather from Nehemiah to this point is that he is a passionate leader. He responds to the heart and mind of God with **patience** (as seen in his four months of praying before requesting to resume the repairs to Jerusalem) and as a **planner**: he surveyed the work then gathered the community; and knowing the threats to the work, he responded by creating a system of work. Patience and planning are key to **reconciliation and managing conflict**.

Because... the people N was about to accuse were people of his own 'class': wealthy and people of authority.

Tollefson's sociological reading of Nehemiah reveals a model for conflict resolution:

- "Separate** the people from the problem." Instead of seeing the problem as a class conflict, Nehemiah treated it as a community problem (v. 8).
- "Focus** on interests, not positions." Nehemiah showed the rich that their actions were hurting the whole community (v. 9).
- "Generate** a variety of **possibilities** before deciding what to do." Nehemiah proposed a solution that benefited the whole community (vv. 10–12).
- "Insist that the results** be based on some objective standard, tradition, or authority." Nehemiah based his solution on Biblical principles (v. 13), as we covered earlier, the principle of caring for the poor.

I was away on a 3-day training session in June. I believe I have mentioned this to a few people: for three days we spoke about conflict in the church. It wasn't an easy three days, as many young clergy were there from a range of different experiences in church conflict. Why a whole three days? Well, one of the repeated learnings was that churches need to adapt processes for dealing with conflict well. As clergy we should be teaching and guiding churches to normalise ways to resolve conflict.

Now I don't want to scare anyone away by saying the plans and goals of revitalising mission in Watsonia and our parish will come with conflict. No. But I believe that when the church is in unity and being effective in mission we can come under spiritual attack.

POINT 2: Churches need to learn from history and apply Biblical foundation in ministry for the future without losing sight of the goal, just as N did. He didn't want to create an unnecessary division that would work against the goal, but rather, unify the people by REMEMBERING the goal.

APPLICATION: We are on a search-and-rescue mission as Jesus explained in Luke 19:10: 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'.

1. Patience in prayer and action
2. Planning: setting goals, being intentional
3. Recognise times of internal conflict

I love this quote, and perhaps some here have heard it before:

'Church is not an organisation you join; it is a family where you belong, a home where you are LOVED and a hospital where you find HEALING'

Conclusion: how are we forming unity in our spiritual family?

- What does it mean to be family?
- How do we create a loving home?
- Do we pray and share our hurts in church: brothers and sisters?

In 1994 when I stepped in a community centre in Kensington I had no idea what I was about to encounter. I was 14. My family was a bit messed up. I was messed up. BUT God brought me into this spiritual family. He surrounded me with spiritual uncles and aunties who just accepted me, regardless of all the strange things I believed. All along my journey God was bringing me into a community: a new family, a home, a hospital where all the messed up things in life were healed. Perhaps you can recall the various ways the church has been your community of support: through struggles, through death, through new life.

God brought together two very different classes of people in our reading of Nehemiah today: the poor and the rich.

UNITY

I was at breakfast the other day and I noticed two young men come to sit beside me and my friend. These two young men looked a bit intimidating and in my mind I was judging them somewhat. They started smoking and swearing and carrying on. The waitress came to take their order. The food came out and the chef delivered it. The chef was an old Asian man. He smiled as he placed the food on their table. These two young men smiled back and were genuinely appreciative of the food. Perhaps they were regulars—who knows? But I just noticed the way the chef spoke and smiled at them as if they were his sons. To me that was a picture of heaven: God brings together vastly different people into his family.

Nehemiah 8:1–6

28th August 2022

by Jonathan Lopez

¹ *All the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.*

² *So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³ He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.*

⁴ *Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.*

⁵ *Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. ⁶ Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, 'Amen! Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.*

Intro

Neh 5–7: What did we miss?

Well, we seem to have skipped a fair bit from last week if you recall (Neh 5). If you have been following in your own reading of Nehemiah, chapters 5–7 are significant:

- Last week we left with N uniting the social classes of poor and rich, by recalling they are a people of God: a family; and he himself does this by leading the way. How does he do this? Ch 5 ends with N showing generosity, hospitality and welcome to all, Jew and official, and not receiving the expected food a governor or vizier is entitled to.
- Sanballat and Tobiah go to great lengths to thwart N's plans, by trying to lure him into meetings, and even sending a false prophet to him to murder him in the temple: Neh 6 (a good reminder, along with Luke's Gospel reading today, that the work of the gospel will be opposed by parts of our society today).
- Neh 6 also highlights for us the work of rebuilding the wall occurs over a course of 52 days (v15–19): after 70 years of exile, God, through the work of Israel, has been able to secure the walls of Jerusalem in just 52 days! Therefore the response of Israel's enemies to this was:

When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realised that this work had been done with the help of our God.'

The work is DONE! So does Nehemiah pack up and return to his lofty position as the cup bearer to King Artaxerxes? NO: as I highlighted in my last sermon:

'The remnant and the exiled Jews of Nehemiah's time were being drawn back by God not just to rebuild walls and buildings: there was something deeper God was doing, something MORE significant.'

Neh 7 tells us that N was not done. Now the true building begins! Israel is called to **restore the testimony of God on earth**, and this is done by leading the people back into a spiritual revival.

HOW? God's Spirit speaks through his Word:

- Jews: the Book of the Law
- Christians: the *logos*, the Word = Jesus

WE are called to be living stones of the church. I quoted last week 1 Peter 2:5:

⁵ *you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house*

So what are the current challenges of being a 'spiritual house':

- HOW are we being 'living stones'?
- DO we really want revival?

...It ALL begins with God's word 'in us'

Part 1: The Book of the Law (vv 1–3)

What was it?

I mentioned last week the Torah—the Book of the Law—is the first 5 books of the Bible, and important to the Jewish community.

Often when we hear the word 'law' we think of rules and regulations and perhaps perceive it as legalism. It may stir up negative thoughts of punishment.

We are told in vv 1–3 in our reading that the community wanted Ezra (the same Ezra from Ezra), who was a priest, to 'bring out the Book of the Law'. This is particularly key to the deeper spiritual significance God was stirring in the hearts of the community: they were eager to hear and hungry to be fed the word of God.

Do we come to church with a similar eagerness and hunger?

Note twice that the people present were men, women, and anyone who was able to understand **and** note that they were **attentive for 6 hours!** (from daybreak to noon). I guess we shouldn't complain when sermons go past 20 minutes, right!?

The community were having their deep spiritual needs met through God's word.

If you recall being a new believer, or perhaps are curious and often have an appetite for more learning;

OR as a maturing Christian you start to read biographies of Christians and theology;

OR as a Christian for most of your life you are still surprised that the same readings of Scripture you've read many times might spark in you a new perspective;

This is all the work of the Holy Spirit in God's word! 2 Tim 3:16–17 tells us:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

POINT 1: The law was meant to be a guide to life and flourishing.

APPLICATION: Build it and they will come?!

Many churches have employed this saying to attract people to church, but it's actually a line from the *Field of Dreams* movie!

In our context we stand on the shoulders of those saints who have built the church buildings we are blessed with: NOW we must use these blessings to enable mission and growth.

I heard this said by the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby:

"First, the church exists to worship God in Jesus Christ. Second, the Church exists to make new disciples of Jesus Christ. Everything else is decoration. Some of it may be very necessary, useful, or wonderful decoration – but it's decoration."

The TRUE work God was doing in N's time was in people not buildings.

Part 2: Worship restored (vv 4–6)

God of heaven and now earth: the testimonies of God in his people.

Verse 4 as Ezra stood reading the law. Note that there are people standing at his right: these are mix of priests and Levites – lay leaders amongst their community.

'Ezra ... on a high wooden platform' shows that preparation had been made for this event. This was the prototype pulpit but may have originated during the Babylonian exile along with the beginnings of the synagogue.

'Ezra opened the book', which, of course, was a scroll; the codex or book form was not yet used. Standing in reverence and acceptance of God's authority in the Scripture must have been customary (and why we stand for the Gospel reading). (Breneman)

Verse 6 for me marks the beginning of God's REAL mission of revival and *restored* testimony on earth: it was not just the leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah that felt the burden of the mission, but now the entire community! *Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, 'Amen! Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.*

An Azusa Street Revival complete with hands raised, responses of AMEN and rolling around on the ground!

God's Spirit in his Word SPEAKS and TRANSFORMS.

POINT 2: Do we REALLY want the testimony of God restored in our time?

APPLICATION: Well, it starts with intimacy with God

'Even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart' (Joel 2:12)

Note the response to God's word. The community were looking to understand it and receive a lamp to their feet. The path back to life. The community did something interesting:

They were requested NOT to grieve like King Josiah, who famously tore his clothes when the Book of the Law was read to him the first time at the age of 26. BUT...

⁹ *Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.*

¹⁰ *Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."*

Worship of God can come out of thankfulness for his love, forgiveness, healing, provisions: aren't these amazing 'joys' we are gifted?

Perhaps take this week to think about the joys God has presented to you all your life.

Revival starts with knowing the source of life and joy and love is God.

Conclusion: what will our response be as a community of God to his word?

Responses to the law and the logos:

1. In Nehemiah's time, Israel longed for a return to Jerusalem; *but* it wasn't a walled city or a building, but a renewal of worship, joy and celebration. Summed up: life and flourishing. God's Spirit in the Law produced a revival of JOY in community life in Israel.

If you read on in Neh 8, Israel finishes its worship with a festival that they have not been able to freely celebrate for 70 years: the Feast of Booths. Joy fills the community!

2. The church: do we long to see God's Spirit at work in the world? Have we been hungry for his word? Have we been open to God's transforming grace and love?

There were many times in my walk with God I was tempted to walk away from church. Friends would tell me many reasons not to go. It was challenging, and perhaps you have factors and groups in your life that take you away from spiritual growth and Christian community. *But* be encouraged by the sentence of the day: *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.* (Psalm 119:105)

Jesus, the Word, will be your light that will lead you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Nehemiah 13: 1–14

11th September 2022

by Denise Nicholls

13 On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God, ² because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.) ³ When the people heard this law, they excluded from Israel all who were of foreign descent.

⁴ *Before this, Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah, ⁵ and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the grain offerings and incense and temple articles, and also the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil prescribed for the Levites, musicians and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests.*

⁶ *But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission ⁷ and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. ⁸ I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah's household goods out of the room. ⁹ I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense.*

¹⁰ *I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields. ¹¹ So I rebuked the officials and asked them, "Why is the house of God neglected?" Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.*

¹² *All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil into the storerooms. ¹³ I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a Levite named Pedaiah in charge of the storerooms and made Hanan son of Zakkur, the son of Mattaniah, their assistant, because they were considered trustworthy. They were made responsible for distributing the supplies to their fellow Levites.*

¹⁴ *Remember me for this, my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.*

Good morning, everyone.

With the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth an era has come to an end: for her family, for the rest of the world. She was a person who stood on the shoulders of those who had gone before her, but continued to build and refocus and rebuild and rebuild her kingdom. (I don't know why we don't say queenhood, but, anyway, her kingdom—the Commonwealth, which she loved so much.) And amid times of grief and difficulty, joy and sadness, she was there for her peoples.

Yet for Elizabeth Windsor her trust was in the Lord Jesus Christ. She was a woman of great faith. Her years of labour and faithful service are done, and she now leaves it in the hands of others; and if, like me, you've been watching the television 24/7 broadcast, a question keeps coming up: What's next? What do we expect to happen next?

Today in our final series on the book of Nehemiah, we see that the completion of the work of the wall and the gates of Jerusalem had concluded. But what was to come next? For the project that Nehemiah was involved in was more than just about the wall and the gates—yes, that was important; and it was more than just about the city of Jerusalem—though that was important as well. It was about the people of God, and being the people of God, and being faithful to the God who called them.

Just before we move on to chapter 13—that's the last chapter for today—I want to do a little recap on Nehemiah. Remember what we've seen so far, is that Nehemiah had this vision to restore the walls of Jerusalem. He went to king Artaxerxes because he was cup-bearer to the king—the king of the Persian empire: modern-day Iran and Iraq—with an audacious request. He faced opposition within and without, and he called on God and God's people to rebuild God's city, and they answered the call.

So by the time we get to chapter 6, the wall was completed in 52 days. I don't know about you, but I've never heard of a building program running so efficiently. Usually people say, are you a fan of 'Grand Designs', when people go in and they have this great plan and they think, oh we'll be in by Christmas—and they never specify what year of Christmas. But here it was 52 days.

In chapter 7 we're told (there are lots of long lists in Nehemiah) that he found the genealogical records of those who had been the first to return previously.

In chapter 8 the people told Ezra, the teacher of the law, to bring out the book of the Law of Moses that had been commanded; and the people stood for about six hours hearing God's word read to them: men, women, children.

In chapter 9 the people mourned and confessed their sins. They put dust on their heads and they wore sackcloth, because hearing God's word had caused in them a response of repentance.

And then in chapter 10 we have these promises that God's people made to God, in the presence of everyone: We promise we will not give our daughters in intermarriage with those people who did not worship God. They also promised that they would not buy from people on the Sabbath, and that they would not neglect the house of God. They also had to decide who was going to live inside the walls of Jerusalem and who would

stay in their lands; and so it was decided that the leaders of the people would move into Jerusalem, plus they needed some more people, so they had a ballot and one in 10 people—so 10% of the population—were to live within the city. And it says at the end of that chapter that some people actually volunteered to leave their ancestral lands and go and live in the city, and the people honoured them for that.

Then in chapter 12 we have the wonderful dedication of the wall of Jerusalem; and people celebrated joyfully with music, with feasting, with singing, and there was great joy in the country.

So the job was completed in 52 days: what next? Well, unfortunately, the people of Jerusalem began to rest on their laurels. They built the wall; the city was safe; they decided to take it easy—even though they had made promises to God that they would continue to worship him and live their lives in obedience to him. There had been some obedience, as we heard in the chapter reading of today, of not intermarrying with certain groups of people, including Moabites.

Now we must be very careful to make sure that we understand, that this was not about a person's skin colour or their race: it was about their heart orientation towards God. So the idea of not marrying an Ammonite or a Moabite was: 'Do not marry somebody who does not worship God'. Do you remember a famous Moabitess, one who is an ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ? Ruth was a Moabitess, but remember she is someone who became part of God's people. Remember her words to her mother-in-law Naomi: 'Your people will be my people, and your God, my God'. So even though being a Moabite by her ancestry, her descent, she had oriented her heart towards God, and become one of the people of God.

And so Nehemiah had returned to Artaxerxes, to his previous post of serving King Artaxerxes. Unfortunately what happened was that there was some slippage: some slip in worship, which became a façade of religiosity, not genuine worship of God.

Do you know what a *trompe-l'œil* [terrible pronunciation] is? (Or a 'trump lol'—I don't know how to say it—is anyone French-speaking here? A *voice*: 'Trompe-l'œil'. *Denise*: 'Trump lawyer'.) You often see them in a garden: on the wall of the garden will be painted something that tricks the eye into thinking you're not looking at a brick wall, you're actually looking further into another part of the garden. You might have seen some of these on Facebook or other places:



<https://www.signs.com/blog/awesome-3d-street-paintings-and-famous-artists/>

I wonder if you're riding along and that lady is riding on that little plank: that's all just chalk, made to look like a great big hole opening up in the pavement. I'm sure one would get a bit of a shock when you see that—but it's still two dimensions. The pavement is still there, but it's a trick of the eye, and a trick of the mind. There's one up at Watsonia near the library, opposite Holy Spirit Church. You think, what is that great big long chalk drawing that goes out for about four or five metres? It doesn't seem to make any sense. But you stand in one part, and it looks like the books are standing up in front of you. It's a trick of the eye.

Well, unfortunately, there had been a trick of the eye in relation to the people's worship in Jerusalem. One of the things that had happened was Tobiah—and you will remember his name as one of the opponents of Nehemiah, opposing things all along the way. He was someone who now took pride of place, not just in the centre of the city to organise whatever his business dealings were, but rather in the courts of God. What had been somewhere to store the offerings of grain and incense and oil—perhaps at one point people said, 'We don't really need this. Gee, we could possibly get some good rent; and, oh, that person Tobiah: he's always been a very leading person in our city. Let's give him that office'—an attitude of slackness in worship, in that the items that were used for worship of God were seen as of lesser value than someone who had opposed God's plan all the way along.

And so Nehemiah booted him out; had the room cleansed; and what was restored back in there? Items for worship: grain, olive oil, incense, the things that were needed for the everyday worship of God.

There was some other slippage as well. Nehemiah says, *I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields.*¹¹ *So I rebuked the officials and asked them, "Why is the house of God neglected?"*

There's an attitude reflected here, isn't there? A room for rent: gee, money is better than anything! And not only that, but the people who had supposedly been set aside, been ordained by God, to lead God's people in worship and prayer, and pray for God's people, hadn't had their allocation of food and grain and oil. And so they had had to go back to their own fields.

It's a bit like Jonathan and myself and Helen are ordained—set apart—in the church of God for a particular work; and when you called me here to be your Vicar, and when we appointed Jonathan here, we wanted to make sure that we had enough, so that Jonathan and I could be devoted to the work here, rather than me going back to teaching, or working in a shop, or doing many of the other jobs that I've done before to support myself; or Jonathan going back to marketing, or the million and one jobs that he has done before to support himself. That's why you pay clergy a stipend: it's not really a wage, it's a stipend to allow us to be devoted to the work that you have called us, under God, to do.

So the poor old musicians: 'Oh, we don't really need you, Syd, off you go, go

and fend for yourself at Centrelink'. They told the Levites, 'Oh, you go, go back and farm, you know, you can get your grain from your own fields. Clear off!' What was happening? Neglect of worship of God.

Did you notice how Nehemiah didn't rebuke the people who'd been set aside, but rather he rebuked the officials: those who made the decisions. So he called the people back to faithfulness. That's my second point: a call to faithfulness. Well, he wanted the worship restored, and the worship always revolved around word and worship of God.

But do you see that it also spilled over God's people? It was also not just what they did at the temple, not what they did in their own prayers, but in every part of their lives. The Sabbath had been a gift from God to his people, and they were to observe the Sabbath. Remember one of the promises that they had made: 'we will not neglect the Sabbath, we will observe the Sabbath'. Yet Nehemiah comes and finds people treading on their wine presses and buying things in Jerusalem on the Sabbath.

Secondly, people in their everyday lives: even though they had been told not to intermarry with people who did not know and trust in God, they began to do just that again. They had rebuilt the city and the walls: it's as though they had said, 'Well, that's the project done and dusted: back to reality!' And unfortunately reality hadn't been their transformed hearts.

For Nehemiah it wasn't just the building of the wall that symbolised the ruinous way that the reputation of God had fallen into, and the people of God had fallen into, that solo fake worship. And so he called on the people of God to be built up in their knowledge and love of God—to be faithful in their worship, and faithful in their lives.



Let me just go to the next slide, because that's what he wanted: he didn't want that *hollow* worship, but he wanted that *heart* worship—that the symbolic rebuilding of the city walls and gate, would shore up within people that understanding that they were the people of God; that God, the God of the universe, was their God, and they needed to worship him with their whole heart.

As the people of God in this place, in this era, we want to be people who worship God by having his word read and worshipping him. But, more than that, what is God calling on us to do, and what will it look like? Over the years, since the establishment of the church, there have been different shapes of ministry. Do you remember at the Reformation, one of the key things that happened was that the services, where people came to worship God, had to be in the language of the people, so that we could understand with our hearts and our minds, and so respond to God. Now Jonathan can speak Tagalog. If he conducted the whole service today in Tagalog, how many of us would understand? How many of us would have been edified by hearing God's word read? How many of us could have sung along? Only Jonathan.

You know in the English Reformation one of the key things that happened, and one of the most radical things that happened, was the translation of Scripture into the language of the ordinary people. In Germany it was German; in France it was French; in England it was English. And remember those first people who translated the Scriptures were burned at the stake for that supposedly terrible thing of people being able to hear God's word in their own language.

Since that time there are different shapes of ministering. We know that the services at our partner church, Merri Creek, are very different from the way we have our services on a Sunday. But what is common, what is key, to Christian churches around the world is that God's Word will always be read, and that there will be worship of God. We've been talking for a while about the possibility of a new work at Watsonia: perhaps a new morning congregation there; and I've charged Jonathan with thinking about, what's that going to look like? Is it going to look like our service here at St John's on a Sunday morning? Probably not; but what will be key—what *must* be key—for us as the people of God, for our worship, and to serve God and the people around us, it must include God's Word read, and it must include worship and response to God.

Why? All for the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not for ourselves, but to build up God's kingdom, our church, like all Christian churches, we, like all individual Christians around the world, are called to honour God, worship the Lord Jesus Christ, and call on others to join in that worship of God. That is why the church exists: not for ourselves; not only to build us up; but we must have that outward focus: that focus of praising God, honouring God, and wanting to reach out with that gracious message of God's love to all people.

Last night King Charles III was proclaimed King of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A cessation, and a beginning; but also a continuation. We too, as we sit here—in St John's people have been worshipping here since 1851, a very, very long time; and we want people to be worshipping here in another 50 years, and another 100 years, and another 150, and 170 years. What we do in our time has to be focused on our God, our King, whom we worship. And so as we come week by week, we worship him, we honour him, and we want to continue on that work of proclaiming Christ: proclaiming Christ Jesus as Lord. That's what God's calling us to do. That's what God has always called his people to do. But how we do it—that requires prayer and wisdom; but it will always have at the centre God, worship of God, and proclaiming of his Word. Amen.



Mammon and Manna

Luke 16:1–13

18th September 2022

by Bishop Kate Prowd

16 Jesus told his disciples: 'There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, "What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer."

³ 'The manager said to himself, "What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg — ⁴ I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses."

⁵ 'So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?"

⁶ "Three thousand litres of olive oil," he replied.

'The manager told him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifteen hundred."

⁷ 'Then he asked the second, "And how much do you owe?"

"Thirty tons of wheat," he replied.

'He told him, "Take your bill and make it twenty-four."

⁸ 'The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ 'Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

¹³ 'No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.'

Well, this gospel is a little tricky, isn't it! Just the one to handball to the bishop for a Sunday visit—curly issue around dishonesty; money and stewardship issues, and a whiff of corruption and shady dealings... Thanks Denise! It's great to be with you all!

So, where to start? How about with a *synopsis* of what's going on here, helped by one commentator (Rev Dr Sam Wells): A wealthy man employs a manager. The rich man gets word that the manager is squandering property. He's fired. But...a moment of grace comes, and the rich man gives him a chance to make good, as it were. Be enterprising. So the manager visits all of the clients to discuss their respective accounts. Then the manager has a smart idea—he starts writing off some of the debts—not making money, but certainly is building social capital. His friendship circle understandably starts to increase—as he splashes his boss's money around—this may serve him well when the day comes and he has to pack his bags. Inevitably, he has to face the music with the rich man, his boss, who knows all of his dodgy antics. Perhaps expecting the worst, he's told: Well done. You were enterprising enough to forgive the debts and give property away—and here's the unexpected message: your shrewdness—shown by acts of generosity, was the best investment you could make.

You're more skilled in this than me....I admire you. And you've taught me something: The secret of real wealth is generosity...

Generosity is the best investment. There's a resonance here: Forgive us our debts...we pray...as we forgive those...who are in debt to us...I was at a gathering a week or so ago with the board members of a major UK Trust. They've been very generous with a grant for our Diocese of \$250K: 3 tranches (approx. 80K) to be dispersed over 3 years. Listening to the 2-IC, he commented that as a Trust they had been successful in dispersing 100 million pounds to different organisations and perceived areas of need around the world. They have now set themselves the goal of dispersing 250 million pounds—their premise being: you give away what you have, not store it up in case you might need it.

And we give away not just money, but social capital, and in so doing, it builds again: Ps 113: The psalmist describes the high and mighty God who 'stoops down' from the heavens to tenderly care for the poor. He longs to 'raise the poor from the dust, and lift the needy from the ash heap'. He would reverse their fortunes, and 'seat them with princes' (113:5–8).

You have to work out what kind of economy you want. According to the same commentator I referred to earlier (Rev Dr Sam Wells), today's gospel is about two economies: The economy of the rich man—that's the mammon economy. This is the economy in which there's never enough to go round. So I need to use everything I've got to make sure that I can have a slice of the pie. It's the economy of scarcity. The second economy is the economy described in this morning's parable—the fired manager's economy. As the same commentator I just referred to points out, this is economy of abundance—in the Bible it's referred to as Manna—where there's enough for all—even with leftovers. It can be referred to as the economy of God's kingdom. Manna is what God gives the people of Israel in the wilderness. It's the loaves and fishes economy—it's the economy where we can learn that happiness is when we learn to love and trust the things that God gives us. And to recognise that we are given these things plentifully, abundantly. "Manna from heaven."

Astutely, the manager in our story replaces making a living by developing social capital. That is, friends become more important than making money. To quote another: "He moves from mammon to manna, from an economy of scarcity and perpetual anxiety to an economy of abundance and limitless grace" (SWells p.13). AND the rich man gets it—he shifts in his understanding of the context and the message to the manager becomes: My economy is smaller than yours (mammon, which comes with debt) and you're the one who's living in the great economy (manna, which incorporates the building of relationships). In other words, a different understanding of the meaning of "richness" is revealed, and modelled.

Let's look at the meaning of this story from a Christological perspective. — A wealthy landowner is about to make his servant pay the consequences of losses on his estate. But he adjourns doing this—to see what might happen. To see if there's anything that's redeemable about this situation. Then,

because of the creativity of the servant, the landowner sees things in a new way. He now has a different perspective about his estate; his economy, because of his servant.

We could see it like this: God was about to punish his servant for the sins of the world. But God waited to see what might happen between the world and the servant. And grace occurred. And God said: I will adopt this economy—the economy of manna; of abundant grace—the Son of God). Jesus exemplifies God’s abundance—and transforms the economy of scarcity (mammon) into abundance (manna). Jesus is the one, who helps us to change from anxious, people whose attitude is the survival of the fittest, to having joy and being generous with thankful friends. And as we receive the joy of God’s abundance, we share this abundance, promised for all eternity, with others.

As you consider what to do with your “economy” – your plant: your property. How might you develop the shrewdness that the manager developed? What economy might you choose to live in—mammon or manna? The economy that may be fine in the short-term, but only includes some and only buys limited purchases? Or: the economy where the use of wealth serves to make friends and set people free?—The kind of economy where, with the goal of making friends and building social capital, there will always be the surety of making friends and being welcomed and included—an economy of

abundance? Where the most prized investment is generosity. Where there is the enjoyment of all that God gives in plentiful amounts, and not even the daily hardships of life—death itself—can take away this generosity; this God-given abundant life.

It’s so easy for us in our Covid world with its restrictions and fears and uncertainties to adopt a narrative of decline and deficit—yet, I return to the vision of the UK Trust I referred to at the beginning of this sermon—They’re not aiming to “make” more millions. Except in so far as to invest in generosity. And they will be shrewd with their nerve and lateral thinking, I imagine. And we would do well to be also.

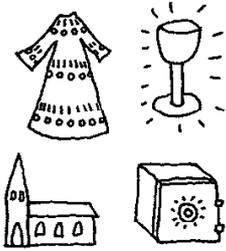
I wonder, if we take this parable into our lives—whether we can be *released* from what holds us back—from fear of not having enough; from reluctance to buy and even to give—and do a *reframe*: The best investment is generosity. It’s our vocation. We’re called to live abundant lives (John 10—“I came that you may have life, life in its fullness”)—and that you may share that abundant life with others. In kindness and generosity and giving and entering into relationship with others. God is on to us. Initially the rich owner is unhappy with the managers’ tactics. It seems, though, that the boss doesn’t mind when the manager gives the boss’s property away by reducing people’s debts. Don’t be afraid to use your shrewdness for ministry and mission, always accompanied by the Holy Spirit. As

someone else has said, the kind of Church we become, indeed, the parish Banyule wants to be, will depend on the world we live in and the kind of God we believe in. I hope you can continue to open yourselves to the blessing that God wants you to be to the communities you serve. AMEN.



GIVING

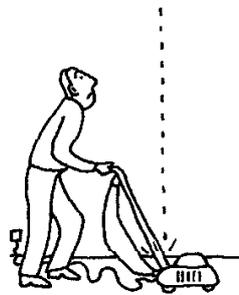
WHY I DO NOT CONTRIBUTE



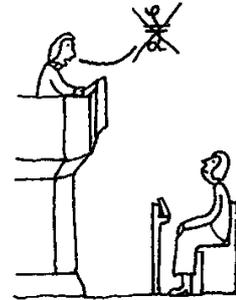
THE CHURCH HAS PLENTY OF MONEY



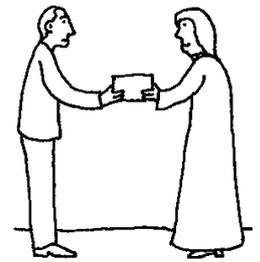
WE CAN'T AFFORD IT



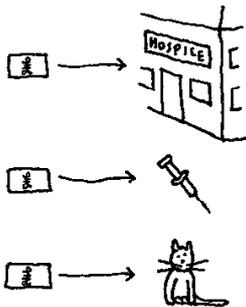
I GIVE MY TIME AND TALENTS INSTEAD



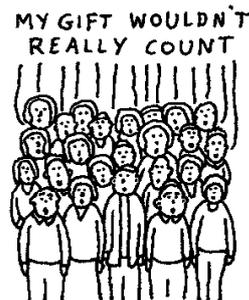
CHURCH ISN'T THE PLACE TO TALK ABOUT MONEY



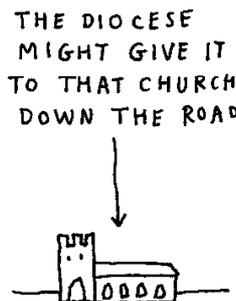
DOESN'T THE GOVERNMENT PAY FOR IT?



I GIVE TO OTHER CHARITIES



MY GIFT WOULDN'T REALLY COUNT
WHAT I COULD GIVE WOULDN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE



THE DIOCESE MIGHT GIVE IT TO THAT CHURCH DOWN THE ROAD
THE MONEY WON'T BE WELL-SPENT



OUR VICAR DOESN'T DESERVE TO BE PAID



SOMEBODY UPSET ME ONCE

I STRUCK THE BOARD, and cried, 'No more;
 I will abroad!
 What? shall I ever sigh and pine?
 My lines and life are free, free as the road,
 Loose as the wind, as large as store.
 Shall I be still in suit?
 Have I no harvest but a thorn
 To let me blood, and not restore
 What I have lost with cordial fruit?
 Sure there was wine
 Before my sighs did dry it; there was corn
 Before my tears did drown it.
 Is the year only lost to me?
 Have I no bays to crown it,
 No flowers, no garlands gay? All blasted?
 All wasted?
 Not so, my heart; but there is fruit,
 And thou hast hands.
 Recover all thy sigh-blown age
 On double pleasures: leave thy cold dispute
 Of what is fit and not. Forsake thy cage,
 Thy rope of sands,
 Which petty thoughts have made, and made to thee
 Good cable, to enforce and draw,
 And be thy law,
 While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.
 Away! take heed;
 I will abroad.
 Call in thy death's-head there; tie up thy fears;
 He that forbears
 To suit and serve his need
 Deserves his load.'
 But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
 At every word,
 Methought I heard one calling, *Child!*
 And I replied *My Lord.*

The Collar

By George Herbert

Right from the opening line, the tone of the poem is one of bluster. Herbert's speaker seeks to reject belief in God, to cast off his 'collar' and be free. (The collar refers specifically to the 'dog collar' that denotes a Christian priest, with its connotations of ownership and restricted freedom, though it also suggests being bound or restricted more generally. Herbert, we should add, was a priest himself.) However, as he rants and raves, the speaker comes to realise that God appears to be calling him – and the speaker duly and dutifully replies, the implication being that he has recovered his faith and is happy to bear the 'collar' of faith again.

The form of the poem is wayward, even sprawling, with the line lengths varying to reflect the movement of the poet's thoughts (if one were reading the poem aloud, a change of tempo, modulating between rapid delivery and slower or more considered recital, would add to the effect).

This looser form also reflects the speaker's desire to cast off the chains of belief and be free: can one ever be free? The poem's form and its use of rhyme hint at what the speaker already knows, deep down, which is that there is no true freedom. 'My lines and life are free': ah, not so fast, the *actual* lines of the poem seem to say, with their regular rhyme and semi-regular rhythm. Any notion of true liberation is an illusion.

This is also borne out by the movement of the poem's imagery, which seems wayward and arbitrary but which in fact follows a clear, logical sequence: thus 'lines' leads into 'rode' (the line that is the road), 'store' into 'harvest', 'fruit' into 'wine' (the great winepress of the wrath of God? or Christ's blood?), 'thorn' into 'crown' (summoning Christ again, with his crown of thorns), 'crown' into 'garlands', 'rope' into 'cable', and so on. Even 'forbears' (i.e. refuses) finds itself solidified (via a pun on 'bears', as in to bear a burden) into 'load' ('Deserves his load').

The poem is an adept example of what we might call 'eloquent inarticulacy': that is, like the religious poetry of John Donne and Gerard Manley Hopkins, the style reflects the stops and starts of the poet's thoughts, the attempt to describe the ineffable, the ways in which religious awe (or a struggle with religious belief) leads to a breakdown of language. Thus words return as phantoms of themselves: 'fears' in 'tie up thy fears' returns faintly in 'fierce' four lines later, suggesting that the poet's wilfulness stems from fear of God; 'serve' resurfaces in 'Deserves' in the next line, reinforcing the notion that only those who serve God deserve his mercy.

The last rhyme on *word* and *Lord* finally restores clarity to the language of the poem: acknowledgement of God makes everything plain. Not only this, but the two words seem a natural fit: 'the Word' is another term in the New Testament for the Son of God – the Lord, in other words.

Commentary by Dr Oliver Tearle

<https://interestingliterature.com/2016/01/a-short-analysis-of-george-herberts-the-collar/>

THE CHURCH TOWER

WAYS TO USE IT TO RAISE FUNDS

