



Ministers' Letter

Dear Friends

On a recent visit to Westminster College in Cambridge, I had the opportunity to walk the Labyrinth in the College grounds. It was a lovely peaceful day warm without being too hot and I had the Labyrinth to myself. Other times when I have had opportunities to walk a Labyrinth, there have been other people trying to do the same.



Once I had worked out whether the stones or the grass was the path, I set off slowly stepping from stone to stone, (not having to dodge the umbrellas etc as in the picture, the only one I could find) walking inwards. I could only look at the next couple of stones otherwise I got confused.

As I walk, I listened, bird song rustling leaves, the hum of traffic it wasn't distracting just the natural environment. I stopped and looked up, it was a beautiful day and marvelled at God's creation.

Going inwards into the centre, I was running over in my head the presentation I would be giving later in the afternoon; mentally checking I hadn't forgotten anything. But once in the centre those thoughts faded and I stayed there for quite a while, experiencing the peace and quiet, enjoying the feeling of being encircled and loved.

Walking slowly outwards, round the circle but a different path than inwards, I carried those feelings with me, praying that that once back in the hurly burly of ministry and life those feelings would sustain me and remain with me.

It was an amazing interlude in all the busy-ness and has helped and sustained me since.

I hope that if you get the opportunity to walk a labyrinth you will take it, enjoy it and learn from the experience.

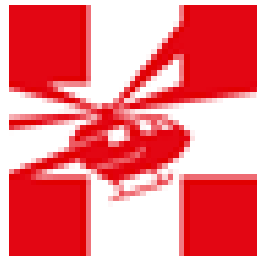
Alison



Heaton Way

The church meeting has taken the hard decision to dissolve the fellowship as from 1st October 2023.

There will be a service of celebration for the life and witness of the congregation on 1st October at 3pm. More information later.



London Air Ambulance

After the service on Sunday 23rd June the church was given an interesting talk by Mario Soto on behalf of London air ambulance one of two charities supported by the church.

London's Air Ambulance was established in 1989 in response to a report by The Royal College of Surgeons, which documented unnecessary deaths from trauma and criticised the care that seriously injured patients received in the UK.

London's Air Ambulance reaches critically injured patients via helicopter from 08:00 to sunset, and rapid response cars at night or in adverse weather conditions delivering care to the standard of the hospital emergency department, bringing the hospital to the patient. Each day, on average five critically injured Londoners need the air ambulance's help. Their helicopters deliver medics to the scene within minutes.

London's Air Ambulance is a charity. It relies on public donations and fundraising. It works closely with the NHS and receives some funding from its NHS partners but is not an NHS organisation. During a surprise, unannounced, collection raised a total of £266.81. Thank you to everyone.

London's Air Ambulance helicopters are going out of service and the charity cannot afford to replace them without financial charitable donations.



Thank you to everyone. An email of grateful thanks has been sent to the Air Ambulance. Lookout for more events during the remainder of the year. Watch for announcements!

Alan Davis
March 13, 1947 – April 25, 2023

He Was My Friend

Not much to add to this title. I only knew Alan for about ten years and in that time, we talked the biggest load of rubbish! Well, I say we but in the last few years it was me telling you know what and Alan listening and grinning at me.

The visits started way back in 2013 when with nothing else to do with my Thursdays I decided to pick on Alan and dump myself on him every Thursday morning. Err well nearly every Thursday. He had no choice in the matter really and the only way he could get his own back was to take an inordinate amount of time to get to open the door! I think he thought I might give up and leave him in peace.

I used to tell him I only came round because it gave me an excuse to buy cakes. We had some fun there though. I used to try to get the biggest cream cakes I could find and then Jacqueline and I just sat back and split our sides watching him make the biggest mess you could ever see. Shouldn't have done it really. It just gave more work to Jacqueline as she tried to de-cream his whiskers. I'd tell him I wasn't round to see him. "I'm only here 'cos Jacqueline makes such lovely lunches for us." He just looked at me and grinned.

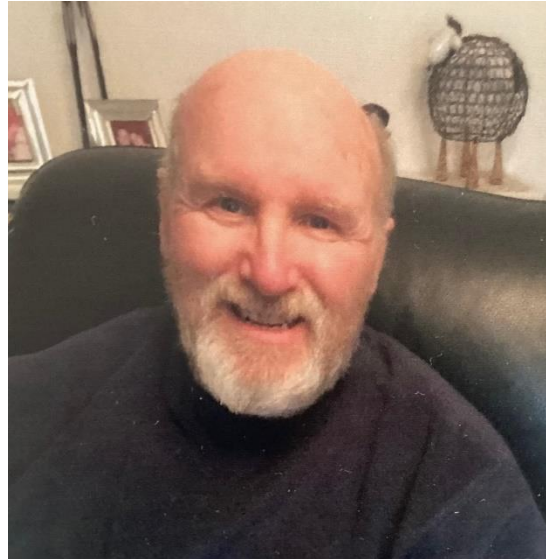
As Alan slowed so Jacqueline decided to call it a day at the school where she had worked for so many years. He couldn't answer the door anymore but in a funny way it enhanced my visits. Jacqueline was a lovely lady and was always ready to listen to me waffling on about the biggest load of rubbish. I think she enjoyed the Thursdays as much as me and I hope Alan did. Near the end, Alan would sit and listen but spoke less and less.

I was always teasing him about where he had his whiskey hidden. He'd look at me and grin as if to say "You'll 'nae find my store laddie." I never did!

I just stopped typing and went back to the top to read through this. I haven't really told you much about the man at all! But he meant everything to me. Those few hours every Thursday. I loved the man. I loved Jacqueline. I miss them terribly. I miss those Thursday visits. I don't count much on his last year with us in the home. I know he could hear and understand me.

I am stuck now. I don't know what to say. I'll give you the words from the service by way of finishing. I was so proud and honoured to read at that service. I don't know what else to say.

John Grant



Friend

By Robert Burns

An honest man here lies at rest,
As e'er God with His image blest:
The friend of man, the friend of truth.
The friend of age, and guide of youth:
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd:
If there's another world, he lives in bliss.
If there is none, he made the best of this.



What's Happening

Coming Soon

July 30th Heath and Havering Joint Service at Western Road 11am not as in the church diary.

August Café Church – Aspects of Faith



What's Happening in the Western Road Extended Church Family?

REGULAR EVENTS

- MON** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Line Dancing 9.30am-12pm
U3A Cultural Group (2nd Monday)10am-12pm: Parent & Toddler 1pm – 2.30pm
- TUE** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Line Dancing 9.30am-12pm:
Havering Women's Aid 10-12.30: Coffee Time in the Foyer 11am – 12pm
Trinovante 1.30-3.30pm: Retired Gents 2-3.30pm: Havering Women's Aid 1-3pm
Alcoholics Anonymous 7.30 – 10pm: Yoga 7-8.30pm Badminton 8-10pm
- WEDS** Playgroup 9am -12pm: FL exercise 1.30-2.30pm: U3A Craft Group 1.30-3.30pm
Dementia Music & Social Club 1.30-3.30pm: Rhodes Arts Drama 5-8pm
- THUR** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Rainbows & Brownies 4.30-7.20pm
Western Road Ladies 7- 9.30pm: The Liberty Singers 7-9.30pm
- FRI** Playgroup 9am - 12pm: Crafternoon 1.30 - 3.30pm:
Coffee Time in the Foyer 11am – 12pm
Boys' Brigade 6pm - 10pm: Street Pastors overnight base 9pm – 1am
- SAT** Renee's Dance School 9am –1.30pm: Card Club (1st Saturday) 2-5pm
Romford Embroiderers (2nd Saturday)1- 4pm
- SUN** Morning Service 10am – 11am

There are almost 41 million people in Afghanistan, most of whom are Muslim. Given that many Christians have been forced deeper underground and must keep their faith hidden, it's difficult to get an exact idea of how many believers live in the country, but it is estimated to be in the thousands.

The Taliban's takeover of power in August 2021 forced many Christians either further underground or away from the country entirely. Many house groups closed, if not all, with believers forced to leave behind everything they own. This legacy continues into 2022.

The rigid form of society imposed by the militant group leaves no room for deviation, meaning Christians – most of whom are converts from Islam – must keep their faith secret. The consequences of discovery remain unthinkable.

Although conversions usually happen as a family unit in Afghanistan, if a woman decides to convert to Christianity on her own, discovery can bring violence, house arrest, forced marriage or sexual abuse. Women and girls already suffer acute oppression and discrimination under the Taliban. Following Jesus can severely exacerbate this.

Since men are at the forefront of public life, male converts can face harassment, ostracism, kidnap, violence and death, if discovered. Consequently, Christian men opt to keep low profiles, with some choosing low-level positions in the workplace, to avoid unwanted attention.

Thousands of Afghan refugees are now living in countries bordering Afghanistan, often in poor conditions in camps for displaced people, and many Christians are among them.



Meet 'Gulshan'

“The Taliban are conducting a door-to-door search to find us. God alone knows who has informed them about the whereabouts and identities of the believers. If they find us, they kill believers on the spot.”

GULSHAN IS A SECRET BELIEVER FROM AFGHANISTAN

Even prior to the Taliban's seizure of power August 2021, living as Christian carried enormous risk, particularly for converts. But the militant group's takeover has made conditions even more dangerous for our Afghan family, forcing them to flee the country or go deeper underground.

One person who knows all too well the dangers of following Jesus in Afghanistan is Gulshan (name changed). Relatives of hers have been killed for their faith, whilst her Christian neighbours have disappeared. She hopes and prays they are safe somewhere.

“It is our great desire to join with our brothers and sisters and worship God together, but now this is not possible,” says Gulshan. “We can only meet our pastor in the dead of night, so no one can identify him or us.” She and her family also face the threat of starvation, due to food shortages in the country.

Despite everything she is risking, Gulshan knows that she is following a faithful God. “Our faith is in Christ and will remain so until our last breath. Dear God, help us to find a straight and smooth path in our lives.”

Knowing that you are praying for Afghan Christians like her makes an enormous difference for Gulshan. “I know that my Jesus and yours is one,” she says. “Through prayer, we are united as we are the body of Christ. May the Lord make you aware of our pain.”

Despite dropping from first place to ninth, Afghan Christians remain in grave danger, and many have been forced further underground, making them less visible for attack.

In the past year, the Taliban has turned their attention to consolidating power and have not been explicitly targeting non-Muslims – so there have been fewer violent incidents against Christians that can be clearly linked to their faith. In this complex situation, persecution is affecting everyone in many different ways.

However, since leaving Islam is considered punishable by death under the prevailing Islamic law, choosing to follow Jesus remains an extraordinarily brave decision to make, because it can have devastating consequences – be it at the hands of the authorities, or even a believer's family, tribe or clan in an attempt to preserve its 'honour'.

A jealous, wealthy man didn't want anyone else to inherit his money. He kept it all in gold bars under his bed. As he aged, he wondered whether he could take his money to heaven. One night he prayed, asking God if he could take a suitcase of gold to heaven. He heard God say, "All right, you can do it." The man happily went to sleep.

That night, he passed away and went to heaven's pearly gates. The apostle Peter appeared and said, "Customs check." He opened up the wealthy man's suitcase and looked at its contents. Then he looked at the wealthy man and said, "You brought pavement?"

It wasn't until then that the wealthy man remembered [Revelation 21:21](#): "The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass."



The next issue of Kindle will be in September.

I count my blessings, not my crosses.
I count my gains instead of losses.

I count my joys instead of woes.
I count my friends instead of foes.

I count my smiles instead of tears.
I count my courage, not my fears.

I count full years instead of lean.
I count kind deeds instead of mean.

I count my health instead of wealth.
I love my neighbour as myself.



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