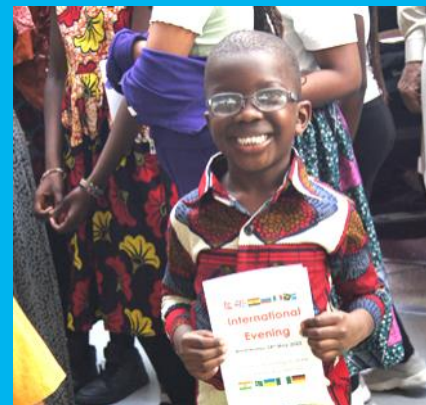


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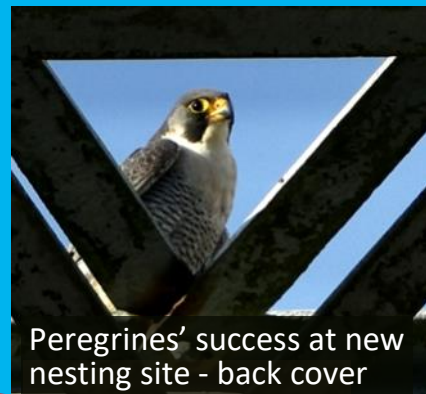
schools community faith



Good news for the middle-east p.12



A confident community p.4



Peregrines' success at new nesting site - back cover

Alert!...yet confident

SUMMER 2023

St John & St Stephen's Community Magazine
stjohnandststephen.org.uk



ALERT ... *yet confident*

Welcome to NEWT 40

Keeping a healthy mental balance

We all love a baby that's 'alert', meaning they're looking around themselves in an open and engaged manner. We instinctively know it's a sign of health. There's also the other meaning of 'being alert' – being alert to danger. Generally, this would seem to be a good thing too, but we can get into a state of being 'over-alert', which is not good for our mental health.

During the pandemic many people, me included, got into that unfortunate state that mental health professionals call 'hypervigilance'. That's when your sympathetic nervous system kicks in and gives you the capacity to quickly handle present danger. Physically this manifests as quick, shallow breathing, sweating and tense muscles, while blood is diverted away from the digestion to fuel the heart for extra exertion.

Eons ago, when our race needed to be alert to, say, wild boar in the local forest, this 'nervous' reaction served an obvious, time-limited purpose, before returning to 'normal'. These days we're more likely to be stressed about unquantifiable, invisible things and sometimes it's hard to regain the steady confidence needed for everyday life. That's why Covid was so stressful for many, quite apart from the bereavement and restricted lifestyles it also brought in its wake.

As our world gets increasingly complex, it can be difficult to know what things are worth worrying about. For instance,

rapid climate change is for all of us to address, and urgently! - see our centre pages. But to wake every day feeling a sense of doom and hopelessness at the worrying statistics on the news just can't be sustained by human beings without our sinking into despondency.

How can we maintain a balance between being realistic about the dangers of the world and remaining confident enough to hold our heads high, knowing we are ultimately loved and held?

In The Lord's Prayer Christians pray 'lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil' – implying we want to be alert to what things draw us away God, whilst at the same time trusting God because he, not our earthly rulers, has ultimate power to bring about our deliverance.

Jesus was always alert to the hypocrites around him and called them out too, ('why do you call me "Lord, Lord" but do not do what I say?'). Ultimately though, he trusted his heavenly Father to deliver him, even through death, into resurrection and new life.

Proving that we can confidently trust God with our own deepest hopes and fears.

Claire.



Copy date for NEWT's Harvest edition will be 15th September 2023

Please send contributions to the Parish Office office@stjohnandststephen.org.uk

or directly to the editor at chris@meunier.org.uk

Living in an *Age of Darkness*

**‘Alert ... yet confident’
from a Sikh perspective**



*The author, Navjit Kaur Gill,
delivering a talk to school children.*

Sikhs believe that we currently live in the era of *Kaljug*. The term *Kaljug* means "the age of darkness" and is considered the most challenging time for humanity. The daily news covers countless atrocities relating to sexual harassment, online grooming, bullying, and substance misuse, which can be overwhelmingly bleak. Sadly, this does mean that as a local community, we need to be cautious of these issues affecting us throughout these difficult times.

Understandably, it not only harms the victims but their families and communities are significantly affected as well. For this reason, it is vital more than ever to be alert but confident, especially for young people during the summer holidays, as they are more vulnerable to predators.

So, how can one become alert but confident and ensure others are too?

Firstly, it is important to surround ourselves with the right people who will help support and guide us to be the best version of ourselves. As the Punjabi saying goes, "*Jaisi Sangat Vaisi Rangat*", meaning the company we keep (whether this is referring to the friends we have at school, relatives, or even colleagues at work) can significantly influence our behaviour, attitude and thought process, without us even realising it. Therefore, the right company will help provide a positive outlook on life and will guide you to make the correct decisions.

Although, this is not to say that we should stay away from "negative" or "bad" people. In fact, spreading love and peace amongst all may even inspire those committing evil to embrace good. Our 5th Guru, Guru Arjun Dev Ji, taught us that we should see the Supreme Lord in all, no matter how sinful a person may be. Guru Ji empathised that we are all God's children irrespective of our actions. Though,



*Parmjit Kaur Gill
and Navjit Kaur Gill
(mother and daughter) having a
discussion on current
affairs affecting the
local community.*

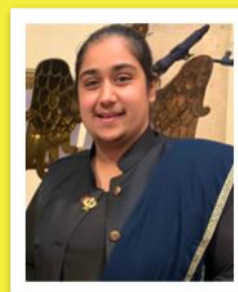
it would be less likely for someone to be influenced if they have a strong support network behind them.

Furthermore, over the summer, it is also important to sit down with our children (especially those starting school or moving on to secondary school) and talk about these sensitive issues and how to keep safe if they are ever in danger. By engaging in open dialogue, children have the opportunity to ask questions as well as build a bond with their parents which can be very valuable if they ever need someone with whom to open up about their feelings.

Finally, we all have a community responsibility to protect, safeguard and support each other regardless of which organisation we belong to. NEWT is really fortunate to have such a diverse local community with a real sense of community coherence among us. So, if one particular faith group or school is facing certain difficulties, then as a local community, we should collectively come together as one branch and provide support. Nobody should have to face these situations alone.

*Well done to the children and teachers
at St John's CE School & New Town
Primary School for successfully
completing another academic year.
Wishing you all a happy and safe
summer holiday.*

Navjit



***A CONFIDENT** Community*

at St John's CE School

The summer term at St John's has been one filled with positivity, community togetherness and celebrations of a whole host of achievements

Children's confidence is pivotal to their success in school and the main way in which we promote this is through ensuring the child always feels supported by the staff, parents and their peers, to give them the trust and belief in themselves to achieve. This is placed at the heart of our school and is the basis of our school motto 'Wonder, Trust, Achieve'.

We do this by focussing on our incredibly inclusive and supportive St John's School community; where staff, parents and children all unite to support each other. That community begins inside the school where staff work alongside our children with endless encouragement, deep-rooted care and a desire of every child to succeed. The summer term sees the yearly assessments that take place in a variety of different year groups and our children have been able to celebrate yet another incredible year of successes – something our staff are bursting with pride about!



The summer term also sees us come together to celebrate in other ways, such as our phenomenal *International Evening*, where our children showcased their confidence and talents in performing to a packed-out church of family and friends from the community. We had acts celebrating various different cultures from all around the world, with singing and dancing, poetry and traditional tales; all in receipt of rapturous and pride-filled applause! This truly highlighted our children's confidence to share in this celebration of inclusivity, and without doubt strengthened our community's confidence in understanding and supporting each other.



And then, we returned again together as a confident community to celebrate our extraordinary St John's Summer Fair. It was a fair filled with excitement, laughter, enjoyment, celebrations and all manner of activities – another opportunity to showcase our children's incredible talents and inclusivity. We want to thank our community for turning out in their hundreds to help the school raise a record-breaking amount of money for the school! We are truly thankful for and humbled by the wonderful support of all our parents.

What an amazing community we are!



DIVERSITY in Poetry

at New Town Primary School

This year's *Poetry Slam* was themed around diversity. Each class was given a poem to perform in a way of their choosing. We had props made, actions created, all coupled with strong voice projection.

The competition was held in 2 rounds. Each phase performed in their Key Stage assembly where a winner was chosen. The final saw the whole school come together to watch the stage winners perform, where an overall winner was selected. The lucky winners of this year's Slam were year 5's Mulberry Class, performing *Finding your Voice* by Joseph Coelho.

It was amazing to see the students take pride in their performance and project their voices in addition to seeing their own interpretations of each poem.

Hollie Appleton

I Had Grit When..... by Joseph Coelho.

I got on the plane for the first time,
took two steps towards her shouts,
boarded the bus at midnight,
spoke my words into an envelope,
uploaded my needs to an email,
cried tears into their ears.

The flight swam through undulations of clouds
and lit joy.
Her shouts bubbled down to muffled murmurs
and forgiveness whispered.
The bus slalomed highways of love
and the argument never arrived.
My posted utterances found stages on desks
and new opportunities unfolded.
My needs were digitised and spread
and comfort sniped over me.
My tears found songs and melodies
that my family and I sang together.

Medeea, Year 5

With Green Eyes Mary Oliver.....

You do not have to be Earth.
You do not have to walk on your knees
For a hundred miles through the desert, praying.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
Love what it loves.
Tell me about Desert, you, and I will Tell you mine.
Meanwhile the World Goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and clear Ribbles of the rain
are moving, across the landscape
Over the Prairies and the Deep trees
The mountains and the river.
Meanwhile the Wild Geese high in the dark air,
are heading home again.
Whatever you are no matter how lonely,
The world offers itself to your imagination,
Calls to you like the Wild Geese, heralding
Over and over across your life
in the family of things.

David, Year 4

Gladi that I'm me! By Jon Blane

If I was a flag,
I'd be flapping and waving
If I was a star
Up high I'd be blazing!

If I was a saint
I'd be singing and praying
If I was a fairy
You just know I'd be swaying!

If I was a bird
I'd be nesting and weaving
If I was a cup
I'd be just overflowing!

If I was a mouth
I'd be laughing and joking
If I was a fish
I'd be swimming and making!

If I was a shell
You just know I'd be lightning
If I was a ghost
I'd be spooky and frightening!

But just look at me now
As plain as can be
I'm glad that I'm normal
I'm glad that I'm me!

By Prince Rakheel
Blackthorn class

Princu, Year 2

I Want To Be a Pink Flamingo by Dean Atta

Pink, Definitely pink.
I want my feathers to match
The hue you imagine.
I want to blend in.
Nothing But flamingoness.
David Attenborough would say,
'Here we see the most typical flamingo'
Though I don't want to be the most,
Just typical. A wrapping paper pattern.
I don't want to stand apart.
Nothing different about my parts.
My back just a back, my head just a head.
My neck, body, wings, simply fit for purpose.
Standing on one leg, just like the rest.
Pink. & Definitely pink.

By Parikshit. cherry class.

Parikshit, Year 3



SUMMER ACTIVITIES to book

WYCLIFFE BAPTIST CHURCH
Transforming lives through Jesus Christ's love

HOLIDAY BIBLE CLUB

SCAN ME




SHEEP WEEK

Ewe need to be there...

Tues 29th Aug - Fri 1st Sept

For ages 5 to 11. 'Sheep Week' will cost £8 per child for 4 days (please do get in touch if the cost is an issue for you). 9.30 - 12 noon.
Entry via The Warehouse, 1a Cumberland Road, RG1 3LB.

Finding your voice

by Joseph Coelho

Sit very still
in a quiet room,
Listen to your breaths
and search inside.
Listen for the ebb and flow
of your voice.

Sieve imaginary hands
through the sands
of your beliefs.
Your voice is in the warmth
of those shifting dunes.

Look at the sky
of your happiest memory.
Your voice is in the exhale
of that endlessness.

Hold the concern
for the ones you love.
Your voice is what nestles against them.

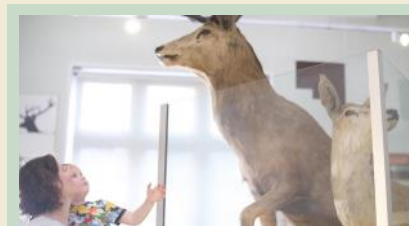
Feel the solidity of your body,
the weight of your bones,
the love in your heart.
Your voice moves through each one
in every part.

RM
READING MUSEUM

0118 960 6060
readingmuseum.org.uk

Victorian Schoolroom
In the Abbey Gateway 1hr £1
1st August book soon

Out In The Forbury: Bug Club 1hr £4
8th August book soon



Museums My Way * developed with Autism Berkshire every Saturday
at Reading Museum from 1st July
drop-in 10am - 5pm

M THE MUSEUM OF ENGLISH RURAL LIFE

0118 378 8660 merl.reading.ac.uk

SUMMER SCREEN

6 Outdoor family films
with headphones
August 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11
£6 book soon

Or at MERL:
24th July
10am - 2pm
free
but book soon

Object Explorer Workshops for 11-18 yrs
1hr free, but book soon
July 26th, August 30th



Climate Crusaders
45 minute sessions £4
25th August
book soon



MORE INFO & BOOKING ONLINE

MORE INFO & BOOKING ONLINE



Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General said,
**'We are on a highway to climate hell
with our foot still on the accelerator.'**

WORDS
**'We have to move
next 3 - 4 years is
the future of hum
desperate situatio**

Sir David King, climate s



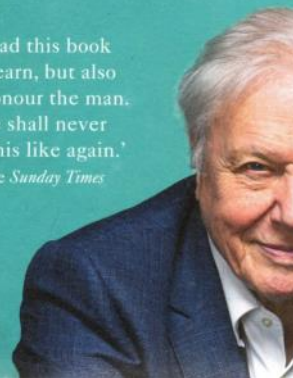
THE INTERNATIONAL BES

A Life Our Pla

My Witness Statem
a Vision for th

Da
Attenboro

'Read this book
to learn, but also
to honour the man.
We shall never
see his like again.'
The Sunday Times



With his characteristic
directness and clarity, David
starts by making it quite clear
how bleak is the future if we
don't change now.

'As a young man', he writes, 'I
felt I was out there in the wild,
experiencing the untouched
natural world—but it was an
illusion. The tragedy of our
time has been happening all
around us, the loss of our
planet's biodiversity.'

The book, he says, contains the
story of how we came to make



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby says
**'The horsemen of the apocalypse
are at the gate.'**

GLIMPS

S of WARNING

rapidly. What we do over the
s I believe going to determine
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TSSELLER

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**But with disaster
looming, how can we
avoid becoming
paralysed by worry?**

**... while staying alert
to the deep changes
we need to make!**

**Could the wild
beauty and power of
God's natural world
yet offer us wisdom
... and hope?**

David Attenborough's book *A Life on Our Planet* is already nearly three years old. But it's a good balanced read, packed with information, easy to understand explanations and first-hand experiences from his unique life in nature broadcasting.

Penguin £10.99 ISBN 978-1-5291-0829-3

this, our greatest mistake, and
how if we act now, we can yet
put it right.

If we fail to act now, decisively,
the picture of the rest of this
century will be of ever
increasing catastrophe and
conflict as we destroy the rest
of the forests, exhaust and
pollute the seas, and find
ourselves without food, water
and, as seas rise, even living
space for our cities. The result
will be conflict worse than
we've ever known—the
collapse of society.

But the larger part of the book
tells us what we can do:

- Give up our greedy politics
of constant economic
growth that steals resources
from nature.
- Switch to clean energy.
- Take up less space for
agriculture by changing our
diet - so freeing wild space.
- Rewild both the oceans and
the land so that we work in
partnership with nature to
restore the natural balance
and so make our planet a
sustainable home for all.



Sea otters protect kelp forests by eating the sea urchins that
destroy them. If we can protect the otters, kelp can remove
billions more tonnes of carbon from our atmosphere.



White storks have nested for the first time in England for
hundreds of years in a rewilded farming estate in Sussex.



Biodiversity and fish stocks in the oceans around the
Pacific island of Palau have recovered rapidly in the 15
years since fishing was banned in 'no-fishing' breeding
zones and limited to sustainable quantities outside them .

Jesus of Nazareth said:

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap
or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father
feeds them ... So do not worry, saying, 'What shall
we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we
wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and
your heavenly Father knows that you need them.
But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew ch.6

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

9

"The climate crisis threatens the planet we live on ... and energy
companies have a special responsibility to help us achieve the just
transition to the low carbon economy we need." Justin Welby

SES of HOPE



Know your Newts

meeting the people in our community

Laurence & Marjorie Nicholls

It's March 19th 2023 and Laurence and Marjorie are standing in front of the vicar, surrounded by their friends at St. John & St Stephen's, renewing their wedding vows. The NEWT was there to revel in a joyous celebration of their Ruby Wedding Anniversary.

A good day?

Laurence: Yes. It was fantastic. It was better than the wedding day in many ways! Claire made a wonderful booklet for the service. She and Mark Laynesmith did a good job.

Marjorie: When we got married, the vicar wouldn't marry us because I said that I wouldn't promise to obey Laurence so the vicar from St Mary's in Reading did.

Laurence: And the wedding night was unforgettable! First of all we found that someone had filled the bedclothes with confetti, which we had to brush off. We then got into and out of the bed very smartly because under the bottom sheet were loads of dried peas!

And your boys went to St John's school?

Marjorie: Yes. They loved it there. This was when Ms Parsons was a teacher. Our boys loved her. She has a lovely sense of humour. She understood the children. If they had any needs, they were picked up and the children were helped. In fact, the boys loved all the teachers. We're so pleased that Martina is the Head now and the school is thriving. I was a dinner lady and helped at the After School Club. Before that I was a child-minder. I have always loved children. I didn't want the boys to go to a nursery. I wanted to look after them myself and so I looked after other children as well.

How does St John's compare to your primary school?

Marjorie: Ten months after I was born on a pig farm in Goring, my father got a job on another farm in Nuffield. My older brother Martin and I both went to the village school. It was small. It had about twenty juniors and twenty infants all in the same room. There was a partition to divide them but it was hardly ever closed. My mother eventually became the school caretaker - a job which came with a cottage. After Nuffield, I went to Langtree School in Woodcote.



40 glorious years

And Laurence?

Laurence: My parents were bombed out of Bristol in the war. They moved back to my grandparents' house in Waldeck Street before I was born so my older brother and I went to Christchurch Primary School. My dad had worked as an electrician in the generating station at the Bristol Aeroplane Company. In Reading he worked at Huntley, Boorne & Stevens who made and printed the tin biscuit boxes for Huntley & Palmers. He also made car brake fluid reservoirs for Girling and thunderflash tins for the military. I remember him telling me that he spray-painted the organ pipes for St Giles' church organ. It had to be done at night.

And your mums?

Marjorie: Both of our mums stayed at home to bring up their children.

Laurence: Later on my mum had a job as a dinner lady at St

Anne's School. By then my parents were living in Caversham so I went to Caversham Secondary School in Wolsey Road. It was a lovely school built around a quadrangle and it was the best school for carpentry. Two years later, after my best friend told me how much he was enjoying being in the technical stream at Alfred Sutton Boys, I had an interview, passed a Maths test and was allowed to join him. At fourteen I had to drop geography and history if I wanted to stay in the engineering stream but I had enjoyed Dr. Watson's history lessons so much that I continued to attend lessons after school and got my O level that way. School was tough and the teachers were strict. After passing Physics, Chemistry and Biology A levels, I got a job as a dispenser at Boots in Henley.

Marjorie: Which was where we met in 1974! Life at Langtree School was fantastic. I was with my friends from Nuffield and made new ones from Checkendon and Stoke Row. We still visit Christine, a very good friend I made in the first week, and go down to cat sit for her in Ramsgate. I left at 16 and then worked in Boots for 13 years!

Laurence: Marjorie had lovely long hair. When she knelt on the floor to get something out of a box, I used to stand on it! I was a bit of a joker. Dispensing was really enjoyable in those days. I *made* medicines by mixing up the ingredients and shaking the bottle. It was hard to get sulphur to suspend in water to make a cure for acne and it gave off hydrogen sulphide which made a real stink! Later, medicines were just tablets in boxes. I was told that if I wanted more money, I would have to manage staff so I got a job as Service Manager at Boots in Maidenhead, overseeing supervisors of the restaurant, cash office, stock room and heating and lighting. I was made redundant in 1990 so became a manager for Children's World in Vastern Road until it was taken over by Mothercare. I managed shops for them in Bracknell, Maidenhead, Aldershot, Staines and Camberley until I retired.

When did you come to Newtown?

Marjorie: We married on March 19th 1983 but we had bought this house in the January. Mark was born five years later and John three years after that. Both boys were born

by C section so I had to stay home for ten days. The Sunday after that they'd be in church. Both were christened at 6 weeks.



"Marjorie had lovely long hair ... I used to stand on it ..."

Laurence: Yes. We know lots of our neighbours including Charlotte Lambourne up the road. She always tells me I talk too much. I pull her leg too. Last Christmas Day we couldn't get together as a family. Omar, a Muslim friend who lives across the way, invited us to have Christmas lunch at his house. It was lovely.

So how is retirement?

Marjorie: I like playing computer games and reading

novels, particularly about country life, like Jack Sheffield's series about a Yorkshire village. I watch my soaps and we both enjoy Springwatch and The Yorkshire Vet.

Laurence: I enjoy a TV series set in the past called The Curse of Oak Island. Marjorie can't cook or garden any more. I like making a proper salad. I collect stamps, mostly British ones now, and I'm hoping to retrieve the



railway set from the shed in Michael's garden in Caversham, where our son Mark has continued to live since Michael died, and set it up in a bedroom upstairs.

Marjorie: We used to go camping in Cornwall but now we prefer a caravan or hotel. We've enjoyed Scotland and Tenerife -as well as cat sitting in Ramsgate!

Thank you both for sharing your fascinating story.

Fiona & Joel Kelling

Good news for the middle-east



At Wadi Rum - scene of Star Wars filming

Day by day, the Kellings are trying to change lives in their part of the world for the better.

Joel and Fiona met each other on a Master's degree course in 'development and emergency practice' in Oxford. They then travelled together to Israel, Palestine and Jordan - an experience that would help them to understand Jesus and His life better, and also begin to chart the direction of their lives.

Next, Joel qualified and practised as an architect in London while Fiona went to Haiti help people recover and rebuild following 2010's earthquake. Once back in London, Fiona spent time as a project manager with Muslim Aid, curious to learn from Bangladeshi and Pakistani employees about Islam, and about how Muslims respond to humanitarian needs.

In 2014, the newly married Kellings left for the Philippines to support reconstruction there after Typhoon Haiyan. Fiona then got a job working with the *United Nations* in Jerusalem to support recovery in Gaza. The escalation in Gaza in 2014 had left over 100,000 Palestinians homeless. Fiona worked in a team that helped to provide rental assistance, materials to build temporary shelters, and shipping containers until families were able to reconstruct their homes. As a co-ordinator she worked to ensure that the most vulnerable were supported as a priority, that temporary accommodation was of a decent standard, and those who struggled to pay rent were supported, while advocating for timely reconstruction of permanent housing.

Inside one of the temporary shelters in Gaza

At Joel and Fiona's first Sunday service in Jerusalem's St George's Cathedral, the preacher was the same Rev David Longe who had read out their banns of marriage in Fiona's parish in London! He asked Joel if he knew what he was going to do while Fiona worked. When Joel replied, 'Not yet', David said, 'Come to the cathedral tomorrow and we'll find something for you to do.' For the next two and a half years, Joel became assistant to the Dean (who is in charge of running the cathedral).

Christians have lived in Israel/Palestine and Jordan for the 2000 years since Jesus and are still a significant minority, making up 2% of the population. David encouraged Joel & Fiona to apply to the *Church Mission Society* to be trained to work with these native middle-eastern Christians. So it was that St John & St Stephen's became one of the six churches in the UK that now help to fund and support them in this work.

In 2018 the Kellings moved to the capital of Jordan, Amman, which is more central to the Middle East with an airport hub. This now enables Joel to more easily get to cities across the region for one to two weeks in every few months. His job is with The *Anglican Alliance* that tries to bring together and support churches across a huge area from North Africa, Cyprus and the Levant to the Arabian



Peninsula and Iran. His role is to help inspire, encourage and support these local churches to work on three major issues: care for creation, mobilisation of local communities and safe migration.

Here are some of the things he is involved with. He has enabled the translation into Arabic of resources for the church's season of creation. At the international COP28 Climate Conference to be held in Dubai in November, Joel will be looking after the needs of the Anglican delegation and ensuring that they're in the right place at the right time. This is to ensure that the churches can give a lead in taking the urgent action needed to save the lives and livelihoods of future generations from the effects of global warming.

Joel advocating for gender justice at COP27 in Egypt last year



Many readers will have heard about the scandalous treatment of migrant workers during the construction of football stadiums for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Part of Joel's work with the Anglican Alliance is to advise and support churches across the Middle East in their efforts to promote safe migration. The churches aim to set a 'good example' ensuring all their employees work in safe, humane conditions and are paid a living wage. Exploitative practices based on prejudice and discrimination in their surrounding communities need to be named and shamed. 'After all,' says Joel, 'Fiona and I are migrant workers ourselves!'

Meanwhile, Fiona has become a trustee of the UK charity Mosaic Middle East. Mosaic Middle East partners with a number of other local churches, providing holistic support to refugees and marginalised people. One of these churches is St Paul's Church in Ashrafiyeh in Amman, where Joel has been helping the Rev. George al-Kopti in



his efforts to protect and support Iraqi refugees and Egyptian migrant workers.

As Christians Fiona and Joel both believe that we all should love our neighbours as ourselves and 'do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God'. God loves everyone and so expects that the poor, the weak, strangers and refugees should be treated with love and care. Fiona and Joel believe that the Earth is God's, not ours, and that we are to protect and look after it and its creatures for God and for future generations.

Joel says, 'As we look back on the journey of faith and work that has taken us from Oxford and London to Jerusalem and Amman, there is a bit of a feeling of inevitability in everything we have done.'



A safe migration workshop that Joel ran in Dubai

And now for the next stage: I have been accepted to train towards becoming a priest in the Diocese of Jerusalem!'

You can follow Fiona and Joel's work here: <https://churchmissionsociety.org/people-in-mission/fiona-and-joel-kelling-jordan/>



Huntley Wharf – our local community continues to grow.

Locals will have noticed the impressive new flats and houses going up at Huntley Wharf between the River Kennet and Kenavon Drive. Some blocks are already inhabited while others are under construction. Keen to connect with these new neighbours in our parish, some of us from St John & St Stephen's met up with Zoe and Adrian who are the two concierges in the new development.

One or other of them is available daily between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. They are responsible for the communal areas in the building, whilst Mohammed, their colleague, handles maintenance matters inside the apartments. Adrian told us that some of the apartments are privately owned, some are rented whilst others are under shared management with a housing association, which means that some homes suit families whilst others are preferred by those who commute to London.

Below: After a walking visit to the Huntley Wharf complex, relaxing at the nearby Bel & The Dragon restaurant.





The Podium, an outdoor shared garden space at first floor level

More recently, two of us were shown round one of the blocks by Zoe, who explained that some of the residents divide their time between Reading and homes in China whilst some others live in one of the Gulf states but spend weeks over here to study or work.

We were shown a nursery and a lovely large, shared garden called The Podium which, being outside at first floor level, ensures privacy and security for residents.

The block has state-of-the-art heating and water systems which are automatically turned off after 24 hours in case a resident has forgotten to switch them off before going away. This Eco-awareness saves energy and keeps bills down. When the returning traveller lands, they can 'phone the concierge from the airport to get the fridge and heating turned on ready for their arrival.

Zoe and Adrian, and their colleagues in the management company POD, are keen to run events and build links that will enhance the lives of residents. Events in the lobby or the Podium have

included a summer party, an ice cream truck, face painting, card-making and crafts for the coronation, and a spa team has visited to run wellness sessions.

A good relationship with Kevin, the local Police Community Support Officer has been fostered and POD works closely with the Council too. We asked if POD might be interested in collaborating with St John's to arrange events for residents. 'Of course!' she replied.

Does she enjoy life working in the concierge? 'Yes! I'm a people person and a problem-solver. Every day residents come with new questions, requests and challenges. They are so varied that you can't plan for all of them. I really enjoy the buzz. And we don't just wait in the office; we walk around the complex, meeting residents and talking to them, asking how they are and whether they have any needs we can help meet.' She says that when she does her last walk round before going home at 7 p.m., Ed, the Development Manager, pulls her leg, saying, 'Have you put your children to bed?'

Remember the excitement of seeing peregrine falcons on the old Gas Tower last year?

The PEREGRINES are back!

When the Gas Tower was due for demolition last year there was local concern about the effect on the peregrines who had started using it. The gas network company SGN consulted with an ecologist, with the Council and with Network Rail, and the result was this new purpose built nest box, which has been erected near Kennet Mouth.

Now local photographer David Thirlwall has captured these stunning images of their nesting success in the new tower nest box. The chick is visible in the nest entrance. The male is flying in. The female is the larger bird and her beak and feet are a pale yellow; the yellow of the male is deeper and darker.

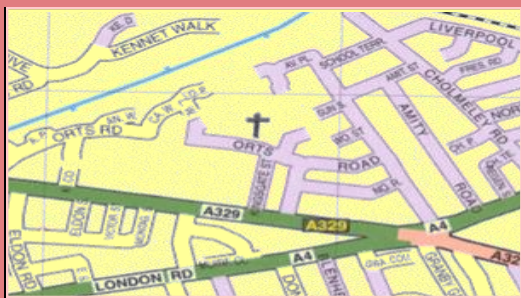


See David Attenborough - on pages 8-9 - on partnering with and restoring nature to save our planet and ourselves

Church Contacts



Vicar
**Rev Claire
Alcock**



**Sunday worship 10:30 am
- everyone welcome**



Parish Centre
Administrator
Jo Laynesmith



Churchwardens
**Ian Maynard
& Sue Bruce**



Assoc. Priest
**Christine
Bainbridge**

please phone the Parish Office 0118 926 3633
or email: office@stjohnandstephen.org.uk

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