



# Christ Church Newsletter

## May 2021

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## Spring

by Richard Watts

Like the earth stirring from cold hibernation,  
The nation wakes from its winter prison.  
Walking, cycling and running to spring's rise,  
We anticipate new life and fellowship.

The birds proclaim the new days ahead,  
The creatures of all sizes in reverie.  
Sleep becomes quiet and daylight bold,  
Until the day of Resurrection.



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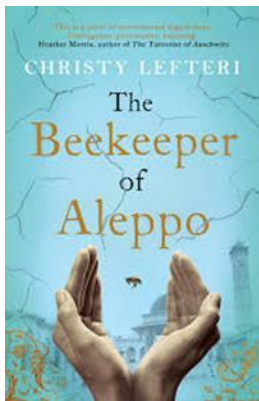
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# The Beekeeper of Aleppo, and Helping the Housebound library scheme

by Jan Broderick

## A bit about me

*Christ Church has been my spiritual home since Easter 2006, soon after a traumatic 24 hours that saw my Mum dying and my first grandson being born. I have lived in Brentwood since 1979 and was brought up in Hornchurch, but I did spend 10 years away from Essex, in Brighton and Liverpool. Like so many I have missed contact with family and friends over the last 12 months and although I achieved a lot to start with motivation has been more difficult latterly. Our online fellowship has been invaluable and the knowledge that we are never truly alone.*



Our Church Book group rated this very highly.

## Book Review: The Beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Lefteri

Christy Lefteri worked in a refugee centre in Athens. While there she was hugely affected by the stories she heard of traumatised people from Syria and Afghanistan. She also realised that most people would have no idea about the real suffering that she saw and so decided to write a story, the tale of Afra, a woman blinded by the explosion that killed her son, and Nuri, her beekeeper husband, *The*

*Beekeeper of Aleppo* is the result, a story of loss, love, resilience and hope as the couple escape Syria for, eventually, the UK.

There are two journeys going on, the physical journey of the couple from Syria, via Turkey to Greece and onwards to the UK and the emotional journey for the couple who have to come to terms with their loss, the great difficulties of their travelling and their need to rebuild their relationship.

The book is beautifully written and manages to interweave present and past events with a clever technique. It is not an easy read but is very moving and thought provoking and will give one a more empathetic insight into the refugee experience.



## Helping the housebound – A Library scheme

I love reading and of course we are very lucky to have so many books available to borrow from Brentwood Library: hardbacks, paperbacks, audio books, ebooks, all available to choose for free.

However, for the elderly and housebound it is not so easy. For over ten years I have been a library volunteer, choosing and delivering books to those unable to do this themselves. It is not an onerous task, visiting just once a month. In general you will know the sort of books they like, sometimes they will even ask you to order specific books and the library will keep them for you until you are ready to collect and deliver.

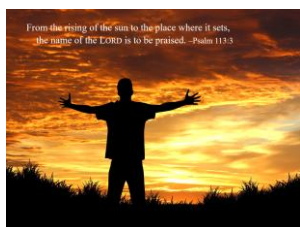
I have met some amazing people, an elderly blind gentleman, blind from a very early age who listened to audio books. At 90+ he had a memory that put mine to shame, travelled to Wales by train, and was a fount of interesting stories. Then there was Vera who I met when she was 95. She wanted a very specific range of books and although her body was weak her mind was as sharp as ever. She shared stories of her life, her family and her work with Shell. I was privileged to attend her 100th birthday party and, then three years later, sadly, her funeral,

If you don't have a lot of time available this is something that can easily be fitted in and can be very rewarding. You (usually) also get invited to an annual tea and cake gathering at the Library!

# Tax Bills, Changed Lives and St Paul's Vision and Courage

by David Petterson

I was admitted as a reader (lay minister) in 1993 and licensed to Christ Church, but when one reaches 70 one loses two things; first, one's driving licence and second one's Readers licence. The driving licence can be renewed at three yearly intervals, but a Reader's licence is not renewed; instead, one is given "Permission to Officiate" (PTO), which is my present status.



I was brought up in what, in my childhood, was a normal nominally Christian way, i.e. Sunday School on Sunday afternoons and a daily school service on weekdays (I can still recite Psalm 113 from the old Book of Common Prayer by heart) and qualified as a solicitor in my twenties. I married my wife Jennifer and have two (now adult) children, Jeremy and Sarah.

Sarah was attending the Ursuline High School in Brentwood. She came home one day saying she wanted to be confirmed, so we decided we ought to start attending Church. After one false start, we visited Christ Church, had a warm welcome, and never looked back.

Then problems came at work; bankruptcy seemed a real possibility (Camden Council sent a

Council Tax bill for about £93,000 to my home address – we know where you live!) and I was worried to the point of sleeplessness. I went to see the then vicar (Peter Goode), who was a very practical and sensible man, for advice. Peter gave me no advice, but just sat and prayed with me; I had the most powerful sensation of God's presence and love, and I never looked back; without being irreverent, I compare it to St Paul's meeting with Jesus on the Damascus Road. Since then, I have served on the PCC and been a Churchwarden (which I gave up on becoming a Reader).

Pre-Covid, I was leading the 8.00am Sunday service and the 8.30am Tuesday to Friday service (I like an early morning service – I find it sets me up for the day!), and also a weekly Bible study group on Thursday mornings. All these are of course on hold with the lock-down, but I circulate a weekly Bible study note to members of the group. Last year we looked at (among other things) the story of St Paul in Acts, and the note below is a shortened version of the first week of this study. Oh – Camden Council cancelled the tax bill!



## Acts 7:59 – 8:3, 9:1-31

St Paul was Jewish to his fingertips ("a Hebrew of the Hebrews" he calls himself); he was a devout

Pharisee and his Jewish name was Saul, and he was also a Roman citizen. He was utterly opposed to the Christians (who then were no more than a sect of Judaism) and was present at the stoning of the first Christian martyr Stephen in Jerusalem. The Jewish authorities hoped that Stephen's martyrdom would kill the Christian movement, but it had the opposite effect – Christians fled Jerusalem to other parts of the Roman empire, and their message spread. Paul went to Damascus with a view to arresting any Christians he found there, but on the way had a vision of the risen Jesus that totally changed his life (we still talk about having a "Damascus Road experience"), and overnight changed from being one of the chief opponents of Christianity to being one of its foremost missionaries. After this meeting with Jesus Paul devoted his life to promoting Christianity (preaching it in Damascus instead of persecuting it as he had been sent to do), with three trips round Asia Minor and southern Greece, eventually reaching Rome as a prisoner.

Read about Paul's amazing conversion experience in Acts 9; what do we make of it? What do we make of others who have had a similar experience, even if less dramatic? What do we think about Paul's fearless preaching in Damascus (9:20-22) and Jerusalem (9:28-29)? What would we have done? Would the church have spread as it did without the courageous preaching of Paul and others like him?

# Singing Together Soon

by Suzanne Hull

## A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath.

**92** It is good to give thanks to the LORD,

to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

**2** to declare your steadfast love in the morning,

and your faithfulness by night,

**3** to the music of the lute and the harp,

to the melody of the lyre.

**4** For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;

at the works of your hands I sing for joy.



Music has always been a big part of my life. From early morning before-school practice sessions (sorry neighbours!), to playing with orchestras, to endless nursery rhymes with Jennifer on my lap, to teaching, it's rarely quiet in our house for long. Even Fenris our dog finds the world much better after a good singing howl, and yet again we're grateful for tolerant neighbours!! I love how music can communicate more than just words alone: it can convey feelings, create atmosphere, and show

intention and personality. What exactly Fenris is trying to express we're still not quite sure!

I've had the privilege over the last few months of compiling the songs for the Sunday services. Whilst I enjoy finding new songs and rediscovering some really excellent old ones, there's also a sense of sadness: we won't be singing them for the present all together, as a congregation. Why as Christians do we put such store by singing together? It's becoming less of a cultural norm – long past are the Victorian days when many people had pianos in their homes for their main source of evening entertainment. A lot of my non-musical friends would be horrified at the idea of singing in a room together where others could hear them.

According to Psalm 92, we sing because of who God is and what he has done. We sing to praise God, to thank him as response to his kindness, his faithfulness, and his love. We use what we have to make it beautiful – replacing the lute, the harp and the lyre with whatever contemporary instruments we have available. This is why we're so keen to get the band up and running again when we can – we want to do our best to praise God in all the ways we

can! There is something in music that expresses our joy in Christ more fully than words ever can. It's memorable, catchy, and we can listen to it or sing it through the day to remind ourselves of God's great grace to us in Jesus.

We worship an infinite God, and our words and our music will always fall short of his perfection. The very best music in the very best concert halls are a very shadowy picture of the glorious music in Heaven, and even the grandeur of the Royal Albert Hall will pale in comparison to the majesty we will see one day. But God sees our hearts, and if we trust in Him, he is delighted in our praise. So let's sing our hearts out in sincerity to Him, whatever we think we sound like, and encourage each other together as soon as we can do so safely back in church.

Do you have an article for the next Newsletter??

*If you would like to be part of a future addition of our Newsletter, please submit any articles to the following email:*

[admin@christchurchwarley.org](mailto:admin@christchurchwarley.org)

*Please could we ask that any articles are no longer than 500 words. Many thanks and I look forward to hearing from you.*