

# ENVOY

Winter2020

**C**hepstow **M**ethodist **C**hurch

Albion Square, Chepstow

[www.chepstowmethodist.org.uk](http://www.chepstowmethodist.org.uk)



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## Hello to you all from Perth in Western Australia.

As you are heading into Winter, it is Springtime here. When you read this, we will be into our hot summer sunshine!

It has been such a different year for the world since Covid came and disrupted our lives in so many ways. Sending our Christmas greeting seems so hard to do. Through all the loss and heartache, our constant strength is in our Saviour, whose humble birth we celebrate on 25th December.

May His love and blessings be with you now and in the coming year, as we continue to place our Faith and Trust in Him each day. We, here in Perth and the whole of Western Australia are very fortunate. We are able to live an almost 'new normal' life. We have 50% attendance in most venues, still safe distancing and hand sanitizing etc. We are able to attend Church and sing, so are more than blessed.

Keep safe and well, as we are here. Our love and God Bless. Special memories of Albion Square which we treasure'.

*Alison and Eifion (Jones)*

### **IRIS DRAISEY (1921 – 2020)**

Iris and Howard Draisey moved to Chepstow as a young married couple in 1960 and brought up their two sons, Alan and John, here. Up until then she had moved around South Wales with her work, firstly as a typist come secretary, which included working at the Food Office in Monmouth between 1940 and 1946, then at the Ministry of Labour in Pontypool where she met Howard and eventually moving with Howard's work in the Civil Service. On arriving at Beachley, Chepstow she took up a job as a receptionist at a local doctors surgery in Hocker Hill Street and later, Regents Way, Chepstow. Both Angie Middleton and Kathy Griffin remember her working for the doctors during this time. They both remember her as a rather formidable person; a typical doctor's receptionist! Nothing much got past her and, boy, if you tried to jump the waiting room queue, you were in for it! That was in the days when you didn't need an appointment - if you needed to see a doctor, you just turned up and waited your turn, sitting on those hard-backed chairs lining the walls of the waiting room, with perhaps a five-year-old, dog-eared copy of the Readers Digest to entertain you! Having said that, she was always very helpful and you were never turned away, "I'll see what I can do", she would say.

We first came across Iris and Howard when we moved to Beachley in 1979. They lived a few hundred yards down the road and were very friendly with the people we bought our house from. Which gave her a good excuse to pop in and

introduce herself to us, not that she needed an excuse! It soon transpired that Howard and Keith had a mutual interest in organs. Howard, of course was one of the organists at our church for many years. Keith spent many hours down the road, as Howard had his own electronic organ at home. Keith, being an electronics engineer “tinkered” with the instrument under Howard’s instruction to get it to sound better. Iris supplied many a cup of tea (and welsh cakes) during these sessions.

Iris was a no-nonsense lady and although firm on the outside was warm and soft in the centre and during Howard’s illness, Kathy had the privilege of spending time with them both. Iris enjoyed talking about her family, her sister and especially her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Iris was a woman of great faith participating and enjoying church life but worship was her priority, especially the service of Holy Communion with the full Liturgy. She enjoyed listening to Even Song on radio 3 in the afternoons. Iris was a regular attendee at Chepstow Methodist Church in the morning service. Kathy remembers that in the early days she used to sit on her own. So, after one service, Kathy decided to have a chat with her and asked her how long she had been a widow, Iris chuckled and replied “I’m not a widow, my husband is very much alive and behind us playing the organ!” Kathy had not connected that Iris was the wife of Howard, one of our church organists.

Iris was also a regular at Women’s Fellowship and enjoyed the informal chats with her friends at church on a Wednesday

afternoon. We, down here in Beachley, got to know her very well particularly in the latter years when giving her lifts, along with Ro Grant to church services and Women's Fellowship. Much reminiscing took place during those car journeys. Iris was an accomplished cook and enjoyed making cakes, (particularly Welsh Cakes), for church events and people that helped her in any way; Ro and Mick Grant who used pop down the road to help her with the gardening, for example.

Out of all the ministers she came to know and listen to them preaching at Chepstow, her favourite was Rev. Joe Rooney. She would rarely miss one of his services and she said she could always understand his sermons. At her request, Joe was the minister that conducted her funeral.

It was a privilege and joy to have shared our journeys of faith with such a lovely lady who will be missed by all who knew her. Rest in Peace Iris. We will miss you.

*Keith & Margaret Harvey (Kathy Griffin, Angie Middleton and Ro Grant)*



Summer has moved on and autumn arrived. Covid 19 means that we are unable to hold our usual Christmas Fayre and sale of Fair Trade goods this year.

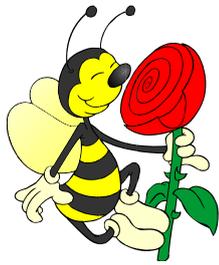
Producers still need our support though, so please take a look at the Traidcraft catalogue. There are some on the stall at Church or if you ring me I will get one to you. Orders can be telephoned to me and I will deliver them to you at a convenient time.

There are Christmas decorations, hampers, gifts and cards, socks and scarves. I have some socks on the stall at a special price. Some sweets are back in stock with 100% compostable packaging. Pear drops are not available yet as the sugar coating on the sweets started decomposing the packaging immediately thus rendering them untransportable! Back to the drawing board - watch this space. Chocolate treats, Advent Calendars and coins are on the stall - also Divine Mint Thins and Ginger Thins are on special offer at £3 per box.

Traidcraft is a Christian response to poverty. It was founded in 1979 by a group of Christians who wanted to challenge the deep injustices embedded in global trade. Your money spent here will benefit those worse off than ourselves.

You can also buy online at [www.traidcraftshop.co.uk](http://www.traidcraftshop.co.uk) - delivery is free on orders over £50.

*Showers of blessings Cynthia Giles telephone: 01291 62567*



## **Gardening with Lesley**

At this strange time of Covid restrictions, our gardens and outdoor spaces have become more important in our lives. I have been so thankful for my garden and have worked and entertained in it for the last nine months. I am still enjoying many of the annual plants that I have grown from seed in March.

The Cosmos are still giving a wonderful display, particularly the white ones which look so good in the garden during these dull and shorter days. My favourite Cosmos which I grow every year is Purity. The seeds are quite large so can be spaced out on the seed tray. They germinate easily and can be potted onto fill spaces in the garden where the bulbs have died back.

The best annual Cosmos are forms of *Cosmos bipinnatus*. There are many colours and sizes. Most of the colours are in the white/pink/purple range. The variety Rubenza has dark ruby red flowers. Cupcakes is a variety with fused petals that look like the paper cases used for cupcakes. For smaller plants for the front of the border or pots, the Cosmic range is a good choice. These also offer a wider range of colours in the red/yellow spectrum. As these are all annuals, it is easy to try different varieties from year to year to find your favourites.

The word “cosmos” comes from the Greek “kosmo” meaning the whole of creation. As well as the familiar creation story in Genesis Luke 17Verse 24

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth . . .”

There is a verse in Phillipians Chapter 2 verse 15 which calls us to

“shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life”.

In these dark times of fear and isolation, I pray that we can all indeed “shine like stars”.

Blessings to you all,

*Lesley Kelly*

## **Zambia - Hope in Christ Partnership – Emergency Aid during Covid19**

Pastor Paul Swala at Hope In Christ Zambia sends regular reports and in early October we received news of all children returning to school in Zambia following Covid 19 restrictions in place since March. Please keep praying for the ministry of the team at Hope in Christ; by being “Partners Across the Miles” your prayers & support do make such a difference to these dear people.

### **Children return to School**

Our President announced last week that all our children in Zambia could return to School which of course includes Hope In Christ School. We were so pleased and the children were so happy. What a joy to see happy faces of the children back to school; enjoy the photos. Praise God.

Please keep on praying for us as you always do; I have recovered well from the malaria and we have been doing essential school maintenance on the water supply, septic tank and soak-away with the gifts you kindly sent , we give thanks to God.  
God Bless you all Paul

### **Secondary School**

We pray for the Grade 7 children who will have done secondary school qualification exams in November and that there will

be sufficient provision from you Father God, through “Partners across the miles in the UK & USA”.....for these children to continue their education along with the other young people who have gone forward from Hope in Christ into secondary schools and colleges of further education and will be continuing their education in January 2021 when the new academic year begins.

The cost of one year’s secondary education fees, uniform, shoes & resources in Zambia is around £200 / \$260 per child. If you can give something, even if it’s the price of a coffee, it will be such a blessing; be assured that every penny will go to help sustaining the education of children & young people linked to our partnership with Hope in Christ. All donations are via Chepstow Methodist Church so can be gift aided if you are a taxpayer and can be made by cash, cheque, internet transfer or directly online via give.net by using debit or credit cards

<https://www.give.net/HopeinChristZambia>

### **News from Sekelani Ngulube, Kabwe Maximum Prison**

From time to time we have updated you on Sekelani, an inmate at Kabwe Maximum prison on death row who we met during our first visit to Zambia in 2015. Some of you have told us that you pray for him and are encouraged to hear news. As you know we correspond with Sekelani regularly; during August he

had a bad bout of malaria and as a Church we were praying for him. You will be pleased to hear that in his latest letter he is recovering well from the malaria and gaining in strength.

You may be aware that Sekelani runs a regular Bible Study and Prayer Group in prison; he shares the Gospel with other inmates who are curious to know what is the strength that sustains him in that dire place with the diabolical conditions. Since mid September Sekelani has also been joining those of us who come together for “Praying Together” at CMC, for an hour between 7-8 pm every Monday evening in our homes.

As ever prayer is the key so if you feel led please pray along with us for our dear brother in Christ, Sekelani Ngulube, be prepared to pray for the long haul as nothing happens quickly in Zambia, but as Sekelani acknowledges to us start by thanking God that he is using him to his Glory in Kabwe as he bring the Gospel of Christ to other inmates and prison staff.

*Vera & Brian Lloyd*



Congratulations to Thomas and Katherine Lovett on the birth of their daughter Grace born on 25th August, a sister to Rosa, second Granddaughter to Christine and Rob Lovett.

Congratulations to Kathy and Dave Griffin who celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 22 August.

Congratulations to Ces Jones who celebrated his 80th birthday on 15th September.

Congratulations to Peter Steed who celebrated his 90th birthday on 8th October

Congratulations to Hazel Edwards who celebrated her 90th Birthday on 17th October.

Congratulations to Tony Watkinson who celebrated his 90th birthday on 10th November

## A Final Farewell to our Triangle Project

The last of the money in the Triangle Project from our church fund was sent to Kenya about five weeks ago by Sue Chimes. We sincerely thank everyone for their support over twenty years. Here's how the last of the money was spent.

Recently, 158 families from the village of Mzizima queued patiently in the heat, near our school, and each received the following:-

2K Maize Flour, 2K Rice, 2K Beans and three bars of soap. This process started at 2.00pm and was completed in the darkness at 6.30. Everyone stated how grateful they were and praised the Lord for his blessings.

The 12 teachers at the school also received food from this allocation. The Head was very grateful for this gesture and thanked everyone for all the support he and the teachers had been given.

In 2019 together with 600 people, we attended the beginnings of a new church. This church now has a roof held up by coconut wooden structures. They needed a cement floor so we paid £450 for a cement floor. This was completed last Friday. The congregation said how thankful they were that they no longer had a dusty area to worship. Joel our chairman of the project

was there everyday overlooking the work. He thanked the people of Chepstow Methodist church for their gift.

Agnes who runs the women's Coop movement had money to supply the women with Rice, Flour, Beans and soap. These are the most vulnerable families in the area. Agnes sends her thanks and greetings to the Methodist church. She praises God for his blessings.

Zainab at the clinic had an allocation of medicines which will be given to the most vulnerable in the community. She appreciated this, as most people, because of Covid had lost jobs and had no money to buy even the simplest of medicines. This medicine will be free to those suffering most.

Christine was our amazing nurse at the clinic and now looks after some elderly people in a house in the village near Timboni. She was given food to support these people in the place which she now runs. She was so grateful and sends her love to Rev Andrew and the congregation.

The remainder of the money goes to the school and they will have at least ten years of WiFi for the computers that were supplied by a member of our church over two years.

The church family has been supplementing a teacher's salary at the school by the name of Alice, for 16 years and the last of the money just sent, will continue to do this.

We will continue to keep in touch with Ken our "reliable man" at Turtle Bay Hotel. When necessary we will continue to support the people in their need.

Unfortunately, there are no tourists staying at the hotel currently, only local organisations which organise training events ensuring a ghost staffing at the hotel. Ken often works one week on duty and the next off.

Twenty years of support from Chepstow Methodist church has certainly made a difference to the health and education of the people there. The school is now a thriving environment that will provide a future for over 750 pupils. The clinic was so successful that now it has received a lifeline and is run by BOMU hospital. No more does it need our support.

Individuals here in Chepstow have made anonymous donations that have shifted the focus immensely. Many in the church family have given constant support in sponsoring pupils through school and university.

It has been an amazing twenty-one years, and years in which our lives have been blessed considerably. We thank you all for your support in the Triangle Project. We praise God for his constant guidance and blessing.

*Julie and Ces Jones*



GOOD NEWS! Our appeal for bicycles for All We Can has raised £1,705 - this is 25 bicycles - amazing and some more has been sent to All We Can direct so thank you all for that wonderful response and thank you too to Margaret for the beautiful bicycle of flowers which All We Can have put on their social media.

## John Wycliffe – Church Reformer

You have probably noticed that each of the main rooms in the church is named for a person who was influential in the history of the church. During lockdown, the new Wednesday House Group has been looking at each of the five reformers chosen for our rooms. We realised that, although the names were mostly familiar, we didn't know much about them.

The earliest person is John Wycliffe, and his name is on the door of the downstairs hall, the Beacon Café room. He lived in the fourteenth century, the late Middle Ages. This was the time of the Great Flood, Great Famine, Black Death, Peasants Revolt – and we think we've got it bad!

Wycliffe spent his time between Oxford colleges and Leicestershire. He became critical of several aspects of the established church and strongly advocated a faith based on the Bible. However the Bible was in Latin, so Wycliffe set to work to provide a translation into Middle English.

His views proved too much for the church and his opinions and writings were pronounced to be heretical. The Bible in English was also rejected. By this time Wycliffe had already died and was buried in Lutterworth. His bones were dug up and burnt and cast into the River Swift.

The seeds of the Reformation had been sown and his followers, the Lollards, suffered persecution for the next two hundred

years until the split with Rome. John Wycliffe is known as the 'Morning Star of the English Reformation'.

My poem is based on Wycliffe's life and is written in the voice of the river.

## Morning Star

The night watch is best, time to cleanse, refresh,  
discharge the filth thrown by day and wait for first light.  
I've journeyed through ages barely shifting my course,  
licking a bank here, dribbling silt there. Winters when  
I barely move, listless fish gasping for spring. Year by year  
my girth swells with rain, seeping onto the floodplain.  
Fields of sodden crops, animals keel into my stream,  
tainting waters. A shadow darkens under my bridge.  
Creeping blackness cripples the land. I see laden carts  
jolting to mass graves. The fields are empty now.  
I taste change upstream, a stirring in a peasant's step,  
tired of being oppressed, waiting for the word.  
Someone spoke and died and thousands more besides,  
running my waters red. Then he came, our Morning Star,  
troubled, I could tell. He listened well, he too spoke out -  
the written Truth in the common tongue. I quenched  
charred parchment rising from angry embers and settled  
forlorn fragments among the forget-me-nots.

On Innocents Day, our star flickered and was gone.  
Heretics burn, be they quick or dead, was what they said,  
dug up and roasted his guilty bones, tossed me his ashes.  
We meandered through water-meads of Middle England,  
mingling streams with Shakespeare's Avon, joined  
the sweeping Severn, then dispersed into the world.

*Pam Horne*



## Action for Children Update

After the conclusion of a very successful fundraising year and the end of March, we really came down with a bump when the coronavirus kicked in and lockdown started.

We quickly realised that 2020 was going to be a non-event year. We had previously made plans for several events including a musical concert and sponsored walk.

However, we are making preparations for a Christmas appeal by means of a collection at the various Christmas services. We shall also have donations envelopes available, and by this method hope to reach of to the many members of the church family who are not able to physically attend any of our Christmas services. The work of NCH is even more necessary now with so many young families suffering from the stresses and strains of this dreadful disease. More details will be available in due course via the weekly notice sheet.

On a different note those church members who hold a Red Collecting Box are urged to pop their small (or even big)

change into their boxes. Collection and emptying will take place in February / March as usual.

Michael is constant touch with our fundraising co-ordinator, Nina Rice, in Cardiff but she is currently working part-time herself, as are many other AFC staff and volunteers. If you would like to make a contribution towards the Christmas Appeal please pop a cheque – pr notes – in a envelope to me at: 43 Penterry Park, Chepstow NP16 5AZ. Alternatively, box will be available at the church service held throughout December.

If you would like to speak to me phone number is 01291 620111 or email [mb4018725@gmail.com](mailto:mb4018725@gmail.com)

*Michael Bale* (Sec/Treasurer) AFC Chepstow CMC support group

## Walking in West Wales - Ceredigion Coastal Path

During August and September after the Lockdown when we were getting back to some sort of normality and campsites reopened, Dave and I decided to get away in (Marigold) our Motorhome and we planned to walk part of the Ceredigion Coastal Path, West Wales, a 60 mile path from Cardigan to Aberystwyth. Dave found a lovely campsite a couple of miles inland near the village of Cross Inn which is about a 2.5 mile walk into the lovely coastal town of New Quay, a traditional fishing town now a popular seaside resort, so off we went.

On our first day of walking due to the poor weather forecast we decided to walk to Aberaeron about 8.7 miles along the coast path. Aberaeron is a beautifully designed Georgian town with a harbour which operated as a port and supported a shipbuilding industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and where Steam ships continued to visit until the 1920s. Having arrived in Aberaeron in the rain where it was even too wet to sit and eat our packed lunch we took the next bus back to Cross Inn, dried off and ate our packed lunch in the motorhome.

The following day looked more promising, a bit cloudy and chilly but no rain forecast. We took an early bus into Cardigan, in the county of Ceredigion. The town lies on the river Teifi. Cardigan was the county town of the historic county of Cardiganshire and home of the first Eisteddfod. It was about a 4 mile walk along the estuary to reach the coast where the Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire Coastal paths meet to begin our walk toward Aberporth, about a 10 mile walk (according to

Dave's estimation!!). The weather improved and we ended up walking in brilliant sunshine and had to strip off and carry our waterproofs. We had our lunch overlooking the beautiful hidden Mwnt cove, a golden sandy beach popular with Dolphin watchers and a haven for wildlife. Eventually (having lost the path) we had walked a very hard and energetic 15 miles!! On reaching the beach of Aberporth we walked into the town and thankfully caught the bus back to Cross Inn.

After a rest day we took the bus back to Aberporth, previously a busy fishing port, now a popular recreational fishing village to walk along the coast path to New Quay and back to the campsite. Dave assured me today's walk would be easier and not as far as the walk from Cardigan to Aberporth (Ha Ha) with no pressure to make it for the bus back to Cross Inn. With our packed lunch and plenty of liquid refreshment (we had run out on the previous walk) and with no water proofs to carry we set off. All along the Ceredigion Coast Path the scenery is beautiful however along this stretch of the coast it is stunningly beautiful, we have been to the Amalfi coast, Italy but on a sunny day there is no beating the West Wales Coast. After a pleasant walk of about 7.5 mile we arrived in Llangrannog village, an ancient popular destination for pilgrims who would come to St Mary's Well to take the water for health purposes, where we sat on the beach and enjoyed our lunch. Refreshed and rested we set off for the remainder of the walk enjoying brilliant sunshine, peace and quiet, wonderful scenery and wildlife and watching the Dolphins swimming in Cardigan Bay. As beautiful as it was with the many ascents (and of course descents) and more miles than Dave had predicted it turned

into a very strenuous walk. We eventually arrived in New Quay just in time to catch a bus back to the village of Cross Inn which saved us the 2.5 mile walk back to the campsite. Feeling elated but very tired after our days walk we had clocked up 17 miles making a total of 40 miles in the 3 days walks we had done along the Ceredigion Coast Path.

We fully intend to go back next year and walk the 20 miles from Aberaeron to Aberystwyth to complete the 60 miles of this coast path and Dave has reassured me that this stretch will be much easier and not so steep!! Should I believe him? We thank God and we are so grateful to have our health and the means to enjoy walking and visiting our beautiful adopted country of Wales. In these very unpredictable times we appreciate that we have enjoyed some respite and we are aware that for many of our church family friends this has not been possible. We hope you haven't minded us sharing our coastal walk with you, some of you may have walked this path or visited some of the towns mentioned and hopefully it will have provoked some happy memories, or maybe for those who are able you may think about walking this coast path giving you something to look forward to in the future.

*Kathy Griffin*



## HIL'S (SPANISH) KITCHEN

### Lentil, Chorizo and Vegetable Stew

(4 portions)

2 tablespoons Olive Oil  
250g (10oz) chorizo, thickly sliced  
4 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 stick celery, sliced  
3 carrots, sliced  
400g (1lb) potatoes, peeled and cut into cubes  
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano  
2 teaspoons smoked paprika  
200g (8oz) green lentils, rinsed (I use tinned)  
1 litre chicken stock  
400g can chopped tomatoes  
Salt & freshly ground pepper  
Freshly chopped parsley & a drizzle of Extra Virgin Olive oil

Traditionally served with crusty bread

1. Heat the olive oil in a large pan over a medium heat
2. Add the chorizo and cook for 3-4 minutes, stir occasionally until the chorizo starts to release it's oil.
3. Stir in the onions, garlic, celery, carrots & potatoes. Cook for 3-4 minutes until the vegetables start to soften, then stir in the oregano & paprika.
4. Add the lentils and stock. Bring to a gentle boil, then cover and simmer for 20 minutes.
5. Stir in the tomatoes and season to taste, then cover and cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the parsley.
6. Serve in warm bowls, drizzle with the extra virgin olive oil and serve with a chunk of bread.

As you may guess from the heading I'm still in Spain, although now due to return mid November. The seasons are changing here, although somewhat more gently here than in Wales I suspect. The above recipe is a traditional Spanish winter warmer .... But as chorizo is readily available now in UK I thought you may like to give a meal a Spanish flavour.

With all the changes taking place in our society due to the Covid 19 upheaval it's made me more aware of the comfort we experience with favourite foods particularly now as we are less able to socialise and enjoy the distractions of gathering together and our focus has had to change.

We have so much to give thanks for .... That supplies are still available in our supermarkets and we have food to eat each day (as we know this is not the case for too many in our world). Everyday does bring its blessings and

surprises ... Here the sunrises and sunsets are often spectacular and awe inspiring. Although communication with friends is different we are able to keep in touch with phone calls and Internet options. Thankfully, here at the moment we can all get out and about and meet up in small groups. Many people are working hard to keep things going and we all reap the benefits of their efforts.

Although we didn't anticipate this turn of events God wasn't taken by surprise. We know, reading his word, that he has a plan. We also know we can choose how we respond to all circumstances and events that test our Faith. Although it's not always comfortable or initially welcome these tests to our faith do make us stronger.

So, be strong & courageous, neither be afraid .... for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:7)

*Hils*



**Book Review: Thief, Prisoner,  
Soldier, Priest  
by Paul Cowley MBE**

Rev. Paul Cowley is presently “Minister-in-Charge of St. Francis Dalgarno Way, one of Holy Trinity Brompton’s (HTB) sites in London. He is the pioneer of Alpha Prisons, Alpha Forces, founder of Caring for Ex-Offenders and various social transformation projects including the debt centre and night shelters for the homeless run by HTB. Paul is also part time Chaplain at HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs and HM Youth Offenders Feltham and the Bishops Adviser for Prison & Penal affairs in London.

This autobiography is a remarkable story of his early years growing up in Manchester in a chaotic world with alcoholic parents, explosive arguments and an aggressive father which led him to being homeless and moving into crime. By seventeen he was a convicted THIEF and a PRISONER in HMP Risley. In 1976 when 21 he joined the army which saw a full time career as a SOLDIER until 1992 when he had risen to the rank of staff sergeant. Paul served in Northern Ireland, Germany and the Falklands; he says the army “made a man of him” but ultimately failed to give him direction or purpose as life revolved around his own selfish desires.

We read that in his personal life before he reached the age of 29, Paul had married and divorced twice and abandoned his son. He says I understood sin in terms of law as I’d been to

prison; but not a divine law from a creator God. I lived by my rules, I did what I wanted and I didn't care who I hurt along the way. It was self destructive life, but I didn't know any better.

Paul says, I frequently ask myself the question, how does a man born into such a dysfunctional family, with very little formal education, and subsequently a criminal record, become a PRIEST in the Church of England? On some days I am truly perplexed but have come to realise it is the love of God and the help of some wonderful family, friends and work colleagues. In 1993 after he had left the army, he met up with Sergeant Major Eric Martin a former colleague and through him had an amazing encounter with God which changed his life. Paul says, I'm sure there are gentler ways to be introduced to God but I needed a sergeant-major, who gave it to me straight, kind words about love, peace and forgiveness would have gone over my head.

Paul writes that God told him that He had a plan for his life; at that time in 1993 he reflects he was unsure about this but now knows that God was true to his word. Personally he has built a relationship with Clinton the son he abandoned who is now 40 and a Christian, they speak every day; he has made peace with his two ex-wives. Amanda his wife has walked side by side with Paul through twenty five years of Christian ministry much of it working among the marginalised, lost and poor, since they married in 1993 along with their 22 year old daughter Phoebe also a Christian.

Paul Cowley was born to serve; in his early days he served time in prison and went on to serve in Her Majesty's Armed Forces; Sergeant Cowley did not look a potential Church recruit, but God moves in mysterious ways as the pages of this compelling book reveal. The chapters which are most striking are those that describe Paul's inner journey to a new Christ centred life of service as church member, ordained priest, prison chaplain and ambassador for social transformation. Paul Cowley is merely the books narrator. The story is about a man's redemption. Unconditional love changed the direction of his life from self-service to God's service.

*Brian Lloyd – October 2020*

## House Groups

Are you feeling disconnected and distanced from the church family during this pandemic? Probably everyone is to some extent and, the longer restrictions are in force for our safety, the more we miss the fellowship.

A great way to stay in touch is through the house group Zoom sessions and we have several running at the moment. You may, of course, have considered joining a house group before and maybe have been put off by thinking it might be too intense, too serious, only for those who really know their bible - or you were worried that you'd be 'put on the spot' and asked questions you really don't know the answer to! This is definitely not the case! Our groups welcome ALL - new and mature Christians, young and old, male and female - and everyone is valued. Folk are encouraged to share their thoughts and opinions, or just to sit and listen if they're more comfortable with that.

Over the past thirty years, groups that I've been involved with have studied films, novels, great Christian figures from the past, and other denominations, as well as bible characters/stories/parables and the study of psalms, hymns and particular books of the Old and New Testaments. Some groups will start with a hymn or Christian song and prayer is always

included. Anything discussed stays within the group. It's a great time of Christian fellowship, with quite lively discussions sometimes. We learn and share, although we don't always agree. Sometimes we just have to agree to differ - in Christian love, of course!

We have had to learn to participate in a different way with Zoom meetings but, with a little discipline and a 'hands up' approach (much like being back in the classroom!), it does work. If you have the necessary technology, I urge you to give some thought to joining a group. Pam Horne (409743) will be glad to give you more information.

*Angie Middleton*

The Spring ENVOY will be available at the beginning of  
March 2021

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