

CHRIST CHURCH

Life

living to
love God
and you

April / May 2020



“Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed – for until then they still hadn’t understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.” John 20: 8-9





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Thank you to all who have contributed articles for this edition of Life magazine.

*Please note that the **deadline** for submissions for the **June/July 2020 edition** will be **15th May 2020**.*

*Submissions are emailed to: **editor@ccbedford.org***

Happy Easter to you all!
Best wishes, CC Life Editor

Vicar's Letter

Dear friends,

It's the centre of the Christian faith. It's the heartbeat of our hope. Nothing compares with it. No other faith has such great news:

"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead."'" (Matthew 28:1-7)

He is not dead; he has risen. Christ is risen. He hasn't just risen in the hearts of men and women, as some sort of spiritual experience, but he has physically risen from the dead, no longer buried in the tomb but alive and living.

It's the most important part of our faith. Prove it false and all Christianity collapses. But for those willing to hear and receive the evidence, the overwhelming evidence, that he did indeed rise from the dead and lives forevermore, he is risen indeed: Luke writes in Acts 1:3, Jesus *"gave many convincing proofs that he was alive."*

Luke uses the word *tekmeron*, the strongest word possible, to convey the sense of 'proof beyond doubt'.

The evidence points resolutely to good news. The resurrection is good news. To a dying world we can proclaim the good news of eternal life in Christ. Death is no longer the final enemy nor the last word. There is life after death, not as vague hope or wishful thinking, but as a genuine, evidenced-based soberly-reported fact. And because Christ is risen from the dead, we too can be assured of eternal life.

Jesus Christ has broken through death's ramparts. Jesus has stamped a path through the valley of the shadow of death. We can follow Him by faith. He has prised open the door that shut at The Fall, that time when sin entered into Adam and Eve as they partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3).

This is desperately needed good news for our hurting world, where death is so often seen as the final barrier. Except ... many long for some hope of some future beyond this life: he's one of the stars in the sky – really?; he's going to be reincarnated – really?; he's just fulfilling the words of that poem *Death is nothing at all, ... I have only slipped away in to the next room* – really?

That poem actually articulates some Christian hope, written as it was by an Anglican clergyman. It's that hope people cling to. But you don't have to hope, or cling in vague wishfulness.

"Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia." Easter is our annual celebration and Sunday our weekly remembrance. If you want to explore more, then contact me and I'll happily help you explore.

Happy Easter, **Richard**



Clair's Epistle

A room filled with light.
Is that where I first saw you?

A blinding flash of reason,
Is that the moment I first came to know you?

There is no sight,
No sound, save
The sound of your might, breaking my chains.

There is no thought
Or deed, save
The thought of redemption
And the deed of death which comes to us all,
...Even you.

And yet, is there another deed?
Is there a blinding resurrection?
Is there an end to death by death?

Oh, perfect man, how I love you.
Oh, perfect man, all is well.

Clair Argent



ALAN COTTENDEN'S ON THE FRONTLINE

An interview with...

Margaret Haywood

Although Margaret Haywood has known about Christ Church for some time, she only became fully part of the church family about three years ago, after a life chequered with blessings and challenges. She kindly agreed to share her story and some lessons she has learned – and is learning - along the way.

So, Margaret, tell me about your upbringing.

I was born in Holbeach (in the Lincolnshire Fens) near Spalding - the home of the famous flower festival - and raised an only child. My dad worked as a GPO (General Post Office) technician and I still fondly remember the green van he used to travel between all the places that needed his repair and maintenance skills. He was a lay reader in our church and, although he really wanted to be an ordained priest, there were no funds to pay for his training. Then his chance came. He was able to secure a grant to attend Worcester College, which specialised in training older ordinands. We moved into College lodgings for the two years of his course, which I remember as a very happy time. However, I think it was quite tough for my Mum. We had moved from our detached house into quite cramped quarters that were kitted out with some rather primitive equipment, like the heavy flat iron that she had to do battle with. She got a part-time job to help the family finances and Dad had his study and pastoral training which meant that I often had to make my own entertainment. I remember sitting in the corner colouring while he chatted with someone or prepared his sermons and so I took in “by diffusion”, I suppose, a lot of what it would later be like to live in a vicarage. Although Mum had to work, Dad had Saturdays off and he and I had some wonderful adventures together on those days.

After Dad's training he had a two-year curacy in Grantham before moving on to take care of five parishes of his own in the Caistor and Brigg region of Lincolnshire. It must have been tough having to deal with five of everything! I often used to



accompany him “on his rounds” and I could tell that he was doing what he really wanted to do.

What about school and your own training?

I went to the grammar school in Caistor (which Dawn French also went to). Six months before I was due to leave, my parents moved parishes again to an under-privileged part of Lincoln and Dad’s job there included being a prison chaplain, a role in which – I remember him saying – he felt more like a social worker! Meanwhile, I went to Durham University to do a degree in education, specialising in theology. I had considered training for parish work but Dad reckoned I would be better suited to teaching and I think he was right!

How did you come to faith for yourself?

I can’t remember a time when I wasn’t a Christian. I’m sure my faith must have grown gradually from simple beginnings but I never knew a distinct conversion. I encountered a lot of different churches from my Dad’s work as a vicar and when I got to university, I really enjoyed experiencing the various local churches and college chapels. I settled, primarily, at St Nick’s and particularly enjoyed the social life of the church family there. George Carey was later vicar at St Nick’s and went on – of course - to become Archbishop of Canterbury.

And after university?

As I approached the end of university I began applying for teaching jobs in Lincolnshire and secured a post in Spalding. We had relations in the area; Mum and Dad were still in Lincoln and I used often to spend weekends with them. Soon after, they moved to South Lincolnshire nearer Peterborough and I continued to visit at weekends, taking on the children’s work and family services at their church. Then – in my second year of teaching – Dad died which was, of course, quite a shock for us all. Mum coped amazingly well. She moved to Spalding, I gave up my flat, and we moved into a house together. It was a whole new life for her. She got a job in ladies’ fashion and – evening and weekends – she helped me with my school work while I supported her with her job.

I taught at my first school – a village school - for seven years and then moved on to a rather bigger school in Deeping St James. I met Jeremy there – in the local Liberal Group – and we were soon married. Our daughter, Hannah was born in 1988, and our son Matthew followed seven years later. Jeremy worked in the printing industry and, when his job moved to St Neots, we moved there and I took on a new specialist

teacher role, focusing on special needs in 14 schools in the Cambridge area. Later, we moved to Colmworth. In time, Hannah attended Dame Alice School and Matthew, Pilgrims, which is how I came to know Bedford and to discover Christ Church. Before we were married, I knew that Jeremy was really rather on the edge of church and I suppose I naively imagined that I would be able to draw him in more once we were married. He was happy to come to church with us if I asked him but his heart wasn't really in it and I found myself trying to live with one foot walking in God's ways while the other was outside.

The next 15 years or so were tough. Jeremy had some stretches without work and we both had periods of illness. It was very hard trying to keep it all together and our marriage was under serious stress. In 2015 we decided to sell up. I took my teacher's pension and we moved to South West France, where we had enjoyed holidays. But it really didn't work and I felt more and more isolated, having been used to a busy job with lots of colleagues and to a church community. Soon after, Jeremy asked for a divorce and – as there was no longer anything for me there in France - I returned to England, coming to Bedford.

How was it, returning to Bedford?

I was in a bad way. My marriage had fallen apart and, although my immediate family were hugely supportive, I had no other support network. I spent a short time in Weller Wing but then moved to Mundesley in Norfolk where I stayed until returning to Bedford in February 2017, moving into a guest house. Then my daughter Hannah spotted a house-share that I could join in Foster Hill Road. It was during this time that I revisited Christ Church. I still remember Kay Berrington's warm welcome and how she introduced me to Penny Gilham who was lovely. John and Fiona Betteley invited me back to lunch. Over the coming weeks I began to rediscover the joy of being back in a worshipping community. At Kirsty Pirrie's instigation, I joined Sidney and Judy Miller's home group and everyone was so kind. Their prayer support was – and still is – marvellous. Rachel Bennett has been a good friend, too. She's the one who found the flat I now live in. "You need a nice little flat", I remember her declaring when it came up for rent just opposite where she lives. After such a chequered few years it has been a real joy to sense God gradually making something of the tangle and I am so grateful to him.

What do you do these days?

I'm working back in education as an exam invigilator at Bedford Free School and Goldington Academy, which I really enjoy. I look after my youngest granddaughter,

Aria (1), 3 days a week and I also spend quite a lot of time with her big sister, Lacey (5), especially in school holidays. Their Mum, my daughter, Hannah, works in advertising and she and her partner live in Bedford. He's recently become a police officer. I also see my son, Matthew, quite often: he works in London where he's just started working as an assistant clinical psychologist. Then there's my 99-year-old Mum who also lives in Bedford. I usually join her at St Peter's church on a Sunday morning, coming along to Christ Church in the evening. My latest adventure is that I'm about to buy a car.

Looking back, are there some important lessons you'd like to share?

One is how important it is to stay close to God and be properly part of a community of his people. Looking back, I can see lots of places where I thought I knew better and things went wrong. Another important lesson for me - and one I am still very much learning - is how to trust God one step at a time when I can't see the whole picture. I'm a great forward planner by nature so my natural tendency is to want the whole journey mapped out before I take the first step. Trusting - and obeying - God a step at a time doesn't come naturally to me. But, looking back, I'm amazed at how far he's brought me - a step at a time - since I've been back in Bedford. If I had seen the whole journey at the beginning I would have been overwhelmed and unable to deal with it. I think another important lesson is that God has supplied all my needs. It's one thing to know the theology of his sufficiency but I can look back and see how he has been at work, even along the messy path I have come. And I'm so grateful to him for bringing me so many blessings out of such messiness.

Are there any particular scriptures that have come to mean a lot to you?

One favourite would be, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7). And two more that I have "fed on" a lot as God has been at work in me - particularly when I was needing to trust him without being able to see the steps ahead: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19) and "(He) ... is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..." (Ephesians 3:20)

Thank you!

Alan Cottenden

Malawi

Samuti Church Project 2019



Whilst preparing a talk for a 'Go for Gold' meeting it occurred to me I should write something about my work with the **Samuti group of Churches in Malawi**. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, and our Church supports the Home of Hope in the West of the country, and also the planting of Macadamia trees which produce nuts with a high nutritional value. I was

introduced to the situation in Malawi via a sermon by Pastor Roger Smith at the Pentecostal Church, Bedford in the late 90s. Roger, in the past, had received a letter from a Prisoner in England about issues in Malawi, so Roger contacted a Church leader in Malawi for more information. Roger kept in touch with the Samuti Church, and sent Church materials and Christian literature to them. Following the sermon by Pastor Roger Smith, I felt guided to write to the Malawi Church, and later to go and see them as they urged me to do so. My first visit to Malawi was in 2004; it was on this visit I appreciated the poverty of the Malawian people, yet despite this I experienced the joy they had, so I felt a call from God to do what I could to help the Malawian people to help themselves.

Initially I helped them by buying them chickens; also, I purchased a generator with the help of a member from St Andrew's Church so they could have light especially as it gets dark at 6pm all the year round.



Subsequent Visits

Since then I have visited the country about 5 times and continue to assist them, and hope to go this year following my operation. I had been introduced to them by a former Pastor Roger Smith; who purchased a second-hand truck for their use since transport is a problem in a rural community. Subsequently I arranged for it to be repaired and tyres replaced because roads are poor. This truck lasted about 6 years. Also, early on I had the good fortune to meet a Malawian Thomas Ngwira, director of a community hospital and orphanage in Ntonda. I realised he was a man to be trusted and also skilled in bee keeping and building fish ponds. He was also known to the Director of the Zambesi Mission (UK) which has worked in Malawi for some years. It was through him I had the idea we could support these projects at Samuti with the help of members of the Church.

My father had been Chairman of the 'Bedfordshire Bee Keepers Association,' so I had some knowledge of bee keeping and also when I was a Mission Partner in Peru, I came across fish farming. Thomas Ngwira had received tuition in Kenya paid for by the Zambesi Mission. Later on, Thomas lost his job at Ntonda and decided to do a Degree in forestry at Mzuzu University. Since then I have supported him in all his work. The result was I worked with the head of the Samuti Church to fulfil these ideas; also, my son helped by giving money to buy land for the fish farms and also further

land for the church to locate bee hives. It has been far from straightforward to develop this; damage was caused by floods 2014/15, and some chickens died from a virus. African bees are very fierce and one inhabitant was stung so had to go to hospital; thus, nearly all the profit was lost one year to pay for hospital fees. Christ Church Mission funds contributed towards flood relief and repairs to buildings.



Some challenges

Another problem was checking how money was spent; this is why I felt it necessary to continue to visit. Charities need to keep proper accounts, so we recruited an educated local woman called Alice to assist the Samuti Churches; however, no one

understood how to keep accounts or present them in the correct way, so in the end I solved the problem by linking with Thomas Ngwira who has formed a charity registered in Malawi called 'Action for Sustainable Development.' Alice did get Samuti Church registered with the Government so this was a success. It must be noted the Samuti Church members dug the ponds by hand without payment, so they contributed to the project in a large way. Altogether three ponds were dug in this way pumps had to be bought, and walls had to be constructed. They have also built a new Church themselves that can seat 500 people. Some money was given by Church members but most of this was achieved by themselves. Then in 2018 out of the blue a business man called Phillipe Sibaud contacted Thomas Ngwira over the internet and agreed to finance further fish ponds. I met him in London and assured him this was a worthwhile project so he visited Samuti and donated £9000 to enable a new project to construct 5 more fish ponds in an area near to Samuti. He also bought some pigs. I followed this up by buying land near there for bee keeping. We had received a grant from Christ Church Mission funds to further bee keeping up north but this proved unsuccessful because of deforestation, but a lesson was learned so sometimes we have to fail in order to succeed. These ponds were completed in 2018. There followed a need to train more bee keepers and this was done in November 2019; just over half of this was paid for out of Church Mission funds. Other expenses incurred were paid for by Coffee Mornings I have held at my home, and Edward Tufnell also helped towards training expenses. Just before last Christmas I received a report and I was thrilled to hear that the training had been a success.

So, despite failures and trials, the community has been transformed. I must admit at times I nearly gave up, but I persevered. I am indebted to all the people in St Andrew's Church and Christ Church who have supported me, and also my family. Although I have been the main source of funds I have also been supported by my friends. I never thought that I could have achieved so much when I felt guided by God to do this work. Looking back everything has fitted together like a large jigsaw and throughout I have endeavoured to work with the leaders of the Church, although I have made mistakes. There have been misunderstandings, but being so far away I have had to rely on Thomas Ngwira our project Director to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. As some of us know, God moves in mysterious ways, and we don't always know when our calling is going to come; for Roger it was from a letter written by a prisoner, and for me it was a sermon preached by Roger in the Pentecostal Church in Bedford. I very much hope in future the work we have undertaken will spread. Furthermore, I hope more can be done to halt further deforestation in Malawi.

Rosemary Phillips

COACH - Creating Opportunities and Casting Hope

Some of you might know who I am and others may not. I am Beth (daughter of Jon & Jane Day) and I grew up in and around Bedford going to Christ Church. Jordan my husband, my daughter Clara and I live in Nottingham. I became a Christian when I was 14 and was a part of Christ Church throughout most of my childhood and teenage years.

God has been incredibly faithful over the past few years as I have been coordinating COACH (Creating Opportunities and Casting Hope) community mentoring. He has opened up unexpected doors and helped people in tough places flourish.

COACH is a community mentoring programme that is a 'friend with a purpose'. We are currently getting the referrals from 2 local primary schools, a secondary school and a medical centre. There are criteria in which COACH could accept a family. As COACH is early intervention focused the criteria is to try and ensure the family already have access to the specialist services they need, to make sure we are not placing volunteers into a dangerous or highly volatile situation and that they are not so chaotic that they cannot keep an appointment. Once they have been identified then they will apply for COACH, we will then go into their home to assess them (this is just chatting to them to make sure they understand COACH and for us to get to know them). Part of the assessment process is for us to ensure it is safe for volunteers to enter into the home and also to see which volunteer we feel would work well alongside them e.g. we are currently assessing a single mother with 4 children and due to her life circumstances she needs a mentor who is very pastoral, gentle and compassionate in their approach. We do about 3 assessments before we accept them onto COACH and then match them with the mentor. The mentor will



then meet with them weekly for 1-2 hours and this can take place in their home, coffee shop, doing an activity together etc...

During the mentoring relationship there are a number of different processes that it will go through and we call this REAL (relating, engaging, action planning and letting go). As COACH is a strength-based approach and a 'friend with a purpose,' part of the aim of it is to help the participant move forward in



an area of their life which the mentor will help them to discover and plan for. Some examples of these are: being able to get out of the house without hiding, getting jobs, organisational skills, feeding their children healthy food, getting their children to school on time, confidence to take their children to the park etc...

Throughout the whole time the volunteer has monthly supervision sessions and also can ask for advice whenever it is needed. We also do a 6-month review with the participant and an annual review where the mentoring relationship usually comes to an end. Before that, the mentor would have been working on the 'letting go' process of the REAL cycle. Ideally, by this time, they will be part of what we are doing as a church community and so the relationship will not cease but rather its role will just change.

This is an interview with one of the mum's that COACH has mentored (they have given permission for me to share their story).

How many children do you have?

I have two children, a boy and a girl who are 3 and 4.

How did you find out about COACH?

I found out about coach through my GP.

What did life look like before you were being mentored?

It was very dull, sad and just unbearable most days really. I hated leaving my house and if I did it was with one of my family members.

How has your mentor supported you over the past 9 months?

Brilliantly! Everything just seems so much easier now. I have someone to talk to that doesn't know about everything. That doesn't judge and pass off critical judgement. They are nice, nice people. It's helped me change everything for the better. I now have a job, I go shopping on my own now. I feel a lot happier, I can now find solutions for everything and now I look past the problems to the future.

What would you say to someone who wanted to get involved in COACH?

I would definitely recommend it, if they are in a situation where they feel they need someone to talk to, guidance or just a friend.

Jordan and I also are leading a missional community in the area where we live. We meet as part of our church in the local primary school and regularly have gatherings for people in the community.

This is just an overview, so if you are interested in finding out more then do get it touch! We are excited to see what God does in this next season.



Things to pray for:

- Thanks to God for the volunteers that we currently have and for those that are ready to mentor.
- Thanks to God for the links with the local GP practice, primary schools and the secondary school.
- For the families that are being mentored and will be mentored.
- For protection of the COACH team as we work with people who are facing challenging circumstances.
- For the future development of COACH in Nottingham as we aim to act as 'salt and light' across the city.
- Pray for more volunteers so that we can always take new referrals.



Beth Bradley

Can Our Church Grow in Numbers, Faith and Service?



Leading your Church into Growth

Churches are meant to grow. Children grow, plants grow, wisdom (can) grows, churches are meant to grow:

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow." (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Since that first Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus' resurrection, the church has proclaimed a

message that showed the importance of making new disciples. A growing church is reflecting the natural DNA of God's church.

I attended a LYCiG (Leading Your Church into Growth) conference in February with AJ, Jess Walker and Steven Allin. It was an inspirational reminder that as a church we are called to grow and required to make the steps possible for growth. The weekend reminded us of the importance of **prayer** – without prayer nothing changes and so calling our church to pray for growth is the first priority for church growth. LYCiG has a prayer to offer us for daily/Sunday use – it's been in the notice sheet recently:

God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your church. Send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions, and power to our witness. Help our church grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you, and in service to our local community, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



The second priority is to create opportunities for **presence**. We have many such opportunities: there are loads of people we meet in the halls and that we come in contact with in our local community. Our presence is physical and networked. It is a key step for us to determine how we can encourage and enable ourselves to

creatively use such presence opportunities. LYCiG invites us towards a conversation based on:

Who are you? Finding out about the person and be genuinely interested in them.

Where are you? Finding out if or where God might be for the person, particularly if they have 'come towards' us: our services or buildings.

Why don't you? If the second question seems vaguely positive about God, then inviting them to give a service or an event a go.

I've been putting such into action recently and have been amazed by the number of people who would like to talk more about God and are open to coming to church. Give it a go yourself. Have that conversation.

The third priority is **proclamation**. For those who come to our services and events we need to ensure that at an appropriate level we offer an invitation to explore more. We are already known for a good welcome, though we all know that needs constant vigilance to ensure we do not become complacent or feel "that's some else's job". In addition, we need to plan ahead to identify those key moments, events and festivals to which to invite people.

The final priority is already in place with **persuasion**. We have determined to run three evening Alpha courses each year, with at least one day time course. We have successfully established the Grow Group, taking mostly newer Christians on a journey of discipleship. Again, we must guard against complacency and promote a strategic approach, looking ahead to the opportunities.



Sometimes, it feels that no one outside the church is interested in Jesus and the Good News. We know from research – www.talkingjesus.org – that non-Christians mostly find us good people and enjoy our company. We also know that some of them would like an invitation from their Christian friend. And we do know that we Christians have many non-Christian friends and colleagues – the pool is there waiting for us to enter in.

LYCiG offer a 12-step approach for a church to take this forward:

- Establish a desire/culture of growth
- Pray explicitly for growth as a church
- Develop a leadership team

- Create an 18 month/2 year plan for growth
- Get into the habit of inviting people
- Ensure you are a welcoming church
- Set aside proclamation/festival events every year
- Run an enquirers' group each year
- Develop an 'evangelism into discipleship' strategy
- Establish a family culture with a commitment to work with children and young people
- Improve the feel and accessibility of your worship
- Find ongoing support and help

Our new **MAP** (*Mission Action Plan*, which will be launched at our Annual Meeting) majors on this whole initiative of *making new disciples* and *deepening our faith*.

Would you like to be part of making this happen among us now?

Can you pray for people you meet and know?

Can you start those conversations with those prompts listed above?

We could leave this to others, but we are all called to make new disciples and deepen our faith.

And we could pray for growth, believe in growth and minister for growth. Of course, it's not growth for growth's sake. It's about seeing many of our friends, colleagues and family members being prompted by the Spirit to seek and to know Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Richard Hibbert



Virtual Christ Church – Bedford

Stream services from our Christ Church YouTube channel
Follow the link below:

[youtube.com/c/christchurchbedford](https://www.youtube.com/c/christchurchbedford)

Visit our website for our:
Bible Reading Plan & Online Bible
<https://ccbedford.churchinsight.com/>

God and The “Inferno”

For those of you expecting a highly theological piece on the Inferno – do you really think that an accountant like me, who has no theological training, would try to write on this subject? Well I might, but not today.

The Inferno I want to talk about is much more real – it really exists and I have survived it (three times now). It is of course a downhill Ski race!

Has the Chair of RIG finally succumbed to double entry booking fever? No, I kid you not – it is the longest open ski race in the world in Switzerland, Mürren, with 1850 competitors. This year’s race was “only” 9.5km long – downhill most of the way with three particularly fearsome uphill bits as skis are not made to go uphill!

So, what is the relevance to me I hear you say as I do not ski? Well let me try to make it relevant. I am afraid I can find no Bible references to Skiing (cricket yes - “Peter went forth and was bowled” (sic), skiing no), but there are plenty of references to races, and a good smattering of references to snow in the Bible – so that is a start.

Allow me to expand. After all, it is a Christian Ski holiday (Goldhill) who I enter under – about 10 of us entered this year. That mild mannered and highly responsible coach driver for those of you who go on the seniors’ holidays (Clive) is the chief protagonist. Once he has put on a pair of skis, he is a very different character (“speed, speed and more speed” is his motto).

Maybe it is looking at the scenery as you head to the start of the race (taking 3 cable cars, 2 chairlifts and a train – a challenge in its own right). You look at God’s amazing creation – 3 of the biggest mountains in the Alps (the infamous Eiger, the Jungfrau and the Muench) across the valley come into view as you ascend the final 2 lifts.

Possibly it is the start. What is the start of your day or week or month or year - or a



different phase of life like? Scary? Oh yes! My thinking was “why I am I actually doing this” – is it fun? Really? God please look after me.

Early on the race – the need for speed. Am I in control? Can I go faster? Staying crouched low over skis for minutes on end hurts. No time to look at the stunning scenery. But there is God with us in the good times.

The really scary downhill bits – can I turn at speed? Will I crash? How do you feel in the scary bits of life? Is God with you – is he by your side when things are just a little (or even a lot) out of control? Do you let him be there with you?

How about the dreaded uphill bits? Tough to negotiate? Hard, exhausting and feel never ending. At some there are supporters cheering you on – do you feel they are there? Do we feel God cheering us on and encouraging us when we find the going tough in life? He is there – but maybe we do not notice.

The final 2 km. Legs tired, heart pumping, need for more speed. Easy skiing, keep the skis parallel, crouch low – really fun as you fly along – 80 – 100 kph if you can.

In control. How does it feel in your life when things are going well? God is still there – do we acknowledge this or leave him behind.



The finish – more uphill. Little left in the system. As we come to the end of a day/week/period of your life how are we feeling? God is still there – cheering us over the line as the Goldhill earlier finishers did to me.

What about those people who value their safety rather more than me? Walk, cheer the racers from the safety of the side line and marvel at their skill, cruise ski, find a quiet corner on a slope to look around, listen and marvel at the wonders of the mountains, valleys, waterfalls and all that we see and hear.

What about those who do not like the snow? Still enjoy the mountains – but in the summer – and there is even a trip for you to go on.

***God is good, all the time!
All the time, God is good!
Wherever we are, whatever we are doing...
God is good, all the time!***

Richard Lindley/Rachel Bennett



SUNDAY SERVICES

8.30am and 10:00am Morning Services

6.30pm Evening Services

WEDNESDAY SERVICE

10:00am Holy Communion



CONTACTS:

Vicar:

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Curate:

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Youth Minister:

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**Join us at Christ Church
Denmark street, Bedford**

