

Easter 2—Free Church Newsletter

Thank you to everyone who sent contributions in response to Alan's request, as we keep in touch as best we can!

A time to enjoy God's World - from Babs Moore

Like so many people I am now working from home. For someone who normally lives life at 100 miles an hour it has been challenging but there are upsides. I have had far more time to enjoy the beauty of the hundreds of spring bulbs we have in our garden and, with the recent pleasant weather, to sit and enjoy cups of tea and occasional lunch in



the garden and really appreciate the beauty of it all. From my eyrie (study window) I can see many birds in the cheery tree below taking advantage of the feeders and watch the tree come into blossom day by day. I have seen Mr and Mrs Robin making baby robins in another tree and two collared doves courting on the roof top opposite. I can watch the occasional red kites flying overhead and slightly further away there is regular battles between birds of prey and members of the crow family. I find myself

thanking God for The Beauty of the Earth, and yes that hymn does keep going around in my head, and praising God that nature carries on regardless of Covid 19. In fact, this may be an excellent year for birds with much less disturbance than normal. I am taking time to be positive and thankful. for nature every day and to take time to enjoy it.

Help with video communication?

As we explore new ways to keep in touch with family and friends, some people you know may want to learn more about online communication. If so, you may be interested in the website Learn My Way <https://www.learnmyway.com/>, which I've used with people needing a confidence boost. Learn My Way have recently opened up their free online courses for access by anyone. It's easy to register and then track your progress through the courses, or you can just dip in to look at particular topics without registering. The courses are quite short and simple, with some quizzes along the way, and cover a wide range of topics. For example, the page <https://www.learnmyway.com/courses/video-calling/> refers to FaceTime, Skype, Messenger and WhatsApp. So do have a look if you're interested. If you want to know more or need any help with getting started, do just phone or email me on david.duffett@ntlworld.com

Spring photos and a favourite reading—from Charlotte

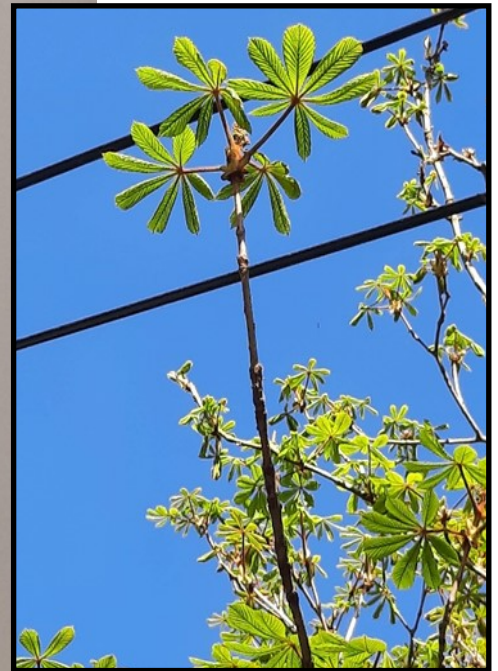
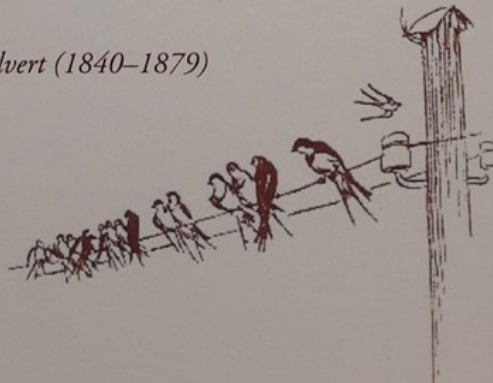
READING

From Kilvert's Diary
Read by Helen Jordan

May 24th 1875

This afternoon I walked over to Lanhill. As I came down from the hill into the valley across the golden meadows and along the flower-scented hedges a great wave of emotion and happiness stirred and rose up within me. I know not why I was so happy, nor what I was expecting, but I was in a delirium of joy, it was one of the supreme few moments of existence, a deep delicious draught from the strong, sweet cup of life. It came unsought, unbidden, at the meadow stile, it was one of the flowers of happiness scattered for us and found unexpectedly by the wayside of life. It came silently, suddenly, and it went as it came, but it left a long lingering glow and glory behind as it faded slowly like a gorgeous sunset, and I shall ever remember the place and the time in which such great happiness fell upon me.

The Reverend Francis Kilvert (1840–1879)



Part of a letter from Ruth Valerio and Gideon Heugh from Tearfund supplied by Mary Cox

We can and we must act.

When Ebola ravaged West Africa in 2014, it was local churches that helped lead the fightback. In Sierra Leone, Christians used video and radio broadcasts to spread vital health messages. Tearfund trained pastors and gave them phones so they could call people suffering with Ebola and pray with them. Churches gave practical help to people in quarantine and church members provided food, water and toiletries.

We are already seeing the church rising to the challenge of coronavirus. In many communities around the world, it is Christians who are coordinating local care, creating neighbourhood WhatsApp groups, dropping off food and toiletries to those who are self-isolating, and being there to provide emotional response.

In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – the largest refugee camp in the world – life is becoming even more miserable. Sanitation and hygiene facilities are already inadequate, and the streets are narrow and crowded. But Tearfund's church partners are distributing hygiene kits and leaflets to educate people about handwashing, social distancing and recognising the symptoms.

Creating a better world

If we lean deeper into God's love, choosing faith instead of fear, we may find that new opportunities emerge. There is the potential for communities to come together more than ever before; for families to re-discover themselves; for busy people to slow down and build a rhythm of rest into their lives; for people to reconnect with God and his world; for nations to re-tune into God's word; for churches to learn how to use digital technology to enhance ministry; and for us to develop more local, environmentally-friendly economies.

One day, we will make it out of this crisis. But what sort of world do we want there to be on the other side? Can we repent of the world we have created, and instead look to build one without such a huge gap between rich and poor – a world where we live in harmony with creation, in which we understand that the well-being of one is bound up with the well-being of all?

In Christ, there is always hope. We can let that hope motivate how we live our lives today as we hold on to God our rock. And, with the love of Christ in our hearts, let us continue to reach out with compassion and determination.

PLEASE PRAY

God of love and light,

In this time of fear, give us your peace.

In this time of isolation, give us your presence.

In this time of sickness, give us your healing.

In this time of uncertainty, give us your wisdom.

In this time of darkness, shine your light upon us all.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Dr Ruth Valerio is a theologian, environmentalist and author, and leads Tearfund's global advocacy and influencing work. Gideon Heugh is a poet and naturalist and is the Senior Copywriter in Tearfund's communications team.