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Parish of St Peter & St Paul, Abington  
- the Church in the Park -  
**Welcome to our October Newsletter  
2024**

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## Rector's Pastoral Letter



## Reflection on the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Under the Oak

We spend 6 weeks in summer taking part in Under the Oak where we discerned and prayed together about where God might lead us to be on this 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

It was interesting that we were doing this on the 800-year anniversary. When we were designing Under the Oak, we could have made it more task driven to

come up with 2-3 plans and initiatives to communicate and implement. And that type of activity is good, with the aim to see the church grow. We do want to see the church grow, but we are growing already.

We talked about community and resources but what stood out for me was a lot of things that came up, we are doing already. We have very active links with 3 schools in our neighbourhoods. We have thriving mission and ministry for Children and families. We reach out and make difference through Churchyard art and other projects with community such as Butterflies. We work together with many charities, especially with Baby Basics which helped babies and mums in need. We support the elderly through our mission for local Care homes and Chaplaincy at St. Christopher's. We are the proud pioneer parish of Ana Chaplaincy in this Diocese. Many other things.

The danger is perhaps not doing more but not appreciating what is already being done. Are we appreciating fully what we are doing and the fact that we are growing as a result? Yes, we are. Not because we have a brilliant plan, but we trusted that God has the plan, and we wanted to respond to that. And this is what Under the Oak should be about: how God is going to lead us in the next 800 years.

When we think about the church growing, it's because we are all growing ourselves. I look into myself and realise how much I have grown since I became part of Abington. I look at you and realise how much you have grown regardless of your age. I have seen a real growth in you. Growth in your graciousness, your capacity to be generous, your willingness to offer what you have for the growth of the Kingdom. That is the Church growing. It is us you and me, not some institution out there or some numbers in statistics. The Church is growing because you are growing and I am growing. WE are growing.

The real treasures we gained through Under the Oak was the depth of conversation rooted in prayer and scripture and we gathered each time to talk about our hopes to see the kingdom grow. Some churches struggle to even talk about mission, but every week we gathered in large numbers, and this was encouraging. These experiences are far more important than any new plan or initiative.

We are at the crossroads of the next 800 years. It has taken 800 years to get where we are today. Things that were unimaginable in the past are happening now, so what kind of seed is God telling us to sow at this point as we look back the past 800 years and look forward to the next 800 years?

This is why we are running the sermon series on Kingdom Life. There are some clues, and those key words can be summarised as follows. These key words are displayed on the wall near the Font in church. My invitation is to write down your name or your responses to those key words.

- 1) **FEEDING.** There is a desire to feed people. And feeding can mean not just food but spiritual feeding. People are not just going hungry but many are hungry for friendship and human warmth. Can you consider and pray if this is something God is inviting you to?
- 2) **COMMUNITY.** So many people tell us how they are touched by what we do as the Church in the Park. Someone told me just last week, how much they appreciated the prayer ribbons. A lady told me how much joy and comfort she received from the message of the arts in the churchyard and the butterflies. Another lady whose mother is very poorly told me last week how much her mother appreciates watching the service and how she sings along every Sunday. There are lots of ways that we can engage with the community and reach out to people, through art, churchyard and many other ways. Can you consider and pray if this is something God is inviting you to?
- 3) **INDIVIDUALS.** We saw really gifted people arising through Under the Oak. Individuals that have not yet been recognised. One evening Under the Oak, we shared our vulnerabilities and prayers which was so powerful. One of our friends, Jill, enabled us to do this by opening herself and shared her vulnerabilities which was so inspiring and humbling. Jill created a sacred space for us by offering herself. I saw Val and her gifts of creativity and skill. There were many other individuals that inspired me, whose gifts I discovered. I am sure you may have noticed too. There are real gifts in our midst. God wants us to release them! If you have a person in mind that you would like to encourage, that you are praying for, then my encouragement is to write down their names on the sheet. Or write down your own name.
- 4) **SPACE.** Under the Oak showed us that we long for a space where we can be open to each other, where we can bring ourselves and receive the comforting touch of God through each other's company. We don't know what kind of space this might be. It could be a bereavement café? A mental health coffee afternoon? A carers' prayer space? Is it possible that God is calling you to be part of creating a space where his presence

and love can be known? If so, please write down your hopes and dreams on the sheet.

One key theme we have been talking about is growing. There are a lot of concerns around growth. Economists and church leaders alike. In this modern world, if something is not growing ceaselessly, then we tend to think something is wrong. If GDP doesn't grow then all media sound alarm bells. If company doesn't grow then the shareholders starts to worry. There is that pressure that makes us feel somehow we have to grow constantly otherwise we are in trouble.

What is missing in this narrative is this: Growing takes a lot of energy and therefore we also need rest and recharge. I see this when I observe my own children. They are growing everyday. And I can see how tiring this job of growing can be for them. Some days they are just grumpy because they are just tired. So what we do is to just let them have rest and sleep as much as they want. But sleeping isn't also easy when you are tired. It takes a lot of care and skills to take rest. But you have to rest to grow. That's how all living things grow as opposed to this mechanical growth that we are getting used to in this modern world. Even God rested and He is the Almighty God!

This makes me wonder. Have you ever felt tired over the last few years? Maybe a bit out of steam? I can put my hand up honestly and say I have. Quite a number of times actually. If you have then I want to say that is absolutely okay. We have been growing altogether and that is a tiring business this business of growth. And if we are to grow as the Church, the Body of Christ, then we must take this business of resting seriously.

As we stand at this crossroads, the threshold between the past and the future, is it possible that God is telling us that maybe worry a bit less about what you might do next, or how much more you will do? Instead, appreciate and notice what is going on and take some time for reflection, rest and recharge. Can we please pray and ponder about this?

When Bishop Debbie came to us a couple of weeks ago, she said this: "Something special is happening here in Abington". What can we see at the heart of it all? Maybe we are in a season of harvest? Season of Harvest naturally means working hard. But it also means nourishment and appreciation. Without them, where is the joy in Harvest, just endless working.

I wonder, why has God placed us in this particular season where things are plentiful and encouraging? It's nothing to do with our own capabilities and competence although they play their part. It's the grace and blessing that God is giving us right now. We don't know how long this season will last but there will be a change of season.

What will we have gained and learnt through this season that will prepare us to meet a different season faithfully? Will we be saddened or discouraged because the harvest is over? Or will be hopeful and inspired to plough the field and sow the seed for the next harvest which may or may not be ours to enjoy?

My prayers is this: Can we find ourselves nourished enough through this season to undertake the task God will give us in the next season? Please pray with me and for me.

All this leads to one question which is linked to our sermon series: Kingdom. What is the Kingdom for you? From when or what does the Kingdom begin for you? I would love to see your responses on the sheet.

With love in Christ

Jun



## Harvest Festival 2024

Harvest Sunday is 6<sup>th</sup> October. We will be collecting donations for the Northampton Food Bank, hosted by St Albans Church. Shopping lists of the items they need have been handed out today, and are also available at the back of the church. All money collected on Harvest Sunday will be donated to Christian Aid. Thank you for your generosity.



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## New Sermon Series: Kingdom Life, “Kingdom begins...”

We are delighted to announce our New Sermon Series: Kingdom Life.

During Under the Oak, the 6-week long visioning exercise we had in July, we talked and prayed about where God is leading us to be. All of that came down to one thing: How do we build and release the Kingdom of God in our community and our life?

Starting from Sunday the 15<sup>th</sup> of September to Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, for 8 weeks, we will be exploring questions about the Kingdom: What does the Kingdom mean? What would the Kingdom of God look like in our day to day life? From what and when does the Kingdom of Heaven begin?

Please join us in prayer as we seek the Kingdom of God together. You will be also invited to take part in Home Groups which will also discuss and pray about the Kingdom.

### **Preachers of Sermon Series: Kingdom Life**

15 September: Kingdom is within you, **by Andrew**

22 September: Searching for the one, **by Jun**

29 September: From tiny acorn to might oaks, **by Jenny**

6 October (Harvest/All-Age): When we offer what we have, **by Alison**

13 October: The unseen Kingdom, **by Liz**

20 October: The Prodigal Son, **by Tracy**

27 October: The answer lies in the soil, **by Prester**

3 November: the Kingdom amongst us **by Jun**

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### **Upcoming Events to celebrate 800 Years**

- Special Talk with Afternoon tea Part 1 (Parish Rooms)

: Christians in the Middle East by Open Doors: Saturday 28 Sep, 3 pm

- Special Talks with Afternoon tea Part 2(Parish Rooms)

: Christians in Ethiopia by Bishop Andrew: Sat 12 Oct, 3 pm

- Special Talks with Afternoon tea Part 3(Parish Rooms)

: History of Abington and its Rectors by Jane Evans: Sat 16 Nov, 3 pm

\*Those are proper afternoon tea. Entry by donation but we do need you to sign-up to know the number to cater. Thank you!

- **Celebration Concert (Church): Christmas Music from the Messiah Sunday, 1 December, 4 pm (Please note the time)**

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### **Readers and Intercessors for this month**

**6 Oct, Harvest(All-Age): Readers:** Junior Church  
**Intercessor:** Junior Church

**13 Oct: Readers:** Steve Groves & Peter Gompertz  
**Intercessor:** Hilary Hodge

**20 Oct: Readers:** Ken Hunter & Hilary Hodge  
**Intercessor:** Peter Gompertz

**27 Oct: Readers:** John Langley & Liz Kelly  
**Intercessor:** Donald Loe

**3 Nov, All Saints' (All-Age): Readers:** Junior Church  
**Intercessor:** Junior Church

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## Butterflies for 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The Butterfly Art Display continues to grow and we now have 806! They are beginning to appear around the church so look out for them!

There are still many available at the back of the church to decorate. Many thanks to Susie and Simon who have been busy displaying them.



**Celebrating 800 Years:  
Butterfly Art Display**

We are creating a community art display to celebrate the uniqueness and vibrancy of our church and our community.

Our vision is to cover the front of the balcony with beautiful butterflies, but we need your help to do this. We are inviting everyone to decorate a butterfly to be displayed in church during our anniversary year.

How should you decorate your butterfly? It is entirely up to you! We want this to be a reflection of you and your personality, there are no rules!

Paper butterflies, in various sizes, will be available at the back of the church. Once completed, please return to the box in the Welcomers' Corner.



## Children and Young People Update

Sunday 8th September was a wonderful occasion! Bishop Debbie visited the Abington Church for the first time and led our 800 year Celebration and Rededication service. 15 people were confirmed which was amazing! Some of the young people in the Church took this important step on their Christian journey. Congratulations go





to Liam, Louis, Billie, Peter and Paul, along with their older brothers, Israel and Isaac. We were also delighted that Evgenii, Alyosha and Katie were also admitted to Holy Communion. Thank you to everyone who took part in this celebratory service, which will be remembered for a long time.

We are looking forward to the baptisms of Evie and Eloise, which takes place at the end of September. They are the two year old twins of Laura – you may have seen them in church on a few occasions over the summer months? This will be a very special occasion.

This year there have been a number of child baptisms. They include Dace, Maeva, Leon, Andrew, as well as Evgenii, Alyosha, Peter and Paul. In November, Grace will be baptised. She is the daughter of Hannah and Ollie, who were married at the church a few years ago. Please would you keep all these children and their families in your prayers.

Another family in need of prayer at this time are Fran and Dan, and their baby son, Dali. They are all members of Little Fishes, along with Dali's sister, Ivy. Dali has significant health problems and it is a very stressful time for all the family.

Abington Guides enjoyed a very successful camp at Castle Ashby in the summer. It is the first time they have been camping since the pandemic! We look forward to seeing some of the Guides, along with the Brownies and Rainbows at the Harvest service on 6th October. Little Fishes are celebrating Harvest on 30th September. The families have been asked to bring along items of food for the Food Bank. Many of them are very enthusiastic to support both the work of the Food Bank and also Baby Basics.

There are now quite a number of teenagers who regularly come to church on Sunday. This is really wonderful. Hopefully we will be able to provide opportunities for them to both meet for fellowship and also to become more involved in the life of the Church. If this is something that you would like to explore with us, please let me know!

Finally we are very pleased that Simona has joined the JC rota of volunteers. It was a bit of a baptism of fire recently when she helped me with her first session! The children were particularly energetic and lively but we still had fun! The current theme for our JC sessions is 'Fruits of the Spirit' and we are learning about what behaviours make God happy.

Cathy Tinsley Children and Youth Missioner, 07516979223 and [children@abingtonchurch.org.uk](mailto:children@abingtonchurch.org.uk)

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## Ride and Stride

### Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust

Thank you for your support!

Alicia and Rachel cycled 12 churches. Also Donald walked to 13 Churches and raised £330. Well done everyone !



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## Abington Pastoral Team

### News from Abington Park View Care Home

Last month on 4<sup>th</sup> September, Sandra led an uplifting service about different ways of praising God. She was helped by Liz and Jackie, and ten residents, with two relatives and Vicky, also enjoyed the afternoon. They especially liked the well-known hymns, Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine, Abide with me, and Breathe on me breath of God.

On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September, Revd Jun, accompanied by Liz, Jane and Sandra, conducted a Holy Communion Service for nine residents in the Garden Lounge. Jun reminded



us that we are all children of God, who knows each one of us by name and loves us unconditionally.

To find more about ways to support our elderly and local care homes, please contact Liz Kelly, Lay Pastoral Minister and Anna Chaplain. Her contact details are [lizmk@outlook.com](mailto:lizmk@outlook.com) and telephone 01604 636947 or 07745 604591.

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## News from St Christopher's

The Lollipop Ponies were very welcome visitors to St Christopher's this month and we had another glorious day, so they spent their time with us in the gardens. Butterscotch and Daisy are two very beautiful Shetland ponies who thoroughly enjoyed the fuss and attention they received from residents.



A number of residents were present for the visit from Bishop Debbie on the 8th September. It was lovely to meet her and to welcome her to St Peter and St Paul's in a commemorative year. A resident and member of staff who had recently been baptized, were confirmed during the service, along with several other members of the Church community.



'Talk like a Pirate Day' has been going for thirteen years, but we decided to really enter into the spirit of the day this year. Residents dressed up, and we had a quiz where the losing team leader was asked to 'Walk the plank! We ended the afternoon with sea shanties! Can you recognise these pirates?



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## Monthly Bible & Prayer Group

We share our questions about the Bible and faith. We share our hopes and dreams in prayer. Why not join our monthly Bible and Prayer group? Anyone with any questions is welcome.

We are currently meeting every **first Thursday** of the month at the **Parish Office**. Next meeting is **Thu 3 October at 7.30 pm** at Parish Office. Do speak to Jun if you are interested.

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## Margaret Frost R.I.P

It is with sadness that we share that Margaret Frost died peacefully on 21<sup>st</sup> of September. She received the last rites the day before she died and was very peaceful.

Margaret had been a MU member since 1987, when she was admitted to the organisation at Abington Church. She was the branch secretary from 1991 and became MU Branch Leader in 1996, a position she held until 2000.

Margaret was an enthusiastic supporter of The Daylight Centre in Wellingborough and held yearly coffee mornings at her home over many years to raise money for MU projects. Margaret and her longstanding friend, Sandra Greaves, organised the teas for our MU meetings for over 15 years.

The members of Abington Church Mothers' Union, past and present, are very thankful to Margaret for her commitment, thoughtfulness and friendship we have shared for over 35 years.

Her funeral will be at Abington on Fri 18 Oct at 11 am.

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## Prayer Requests

Each week at church we pray for people in need and also for schools, colleges and universities attended by our young people, as well as places of employment, where members of the church family work.

If you would like to make a prayer request, please see Cathy Tinsley, who is responsible for compiling these requests, or email her on [cathytinsley18@gmail.com](mailto:cathytinsley18@gmail.com)

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## [Draft Minutes from the last PCC Meeting](#)

Please click the title above to access the link.

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### **Zoom Compline**

This is a weekly service at 7.00pm on Tuesdays. In case you don't know, Compline is a quiet, reflective service at the end of the day and includes an open prayer time, so we are able to continue to support one another. The joining details are: Meeting I.D. 815 8020 8528. Passcode 409450 Please talk to Liz Kelly if you want to know more about this and to receive a weekly invitation by email, which enables one-click joining. Her contact details are: [lizmk@outlook.com](mailto:lizmk@outlook.com) or telephone on 07745 604591.

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### **Parish Newsletter Contribution**

Please send your stories and photos to Revd. Jun, [rector@abingtonchurch.org.uk](mailto:rector@abingtonchurch.org.uk) by 23<sup>rd</sup> of each month.

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