

# CHRIST CHURCH

# Life

living to  
love God  
and you



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June - July 2021

“Look around at the nations; Look and be amazed!  
For I am doing something in your own day,  
Something you wouldn't believe even if someone told  
you about it.”

-Habakkuk 1:5 NLT





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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 **August/September 2021 edition** will be **16<sup>th</sup> July 2021**.*

*Submissions are emailed to: [editor@ccbedford.org](mailto:editor@ccbedford.org)*

## Vicar's Letter

**Dear friends,**

Lockdown is easing. Some version of normality is beckoning over the horizon. We're heading not so much back to what was, but forward to new way of living, serving and worshipping. Of course, there will be aspects of the past that we hold on to and there will some of the changes we will invest further in.



Yet, the key for all of us is not about looking to the past ways of living, serving and worshipping, or thinking that the new or amended ways of living, serving and worshipping will mean it's all alright again.

Not viewer numbers on our YouTube channel, nor clicks on CCB News emails, not listening to Christian podcasts nor enjoying other churches really good online presence truly measure what's most important for you about these past 18 months.

It's your faithfulness to Jesus. These 18 months can only be of true value for you, and for our church family, if you and I can look back and, despite being challenged and depressed and wishing only for ... the main point that matters is: we faithfully honoured the Lord.

Now, if in your heart you know that these months haven't been your finest hour with Jesus – a case of so little offered so rarely so much of the time – do not despair. Take time today to set solid rhythms: mark out a time when you're going to stop to be with Jesus; ask the Holy Spirit to fill you; read a Bible passage (try a reading plan on YouVersion); thank God for being faithful to us; and pray to remain close to him.

The Gospel writer, John, helpfully reminded us of the power of such rhythms: 1 John 2:24-25:

*“So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.”*

Whether you've found these 18 months a rich time with Jesus or a missed time with Him, decide today if you're going to drift or determine, to slide away or set your sails for the Spirit to spread wide.

Remain in Him and rejoice in His presence,

**Richard**

## ALAN COTTENDEN'S ON THE FRONTLINE

An interview with...

### Jess Walker

Jess Walker – our trainee youth worker – will soon finish her part-time degree in Theology, Ministry and Mission at Ridley Hall in Cambridge and so it seemed a good time to ask her to reflect on how it had gone and what God might have for her next.



#### ***Tell me about your course at Ridley***

So, I'm studying for a BA Hons in Theology, Ministry and Mission, and doing it alongside my placement at Christ Church. There are about a dozen of us in my year group and, while most of us – including me - are specialising in youth work, some are focusing on pioneering ministries, children, or sport. We're of a variety of ages, from late teens to sixties, and – though we have naturally fallen into a “younger” group and an “older” group – we've also gelled together really well as a whole year group, which is lovely. Before COVID restrictions came along, the study pattern was that we each worked on our own back home most of the time but, every two months, we would all converge on Ridley for a residential week, each day starting with chapel at 8:00 with lectures from 9:00 till 17:00 to follow. Most of the other students at Ridley are studying for ordained ministries and we would mix in with them – and the staff - at lunch (I especially enjoyed the after-lunch ping pong sessions!) and dinner times, so there was a real sense of community about the place. Some late-night worship sessions in the chapel after the pub have been particularly special!

#### ***What impact has COVID had?***

One important consequence is that we can't have our residential weeks. They are still set aside for lectures, tutorials and the like but it all has to be done online. That's made my close friendship with two fellow Ridley students – particularly precious: we have a weekly online meeting together which we also use for catching up and encouraging one another, laughing, praying, and talking about how our assignments are going. We three were already good friends before COVID and we were often in touch but these regular “meetings” during lock-down have been special.

We're in our third year now (and nearly finished!) and I'm really grateful that we had the first two years together as a year group before lockdown: that's made it easier to support one another from a distance over the last year. During lockdown, a wider group of my Ridley friends have established the habit of meeting together online on Saturday nights, which is a great way of celebrating one another's birthdays, sharing news etc.

### ***What sort of topics do you tackle during your (non) residential weeks?***

The last one in February is a good example. It was on Modern Theologies: Post Modernism, Post Liberalism, Eco Theology and Queer Theology. These are all strands of modern thinking that we're likely to come across – if we haven't already – and it's been really valuable to have the opportunity to think them through.

### ***Which aspects of your degree syllabus have you particularly enjoyed?***

I love the deep theological discussions but what has excited me most is the Ministerial Practice Training (MPT). That involves us exploring together how the things we've been learning in the rest of the course might "play out" practically in the different contexts that we encounter now in our "day jobs", and might come across in the future. We've mostly done this through two-hour discussion sessions and they've been brilliant. Our MPT tutors have become the "go to" people when we've needed good advice on working issues through, practically.

### ***What took you to Ridley in the first place?***

In the sixth form I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I left school and I ended up doing a sort of gap year that involved working full-time for a year combined with volunteering at YCG at Christ Church. YCG helped me to discover that – although I didn't match what I saw as the typical extroverted youth leader – I really was interested in youth work and I set about exploring training possibilities. Ridley wasn't initially on my list of possibilities at all but that's where I wound up, and I'm glad. I was 19 when I started and I have sometimes wondered if I would have been better waiting until I was a bit older: at 19, I think I was still very much figuring out who I was. However, I'm learning that God's timing is perfect and it's worked out really well.

### ***How did you come to faith in Jesus?***

I wasn't brought up in church and first started coming to the Christ Church youth group when my school friend invited me. At that time, the leaders who led the youth group were brilliant at creating a space where you felt welcomed, accepted, loved and comfortable to get involved at whatever level you wanted while you weighed things up.

When I was 15, I went on a CYFA (Christian Youth Fellowship Association) summer camp along with some friends and apart from being great fun, I learned different things about God and what it meant to become a Christian. In November of that year (2015) I was confirmed. I can't identify a specific point of commitment: it was more of a case of gradual growth for me.

### ***Looking back, what advice would you give to your younger self - age 15, say?***

Pray more. Be more gracious towards yourself. Most things aren't as big a deal as you think. Have fun: you'll be fine! You don't have to be an extrovert, dress in a particular way and do particular things to be acceptable. Be confident despite the fact that you won't always get things right. Find out how to be nice without being trodden on.

### ***What has God been teaching you lately?***

Patience! Mostly with myself! I place high expectations on myself and tend to give myself a hard time when I don't measure up. I can also find it tough when others disappoint me. God has been teaching me more about grace, about not dwelling unhelpfully long on mistakes - mine or others'.

Something else I've particularly been learning along with my two Ridley friends as we've prayed and talked together is how God often helps us in a situation, not so much by changing the situation itself, as by giving us a fresh perspective on it, so that we can see better how he is – or wants to be – at work in it.

### ***How do you go about praying and reading the bible?***

I'm a journaler. My notebook helps me think and clarify things. Sometimes, I might write a lot; other times just a series of brief bullet points. Sometimes I don't write anything but read back over the last month or year, say, dipping in and finding encouragement as I'm reminded of what God has been doing in my life and his faithfulness. I also use Post It notes to remind me to pray regularly for particular people or situations because my short-term memory is terrible.

I have to study the bible a lot to prepare for youth group sessions and to write my essays for Ridley but I've learned that it's important also to read the bible "for me": to feed me rather than to feed into an essay or a lesson plan. If my ministry to the young people is to be authentic, I can't be running "on empty" in my own life. I think it's about having rhythms and routines of prayer and bible reading without drifting into dry legalism, going through the motions without there being much "life" about it. Well, I try: but it doesn't always happen!

### ***What do you do for fun?***

I love to play a few of my instruments, either alone or with a small group of friends (I have terrible stage fright so I won't play for big crowds). I also like to read (especially crime and murder mystery), to walk, to cycle (but not too far!) and to paint with pastels. Best of all is spending time with some close friends. I've found some really good ones in the past few years.

### ***Do you have a favourite scripture passage?***

Ephesians 3:20 has been very special to me for several years: "(God)... is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..." I first became really aware of it at Spring Harvest in 2015 and it's brought me encouragement and reassurance many times since, often at key turning points or in the face of difficult decisions.

### ***When does your course finish, and what happens next?***

I'll finish the course this summer but the graduation ceremony has been put back to later in the year when, hopefully, COVID restrictions will have been more fully lifted.

I'm not sure yet exactly what I want to do long term but I certainly feel drawn to work with young people, helping them to discover what it means to know God in their everyday lives. I would say I'm pretty good at planning and at relating to young people one-to-one and in small groups, but I'm not so comfortable with big groups and I'm not very good at high-energy games. So, I'm keen to find out what God has in mind for me and feel a mixture of excitement and slight apprehension. My tutor at Ridley has been great at helping me to think things through and she is very well-connected with churches and other organisations so she's well-placed to advise. Ridley also organised some very helpful coaching sessions to help us work through what we wanted to do.

In the meantime, the Christ Church PCC has offered me a short-term (July to December) part-time appointment to work with our 11s-18s, which I've agreed and I'm really looking forward to it. After that: who knows?!

**Thank you!**

**Alan Cottenden**

# DENEUF NEWS May 14<sup>th</sup> 2021

Hilary Deneufchâtel, based in France with SIM, currently training as a Bible translation consultant.

Dear friends,

It is nearly a year since we moved back to France from Benin. It's a very different France from the one we left behind, and we know that you've also been living with changing Covid restrictions, but we hope that you too have seen the faithfulness of God. We feel at home here in Villers-lès-Nancy, and are enjoying this part of the country.



## Monkolé Bible

In April my Swiss colleague Philippe from Midi Bible sent me a message to say that although it had taken longer than he had hoped, the Monkolé Bibles were finally being printed in South Korea. When that's finished, they will be sent by boat to Benin, and once they get through customs, they'll make their way north from Cotonou by lorry.



I was encouraged recently to hear that both Monkolé churches have literacy classes running, with people wanting to make sure they'll be able to read their Bibles once they arrive.

The Monkolé song book has been updated and re-printed in Parakou, and I had a photo of that sent to me just this week. Since I also proofread that, it was great to see it finally

in print! Some songs are translations of French hymns, but many were composed by the Monkolé themselves.

## **Bible consultant training**

Most of my work time lately has been spent learning Biblical Greek. It's a difficult language to learn, and very different from other languages I know, but I'm enjoying the challenge! As a former language teacher, I know that motivation is crucial, and I am certainly very motivated!

I have also been able to attend some online training about translation software. This is software which works alongside Paratext, the main package used in Bible translation. I've learned to use one programme which helps do some basic type-setting. It wouldn't replace a professional type-setter for the Bible, but it could be used for printing individual books as they are translated and checked. Another programme can produce mobile phone applications with Biblical text in them. These are handy things to know about to recommend to teams in the future.

I also had the opportunity last week and this week to sit in on some online checking sessions. The translation consultant is in Dallas, and the team is in Zambia. It's been inspiring to see the reality of online checking sessions, and to appreciate the consultant's good relationship with his team, and the work they are getting done. I have of course spent many hours in checking sessions over our time in Benin, but it's interesting to see the different style of another consultant.

Another activity which has taken place over Zoom recently is the Bible study which I've been doing with a friend here in Villers. She is a Christian who wants to know the Bible better, and studying with her helps me to see the text through the eyes of someone for whom it is relatively unknown. This is extremely helpful for Bible translation.

## **Family News**

Marc continues his work as a supply teacher. It is different from the system in England as he has a reliable post and salary from the education authority. He is now teaching partly in Nancy and partly in Épinal. This job has added even more unpredictability to our timetables, but he has been enjoying teaching and gets on well with his colleagues.



Simon will be going to lycée next year (like sixth form but starts a year earlier and lasts 3 years). He is hoping to study for what is called an Abibac, where he would have a lot of his classes in German. Benjy is in his first year of secondary school, which is going well. Eve is mid-primary school and she is enjoying school too. They are all glad to be able to get involved in church activities for their age groups, and also a local scout group, when Covid conditions allow!

In Benin the weather put us off much walking, but here we have had fun rambling in the local countryside as a family. We've been enjoying the four seasons! We look forward to a trip to England sometime, but with quarantine and tests to have to fit in, we don't think it is going to be this summer.

Much love,

**Hilary (and all the family)**

hilary.deneufchatel@sim.org

***We thank God:***

for His help as we have made the transition back to life in Europe  
for the printing of the Monkolé Bibles  
for the literacy classes in the Monkolé churches  
for this opportunity I have to observe some online checking

***Please pray with us:***

That Monkolé Christians will be equipped to read, study and understand their Bibles  
that they will share the Good News around them with those who do not know it  
for my continuing training

# Leadership Conference 2021

## **The Roar of Jesus**     *John reflects on the HTB Leadership Conference 2021*

I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Leadership Conference run by HTB, which was held online this year. It was a short event lasting just a couple of hours, but boy did they manage to pack a lot into a short time – worship, talks, interviews, prayer ministry, and updates on how Alpha has been flourishing online during the pandemic. And what's more is that because the conference was online, they were able to interview people from all over the world.

Nicky Gumbel opened with a great reflection on Isaiah 61 as we come out of the pandemic. Here are my thoughts on what he had to say.

Something new will emerge as we come out of this pandemic, but what do we want that something new to be? What do we want it to look like? We had the roaring 20's in the 1920's but what will we be roaring about in the 2020's? Some predict a roar of hedonistic pleasure seekers but what kind of roar do we want to hear? We want to hear the roar of The Lion, the roar of Jesus!!

Isaiah 61 begins "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me...". The word Christ means Anointed One, and just as Jesus was the Anointed Son of the Father, so we are anointed by Christ. 1 John 2:20 tells us that as Christians we "have an anointing from the Holy One and all of [us] know the truth".

As those anointed by Christ we want to hear the ROAR of HIS LOVE. Jesus' roar was full of love, love for those that need it most: the poor; the broken-hearted; the captive; the prisoner. In other words, the marginalised. In being anointed by Christ, as Isaiah 61 says, the Spirit of the Lord is on us and Jesus has anointed us to proclaim Good News to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners (Hebrew: the blind).

As those anointed by Christ, we also want to hear the ROAR of JUSTICE. The Lord loves justice and hates robbery and wrongdoing (Is 61:8). Jesus came to bring freedom and justice to the oppressed.

The roar of Jesus is the roar of justice and we are to seek justice for the oppressed too – avoiding the exploitation of others by choosing wisely who we do business with, or wherever possible buying fairtrade and ethically sourced goods. And God wants this roar of justice to come from a unified and diverse church.

This is why Paul was tasked with taking the good news and preaching the boundless riches of Christ to the Gentiles – “to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things” so that “through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known” (Eph 3:8-10).

And as those anointed in Christ, we want to hear the ROAR of THE GOOD NEWS. The digital revolution we have faced during the pandemic means we have been able to reach those who couldn't or wouldn't come to our church services in person. The Holy Spirit is (the only one?) not confused by Zoom but the digital revolution means we can now reach people who couldn't get to church because of disability, frailty and other challenges, and not just because our buildings were forced to close during lockdown. The digital revolution also means we can now reach those who wouldn't come to church, perhaps because they want to remain anonymous as they explore the Christian faith or what we as a church have to offer them, perhaps they are afraid of being hurt (again) by the church as they dip their toe back in the water. God through the pandemic has given us access to the online world, and the online world has in turn given us access to people beyond the walls of the church...

We want to hear the ROAR of JESUS above and beyond any other roar we might hear as we emerge into a new world.

We need to hear the anointed ROAR of JESUS, the anointed ROAR of LOVE, JUSTICE, and THE GOOD NEWS because we are anointed ourselves to bring the Good News to this world. This is the new world we want to see emerging from the pandemic.

**John Bell**

# Baptism

*‘For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the Head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by human hands but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead’ (Colossians 2:9–12).*

## What is Baptism?

### **IMPORTANCE OF SIGNS**

What signs do we use in society and what do they mean? i.e.

- a handshake (meaning greeting, trust, friendship)
- a salute (meaning respect for authority)
- a wedding ring (meaning commitment and unavailability to others)
- a poppy (meaning remembrance of others’ sacrifice)

Jesus gave us two signs to partake in.

These two signs, Baptism and Holy Communion, are called ‘sacraments’. A sacrament is “an outward, visible sign of an inward, spiritual grace”.

### **BAPTISM**

What is baptism a sign of in each of these passages?

- Matthew 28:19
- Acts 2:38-39
- Romans 6:4
- 1 Cor 12:12-13
- Matthew 3:11
- Acts 2:38

Read Ephesians 4:4-5 which explains that we only get baptised once. We may not remember it, just like we may not remember all the details of our wedding day, but the important thing is that we know that it happened. Each time we see someone else being baptised, we remember that we ourselves belong to Christ and that He himself has given us this sign of baptism.

Often people ask about the validity of their baptism if they were baptised as a child. We affirm infant baptism. Here's a helpful analogy to understand the interplay between faith and baptism: when you are baptised, it is like receiving a cheque with 'forgiveness' written on it. When you come to a personal, conscious faith in Jesus Christ, this is the moment when you cash the cheque in. However, the cheque was always valid, even if you received it as a child.

There are two extreme views on the subject of what baptism is, what it means and what it does. On the one hand, some people believe that baptism works automatically, so that if you bring your baby to be baptised, then your baby is saved, and if your baby is not baptised, he or she is not saved. This view explains the urgency that was felt in the Middle Ages about getting a baby to baptism, because if the child died unbaptised, he or she was thought to go straight to hell and could not then be buried in a churchyard. But if the child had been baptised and had not committed any further sin since then, the baby was considered to be safe in heaven. That is a kind of magical, mechanical view of baptism, which still lingers in our society today.

I know of the story of one woman who was not herself a church-goer but was quite desperate about getting an early date in the diary for her baby's baptism on the basis that they would otherwise go straight to hell – even though she purportedly did not subscribe to the existence of heaven and hell.

At the other extreme are those who see baptism as merely 'a sign' or 'a symbol.' For this reason, some do not baptise at all. They regard it as an empty sign which can be dispensed with.

Where does the truth lie? I want to argue that the biblical view does not lie at either extreme.

### **Baptism is a command of Jesus**

Jesus himself was baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan (cf. Matthew 3:13). After his resurrection Jesus gave this commission to his disciples: *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you'* (Matthew 28:19).

## **Baptism is a part of Christian initiation**

From the day of Pentecost onwards the church has administered baptism. After Peter had addressed the crowd on the day of Pentecost, they *‘were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”.*’ (Acts 2:37–38). So, Christian initiation has three parts. The first part is what we have to do: repent and believe. Always in the New Testament baptism is connected with faith (e.g. Acts 16:31–33). Secondly, the verse instructs us, *‘be baptised’* – that is not something we do but something the church does to us. Thirdly, we will receive *‘forgiveness’* and *‘the gift of the Holy Spirit.’* That is what God does for us, and that is the third part of Christian initiation.

In the New Testament, we find that these three are all part of Christian initiation but they do not always happen at the same time. In fact, in practice it is impossible almost to synchronise them. In the case of the apostle Paul, there was a delay between his experience of the Spirit and his subsequent baptism. Similarly in Acts 10 Cornelius and his household were filled with the Spirit and then they were baptised. Meanwhile, the Samaritan converts had already been baptised when they were filled with the Spirit. Problems can arise when we try to synchronise these three events.

One church leader tells of a man who came to see him, who had been baptised as an infant. He later had a conversion experience and went off to a Baptist church where he was re-baptised. He then came to the church leader and said, *‘I am not sure that at the time I was rebaptised I was really converted but I think I am now, so I would like to be baptised again.’* He was trying to make sure that his faith had come before baptism, which is not always possible to achieve. What matters is not when we were baptised, but the fact that we have been baptised.

## **Baptism is a mark of entry into the church**

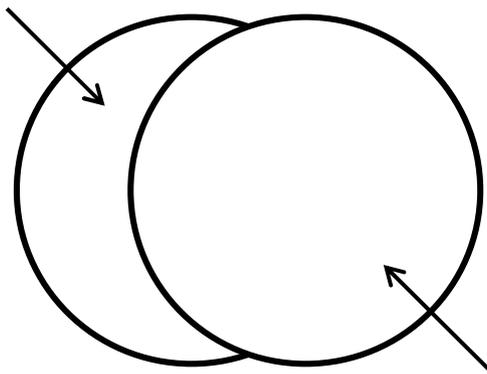
Thirdly, baptism is the mark of entry into the Christian church. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says, *‘For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body’* (v.13). We are baptised into the church. There is a very important distinction between the church and the kingdom of God.

John Murray, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania wrote:

*‘Those united to Christ in the spiritual bonds of effectual calling and saving faith [are] known only to God who alone infallibly discerns as well as determines who his people are [and yet] it is by divine institution that the church, as a visible entity administered by men in accordance with Christ’s appointment, must admit to its fellowship those who make a credible profession of faith in Christ and promise obedience to him. To exclude such is to arrogate to ourselves prerogatives which do not belong to us and it is to violate the institution of Christ.’*

John Murray makes the distinction between the invisible and the visible church. Since the terms ‘invisible church’ and ‘visible church’ are not found in Scripture, perhaps it is better to distinguish between the kingdom of God (invisible) and the church (visible) as it exists on earth.

*Church (entry by baptism)*



*Kingdom (entry by faith) This diagram demonstrates that the way into the kingdom of God is by faith.*

The way into the church is through baptism (diagram 1 & 2). It is possible to be a member of the church and not to be a member of the kingdom. There are people who have been baptised who have never come to faith in Jesus Christ and who are not part of the kingdom of God, but they are part of the church. Equally it is possible to be part of the kingdom of God, but they are not part of the church. For example, Jesus said to the thief on the cross, *‘Today you will be with me in paradise’* (Luke 23:43). Despite the fact that the thief was never baptised and thus never became part of the church, he was part of the kingdom – he was saved. As Christians we are called both to enter the kingdom of God by faith *and* his church on earth by baptism.

## **Baptism points beyond itself**

The great theologian St. Augustine described baptism as ‘a visible form of invisible grace’ and the Book of Common Prayer describes it as ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.’ So, what does baptism signify for us? It signifies three things. First of all, it signifies cleansing. Paul writes to the Corinthians of their baptism: *‘you were washed’* (1 Corinthians 6:11). Secondly, it symbolises incorporation into Christ. Paul writes that we are *‘baptised into Christ Jesus’* (Romans 6:3). He explains that we are baptised into his death and resurrection: we died with Jesus Christ, we were buried with Jesus Christ, we rose again with Jesus Christ. *‘Having been buried with him in baptism ... [we are] raised with him through your faith in the power of God’* (Colossians 2:12). Thirdly, baptism symbolises the seal of the Spirit: *‘For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body... and were all given the one Spirit to drink’* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The water symbolises the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism by full immersion, where a person goes right down under the water, is a wonderful three-fold symbol. First, water is used for washing. The individual is visibly cleansed by the water. Secondly, the symbolic action of falling back into the water and then emerging echoes our dying and rising with Christ. Thirdly, the water itself represents the living water of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39). Because of this powerful symbolism many churches baptise adults by immersion.

Of course, there are good reasons why this method may not be appropriate for babies. For example, The Book of Common Prayer instructs: ‘If the godparents certify that the child may well endure it, he shall dip it in the water, discreetly and warily,’ but goes on to say, ‘But if they certify that the child is weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it, saying the aforesaid words...’

Baptism by anointing or splashing with water is just as effective, because the grace of God is not limited by the amount of water we use.

## **Baptism is an effective sign**

Fifthly, baptism is an effectual sign: it affects what it signifies. The Western mind, often erroneously, tends to draw a distinction between the physical and the spiritual, advocating that it is possible to do physical things with no spiritual consequences. The Hebrew mind does not work like that, believing that what you do physically has spiritual consequences. That is Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 6 when he is talking about

sexual intercourse. He says one cannot simply do it as an isolated physical act as it has inbuilt spiritual consequences. When a man has sexual intercourse with a prostitute, he unites himself with her spiritually (vv.15–17). All the way through the Bible the physical and the spiritual go together. Baptism affects what it signifies: the physical act has spiritual consequences.

Baptism is a gift of God given by grace, not presupposing any human merit. As a result, some so emphasise the efficacy of the sacrament in conferring grace upon an individual that they believe that the moment a child is baptised, he or she is saved regardless of anyone's faith. Whilst they rightly stress the grace of God, others rightly emphasise the importance of faith. They say that there must be clear unequivocal faith: what matters is the individual's response. The Bible stresses both grace and faith. They are brought together in baptism. Baptism affects what it signifies, providing there is faith as a response. Let me give you an illustration.

Suppose somebody gives me a cheque for £10,000. The moment I receive that cheque (providing the person is worth £10,000), I can say, 'I am now richer. I am richer by £10,000.' But I am not yet richer because I have not cashed the cheque. When I go to the bank and cash the cheque, then I really am richer by £10,000. Baptism is like the receiving of a cheque. Faith is like the cashing of the cheque. We need both. The giving of the cheque is the equivalent to an act of God's grace. The cashing of the cheque is the equivalent to our response of faith.

As St. Gregory of Nazianzus said, 'Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift...We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called *gift* because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; *grace* because it is given even to the guilty; *baptism* because sin is buried in the water; *anointing* for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; *enlightenment* because it radiates light; *clothing* since it veils our shame; *bath* because it washes; and *seal* as it is our guard and the sign of God's Lordship.'

(This is closely drawn from an article by Holy Trinity Brompton)



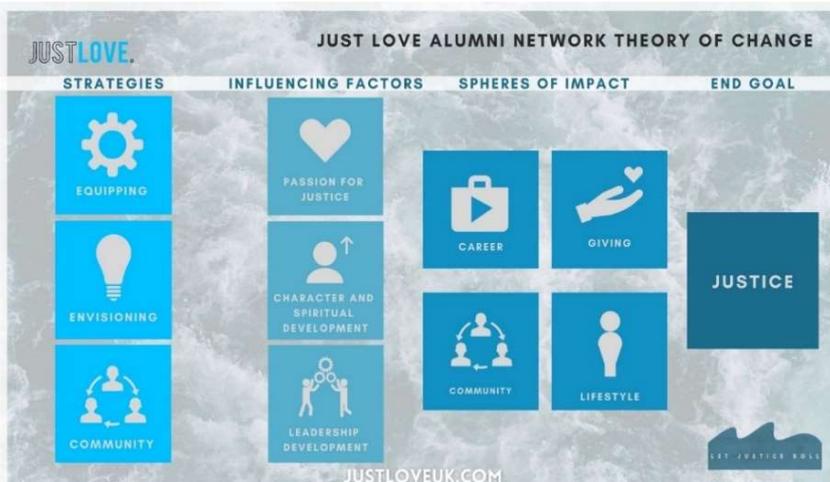
**Richard Hibbert**

# Impressions of the Let Justice Roll Evening



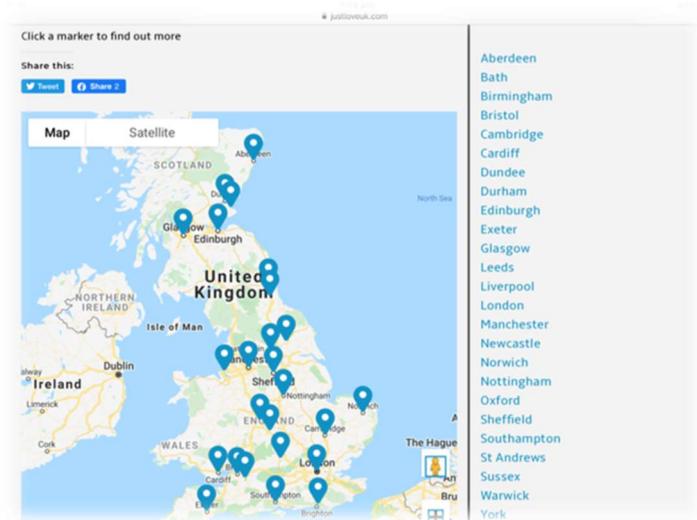
A few weeks ago, I was privileged to receive an invitation to attend a national fundraiser/vision evening, for the charity JUST LOVE, who's vision is to inspire and release every Christian student to pursue the biblical call to social justice; see this generation embark on a lifelong pursuit of justice, giving generously, consuming ethically, loving radically and seeking change in the industries in which they work. WOW what a vision and one, as Christians, needs our support.

I was most impressed by the young adults drive and enthusiasm, for change. They believe so strongly in this movement and are excited to see it impact our nation. Founded in 2013 in Oxford, they have grown and expanded substantially, supporting hundreds of students in twenty-five university cities across the U.K. and attending a variety of Christian based events, including HTB Leadership

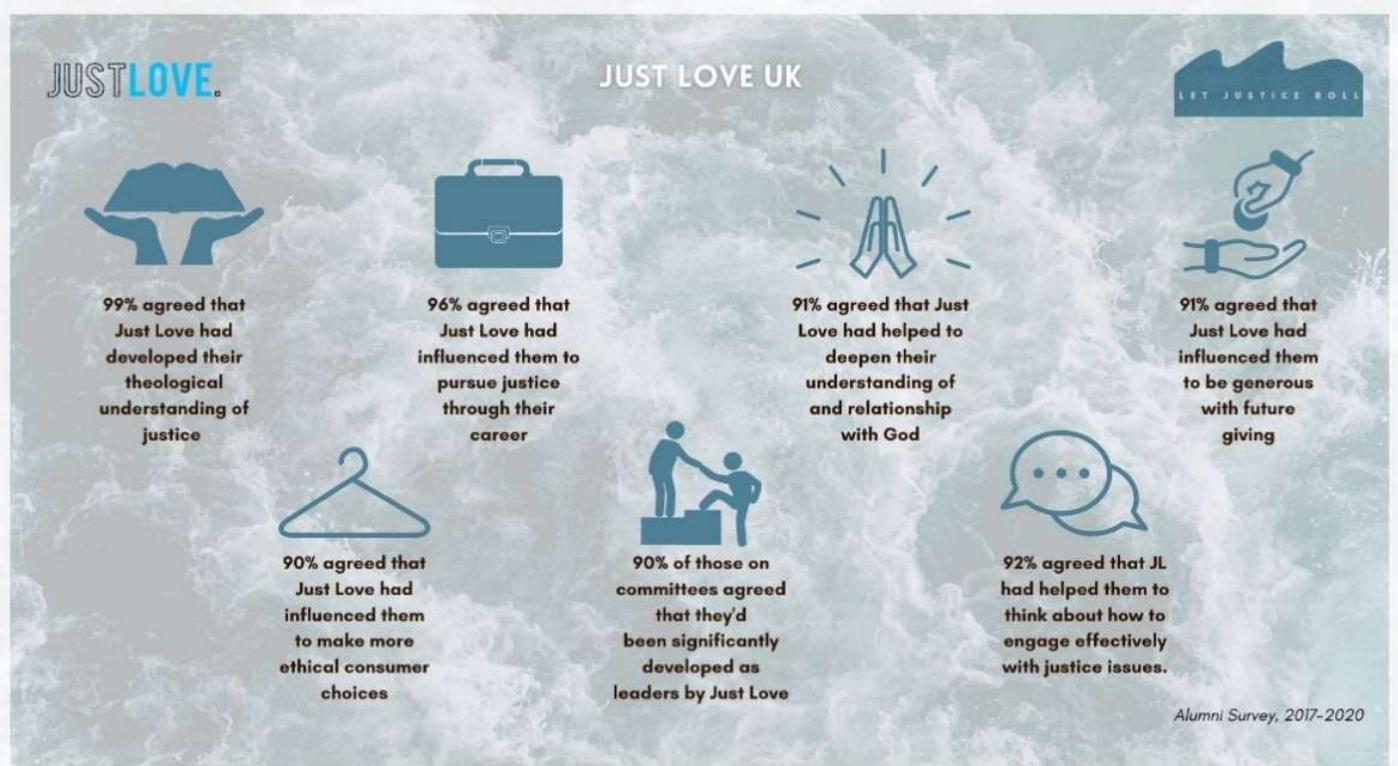


conference.

Their involvement and impact with the universities, have seen student numbers grow and become active in their local communities, showing love in action, by teaching English to refugees, youth mentoring, foodbank collections, campaigned around religious persecution, climate change, the list goes on.

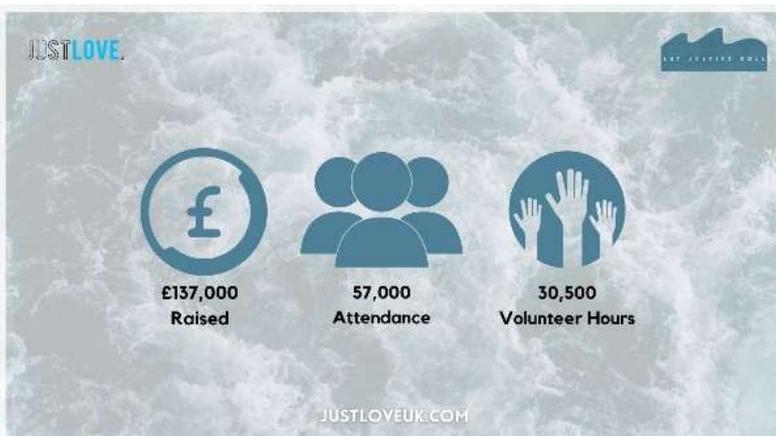


Many of our fellowship know, that Esther Platt, daughter of Sue and Simon Platt, is a leader of Just Love, responsible for three universities in the south of UK, and whilst Mission Impact Group have been able to support Just Love, financially, in a small way, prayerfully we may be in a position to support our CCB home grown missionary further.



*A survey showing how Just Love has influenced change*

On the night of the Let Justice Roll event, we heard from great speakers who work full time for the charity, also students at the chalk face who lead Just Love groups at their Universities and the Christian MP for East Ham, Stephen Timms, who was full of



*The above shows how active the students have been, even in lockdown.*

praise for the way Christians, and in particular Just Love, had served their communities in practical ways, during the pandemic. He told the audience that prayer was a lifeline to him in politics and he meets with members of his church each week to pray for his work, and he was so pleased that the twenty-five student groups, of Just Love, meet together to pray, as a high priority.

The CEO of Just Love, spoke enthusiastically about students, 'Our students could have been forgiven this year for opting out, for finding ways to distract, but so many of them have made space for God, showing up to reality, embracing suffering and praying for their communities'.

“

*My involvement in Just Love has completely changed the course my life. It's opened my eyes to just how BIG Jesus is, and how all-encompassing His mission to the world is. It's helped me realise that social justice isn't an optional extra, but an integral part of Christian discipleship. As I leave university, the people I've met, and the experiences I've had in Just Love will continue to shape and form me.*

Neil, Cambridge

*A testimony of one of the students.*

The whole evening had its focus on fund raising, so they could grow their staff team next year, and it was great to hear a week later, that they had reached a target, enabling them to recruit a staff member starting in September, 2021. I personally hope this will enable support for the Scottish, Just Love leader, who is having to oversee ALL the universities in Scotland, a huge ask.

Thank you to all the team at Just Love, for giving me insight into the workings and great potential of the charity.

*'Let just justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'*  
Amos 5:25

**Mary Shaw** - Mission Impact Group.

# Children and Communion

In February 2020 we began a course of preparation for children wishing to be admitted to Communion before Confirmation. The original plan was, following completion of the course, that those children that needed to be baptised first would be on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020 and then the children would be admitted to Communion on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, unfortunately with the national lockdown coming into force it meant that those plans were not able to happen at that time.



However, they were eventually able to be admitted on 11<sup>th</sup> October and 4 of the 8 children that had completed the course received their first Holy Communion that day.

Below are some of the thoughts the children shared about receiving Communion and what it meant to them.



*This is a table cloth the Children designed*

"I want to take part in Communion, because it reminds me that Jesus died for me, and I know what the bread and wine mean. He forgives me when I do wrong things. I like taking part, because it makes me really feel a part of God's family".

**Aqualina**

"It meant a lot to me to join the congregation in taking communion. I enjoyed learning the significance of taking the bread and wine." **Lewis**



# Journaling Prompt- June/July

As a Church we have just finished the un-answered prayer course by Pete Greig, in the evening services. I thought I would leave you with an excerpt from his book 'God on mute' to think on

*'I asked for strength that I might achieve;*

*He made me weak that I might obey.*

*I asked for health that I might do greater things;*

*I was given grace that I might do better things.*

*I asked for riches that I might be happy;*

*I was given poverty that I might be wise.*

*I asked for power that I might have the praise of men;*

*I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.*

*I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;*

*I was given life that I might enjoy all things.*

*I received nothing that I asked for, all that I hoped for.*

*My prayer was answered, I was most blessed.'*

*'Blessings of unanswered prayer'-Written by an Un-Known soldier of the American Civil War, Pete Greig 'God on mute'.*



SUNDAY SERVICES

8.30am and 10.00am

Wednesday & Sunday Services –

Please check [ccbedford.org](http://ccbedford.org) for Covid-19 service times



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