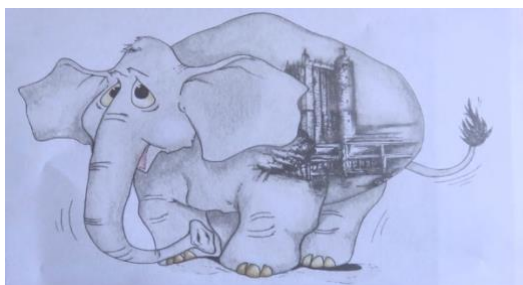




Totnes Team Ministry  
Newsletter  
May 2021



## Monthly Reflection: Rev Pauline Lewis



At one of the staff meetings our rector, Jim, gave us a challenge – we were to use the word elephant in our homily!

I was fortunate to be preaching on Mothering Sunday and it was a wonderful opportunity to talk about the “elephant”.

Since then, several people have asked if I could repeat what was said. **So here goes with a shortened version.**

When I was training for ministry, I was asked to write an essay using an animal to describe my church and to say ‘why’. **I chose the Elephant.**

Just look at this wonderful animal.... It’s big, **just like the church.**

It has sturdy feet so that it can plant itself in difficult areas, **just like the church.**

It can tread softly when it needs to, **just like the church.**

It has a strong back so that it can carry people and heavy loads, **just like the church.**

It has big eyes so that it can be aware of its surroundings, **just like the church.**

It has large ears so that it can listen effectively, **just like the church.**

It has a long trunk so that it can feed and be fed, **just like the church.**

It has stamina and is able to work long hours, **just like the church.**

It moves around as a family in a herd, young and old together, **just like the church.**

It has a sense of humour, *(just look at its small tail)*, **just like the church.**

All in all, the Elephant is loved by young and old alike,

can **WE say JUST LIKE OUR CHURCH?**

**God bless her.**

## Services in our churches this month

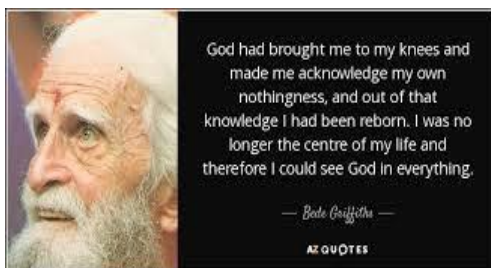
	May 2 <i>Easter 5</i>	May 9 <i>Easter 6</i>	May 16 <i>Easter 7</i>	May 23 <i>Pentecost</i>	May 30 <i>Trinity</i>
<b>St Mary's Totnes</b>	8.00 MP 11.15 MP 17.00 Vespers	8.00 HC 11.15 HC 17.00 Vespers	8.00 MP 11.15 HC 17.00 Vespers	8.00 HC 11.15 HC 17.00 Vespers	8.00 HC 10.30 <b>TEAM SERVICE</b> 17.00 Vespers
<b>St John's Bridgetown</b>	10.00 HC	10.00 HC	10.00 MP	10.00 HC	<b>TEAM SERVICE at TSM (10.30)</b>
<b>Ashprington</b>	11.15 HC	11.15 VW	11.15 HC	<i>Joint at Cornworthy</i>	<b>TEAM SERVICE at TSM (10.30)</b>
<b>Berry Pomeroy</b>	11.15 MP	11.15 MP	11.15 MP	11.15 MP	<b>TEAM SERVICE at TSM (10.30)</b>
<b>Brooking</b>	9.15 HC		9.15 HC		<b>TEAM SERVICE at TSM (10.30)</b>
<b>Cornworthy</b>	9.15 HC	9.15 VW	<i>Joint at Ashprington</i>	9.15 VW	<b>TEAM SERVICE at TSM (10.30)</b>
<b>Dartington</b>		10.30 MP		10.30 MP	<b>TEAM SERVICE at TSM (10.30)</b>
<b>Marldon</b>	10.00 HC	10.00 MP	10.00 Celtic HC	10.00 VW	<b>TEAM SERVICE at TSM (10.30)</b>
<b>Stoke Gabriel</b>	8.15 HC 11.15 HC	8.15 HC 11.15 HC	8.15 HC 11.15 HC	8.15 HC 11.15 HC	8.15 HC 11.15 HC
<b>Telephone</b>	12 midday	12 midday	12 midday	12 midday	12 midday
	14.00 – 17.00 Wild Church		18.30 (Zoom) Sacred Space		
<b>Zoom</b>	10.00 am	10.00 am	10.00 am	10.00 am	10.30 am

HC = Holy Communion, MP = Morning Praise, VW = Village Worship

For **Wild Church** please contact Sam Wernham on [livingspirit3@gmail.com](mailto:livingspirit3@gmail.com)

## Father Bede Griffiths – reflection by Chris Jackson

Thirty-five years ago I went to India and Nepal for a five weeks holiday. I did the normal touristy things like going to Kashmir and visiting the Taj Mahal, but also wanted to visit an Ashram (Indian monastery) hoping to meet a Guru (spiritual teacher). I prayed to God about where to go and my prayers were answered when I met a man who had spent six months with a monk called Father Bede Griffiths. He was head of a Benedictine Community in South India where the goal was to marry the spirituality of the East and the West. It sounded just what I was looking for and to confirm this a few days before I left, I received a card from a Christian friend suggesting that I visit Fr. Bede! Arriving in Chennai on my way I heard about a guru called Sai Baba who was meant to do miracles and excitedly decided to visit him first. The moment I arrived in his huge Ashram I hated it; the spiritual atmosphere was over-powering, I couldn't think straight and felt like I was being asked to surrender to a person I wasn't sure I trusted. I left quickly without even seeing him.



A few days later I arrived in Fr Bede's Ashram Shantivanam (forest of peace) and was taken straight to meet him. He was an old man with a long white hair and beard dressed in the orange robes of a Sannyasin (Hindu monk). I sat and talked to him in his simple hut for about half an hour. He listened patiently as I talked about my trip, my worries, my experience of going to Sai Baba's Ashram, about whom he said kindly 'he does some good some bad'. Fr Bede had a sweet and peaceful presence and it felt like chatting to an old friend. At one point he looked out of the door at the peacocks passing by 'so beautiful, quite extraordinary' he exclaimed. At that moment I felt absolutely tiny. It's hard to describe why? Perhaps an awareness in that moment of his spiritual stature and that I had been treating him like an equal or just the realization that I was caught up in my stories and trivialities and was not noticing the beauty all around me while here was this old sage taking a childlike joy in it. Whatever it was, it left a lasting impression.

I stayed in his Ashram a week, it was an extraordinarily beautiful place surrounded by trees and coconut palms close to the sacred Kaveri. It was very simple there was a dining room where we ate vegetarian food sitting on the floor, a beautiful Christian temple and a wonderful library with books from every religious tradition.

We slept in simple huts spread out over the Ashram under the canopy of trees. After a few days I was surprised to realize how peaceful I had become; this was the effect the place had on everyone. The Ashram really was a haven of peace



with its monastic rhythm of beautiful ecumenical Syrian Christian services at which religious texts from throughout the world were read, regular meditation and yoga sessions as well as leisure time to walk, talk and contemplate by the banks of the river. We saw Fr Bede at mealtimes and at the services and sometimes

wandering round the Ashram, and his quiet presence was palpable everywhere. He was even considered a holy man by the local Hindus who would come to visit him during the day to receive his blessings. Unfortunately, in a hurry to see more of India and to keep to my schedule I left after a week, not listening to his advice to stay longer and despite my intention to return never went back (since his death I am told there has been a large road built nearby and the place is not the same).

A few years later I saw him briefly when he came to give a talk at St James' Piccadilly in London. He was very frail and seemed practically transparent, filled with light, very much like people often do just before they die. He had had a stroke that he called 'a stroke from God' and said that after it he was overwhelmed by the love of the mother. He reported that as a result he had come to a nondual vision of the world and had made more spiritual progress than in all the time before. Meeting him has left a lasting impression on my life. He wrote many books including his journey to becoming a monk called 'The Golden string', 'Return to the Centre' and 'The Marriage of east and west'. There is a very good biography about him by Shirley de Boulay called 'Beyond the darkness'.



Thank you to those who have contributed to this important charity, which helps protect countless people in developing countries against water-borne diseases such as Cholera, which can often prove fatal.

If you have not already contributed, please put your donation in an envelope and mark it WATER AID, then place it in the main donations box at either of the Totnes churches.

**Martin Harvey**



## Small steps to big changes ...

The last 12 months have forced all of us to make unprecedented changes to our lifestyle – some of them quasi-permanent. We've done it because we had to – and the Church of England has been a prime mover in creating safe spaces and new forms of worship.

Now, we face the even greater threat of climate change and, once again, the C of E has led the field, setting far more ambitious targets than the UK government. But all this is of little use unless we too are willing, as individuals, to make small but important changes to our lifestyle.

Some of these changes are really easy – like changing to a Green gas and electricity provider such as Bulb, Octopus, Ecotricity or Good Energy. Others may include lowering your central heating thermostat by a degree or two, switching radiators off at night and in rooms you're not using. You can always wear an extra layer of clothing!

And here's the really good news: unlike Covid precautions, all of these changes involve a 'feel good' factor. We feel good when we do something that helps preserve God's Creation against the ravages of climate change – it's as simple as that.

If you care about God's creation, then DO something! You'll be glad you did.

[More information here](#)

**Julian Hall**

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## Sacred Space – May 16<sup>th</sup>, 6.30pm on Zoom

Sacred Space this month is entitled "A Time of Hope for Creation."



People are invited to have a journal or notebook and pen or crayons or paints to hand at home.

All welcome – details of the zoom to follow in a weekly email

**Rev Deborah Parsons**

## Seen any Mystery Worshippers lately?

Quite often if you look up a church on-line you might find a report by a “Mystery Worshipper.” Since ancient times (ok, 1998), Ship of Fools has been sending Mystery Worshippers to churches of all denominations worldwide. Travelling incognito, they ask those questions which go to the heart of church life. The reviewer is unknown to the congregation, who do not know that their church worship service is being scrutinised. The only clue that they have been there at all is the Mystery Worshipper calling card, dropped discreetly into the collection plate, and the mystery worshipper then submits a kind of “customer review” on line. The aim of the project is to give people an idea of what goes on in a wide variety of churches – and also to hold up a mirror to churches to let them see how they looked on a particular Sunday to a visitor from outside. They make an interesting and often amusing, read, obviously from just one person’s viewpoint on just one particular day. Some reviews are very positive, but others can make you cringe uncomfortably on behalf of the church reviewed. **Here are the questions that are covered by each review**, after a description of the church and its neighbourhood:

What was the name of the service attended?  
How full was the building?  
Did anyone welcome you personally?  
Was your pew comfortable?  
How would you describe the pre-service atmosphere?  
What were the exact opening words of the service?  
What books did the congregation use during the service?  
What musical instruments were played?  
Did anything distract you?  
Was the worship stiff-upper-lip, happy clappy, or what?  
Exactly how long was the sermon?  
On a scale of 1-10, how good was the preacher?  
In a nutshell, what was the sermon about?  
Which part of the service was like being in heaven?  
And which part was like being in... er... the other place?  
What happened when you hung around after the service looking lost?  
How would you describe the after-service coffee?  
How would you feel about making another visit (10 = ecstatic, 0 = terminal)?  
Did the service make you feel glad to be a Christian?  
What one thing will you remember about all this in seven days' time?

I wonder how each of our team churches would be reviewed if ever we have one of these mystery reporters?! ....

Carolyn Stilwell



## DEVON GREEN CHURCHES ACTION GROUP AND A ROCHA UK 'CHURCHES COUNT ON NATURE PROJECT' 2021

*Churches Count on Nature* runs from **Saturday 5th June – Sunday 13th June 2021** and is all about local people discovering and recording the wonderful plants and wildlife in their local church yard. This is an ecumenical partnership project between **A Rocha UK, the Church of England Environment Programme**, and **Caring for Gods Acre**.

Participating churches will be encouraged to act for wildlife by recording nature in their church yards, spaces and burial grounds or nearby land. Express your interest in taking part here: <https://bit.ly/2M0k3AE>

In the **Exeter Diocese** we are working with the **Devon Biodiversity Records Centre** to produce a Toolkit to help you with recording nature in your churchyard or burial ground. It focusses on Devon wildlife and shows what wildlife surveys are currently available for you to use in your churchyard. This toolkit will be ready in May. Please contact David Curry if you would like to participate. Email: [dcurry.devongreenchurches@gmail.com](mailto:dcurry.devongreenchurches@gmail.com)

**Caring for God's Acre** has produced a Starter Guide with excellent illustrations of churchyard wildlife. See [CfGA-Starter-Guide-2020.pdf](#) ([caringforgodsacre.org.uk](http://caringforgodsacre.org.uk))

### ***Love Your Burial Ground Week***

The above event is running alongside the national **Love Your Burial Ground Week 5<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021** (Formerly known as Cherishing Churchyards week). Join us for a special week to celebrate churchyards, chapel yards and burial grounds of all types.

Many churchyards and burial grounds have been valued and loved for hundreds of years. People who are now responsible for their upkeep are part of a long line of generations who have taken up the management baton. But it isn't easy. The things that make these sites special – Lichen encrusted headstones, ancient monuments and species rich grassland.

In short, being a custodian of a community's burial ground can be both physically and emotionally demanding (and probably always has been!). The



charity *'Caring for God's Acre'* (CfGA) was set up to support people in the task of keeping burial grounds beautiful, accessible and connected to their communities. The last point is important – *'connected to their communities'* and is why CfGA started a dedicated week – national Love your Burial Ground Week (formally Cherishing Churchyards Week) nine years ago. It usually takes place in the second week of June.

During this week we are asking churches and groups in Exeter Diocese to run an event to highlight to the wider community the wealth of heritage their unique site contains. Events in previous years have included teddy bear picnics, family bug hunts, dawn chorus (followed by breakfast!), illustrated talks, wildflower identification, tower tours, family history, memorial recording, volunteer work party sessions and more.

So why not join *Devon Churches Green Action* and *CfGA* in June and help celebrate the wealth of heritage in our burial grounds?

*We are emerging from a challenging period of our lives and we need to invite people to our sacred Green Spaces and reconnect them with the wonders of God's Creation.*

To register your interest in the event please let David Curry, Exeter Diocese know asap and complete a form when you have decided on your activities

Email: [dcurry.devongreenchurches@gmail.com](mailto:dcurry.devongreenchurches@gmail.com)

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### Got any old cookery books??

Totnes Rotary with Food in Community are asking for donations of unwanted (or unused!) cookery books to go in their popular food boxes.

Donations can be placed in a big lidded box labelled "Cook Book donations" on the United Free church forecourt in daytimes when they are using the church - Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. There is parking directly opposite so it is easy for people who are not very mobile to donate and does not involve going indoors for those worried about COVID.



It's about seven years ago now when Transition Town Totnes called a meeting in the Mansion House of all the voluntary groups in Totnes alongside SHDC, DCC and TTC, NHS, Leatside. I went along to represent Totnes Street Pastors and the Totnes Team Ministry. We went on to call a town meeting to discuss the issues around drugs and alcohol in the town and built a small parent support group which arranged a couple of talks with police, youth workers and NHS which proved very helpful.

Caring Town applied for grants to pay for a part time coordinator (originally Fiona Ward) to bring together all the information with regard to the voluntary agencies (around 70!) in the town. Out of this the **Caring Town Information Exchange housed in the Mansion was born. Pre Covid** CTIE regularly attended the St John's Coffee Wednesday Morning. CT went on to canvass the community with regard to the issues that they were most concerned about. Three key issues came up in discussion and they were vulnerable families and street people plus issues around drugs and alcohol, how to keep our young people safe and mental health.

I am involved in two subgroups re the vulnerable and our young people. Janet Ronson from Cornworthy has been involved with issues round our young people's mental health and she and other retired professionals received some training in mentoring from a grant arranged by Caring Town and they mentor young people at Kevicc. The subgroups meet every two months. It means we can information share and talk to the professionals as well as other volunteers and it makes sure that we are supporting one another with the same objectives. It has meant I have good contacts with The Rough Sleeper Navigator and PCSO Jason Vasey. Issues that Street Pastors come across on shifts can be relayed to them and to the youth workers in our town and surrounding villages. We also put together a business card full of support information and helpline phone numbers to give to our young people on our shifts to help keep them safe.

CT works with Kerry from TRAYE (Totnes Rural AREA Youth Engagement) and Simon from Rushbrook. The group running the Friday Night Youth Activities at the Leisure Centre is Genesis Youth – hired by SHDC. Incidentally, it is a Christian initiative, and they are keen to train volunteers.

**The current CT Coordinator is Lesley Nel who is based at TTC offices.**

When the pandemic arrived, the work of Caring Town meant that communication across volunteer and statutory groups was well established so that when TTC set up a weekly Partners' meeting to discuss all that we were doing and how we could help one another during the pandemic, everything was already virtually in place. The support we were able to give one another has been acknowledged a national role model. **Liz Waterson**

You can download the latest report form CT

here [https://mcusercontent.com/24f6c3728a5f25ffff6bf6e58/files/592158ca-1c52-41d2-82b0-937d845d6aef/Caring\\_Town\\_Project\\_Report\\_Oct\\_2020.pdf?utm\\_source=Caring+Town&utm\\_campaign=fccaa89063-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_06\\_12\\_01\\_47\\_COPY\\_0](https://mcusercontent.com/24f6c3728a5f25ffff6bf6e58/files/592158ca-1c52-41d2-82b0-937d845d6aef/Caring_Town_Project_Report_Oct_2020.pdf?utm_source=Caring+Town&utm_campaign=fccaa89063-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_06_12_01_47_COPY_0)

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### (In your) Face Book .... A new page for Totnes Team Ministry

Several people commented how apt Rev John Luscombe's recent description of Face Book was ...! We know that many people do not use Face Book, but for those that do it is a useful way of keeping up with things and sharing news and views with others. We find that we can reach a wide selection of people through social media who might not easily find us or be curious.

We are in the process of starting a new 'open access' Face Book page for the Totnes Team Ministry. This will mean that we can share our news and activities more widely. Details will follow soon, and users of our existing page will be invited to 'like' and 'follow' our new platform.

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### Operation Noah's annual Supporters' Event

9 June, 10:30am-12:30pm - Online, Free - [Register](#)



#### Workshops include –

- How and why should churches divest from fossil fuels
- Eco-Anxiety and pastoral care
- Climate and racial justice
- ... and more

## 'The Good Life' – Totnes Church Allotment on Kingsbridge Hill



Remember that wonderful sitcom about Tom and Barbara Good going self sufficient (and of course Margot and Jerry's marvellous reactions). Well, we have acquired an allotment on Kingsbridge Hill and plan to start growing lots of fruit, veg and flowers to support our various community ventures. No goats ... but maybe pea pod wine!

As you can see in the photo, it needs some weeding ... but it has been well looked after and already has lovely blackcurrants and strawberries – so jam makers be ready!

If anyone would like to join in on an occasional basis with a bit of weeding, planting or watering (or enjoying the view), then all we ask is that you join the Totnes Allotments Association (just £5 a year). We are planning a good weeding stint on **Monday May 3<sup>rd</sup>** if anyone wants to join us – weather permitting.

However, if you would prefer to help in other ways then we'd be grateful for donations of gardening equipment (spades, forks, trowels, watering cans etc) and fruit bushes, flower bulbs or veg then please let Diana and Göran know on 01803 863394 or by email [diana.walters2@gmail.com](mailto:diana.walters2@gmail.com). We are also looking for a nice bench or two (or pub table) so that workers can relax with a well-deserved beverage.

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## Your loo can help Africa



Thanks to many people who donated to the toilet twinning appeal coordinated by Viv Elce recently. As a result of your generous donation, three loos at St John's, Bridgetown are now twinned with facilities in Uganda, Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Toilet twinning is a wonderful initiative and means reminds us of our incredible privileges of running water and sanitation.

For more information on how to twin your toilet for just £60, please ring 0300 321 3217 or see

<https://www.toilettwinning.org>

## Final Reflection – ‘It’s just a thought about God’

The six-year old boy sat at his desk drawing intently but covering the paper with his arm. Soon the teacher came and said, ‘Now Tommy, what are you drawing?’ The little boy looked up knowingly and said, ‘I am drawing God’. ‘Oh’ said the teacher, ‘but we don’t know what God is like’. To which came the swift reply, ‘Well we will in a minute’.

You may smile and wonder what the little boy had drawn, because how could little Tommy possibly know what God was like? But hang on a minute. What if little Tommy was a sensitive child in a reflective mood; then his picture was his way of expressing his understanding of God. One of the greatest painters of all time, Michaelangelo, once painted his idea of God on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel and his idea of what God was like was in the shape of a grey-haired old man in swirling robes amid the great billowing clouds of the heavens.

For many people this unlikely vision of a superman in the sky is still how God is for them. What is interesting is just how much the sky and, ‘up-there’, is a feature of our present-day worship; especially as we turn to the life and teaching of Jesus to catch a glimpse of what we think God is like. The good book suggests that God is hidden and that God is ‘Spirit’. But the idea that God is formless may make it even more difficult to think of God when we say our prayers or sing our praises.

So maybe we all have a different concept of the immortal invisible One - hid from our eyes.

If this is so then there is so much truth in the words of the late Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks when he said, ‘In heaven there is truth; on earth there are truths’; and goes on to say, ‘He is my God, but also your God. He is on my side, but also on yours’.

I find those words so comforting. To remember that however God is for us, whether as a being beyond the clouds or as spirit filling every place, as a deep presence or just scribble on a piece of paper; in the end, God just IS, and it is not us in our human frailty who hold him fast, but the Lord God who holds us in his unfailing love.

**Rev Cliff Berdinner**

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Contributions Please!

Next newsletter deadline: June 20<sup>th</sup>

[ttmcomms@gmail.com](mailto:ttmcomms@gmail.com)