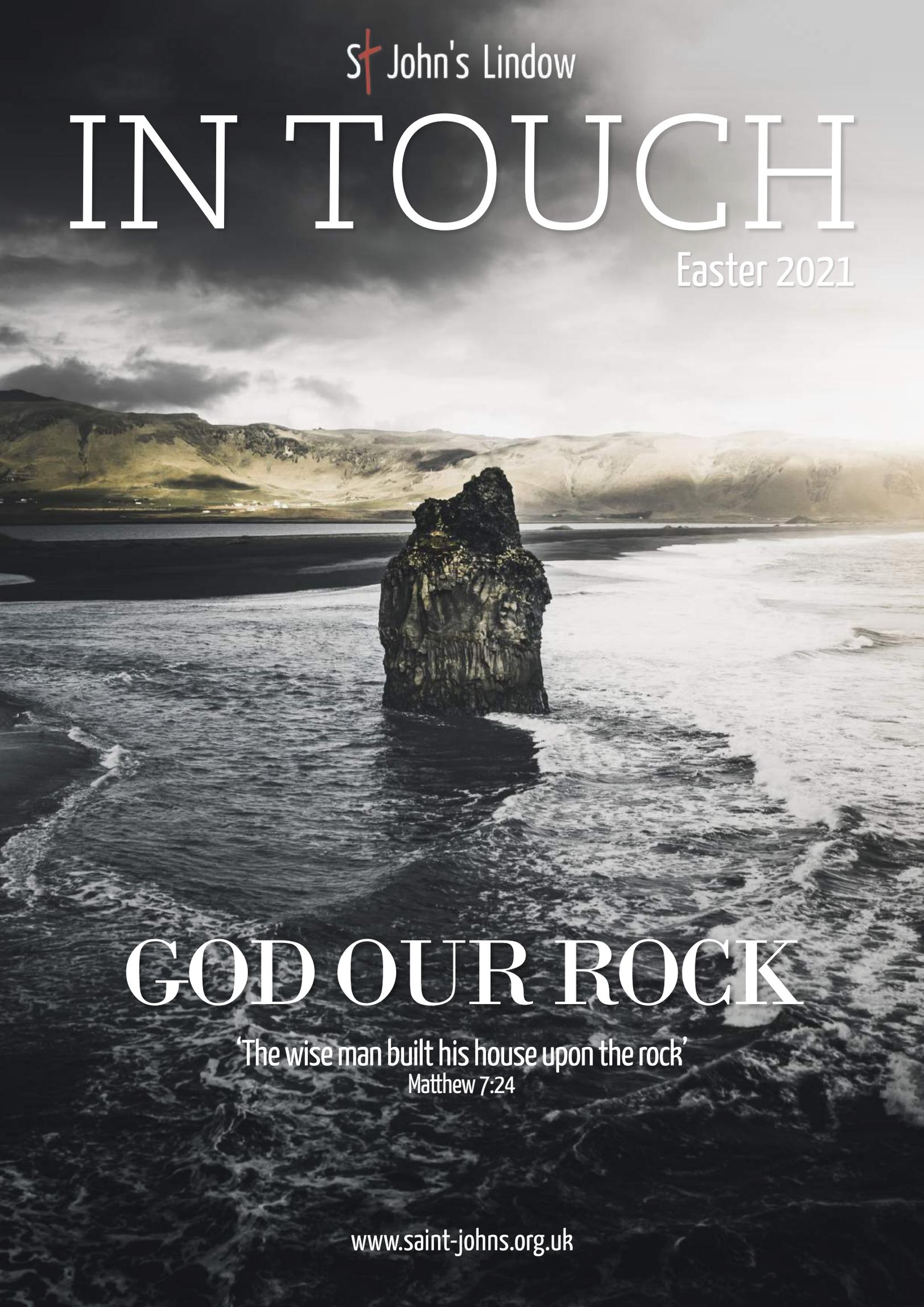


St John's Lindow

# IN TOUCH

Easter 2021



## GOD OUR ROCK

'The wise man built his house upon the rock'  
Matthew 7:24

[www.saint-johns.org.uk](http://www.saint-johns.org.uk)

One of the things that many have found difficult about the past year has been the uncertainty, the 'not knowing'. There has been uncertainty about family celebrations, holidays and vaccinations. More significantly there has been uncertainty about jobs and businesses, about careers and education, about health and even life itself. As we emerge from lockdown there is uncertainty about how quickly that should, and will, happen.

The theme of this magazine, 'God our Rock', speaks right into that. In the Bible God is repeatedly pictured as a rock. At the start of Psalm 18, for example, King David sings 'The Lord is my rock, in whom I take refuge' and at the end he shouts 'Praise be to my Rock!'. A solid immovable rock is a brilliant picture of God's utter reliability, dependability and eternal faithfulness (Keith Ranger helpfully explores this theme in our 'Theology Corner' p11).

Jesus used the picture in a story of two housebuilders (Matthew 7:24-27). At first both houses looked the same but it was when 'the rain came, the storms rose, and the winds blew' that the difference was revealed – one person had built his house (life?) on sand, the other on 'the rock'. Tragically the 'storms' of the past year have revealed the shaky foundations of our 21st century society, with huge rises in identity loss, anxiety and depression. None of us escape the 'storms' but it makes such a difference when you know that your life has an unshakeable Foundation. For some, money and wealth

has cushioned the impact, but those things will be of no use when it comes to the last great 'storm' – God's examination of our lives.



So how do we build upon 'The Rock'? Jesus leaves us in no doubt. 'Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like the wise man who built his house on the rock'. Both 'housebuilders' hear the words of Jesus but only one responds. The wise person is the one who responds appropriately to the words and claims of Jesus – submitting to him as Lord, trusting him as Rescuer. It is Jesus who is that firm foundation through the 'storms' of life now, and most important of all, the only refuge from the judgement of the last day.

It is always wise to trust the trustworthy!

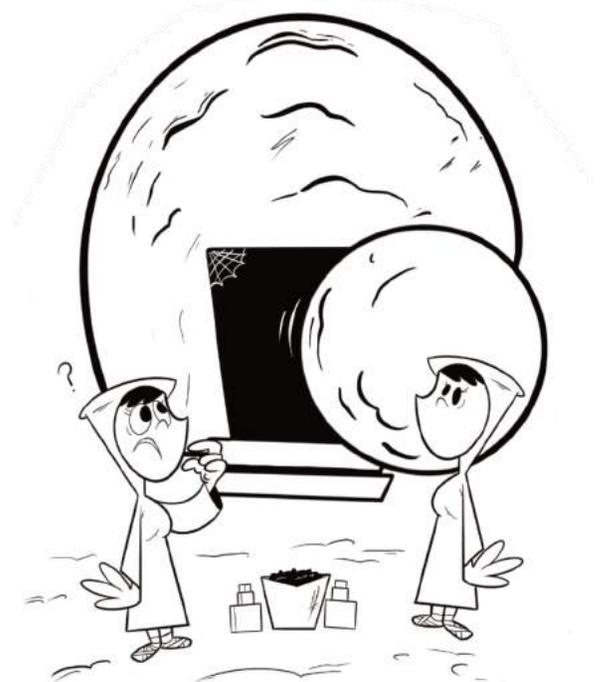
Yours, resting upon the Rock,

Simon

## SKETCHY THEOLOGY

BY BEN HOLLINSHEAD

**"THE STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY SO THAT HE COULD BE THE ROCK THAT REMAINS FOREVER."**



**Marc: How did you two come to Wilmslow?**

Jane: We used to live in Johannesburg in South Africa, but after having a baby we wanted to come back to family.

Ewan: So in 2018 we moved to Hazel Grove at first but then moved to Wilmslow in July 2020.

**Marc: That sounds like a big move! What's family life like now?**

Ewan: Cameron is just over 4, Julia is 3 in May and Clara is just a few months old, so we've never been busier over lockdown!

**Marc: I can imagine! So how did you two come to meet?**

Ewan: I was actually born into a fairly big family as one of five children in Zimbabwe and went to school there. However the family decided to relocate to the UK as the Zimbabwe dollar was very weak.

Jane: I was born in Scotland, so when Ewan moved over here we both met at the Glasgow Navigators group.

**Marc: So do you both come from a church background?**

Jane: I grew up in a church in Aberdeenshire and my parents even helped plant a church. I went to a lot of Christian camps, too but it's hard to pinpoint a time where I actually became a Christian. It's always been there.

Ewan: My uncles were Christians and there was a lot of cultural Christianity in South Africa so it was quite a shock coming to the UK. I made a proper commitment to my faith when I was a teenager.

**Marc: And what drew you to St John's once you moved here?**

Jane: We've always loved smaller, evangelical churches so St John's was a great fit for us. We saw the church advertised on the Northwest Partnership website so here we are! We really have found everyone in this congregation to be very friendly.



**Marc: That's great news! How's lockdown been as newer members of the church family?**

Ewan: The breakout groups have been a great way to meet people. We've been grateful for the creche in the church building but we do miss physically seeing people. We feel very thankful as, like Jane said, everyone is very friendly.

**Marc: Do you see yourselves settling here?**

Ewan: We actually don't know because we'd love to go back to South Africa eventually.

Jane: Our hearts are definitely in South Africa! It feels like home. However the option is very open at the moment. We're still searching for God's will in what he wants for us.

**Marc: South Africa truly sounds great! How would you say God has helped you through this past year?**

Jane: Everything has been very hectic so it can be hard to reflect sometimes, but God has definitely helped our kids to keep calm throughout lockdown.

# FRIENDS INTERNATIONAL

Graham and Sabine Stockton

Friends International is an evangelical mission which seeks to help churches and Christian Unions to welcome, befriend and share the good news of Jesus with international students studying in the UK. It also helps students to prepare for returning home and, where appropriate, to find a church in which to serve. In Manchester we are currently a team of three staff workers as well as two trainees on a one-year cross-cultural training and discipleship programme.

Together we offer training and facilitate cafes and events, a hosting scheme, Bible studies and a Bible training course (called The Philip Project), staffed by church volunteers, where we can meet and share with international students.



Harmienke



Vicky



Cindy

You may remember that each year (virus permitting) we have been bringing about 15 international students to a service at St. John's followed by their being hosted for lunch by various members of the church. This is often the first time that these students have been to church or enjoyed hospitality in a British home and they always enjoy it very much as well as it being a witness to them.

## How has lockdown affected the ministry of Friends International?



The first effect of lockdown was for us to get acquainted with Zoom technology and for all of our cafes, Bible studies and other activities to go online. This meant changing the type of activities we could do, and while we soon found that it worked quite well, we missed the personal contact, and found it harder to build meaningful relationships with students. Our numbers went down as some students returned home and others didn't enjoy the virtual world. However, we also found that some former students who had returned home, and who we had lost contact with, were able to join with us again – so we had people join from China, Romania,

Turkey, South America and elsewhere.

Our main way of contacting new students had been through our annual **Manchester International Outreach** (a two-week summer welcome programme with a cafe each night) but it was not possible to run this in 2020. However,



through one of our trainees, we were able to connect with Chinese students who were either planning to start courses at the University of Manchester in September 2020

but were only arriving later in the year or were just interested in studying English. We therefore started a lunchtime (evening time in China) English Hour and cafe; these attracted up to 45 people and have continued with an average attendance of 15 each week.

Normally, dozens of students enjoy being hosted by local families (including some from St John's) over Christmas, but this year it had to predominantly be via online contact. We were able to watch The Nativity Story film together online and discuss it afterwards and have other special events over the Christmas holiday week.

It has been a challenging and disorientating year both for our team and international students, but we have drawn comfort from the truth that God '*... is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken*' (Ps 62:2 NLT). As such we look to him as we look forward to new opportunities to witness.

# PROMISES, PROMISES

By Leonie Poole

## **“I’m really sorry, we can’t complete on Wednesday”**

our solicitor said, midday on Tuesday. “Might possibly happen on Friday.” “Nooooo” I pleaded (I may have slightly howled wolf-like down the phone) as all of our moving plans came crashing down. Yet again, the estate agents had not kept their word: it was clear they couldn’t make things happen when they said they would. As I searched through my diary for the relevant numbers to cancel plans so recently made, I was stopped by a sudden realisation. By their failings, the estate agents helped me grasp again how amazing our heavenly father is. Even our hard working, helpful solicitor could not make others keep their word. My conclusion: complete and utter faithfulness with respect to words and promises is entirely God’s domain.

Numbers 23v19 says “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?” (The answer to these two questions is a resounding “no” in case you are in any doubt.) God is reliable and faithful in his words. God always does what he promises to do and we can depend on him never to

“  
*...the essence of true faith is taking God at his word and relying on him to do what he has promised.*  
”

be unfaithful. God will always do what he has said and fulfil what he has promised. He can be relied upon, and he will never prove unfaithful to those who trust what he has said. Indeed, the essence of true faith is taking God at his word and relying on him to do what he has promised.



Martin Luther, the 15<sup>th</sup> century Reformer is an example of taking God at his word – here he describes how he approached God in prayer as one of his dear colleagues lay dying. “I threw down my sack at his door and rubbed his ears with all his promises of hearing prayer, so that he could not but hearken to me, should I ever again place any reliance on his promises.” Apologies for the quaint and slightly flowery language but here is a believer who knows he prays to a faithful God. “I know the promises you have made God and I’m not moving from your doorstep, nor shutting up til you keep your word.”

So dear family at St John’s, as we emerge from lockdown, let’s stand on every promise of God’s word as we go and make disciples. And if you need a reminder of his great promises, why not pray your way through the words of “From the breaking of the dawn” – the hymn that encourages us to stand on every promise of God’s word.



# PREDICTION IN SCIENCE AND BIBLICAL PROPHECY

By David Watts

**The Higgs boson is an elementary particle far smaller than atoms and molecules.** For years it was like the missing piece in a jigsaw puzzle. In 1964 Peter Higgs predicted its existence but it was not observed until 2012 at the European science research station in Geneva, after much experimental searching.

Such predictions in science and the predictions made in biblical prophecy are both only possible because of the rock-like reliability of God. What we call *the laws of nature*, understood theologically, are the regular patterns of the *secondary causes* within the physical world that are subject to God's will and purposes; not *vice versa*. Scientific laws are *human approximations* to the actual behaviour that God has established and maintains. God, as the *primary cause*, is not just another cause alongside many others, but the One who upholds everything that happens.

There are many aspects of created existence that are particularly complex and - from our human perspective - exhibit behaviours that we describe as *chaotic*. In science, this feature makes exact prediction less certain. We see this daily in our weather forecasts where predictions beyond 14-20 days are highly uncertain, despite powerful computers being used to solve the equations of global fluid dynamics. When it comes to predicting human behaviour, we are familiar with many failed election forecasts!

All of this makes the accuracy of predictions in biblical prophecy all the more remarkable, considering the time spans and complex variables involved.

It is not widely known that Sir Isaac Newton wrote far more books about biblical prophecy than about mechanics or physics. Newton thought this worthwhile

because of his foundational belief in God as the author of both the natural world and of holy scripture, the primary cause for everything. Admittedly, biblical prophecies are not always written in the language of today's physical and biological sciences, for several reasons:

**1** They were originally given in languages and cultures long before the time of their fulfilment, let alone the 21<sup>st</sup> Century AD.

**2** They presuppose a belief in an eternal God with a capacity to foreknow all human history (whereas modern science is only concerned with immediate observable causes and so speaks a different language). This is why we find Jesus rebuking the unbelief of those who refused to listen to Moses and the Prophets (Luke 16:31). It was a similar unbelief which caused some 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholars to separate the book of Isaiah into sections, supposedly written much later by different people, simply because they refused to accept predictive prophecy, despite the book of Isaiah bursting with internal evidence of its unity!

## The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53

Let's focus on a particular section of predictive prophecy from the *Book of Isaiah*, written centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. This passage, beginning at Isaiah 52:13 and continuing throughout chapter 53 speaks of a suffering servant.

The identity of this suffering servant has been often debated: (a) Is it the prophet himself? (b) Is it the people of Israel as a whole or (c) is it another mysterious



The Large Hadron Collider at CERN

individual? For several reasons<sup>1</sup>, interpretations (a) and (b) do not fit and – as we discover in the New Testament – these predictions were fulfilled uniquely by Jesus Christ.

Reading the passage, this servant has a hard time right from his upbringing. He is nothing special to look at; his background is unpromising; he is despised and rejected: he is “a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3).

These are sombre words. But the astonishing thing is that he suffers all this *not on his own account* but for the sake of others. He has borne ‘our’ infirmities and carried ‘our’ diseases. It was natural for Isaiah’s readers to assume that the Servant had been ‘struck down by God’ for his own sins but the revolutionary content of this song – that is so hard to believe – is that he was pierced for *our* transgressions and crushed for *our* iniquities: and the end result of his actions is that we are made whole; we are healed by his wounds (53:6). All of us are sheep that have gone astray: we are sinful. The evil we have done

has been laid on the innocent suffering servant. Our sins are atoned for by substitution of the Servant in our place.

So much of this and similar passages resonate with what the New Testament tells us about Jesus. He remained silent before his accusers (Isaiah 53:7) and gave his back to those who struck

him (50:6) when he was scourged. He was struck down by God when he was cut off from the land of the living as he endured his agonizing death by crucifixion (52:14; 53:5,8,10). The innocent Jesus was crucified with criminals but a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, provided the grave (53:9).

### Death and Resurrection

The final stanza of this amazing song changes key as the sorrowful theme transitions into hope and triumph (53:10-12). The resurrection of the Servant is explicitly and unambiguously foretold. Subsequent to his death and burial: “He will see his offspring and prolong his days”. “*After* the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied”. “*Therefore*, I will give him a portion among the great ... *because* he poured out his life unto death”.

Such accuracy in the predictions of biblical prophecy (like the predictions made in the very different world of modern science) point to, and depend upon, the rock-like reliability of God.

No wonder, at Easter, the global Christian Church cries out: **“Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!”**

“  
*...he was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities: and the end result of his actions is that we are made whole*  
 ”

1. Alec Moteyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, IVP 1993

## LIVING WELL IN A BROKEN WORLD.

We all feel anxious at times, and many of us are currently feeling more anxious than usual.

Anxiety is often viewed as a negative emotion that should be avoided. However, anxiety is an essential and often beneficial emotion that we all experience in response to situations that we think might be threatening or dangerous.

Contrary to popular belief, the Bible tells us that experiencing some anxiety can actually be a good thing. For example, the apostle Paul cared so deeply for the churches he planted that he openly expressed regularly feeling anxious about them (2 Corinthians 11:28, 1 Thessalonians 3:5).

As Christians, we have the privilege of being able to honestly express our fears and worries to our loving Heavenly Father who cares for us as his children (1 Peter 5:7). In the midst of anxiety, we can take comfort in knowing that God is our Rock who will sustain us (Psalm 55:22). Like the apostle Paul, we can give God our praise and thanks for His faithfulness and steadfast love.

Through common grace, God has provided us with abundant blessings that we can access on a daily basis. Some examples of common grace that can help us to feel less anxious include regular exercise, healthy eating, taking medication as prescribed, maintaining a routine, prioritising sleep and rest, making time for hobbies, learning new skills, and spending time with friends and family. We need to remember, though, that there is nothing we can do to earn our own salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9).

We are sometimes tempted to think that anxiety is caused by a lack of faith. This is not true at all when it

comes to anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health condition in the UK, affecting 15-20% of the population. Anxiety disorders are characterised by intense and uncontrollable anxiety that significantly impacts everyday life. People living with an anxiety disorder usually need professional support, including psychological talking therapies and medication, to get their anxiety under control. Anxiety disorders are very treatable, and it is a good idea to see your GP if you think you have an anxiety disorder or any other mental health condition.

Churches have an amazing opportunity to support people living with mental health conditions by offering radical hospitality, compassion, love, and hope. With 1 in 4 people living with a mental health condition, learning more about mental health conditions can help us to better support and love one another. For more information, visit [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk).

If you would like to speak with the pastoral care team, please contact Didge Stubbs 01625 540317/07767 758089

*Philippa is a Chartered Psychologist, a member of Christ Church Central in Sheffield and grew up here at St John's.*





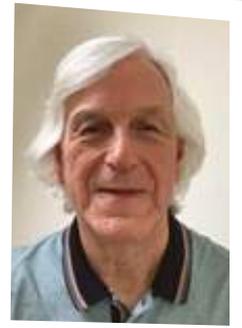
Looking at this, I'm sure Ros' cakes don't last long!



..and Janet Edgington's marmalade has gone down well!!



Helen Dupere has been busy with a caravan of love...



Ian has been concentrating on growing his hair!



Janet Edgington and Liz Binns Have both been busy quilting!



Simon has been working on a bird table. Who said it looks like The Gallows?!!

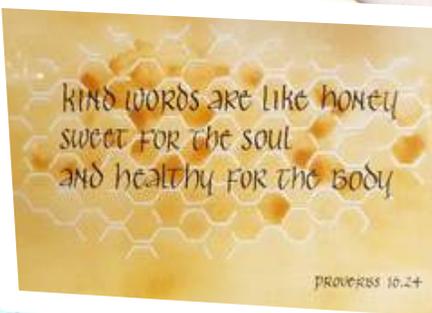
# Lockdown Projects



Ian and June Powell have been busy welcoming their new granddaughter, Stella



Leonie's lockdown DIY project was painting the chimney breast!



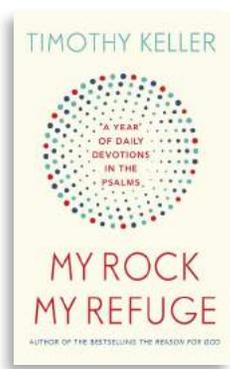
I think we'd all make a bee-line for Dedé's calligraphy!



Chris Piltz has been reminiscing, painting the Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada, which she visited 25 years ago



Hazel Brooks has been especially busy! From 5K running and piano lessons, to knitting and puzzles! Not to be outdone, Nigel has been perfecting his sourdough!



## My Rock, My Refuge Timothy and Kathy Keller

Timothy Keller is a New York pastor and author of many books; notably the best-seller: *The Reason for God*. He and his wife wrote the final draft of this devotional book based on the *Psalms* while staying in the English Lake District.

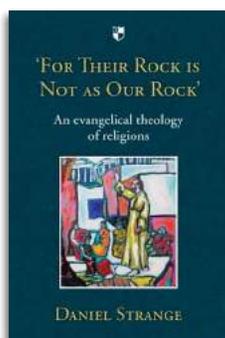
He reminds us that the Psalms were the divinely inspired hymnbook for the public worship of God in ancient Israel and throughout the centuries. When Jesus entered Jerusalem the crowd spontaneously greeted him by shouting Psalm 118: 26

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD”.

The Psalms are the divinely ordained way to learn devotion to God as He reveals Himself. They would all have been sung by Jesus. And they are also about Him.

This accessible book provides 365 daily readings from a Psalm, followed by a short meditation on its meaning and ending with a prayer. Keller explains the historical context of each Psalm in plain language, how relevant it is to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and how we should be repenting, praising God and thanking Him in all circumstances. I highly recommend this book.

Wendy Watts



## For Their Rock is Not as Our Rock Daniel Strange

This is a serious interdisciplinary study of world (non-Christian) religions from a reformed Christian perspective. Dan Strange is a lecturer in Culture, Religion and Public

Theology at Oak Hill Theological College, London. He builds upon Biblical foundations and provides a detailed, comprehensive and historical analysis with humility and scholarly thoroughness. This deals not only with the question of salvation but also questions of truth and apologetics and the ‘subversive fulfilment’ of human religiosity in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

David Watts

# NEW FACES



## Anne Hignell

Hello Everyone,

I am Anne and live in Frodsham which is a few miles away from St John’s but absolutely accessible by the medium which is zoom! I am Mum to two grown up girls, mother-in-law to their lovely husbands and now a granny to two babies born in lockdown.

I have become closer to the Church family at St John’s following my lovely experience with the 'Christianity Explored' course. I have attended church remotely and have enjoyed, immersed myself and learned so much from these services.

I came to be involved with the 'Christianity Explored' course following a suggestion/invitation by George Perrin who I know from Runcorn Rowing Club where we are both members. All I can say about my thoughts about this invitation is that I felt that it was 'TIME'; time to ask all the questions.

I have ever wondered about (by email usually) in a safe and supportive environment. I should say here that I come from a Catholic Convent Grammar School

background and questions were never encouraged! It had little to say about the gospels but an awful lot to say about the rules we were required to learn (or else!)

I am incredibly grateful for this timely intervention and continue to enjoy the learning and fellowship which is offered by Simon and St Johns as well knowing that Jesus was patiently with me all along.

## A Not So New Face – Charlie Jenkins



Charlie is from Warwickshire and joined the British Army after university. He’s lived up in Wilmslow since 2000, is married to Lesley and has two children, Harry and Millie (pictured on a chilly Scottish beach during a family holiday last August). Both children are at the High School. Charlie has been involved with Lindow Scouts since 2011, initially with the Beaver section and now with the Explorer unit. Christened as a Roman Catholic, with a Catholic mother and Methodist father,



Charlie has attended services in Wilmslow at St Bart’s, St Anne’s and St Theresa’s. He’s now attending services at St John’s and is regularly beaten at croquet by Simon on Fridays.

## Are you building on The Rock?

Keith Ranger



In the musical era which gave us The Beatles and the call to “Rock around the Clock”, a Christian street preacher was jokingly asked, do you have Rock-n-Roll in your church? “Of course we

do” came the ready reply, “we build our faith on The Rock, and roll our burdens on the Lord. Come to our church and we’ll teach you how to do it!” But what, or who, is The Rock?

Let’s do a little detective work. Please read the verse below of a lovely old Christian hymn, noticing especially the underlined words or phrases. If facing difficult times, what hope and help could you find here? And does Jesus figure in your answer? Why?

“Beneath the Cross of Jesus

I fain would take my stand,

The shadow of a mighty Rock within a weary land.

A home within the wilderness, a rest along the way,

From the burning of the noontide heat,  
and the burden of the day”.

Let’s now widen the search-area. Here is a verse from a modern poem. Does it help you further to identify “The Rock”?

Does Jesus watch our TV screens,

can God be said to care,

When life seems such a Lottery

and things look so unfair?

“Yes”, Jesus says, “My Cross is proof

God came to share your pain.

Just bring your broken heart to Me,

I’ll make you sing again!”

It’s all about JESUS, isn’t it? He is The Rock on which we can build our lives. So how does the Bible profile Him as “The Rock?” This, after all is “Theology Corner” and the Bible is our text-book!

### 1. Jesus is the SPECIAL Rock.

As divine Lord of all He has the right to say – “There is no other Rock” (Isaiah 44 verse 8). If it is forgiveness for sin, salvation from judgement and eternal life in heaven that you seek, Jesus says – “Don’t waste time looking elsewhere!”

### 2. Jesus is the SOLID Rock.

In Matthew chapter 7 He offers His teachings as a sure rock-like foundation for our present and eternal future. Other options are shifting sand, unable to endure the storms of life.

### 3. Jesus is the STRONG Rock.

In Psalm 61 verse 2 He is “The Rock higher than I”. In other words, He is able to protect us amid life’s storms and spiritual dangers.

### 4. Jesus is the SAVING Rock.

In Matthew chapter 16 the Church is built on Him. His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead brings the blessings of forgiveness and eternal life to the repentant sinner.

### 5. Jesus is the SPIRITUAL Rock.

In 1 Corinthians 10 verse 4 He is the Giver of life, joy and salvation, described as satisfying, living water for the Christian in the “here and now” of this life and the “there and then “ of the next. We sum up with a further short poem :

“To combat hate and evil  
the Church is called to share

The Light of Christ and Love of Christ  
with people everywhere

That ‘here and now’ and

‘there and then’ from God’s eternal throne

May flow pure living water

to those Christ’s made His own.”

# SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAMME

## SUNDAYS

Meet at 10am

April 11 **Resurrection: Assurance**  
Acts 2:22-41

April 18 **Resurrection: New Life**  
Romans 6:1-14

April 25 **Resurrection: Hope**  
1 Corinthians 15:1-28

May 2 **1. The certainty of heaven**  
1 Peter 1:1-12

### 1 Peter: Homeward Bound!

May 9 **2. Strangers in our time**  
1 Peter 1:13-2:3

May 16 **3. The very stones cry out!**  
1 Peter 2:4-12

May 23 **4. The injustice of it all**  
1 Peter 2:13-25

May 30 **5. To have and to hold**  
1 Peter 3:1-7

June 6 **6. Suffering and fear**  
1 Peter 3:8-22

June 13 **7. The reality of judgement**  
1 Peter 4:1-19

June 20 **8. Standing firm**  
1 Peter 5:1-12

June 27 **Community 'Thank You' Service**

July 4 **The Sceptic**  
John 1:35-51

### Encounters with Jesus

July 11 **The Insider**  
John 3:1-15

July 18 **The Outsider**  
John 4:1-30

July 25 **The Forgotten**  
John 5:1-15

## HOMEGROUPS

Meeting in various homes, on Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays, afternoons and evenings, to study God's Word and encourage one another.

### 1 Peter : Homeward bound!

During the spring our homegroups are linked to our Sunday series.

Meeting weekly via Zoom (at least initially) the groups begin on 15th April and finish on 24th June. Dates given are Thursdays but some groups meet at other times (full details on weekly noticesheet). One week each half term will be a Prayer Evening (see below)

*In addition a women's bible study meets 9.45am Wednesdays, and a men's bible study 6.30am Fridays.*

### Monthly Prayer Events

*(Via Zoom or church rooms)*

#### Thursday 29th April

Prayer Evening 8.00-9.30pm

#### Saturday 15th May

Prayer Breakfast 8.30-9.45am

#### Saturday 12th June

Prayer Breakfast 8.30-9.45am

#### Thursday 1st July

Prayer Evening 8.00-9.30pm

## SPECIAL EVENTS

At the time of writing the restart of events such as 'Evergreens', 'Who let the dads out?', Men's Breakfast, International students visit and Youth weekend away are all uncertain – please see website/ weekly noticesheet for the latest update.