

# WIDER HORIZONS

## A POSTCARD FROM AMMAN



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A postcard from Amman

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Sponsoring the World's  
Biggest Jigsaw



CHRISTCHURCH

February

2018

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ROBERTA'S  
WRITINGS

Dear friends

This month's letter comes to you as a postcard from Amman, the capital of Jordan. I am here again to help look after my ten-month old grandson George and see my daughter and son-in-law who live and work here. Let me tell you a little of how this came about.

Rosie, my daughter, studied French and Arabic at university. For her language-learning year abroad she lived in Bethlehem and then Amman. Here she met Hussein, a Master's student from Iraq. They married in 2015 and as soon as she graduated Rosie came to live with Hussein and his family in Amman.

Hussein's father is a professor of law, and used to teach at Baghdad university before terrorist threats meant the family had to flee. Hussein and his father both work in Jordan but because they are refugees they don't have the same access to jobs they would have in their own country. Still their story gives an indication of how diverse refugees can be when civil disruption strikes everyone is affected.

Jordan has welcomed more refugees per head of native population than any other country. Some live in huge refugee camps on the edge of Amman or on the borders with Syria. Some refugees have been here since the Israeli war of independence in 1948 or the six days war in 1967 when they fled their homes. Newer refugees fleeing fresh conflicts in the region arrive every day and are registered with the UN refugee centre. Rosie has been there and reported it is a hot and dehumanising place. Yet for many it is better than where they have come from and gives a faint glimmer of hope in desolate circumstances.

Jordan itself is a very varied country with many beautiful and fascinating places to visit. On its border with Israel is the Jordan river where it is possible to visit the place where St John is thought to have baptised Jesus - very hot, bare and very remote. Above the river valley is Mount Nebo where the book of Exodus tells us Moses looked over the promised land before the children of Israel finally settled - this is a stunning view towards the Dead Sea, with the hills rising up towards Jerusalem. In the south there is the ancient city of Petra where I suspect the journeying Magi may have picked up their supplies of gold and frankincense - the temples intricately cut in the red rock certainly tell of brilliantly creative peoples in the first century AD. Beyond this, at the very south of the country, there is the beautiful Red Sea and the holiday resort of Aqaba with the remains of the first purpose built Christian Church.



Amman itself is a big modern city, strewn across many hills. There are motorways, shopping malls and parks. You can find almost every Western retailer here from Tesco to Clarks with the high end brands also present. I have taken George to a great soft play area in a shopping mall, a bit like Dan's Den, very friendly, if not quite with the special warm heart. There I met a nanny from the Philippines looking after her young charge. We could easily have been in London or New York or Singapore. What a truly global village we live in today!

Many of us at Christchurch now have connections all round the world. A good number of us have multi-national families with some of our close kin living in other countries. It is my hope and prayer that these links will increase both our understandings of each other and the desire to make a more peaceful world. I believe it is also vital to work to make the world more equal.

At the moment international links are growing between people who share business interests or are more affluent or educated (these are the people I meet on the planes on my visits to Jordan), while those with little material wealth or education or prospects remain personally disconnected yet, at the same time, seeing through modern media the riches and lifestyle others near and far can enjoy. This is a recipe for discontent as well as being an unfair situation. It is in part what prompts some to flee their bleak or worse life situations and to travel at great risk to other more affluent countries. World leaders would do well to put time and resources into relieving poverty and developing equality of opportunity within and across countries. That though is unlikely to be a vote winner and will require a largeness of heart and mind on the part of our political leaders.

In the words of Graham Kendrick we can pray: *"God of the poor, friend of the weak, grant us compassion we pray"*.

Without having international family or friends, and without travelling very far, it is still possible to build cross-cultural friendships. Fiona Kendall from our congregation, and

others, have been doing this for some time by supporting Asylum seekers in Bradford. As Fiona told us in the services on Sunday 07 January, God has now also called her to serve in Italy in the Protestant Churches response to the current refugee crisis with the organisation Mediterranean Hope. We wish Fiona every blessing in this work and look forward to the understanding and links we can build through her to the people whose lives are now connected to our own.

Wishing you all opportunities for new friendships and the deep just peace of God,  
*Roberta.*



## Comings and Goings

Fiona Kendall has a new job which will take her to Rome for four years. She will be working for 'Mediterranean Hope' as a mission partner shared between the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church. She leaves with our prayers for a happy and fulfilling time in Rome.



COMINGS &  
GOINGS

Some of our members have moved house. The three new addresses are:

Paul and Wendy Ribbands - 15 Oakridge Avenue, Menston LS29 6DF, phone 01943 872381.

Michelle Stewart - 3 Lime Close, Addingham, LS29 0TP.

Ian Watt - 4 Sidebeck Way, Addingham, LS29 0TX, phone 01943 969738.

We wish them all much happiness as they settle into their new homes.

Please note that the email address in the new directory for Steve Amos is incorrect. It should read: [steve.amos.gb@gmail.com](mailto:steve.amos.gb@gmail.com) Also, please check that you don't still have his old "blueyonder" address from several years ago.

Please continue to pray for people in special circumstances and let the Pastoral Team know of any new concerns.

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## Children's, Young People and Families Lay Employee

The Trustees are pleased to be able to announce that, following interviews held before Christmas, Rebecca Anderson has been appointed to this post, and will be joining us towards the end of February.

Rebecca is currently Youth Pastor at Sheldon Road Methodist Church, Chippenham.

*Michael Noble*

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## Wednesday Afternoon Fellowship

On Wednesday 06 December, forty members sat around the festive tables to sing carols, interspersed with items from committee members and concluding with prayers led by our minister Rev Roberta Topham.

A lovely Christmas afternoon tea was then served and enjoyed by everyone. Many thanks to Joan Loach, our President, and all the committee members and also our faithful tea ladies, Val Worrall and Pat Scott.

The Wednesday Afternoon Fellowship will recommence on the 24 January with the Spring/Summer programme when Dennis and Dorothy Hawkshaw will entertain us with 'Sixty Years of Gilbert and Sullivan'.

A warm welcome is extended to everyone - do come along and join us!

*Sylvia Baldwin - Speaker Secretary*

## Housegroups from January 2018

Christchurch Housegroups will be using study material produced by The Joint Public Issues Team entitled '**Art of the Possible**'. The Joint Public Issues Team is a venture of the Baptist Union of GB, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland. Its aim is to allow the four churches to work together in living out the gospel of Christ in the Church and in wider society.



HOUSEGROUPS

'**Art of the Possible**' is a resource which enables groups to consider the role of politics in the Church.

- Does politics have a role in the Church or is it a distraction from our mission?
- Is politics about compromise – what is possible – when our Christian faith is about truth?
- What does politics mean for our faith – and what should our faith mean for our politics?

At a time when a lot of people say they are turned off by politics, many in our churches are still greatly concerned about what is going on in our world.

'**Art of the Possible**' contains six sessions which cover different aspects of Christianity and politics, including our images of God, why politics is about more than voting, whether Christians should break the law, and why Christians should do politics.

The six sessions are entitled:

- What does God look like?
- Where is the justice?
- Change-makers
- Church and State
- Parliament
- Politics of the here and now

*Art of  
The  
possible*

YES  
 NO  
 MAYBE

Each session has Bible references, discussion handouts and plenty of focus on our present day lives as Christians.

It looks an exciting resource for a very practical and contemporary topic and anyone who is not already part of a Housegroup but who would like to join in would be most welcome.

Please speak to me or contact me by email, [juliet.j.amos@gmail.com](mailto:juliet.j.amos@gmail.com) or leave a message in the church pigeon holes.

*Juliet Amos*

## What about the Women (part 2) - Gender issues

### More thoughts from Melting Pot

The language we use is important - generally we do use more inclusive, non-gendered versions of the Bible. In Housegroups we looked at the book of James; Chapter 2 in my 1970's Jerusalem Bible starts each section with 'My brothers' but more enlightened versions now use 'my dear friends'. This also applies to the hymns and songs we sing, where 'male' words are used, particularly in older hymns, then I can feel irritated, even excluded, and my discomfort at the words used can get in the way of worship.

God in our worship and study is described as male, in prayers, hymns and songs: He, God the Father,



Lord, King - but why? We could use female or genderless terms for God. We imagine God in our image and we are not all male! We should not restrict our idea of God but should be allowed freedom to describe God creatively. Feminine versions of the divine are not unknown in anthropology. There are descriptions of God as a 'Creator Mother' or Amma (not Abba). There are theologians and writers of liturgy and prayers from a feminine perspective, such as Nicola Slee and Janet Morley, who use descriptions of God as a Creator Mother or Amma, not Abba Father.

To take these ideas one step further some artists have explored the Bible story creatively: there is a sculpture that caused controversy when displayed in a church in America with the artist Edwina Sandys (1975) portraying a female Christ on the cross - Christa. This may be a step too far for some, but it is a way of exploring our faith, thinking differently and creatively looking at God's story. You can find certain parts of the Bible that describe the feminine, nurturing, creator aspects of God (eg the wisdom literature and Song of Songs), and there are images of God as female (eg the mother hen and her chicks). Look out for more examples of the feminine within the Bible.

Then there are other issues that we are becoming aware of: those of us who do not identify as male or female, or who wish to express themselves in a non-binary way - this may be on a spectrum of gender - so we now have the freedom to be who we really are and not conform to rigid identities, perhaps to fulfil our God-given identity! So the use of male and female language becomes important, so that we are inclusive of all. Male and female are no longer rigidly defined and perhaps correspondingly, we should not have a fixed/agreed description of God? I think we need to continue to challenge ideas of gender both within worship and in our lives; our children and grandchildren will require us to do this, or we will be left behind.

At the Melting Pot discussion there was talk of whether we could take part in

worship where God was described in a female way – we thought that people would need to be prepared for the event and perhaps there could be a discussion about our reactions to this idea. What do you think?

*Helen Singleton*

*If you have any thoughts, whether you agree or disagree, or simply want to explore the discussion, please send it in for consideration (Ed).*

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### **Jigsaw Festival update**

Don't forget you can still sponsor part of the making up of the worlds largest jigsaw puzzle. Details were in the January issue of Wider Horizons, but to recap: you can sponsor a 10-pieces segment of the puzzle for £1; let us know of any person or company willing to sponsor part of or the whole 48,000 piece puzzle; or just simply tell your friends and family of this ambitious project to help raise funds for Cancer Research UK, Yorkshire Air Ambulance and our own church funds.

Speak to John Sayers, Pam Harris, Malcolm Atkinson or myself for more information on this ambitious world record project.

The completed puzzle, measuring over 25ft by 6ft 6in, will be on display in the Lower Hall from Monday 1st to Saturday 7th April.

*Brian Scott*

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### **Christchurch Calendar**

Sales of the 2018 Christchurch Calendar raised £191 for our funds.

Thanks to the artists who contributed their work and to those of you who purchased calendars – Breaking News – we have now completely sold out!

*NB It's a long time until 2019 but it is never too soon to start looking around Ilkley for likely photo opportunities.*

*Margo Atkinson*

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A REFLECTIVE, INFORMAL AND SUPPORTIVE TIME FOR ANYONE AFFECTED BY THE LOSS OF A BABY AT ANY STAGE OF PREGNANCY, OR IN INFANCY. A TIME OF REMEMBERING, SHARING AND GIVING THANKS.



Stars

4TH MARCH  
CHRISTCHURCH CAFÉ

7:30PM TO 9:30PM

FOR A CHAT ABOUT STARS, CALL LAUREN ON 07891 25081 OR EMAIL  
LAURENMCDONNELL4@GMAIL.COM

## WORSHIP AT CHRISTCHURCH - February 2018

Sunday	04	11	18	25
<b>Theme</b>	<b>I am the Way, the Truth and the Life</b>	<b>I am the Resurrection and the Life</b>	<b>The Way of the Cross</b>	<b>The Transfiguration of Jesus</b>
<b>Readings</b>	John 13,31-14,14; 1 Peter 3, 13-18	John 11, 1-44 Romans 8, 6-11	Mark 8, 27-38 Hebrews 12, 1-2	Mark 9, 2-13; 2 Peter 1, 16-21
<b>9:00am</b> Interactive All-age, All-stage	Worship Team Covenant Service	Worship Team	Worship Team	Worship Team
<b>10:45</b> Preacher led Time-honoured	Rev Dr Roberta Topham Covenant Service	Rev Dr Roberta Topham	Rev Lesley Taylor	Mrs Joan Bosomworth
<b>6:00pm</b> Circuit Service	-	at Burley	-	-

### Friday's Pause For Thought - a 20 minute time of reflection

2nd — Mrs Margaret Cook / 9th Rev Roberta Topham\*  
16th — Canon Phillip Gray / 23rd — Rev David Callander  
*\*Communion available after the service*

### Wednesday Fellowship

Meeting most Wednesdays at 2:00pm  
7th February—**The Cat's Whiskers**  
Speaker: Val Appleton

14th February - **Up And Under**  
Speaker: Brian Scott

21<sup>st</sup> February - **Alpine Adventure**  
Speaker: Ann Holdsworth

28th February  
Speaker: Rev Dr. Roberta Topham

Please contact the **Prayer Chain** for urgent or special prayer needs:  
Val Worrall (01943 831779)

Text your prayer concerns to the Christchurch Prayer Team on:

**07562 343622**

**The deadline for the March 2018 edition of Wider Horizons is the first Sunday in February.** Items (please try to keep to about 350 words which is about one page) *preferably by email, please, as a Word attachment to both*

Mike Fawcett - [office@christchurchilkley.org.uk](mailto:office@christchurchilkley.org.uk)  
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