

## Editorial Notes

The front cover shows the layout last year in Street Parish Church for 'The hour of silent personal prayer' which due to the restrictions was all that was allowed. This year despite the high numbers of covid cases in our area, we are feeling positive about having services of remembrance in our churches to remember all those who lost their lives in the two wars and in the conflicts since. On page 11 there is a short list of remembrance gatherings and services in Street, together with a short article from Ana on our remembrance services.

At the beginning of October our PCCs all met up at Bagley Baptist Church from which there was a stunning view of the Mendip hills, see the Rectors letter on page 2, and a few pictures on the back cover alongside some Compton Dundon harvest ones.

Have you met our new ordinand Alison Tolson yet? On page 9 you can read a little of her background, along with a picture.

Pam and I are hoping to see many of you at the Coffee Morning which is advertised on page 14 and I encourage you to give your support to any other event in the benefice which you will read about throughout this magazine.

As Christmas approaches and covid reduces (hopefully) our churches are getting busier, for which we praise God, and we pray for all those involved in the preparations for the services, coffee mornings etc, and especially for the younger generation in our schools and churches. May God Bless you all. Editor.

## Rector's letter

Dear Friends,

'Looking back, looking forward'

It was a joy to meet with members of all three of our PCC's for a day away in early October when, generously hosted by Bagley Baptist Church we spent some time reflecting on what has happened and dreaming some dreams about what the future life and ministry of our benefice might look like. We will take time to process all that we discussed and watch this space!

As Christian people, we are often both looking back and looking forward, looking back with gratitude for all that Jesus did for us through his life, death and resurrection and looking forward to the glorious future that awaits us when he comes again. In the meantime, we are called to live in what has been called the 'now and not yet time'

November is a looking back and looking forward month in the church's life. At our memorial and Remembrance services (see elsewhere for details) we look back with love and thankfulness both for those we have loved and lost and those who have served their country. Yet it is also a time of looking forward as we begin to think about the many and various Christmas opportunities that December will offer in the life of our churches.

This year particularly, we can look forward to a relatively covid restriction free Christmas (at least that is the case as I write this!). We also look forward to getting to know our new ordinand, Alison Tolson, (see elsewhere in this magazine), as she starts to serve and learn in SWCD Churches.

God has called us as his family in Street, Walton and Compton Dundon to an exciting future.

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 9.

With my love & prayers

Ana.

## **Memorial Services**

On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 3pm (Parish Church, Street) and 6pm (St Andrew’s, Compton Dundon) we will holding our annual memorial services which are offered as a quiet reflective space for those who have lost loved ones either recently or longer ago.

Invitations will be sent to the families of those whose funerals we have had the privilege of conducting more recently but, the services are open to all who wish to come and remember. If you are aware of friends, family or neighbours for whom this would be of value, please consider inviting them along.

If you or someone you invite would like the name of a loved one read out at the service, please let the office know, remembering to tell us which of the two services you will be attending.

Ana Lawrence

## **At the heart of Christmas**

The Church of England has announced its campaign for Advent and Christmas 2021, which will focus on the words ‘at the heart of Christmas’. Watch out for more details and for the ways in

which you can get involved in putting the Christian Christmas story back 'at the heart of Christmas' in Street, Walton and Compton Dundon this year. Ana Lawrence

## **WALTON MATTERS**

I lift my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Psalm 121: verses 1-2

Our Thursday coffee mornings are really going well and are much appreciated by church members and village folk. It is good to be able to meet informally and everyone is delighted that Ana is able to join us and share a thought for the day. We are also glad that once again coffee and biscuits are being served and, on special occasions, cake! A special thank you to all the ladies who organise this.

Harvest services went very well and were much enjoyed by all. The format of the celebration service took some people by surprise, but was enjoyed by all. In the afternoon the children had a really good session, with some of them not wanting to go home at the end. The school children came into the church to celebrate their harvest services on the Monday. We thank the people who gave so generously, the gifts now having been sent to the Food Bank in Street.

Unfortunately we were not able to have the usual harvest supper, but on the 13<sup>th</sup> November we are holding a Music and Merriment evening in the Village Hall, starting at 7.30pm. Andy with Rough Around the Edge will be providing the Music and the Merriment will be provided by various other people. There will be a

ploughman's meal and a raffle. Tickets will be available from the end of October – look out for posters.

The shoe boxes are ready for collection. They are so much appreciated by the children and the knowledge of the love of Jesus also spreads to their families. If you feel unable to fill a box then there is the opportunity to give a donation or bring a few items which together can be used to fill a box. Remember that the greatest thing we can do is pray for the safety of those who deliver the boxes to the countries and for those who receive them.

Hilda Grint

Flower Rota:

7<sup>th</sup> November      Anne Halstead

21<sup>st</sup> November    Liz Selway

## **Harvest Giving to Christian Aid at Compton Dundon**

Harvest was celebrated at St Andrew's Church, Compton Dundon last Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, a well attended and most enjoyable service.

We are reminded of God's bounty and our good fortune enabling us to have food in plenty.

However there are many locally who require practical support with food parcels and our food donations were gratefully received by the Salvation Army in Street.

David Hatrey led us in worship and his talk included a version of 'Ready Steady Cook!'

John Gordon, Peter Robertson and Pat King were asked to select 5 items from those on display to concoct a tasty meal. Suffice it to say that John and Peter had 16 votes each for their meals and my fish kedgerree came second! (Pat.)

Following the service nearly 80 villagers and guests enjoyed a Harvest Lunch in the Village Hall, our first village social event since the initial lockdown so special indeed. An impressive selection of home-grown fruit and veg was auctioned by David,

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raising £124 for Christian Aid, one of St Andrew's chosen charities. David also shared some interesting and encouraging facts about the involvement of Christian Aid in training midwives in places where they are so desperately needed. Together with the collection from church we were delighted to be able to send £357 to Christian Aid to support their charitable work such as this.

For every pound donated to Christian Aid:

86p is used directly for charitable purposes.

Of this 86p, 43p supports long term projects in developing countries.

35p is spent on emergencies that arise, both here and abroad.

8p is spent on campaigning and education.

The other 14p is invested in fundraising.

For every pound invested, more than £7 is secured in return.

It seems fitting to end with words from one of the Christian Aid prayers that we shared during the service:

'Creator God, help us to be your agents tending to the beauty of the earth and enabling the healing of your nations'.



## Supported charity profile –

At their recent Harvest Festival lunch, St Andrews Compton Dundon raised money for Christian Aid, one of the charities they have chosen to support in 2021.

Christian Aid, <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>, perhaps best known for those envelopes that sometimes pop through our letterboxes each May, is an ecumenical Christian international development charity that works throughout the world to alleviate poverty in some of the poorest communities and offer support for long term development under their mission statement, **to create a world where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.**

As well as its own work, Christian Aid, with Tearfund, another of the beneficent charity partners, is a member of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), where a number of charities work together to respond to major disasters and humanitarian crises. Christian Aid and other DEC members are currently working in Afghanistan to respond to the looming humanitarian crisis there, as well as in many other countries in the world, often where there is considerable risk from war, unrest or natural disaster.

To find out more about the work of Christian Aid, visit their web site, where you can also find resources to help you to pray for their work. You can also search the church web site for a list of all the charities our churches are supporting this year.

Kevin Lawrence, for the Benefice Charitable giving committee.

## **TALKING CHURCH FINANCES**

At their recent Parochial Church Council meetings, each of our parishes approved the creation of a benefice wide Stewardship group, to comprise of people drawn from across our churches. The PCC's have asked the group to work together, both to help us all reflect on the theology of our financial giving and to make recommendations to the PCCs on ways we could develop some of our stewardship practices across the benefice.

The group will begin its work in the coming weeks and there will be more information to follow both in future editions of 'Life' and elsewhere in our churches.

The context in which this group has been appointed is of a significant financial deficit in each of our parishes. To put it simply, we are, and have been for a while, spending more that we are receiving.

Despite the faithful and generous giving of many and despite prudent and careful control of costs by our Treasurers and PCC's, the stark fact remains that, the accounts of each of parishes regularly show expenditure exceeding income, a situation that no church family, just like any other kind of family, can sustain for ever. The good news is that each of our parishes are blessed with some reserves, money in the bank, built up from past gifts. Drawing on these reserves, where we can, to cover the shortfall is providing some short-term breathing space for us,



but they will not last forever. We do therefore need to take action, not only to 'balance the books', but also as we seek the financial resources that will be needed for the ministry and mission that God is calling us into as SWCD Churches.

There is no doubt that Covid19 has made this situation worse. Our church buildings were shut for months, with no Sunday collections taken; many of our traditional fundraising events were cancelled; weddings, from which we receive fees, were postponed and restrictions meant our buildings could not be hired out to external groups, reducing our income from this source. However, our deficits predated the pandemic and its ending, although it will help, is unlikely, on its own, to see this 'problem' sorted.

The Stewardship group and the PCCs to whom they will make recommendations have much to ponder and please do pray for us and them as they wrestle with these issues. SWCD Churches Stewardship Group

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### **My Ordained Ministry Training.**

My name is Alison Tolson and I'm really looking forward to joining the benefice as part of my training for ordained ministry. I am fortunate as a (very) mature student to be able to participate in what is known as a context-based course, which basically means I live, work and pray in the college environment of Cuddesdon 3 days a week and am back home for the rest of the week.



Home since 2002 has been Shepton Mallet where we moved as a family after I left the cathedral in Wells where I'd worked as a Verger. It is now only myself and my husband, Nick, plus 2 dogs and a cat! left at

home, as the 6 children have all flown the nest. Although living in Shepton Mallet, I have had connections in the Street and Glastonbury areas over recent years, I was part of the Air Cadet Squadron covering both areas and I was part of the parish of St John's, Glastonbury. Since the beginning of the pandemic last year I consider myself fortunate to have held a post at the Co Op in West End, one that I have only just given up to start this stage of my journey.

When I'm not reading theological books, I enjoy reading crime novels. Over recent months I have discovered a joy in doing Diamond Art and other crafty things, I also love exploring outdoors and discovering God in the nature around us.

Alison Tolson

## **My commissioning as Chaplain to the Sea Cadets**

Well the night of my commissioning as Chaplain to the sea cadets had arrived. It was a mixture of excitement and terror!! What a mix of emotions as apart from the lack of braid on the sleeves and the Chaplains badges the uniform was the same as I had worn 25 years previously in the RN. Due to covid I could only have my husband and Ana as my support but it was lovely to have them there. I was warmly welcomed at the hut and it was the first formal little parade for the cadets since lockdown. It was a moving and meaningful service and I was glad to get through it with no mishaps! I immediately felt part of a family and I have since enjoyed my nights at the hut getting to know the staff and cadets little by little and them getting to know me. I look forward immensely to serving them for the years to come.

Suzie Williams



# Remembrance



## Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November

11am

Ceremony outside Clarks Headquarters



## Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November

10-45am

Service at Elmhurst School

## Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November

2pm

Parade from Royal British Legion car park to memorial garden by the URC where there will be a service

## Remembrance Sunday



In order that our churches can mark remembrance at 11am on 14<sup>th</sup> November, a number of service times have changed for this Sunday. **Please check the services rota for details.**

As in previous years, there will be no morning service on that day at the Mission Church, but this year, we are holding an informal service of Communion in the Mission Church at 4pm, with the opportunity of prayer for healing. This is open to all those across our churches and beyond who would like to come. Ana Lawrence



**Tearfund**  
**The Big Quiz Night**

**Saturday**  
**20<sup>th</sup> November**  
**7.00 for 7.30pm**  
**Mission Church**  
**Street**

**Bring your own**  
**Refreshments**  
**Entry £5 per person**

For more details or to book a table for the quiz please contact Suzie Williams.  
Email - [suzieattheoldvic@goolemail.com](mailto:suzieattheoldvic@goolemail.com) or mobile 07928 921129

### **£2 Coins/Coffee Morning**

We are still collecting £2 Coins for Holy Trinity  
and Mission Church Street, Funds.

(10% of all monies collected will be given to the Missions and Charities  
that we are supporting,)

Please continue to let Roger or Pam Harmsworth have your  
£2 coins. Thank you to those who have already donated £604.

Donations of other coins or notes will be accepted at the:-

### **Coffee Morning in The Mission Church**

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December**

**10-00am till 12 noon**

Cheques should be made payable to STREET PCC

# Engaging with the wider community

## Christmas Projects

### Baby Jesus Rocks

Following the popularity of 'Baby Jesus Rocks' leading up to Christmas last year we are going to revisit this, in both **Walton** and **Compton Dundon**. I will be redesigning the image that appears on the pebble to echo the Church of England's theme this year which is 'At the heart of Christmas'. During December we will gradually put the pebbles around the villages, with posters and a social media campaign encouraging people (not just children) to seek them out and bring their pebbles to one of the Christmas Services (there may be a sweet reward involved).  
HELP REQUIRED

#### *Pebble Painting*

Last year between a small team of people we painted nearly 400 pebbles, each in our own homes due to lockdown restrictions. This year I hope that we will be able to have a couple of pebble painting gatherings and get a little factory going which is far more sociable and probably quicker.

#### *Pebble Placing*

Each pebble needs to be carefully placed, with the intention that it will be found; this requires some walking around the village and hunting out the best 'hiding places'. It is best if it is not all done on the same day. Each time I walked Cara I put 5-10 pebbles in my pocket and placed them during my walk.

## Get in the Picture

This project allows people to take part in the Christmas story. Dress up as a shepherd, a King or as Mary and imagine yourself as a character in one of the greatest stories ever told. At the Christmas Market on 20<sup>th</sup> November in **Street** we are hoping to have a stall where people come, put on a costume from the Nativity Story and have their photograph taken, which is then uploaded to the Church website. This is an opportunity to put the Christmas Story out into the High Street and engage with lots of people as they dress up, laugh and reconnect with the Nativity Story.

### HELP REQUIRED

#### *Costume and Backdrop Design*

We will need to create a nativity backdrop for the stall and gather a series of costumes together so if you are a creative person this may well be right up your street.

#### *People to be on the stall*

We will need 2-3 people to help on the stall at any one time, encouraging customers to 'Get in the Picture', keeping the costumes sorted and tidy, and ensuring that people fill out photograph permission forms, oh and of course we will need photographers.

Get involved by contacting Diana Greenfield on 0921858094 or [dmgreenfield@me.com](mailto:dmgreenfield@me.com)

Please Pray for these activities.

Diana Greenfield.

## Wildlife without a Garden

Wilding our spaces seems to be a trend in our modern life and as Christians with our duty to care for God's creation, the recommendations of the various groups and societies can be adopted into our Christian way of life to help us in our caring and give us abundant amusement as well.

Following on from the article on ways of attracting wildlife to gardens, here are some ways to care for God's smaller creatures if you want to attract them into a garden-less environment to have a beneficial input in increasing their numbers. This will help in reversing today's decreasing numbers of insects which pollinate our fruit and vegetable crops. Yes, bees and butterflies travel miles to find their food and drink!

Without a garden or soil to plant flowers or create a space for a pond or feeding station for birds does not mean that watching and caring for God's smaller creatures is impossible.

If you have a balcony plants to attract bees, butterflies and hover flies, can be grown in pots or troughs. These can be hung over the edge of the rail as long as they are securely fastened to it. Obviously it would be better if they are placed on the balcony deck if there is enough room.

A good potting compost such as a John Innes No.3, preferably organically fertilised, is essential for successful growing, nutrients can be replaced annually by applying an all round organic fertiliser such as 'fish, blood and bone' mixed with a small amount of compost, this will feed the soil microbes, unlike straight chemical feeds, thus avoiding frequent soil changes.

The range of plants that can be grown in this way that will attract wildlife is very extensive, the main thing to remember is that many hybrid and double flowered plants do not produce the pollen and nectar that attracts the bees, butterflies and hover flies in any number and only certain varieties of plant attract a certain variety of butterfly. e.g. Birdsfoot trefoil for the common blue. If you enjoy cooking, why not consider a herb garden in pots, many are prolific flowering, their leaves can be cut and come again. Lavender and thyme are good examples.

The cosmos, poppy and single flowering plants of the daisy family are groups which are colourful and attract the insect

life to their abundant pollen and nectar. Almost all good, reliable seed catalogues now highlight the plants which attract insects, usually with a picture of a bee or butterfly and in the description.

An alternative if there is no balcony but you have wide enough window sills is to grow the above plants in window boxes. Again making sure they are securely attached to either the window frame or sill and will not fall. A “bug-house” as a winter refuge and home for solitary bees, lady-birds and hover flies can be an added attraction to keep the insects local and safe in bleak times.

Unfortunately water loving creatures are nigh impossible to attract above ground level but birds, bees and butterflies will come to feeders and dishes of water hung from hanging basket brackets attached to the wall or window frame alongside an opening window. The feeders and baths which attach to a window using suction cups do fall off after a time and can be a hazard to anyone below if there is nothing to stop them falling to the ground. Different foods attract different wildlife, bees and butterflies feed on sugar water offered in a rabbit water feeder or shallow bowl. Birds like a feeder for suet balls, pellets or blocks and one for a seed mix would cater for a wide range of small to medium sized birds and the antics of them can be very amusing.

If you live in a high rise I hope this gives you some encouragement to try and help our environment to be more friendly to God’s smaller creatures especially at times when their food is in short supply. i.e. winter and early spring for pollen and nectar, winter for bird food and summer when they are feeding young.

If you have any queries or would like further information please contact me at [daveyemm@outlook.com](mailto:daveyemm@outlook.com) and if possible I will answer.

This article is written on behalf of your Eco-Church Group as part of the Churches’ endeavours in encouraging a higher standard of ecologically friendly living by us all in caring for God’s creation.

David Yemm



## Manna

Join the fight against modern slavery

Last month, on Anti-Modern Slavery Day, churches across Somerset were lit in bright red as part of the Clewer Initiative's campaign to show their stand against modern slavery. Clewer is the national work of the Church of England to combat modern slavery. They support churches across the country to help tackle it where they are, especially with their Hidden Voices programme.

Bath Abbey, which recently hosted a Monuments, Empire and Slavery exhibition to explore the Abbey's past connections with the transatlantic slave trade, was one of the 'red churches'. Yet, 200 years after the abolition of the slave trade there could still be up to 136,000 men, women and children trapped in modern slavery in the UK. The first town to petition against the transatlantic trade slave was Bridgwater and today the community is still active in battling slavery and are part of Hidden Voices Somerset which has had 60+ lay people and clergy involved from five denominations. An event to mark Anti-Slavery Day was held on 18 October at St Mary's Church, Bridgwater.

The theme for this year's Anti-Modern Slavery Day was #OrdinaryActivist and Clewer shared stories of people from all walks of life doing their bit to fight modern slavery, from the bride sourcing an ethical dress for her wedding to a mum working in the evenings and during her child's nap times to raise awareness of the issue.

If you think you could be an #OrdinaryActivist [visit: theclerinitiative.org](https://theclerinitiative.org)

## **News in brief**

### **Planting the green canopy**

Bishop Ruth was invited with all the Bishops in the Church of England to plant a tree as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative; a royal initiative which asks people from across the UK to plant a tree to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee next year.

Bishop Ruth was given a broadleaf sapling by Forestry England and asked to choose a special place to plant it. The tree represents the bishops' commitment to "pray, speak out and take action" on climate change. She donated her tree to King Ina Church of England Academy in Somerton to plant in the grounds of their new school. Though it is a very small sapling now it's hoped the tree will eventually grow to around 30 feet high. It will help the environment by absorbing and storing carbon and will also act as a symbol of the church's commitment to take care of God's world.

### **Bishop visits new school**

The pupils at King Ina Church of England Academy in Somerton enjoyed showing their new school to Bishop Ruth and other supporters at a special celebration assembly. The new space brings together the pre-school, Infant and Junior schools.

Bishop Ruth encouraged the children to 'recognise that there is so much in our world to be thankful for'.

### **Abbey celebrations**

Hundreds of Bath Abbey's supporters, congregation, staff and volunteers have attended a special Footprint Celebration Service followed a Thanksgiving reception and a tour on Sunday 17th October.

Guy Bridgewater, Rector of Bath Abbey, said: “We are overjoyed to celebrate the completion of the building work of the major Abbey Footprint project. The vision of a fully restored Abbey floor, and greatly enhanced facilities for welcome, worship and ministry with the city and its visitors, has been gloriously fulfilled. The Celebration Service is a chance to express our gratitude to God - and to everyone who has helped renew Bath Abbey by their generosity, patient faith and hard work.”

## **Bishop’s Letter**

### **‘There is much to do’**

Alistair Redfern, Assistant Bishop of Bath and Wells and Chair of the Clewer Initiative

Our church faces many challenges about funding, organisation, credibility and appropriate approaches to mission. Where might modern slavery fit in?

Bath and Wells is a leading light within the Church of England in terms of a positive and effective response to the growing evil of modern slavery. On behalf of the Clewer Initiative, which coordinates the Church of England’s work in this area, I would like to say a huge thank you to David Maggs, Sian Owen and others. They have helped the diocese lead the way in raising awareness, offering training to establish community resilience, fight back against the phenomenon of county lines (the involvement of children and young people in drug trafficking), and pioneered the development of partnerships which enable the church to play a key role in both care and prevention. Bath Abbey has been doing some ground-breaking work about monuments and the transatlantic slave trade with an approach which will be

very helpful to others. Yet, with modern slavery increasing, there is much to do.

Jesus calls us to love God and our neighbour as ourselves. The gospel makes clear that the neighbour is not just the person next door, but is particularly the person everyone easily passes by – while they are suffering without hope. In Matthew 25 Jesus makes it clear that we meet Him in the poor and oppressed – or in Clewer's words, Hidden in Plain Sight.

In the modern rush to grab cheap goods and services, we rarely notice those who may suffer and are criminally controlled in order to provide them. As we rightly reorder our priorities as churches, our ways of working, our mission and service – modern slavery is a key indicator of whether we aim to serve the church as our own safe place, or whether we aim to be out on that road between Jerusalem and Jericho, looking to encounter and rescue and raise up those who are trapped and suffering and generally ignored.

Let us not rest on our laurels, but build upon our work so far, so that others may be brought good news, embraced into our communities, and given confidence to know the love of God through the love of their neighbours.

Every blessing

Bishop Alistair

## Interview

A community approach to ending modern slavery

Volunteer, Sian Owen runs the Hidden Voices, a Modern Slavery Support group in Bridgwater and was shortlisted for one of this year's Modern Slavery Awards for her work.

How did you get involved with Hidden Voices?

I first heard about Hidden Voices about four years ago when they ran a training course at my church, St Francis in Bridgwater. I went to support the church but got very interested in the subject. That intensified after the death of a family member, who we later found out had been exploited.

What does your work involve?

It is mainly getting out into the community and onto the streets to raise awareness of the issues. We started by getting in touch with the Mayor who put me in touch with the leader of the Town Council who had recently written an article about Bridgwater being the first town to petition against slavery back in 1785 and our network has grown from there. We try to attend as many community events as possible, including the Bridgwater Together event which is a celebration of the diversity of our community. It was a fantastic day, then lockdown hit.

How has the pandemic affected your work?

I have been able to do some online training for village agents and they still keep in touch and call us if they have any concerns. We have continued to be out and about and visible as much as possible and my partner and I were even able to spot an incident of County Lines drug exploitation on our early morning walks.

How can people help?

Everyone can learn to spot the signs and make a call. You can call the Modern Slavery Helpline (08000 121700), the local police on 101 or the Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority (0800 432 0804). You can also report it on their website (<https://www.gla.gov.uk/>). The easiest thing to do is know your neighbour. If someone moves a lot of people into a house and you see people leaving early in the morning and not returning in the house, you are more likely to get a feel if something is wrong if you have spoken to them. So start with saying 'hello'!

You could also take a look the [Hidden Voices course available on the Clewer website](#) and do your own research.

**U.S.B.  
Find something to praise God for**

‘... IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY ... MEDITATE  
ON THESE THINGS.’  
PHILIPPIANS 4:8 NKJV

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General Robbie Risner described the seven years he spent as a prisoner of war as 'the essence of despair.' He said, 'If you could have squeezed the feeling out of the word despair, it would have come out lead-coloured, dingy and dirty.' What's amazing is how he survived. He pried the cover off a floor drain in his cell and lowered his head into the opening. There he noticed a solitary blade of grass, the only smidgeon of colour in his colourless world. Calling it a blood transfusion for the soul, Risner began each day in prayer, lying on the floor of his cell with his head down the vent, focused on that single blade of grass.

Jesus said, "Your eye ... provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light. But

when your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness ...  
“ (Matthew 6:22-23 NLT). What are you looking at? Each day you get to decide where you'll focus. And you won't have to look hard to find things to complain about: war, petrol prices, the economy, global warming, and crime.

God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed in the Garden of Eden, but they chose to focus on the one thing they couldn't have. He divided the Red Sea, sent signs to guide the Israelites in the wilderness and provided food so they'd never go hungry. Initially, '... They ... sang His praise. But ... soon forgot what He had done ...' (Psalm 106:12-13 NIV). Don't be like that. The Bible says, 'If there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.' Surely you can find something to praise God for today!

*From the daily readings in 'The Word for Today'. This booklet of devotional readings is published every three months and is available free of charge through the generosity of supporters, from: UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF. Tel: 0845 60 40 401. Email: [ucb@ucb.co.uk](mailto:ucb@ucb.co.uk)*

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