



There was much excitement at LMC on 1 March as the new brand identity was unveiled! Jenna and Charlotte did the honours, with great support from the LMC youngsters and their party poppers. The new installation at the back of the church (pictured above) is just one of the new signs around the church building.

The new logo and accompanying strapline – Life Mission Community – are part of the response to the communications survey last April, which elicited over 150 responses and stated (among other things) that LMC should be clearer about who we are and what we stand for. At the same time the Lent services and bible studies are focusing on the life, mission and community of Jesus, challenging us to reflect further on these aspects of his ministry as we build LMC’s vision around them. Bible studies take place every Monday morning and Wednesday evening during Lent. Please join us!

LMC

Life

March 2020

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Rev's Reflections

Giving up something bad for Lent



Rev. Sue
Creighton

Lent

I decided to give up Facebook for Lent. I don't look at it constantly during the day, so I knew it wasn't going to be particularly sacrificial or self-denying. My reason for giving it up was because some of the posts I was seeing were not good for my soul and were creating in me angry responses, leaving me with a sense of frustration or bewilderment or with a desire to write something retaliatory. Most of them involved unkind words, hateful prejudice and unbelievable hypocrisy. I'll just give you one example; it involves responses towards Greta Thunberg. Agree with her or not, some of what has been said about her and towards her has left me speechless – after all, she is only 17! After the climate change rally in Bristol a local newspaper printed the names of a number of men who had posted on social media terrible, vicious things about her, including posts advocating physical harm towards her. The irony is that on their profile pictures they had the phrase 'Be Kind', which has become popularised since the suicide of Caroline Flack.

I'm quite a robust person and I don't get easily offended. But as I considered giving up Facebook I was reminded of a book by James W. Moore, *Give Up Something Bad For Lent*. By 'bad' he means bad words, bad attitudes, certain acts or habits that have the power to contaminate, infect or poison the soul. I can't control everyone else's words, attitudes, acts or behaviour but I can choose whether to let them contaminate, infect or poison *my* soul. So I decided that during Lent, which is a holy time, a time for spiritual reflection and renewal, I would avoid the soul-poisoning words and attitudes of others. I feel this will help me spiritually to follow Jesus to the cross and to embrace his new life at Easter.

Who knows: maybe I'll give up Facebook for good!

LMC Stories

If you were at Gill Songer's service in January, or you've been at the contemporary evening service recently, you will have heard about The Story Project (www.thestoryproject.org.uk). Run by the Methodist Church in partnership with Cliff College, this project aims to give everyone a platform to tell their story of what God has done for them and how he has changed their life. Each of us has a story – and it is always a story worth sharing. Over the coming months we will be hearing a few stories from LMC.

Hi, my name is Selma.

I was born in a Christian home and my dad was a minister. I went to church every Sunday, and read or heard God's Word, the bible, daily. But I was soon to discover that these things didn't make me a true Christian. One day in a bible study I learned that God has children, not grandchildren. Salvation is individual – it's not something I can inherit from anyone. Wow! Being aware of this changed my life; I decided to give my life to Jesus and started my own journey with Him.



We were a very 'normal' family; my dad worked three jobs to provide for us: an accountant during the day, a teacher in the evenings – and a minister all the time.

I started to work at the age of 16 to help. Our budget was limited – we had just enough; nothing extra. If something unexpected came up and we needed extra money my dad always told us, 'God will provide!' And you know what? He always did! Usually in a way we didn't expect.

Every time my dad went to see someone, his greeting was, 'Are you standing firm in God's promise?' This was his way of asking, 'How are things?' He knew that if we were standing firm and resting in God's promise, everything would be fine.

It's often the small things that remind me of God's promise.

A few days ago, I had a vertigo seizure. I went to Loughton around 11am. I chatted in the LMC office for a bit and then went to St Mary's to meet a friend.

On my way home my head felt very heavy. As soon as I arrived home, I climbed the stairs to my bedroom. Everything was spinning around, and my vision was blurred. As I was by myself I felt desperate, and because of the lack of control and a feeling of acute vulnerability I felt panicky and afraid. Immediately, God's words came to my mind: 'I will never leave you alone, I will never forsake you.' I was not alone.

I felt secure in God's presence. I was able to find my phone and call my daughter, who came home with some medicine.

Thank God for our family, friends, brothers and sisters. How fragile we are! We need one another. We need God and His promises for us!

I was reminded, and not for the first time, that He provides everything and He will never let us down.

Selma Bedore de Alcantara

Don't Grow Weary in Doing What is Right



A Reflection

It's hard not to get discouraged by the 'news' of all that goes wrong in lives and communities and nations. We have the brilliance of 24/7 news coverage but we also have the burden of so much suffering and conflict.

When I find it too much I often set about writing. I start from my two worldviews: of the Christian and the secular. I know in my age that I have become more 'at home' in thinking of myself as 'both' Christian and secular. At one level my teaching and writing life has been all about translating and interpreting from our Christian story to living in 'the world as it is' – a secular and plural world.

Meaning and Purpose



Bernard Williams wrote: ‘In the case of religious statements, in particular statements about God, the important question, to my mind, is not whether they have a meaning, or no meaning: the important question is, what sort of meaning they have’ (*Essays and Reviews* 2014).

So, let me concentrate on the word ‘meaning’ and add the word ‘purpose’. Humans have many choices. In the past I often used the term ‘end-words’ to denote high-value words and actions. The word ‘God’ is one such word and indeed all ‘end-words’ pressure us with the question: ‘What do you mean: what do you want to say?’ Well, I want to say three things.

Meaning and purpose include valuing yourself and living with others. This is so because identity and community nurture each other and are, I would say, inseparable.

Meaning and purpose include our capacity to enter the many experiences in which the ‘self’ and ‘ultimate being-reality’ interact. When we interrogate and question consciousness, language and being-reality we highlight the sheer ‘otherness’ and wonder of life.

Meaning and purpose include the practical values by which we live. Some of the key ones are kindness, grace, compassion, forgiveness. At a political level there is non-violence, justice and peace. The choice between living like this and living in ways that are exploitative, oppressive and violent will no doubt be ‘the’ evolutionary choice that will settle our and our planet’s future. So, ‘Let us not grow weary in doing what is right [in well-doing], for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up’ (Galatians 6:9).

Tony Holden

Spotlight On: Climate Festival & Art Trail

LifeWorks has organised the Art Trail since the inaugural 2012 event. This year it will be bigger and better than ever and will form part of a community Climate Festival. *LMC Life* caught up with Jenna to ask her how her plans are going.

Mary: I'm here with Jenna, organiser of the Climate Festival & Art Trail. So firstly, Jenna, tell us a few details about when and where the festival will happen.

Jenna: Sure! The festival is part of the Essex Summer of Art. It will be from 15 May to 30 May. LifeWorks is the 'anchor venue', although there will be lots of events going on in different places locally during this fortnight. LifeWorks/LMC will host the open evening on 15 May to launch the festival, as well as a concert on 30 May to bring the festival to a close – plus lots in between.

M: How is this year's event different from previous years', and why the change?

J: Previously we've just run the Art Trail, which has been very successful in its own right. But this year we wanted to use this platform we've already established to encourage some sort of action in response to the art we display. Climate change has rightly become a pressing issue rather than just



a niche cause over the past decade, and we felt that we could celebrate the arts in Loughton through a town-wide exhibition, like we've always done, but also use art as a tool for reflection on climate change and elicit a positive, tangible response going forward. So this year all the art

on display will reflect the climate change theme, and community groups will run workshops, talks, walks and other events to raise awareness even further.

M: Can you tell us any more about the events you've planned so far?

J: We are still in the early stages, but some of the events include an eco fayre at St Mary's on 16 May, to inspire local people in their eco journey, with stalls and activities on offer; a sensory nature walk at Grange Farm; and workshops at GROW Community Garden on the environmental benefits of organic approaches to community food growing, as well as seed swapping to protect biodiversity. Woodland Trust has a butterfly workshop planned; Oakview School is running a whole-school environment week project; and The King's Oak are hosting a 'May Day' eco celebration event. Churches Together in Loughton, the synagogue and local charities, businesses and schools are all getting involved in some way.

M: That sounds exciting. What lasting changes are you hoping to achieve?

J: Climate change is such a huge issue that it can seem overwhelming – you can get caught up in the enormity of the problem. This is an opportunity to come together to change something in our little part of the world, and



Local dignitaries attending and supporting the Art Trail (left)

LifeWorks hosting a busy exhibition as part of the Art Trail (right)



hopefully that will have a reverberating effect. So as well as raising awareness through the art on show and the various events taking place, we will also be encouraging people to make pledges, either individually or as a community. For example, as an individual you might pledge to start composting, cut your single-use plastic use or walk more; businesses will make pledges at corporate level. And watch this space for the community pledge!

M: Will there be a church pledge?

J: We are hoping that LMC will become an eco-church. There are a series of challenges we have to meet to get 'bronze' status; then we can work on silver and gold. I'll be telling LMC more about this over the coming weeks.

M: Excellent. What can the LMC family do at this stage to get involved?

J: Well, firstly I'd encourage any artists to submit their artwork by 30 March. Go to www.loughtonarttrail.com for the submission form. LMC will be hosting the exhibition, as well as other events, so we will need helpers across the fortnight. We will also be incorporating the climate theme into worship nearer the time. And if anyone has ideas, I'd love to hear them! You can talk to me or to Ray Harris, who is leader of the Sunflower Group and has been instrumental in the planning phase, for more information. Please pray for us as we continue our work on this, and be willing to come along in May.

M: Thanks Jenna, and good luck!

A complete list of events will be available soon.

You might know I keep bees. Have done for 35 years. A bee colony is a simply amazing eco-structure all of its own, and totally fascinating. We pinch their surplus honey but the importance of bees and other pollinators as part of our world is, like so many other things, totally undervalued. We all know our personal lifestyles are trashing this wonderful world, yet still we do it. Anything we can do to help the planet should be done now. Loughton needs its Gretas - NOW ! Come join us.

Alec Brown

My Prayer Journey



Prayer is like a secret garden made up of silence, rest and inwardness, but there are a thousand and one doors and we each have to find our own.'

Jean Vanier

As I meditated on these words recently, I questioned whether they were true. I tend to think of my prayer life as going through seasons, and began to consider my own prayer journey since my simple prayer many years ago asking Jesus into my life.

I've had highs and lows on the way, and at times had to cling on to my faith by my fingertips. Praying did not come easily to me. It was born out of facing huge challenges at many levels over many years.

Initially I did not know how to pray - that was something done by others leading church services. After all, how can you pray when your life is falling apart, when you are in the depths of depression, when you feel rejected, inadequate, confused? How can you forgive those who hurt and wound you?

When I look back at my life though, I see God was holding me, loving me, leading me and teaching me. He knew me and was there for me even when it didn't always feel like that.

I started to set aside time for prayer and went out with the dog and 'talked' with God. I felt His presence and knew I was loved. It was not as hard as I thought. Not all my prayers were answered in the way I'd hoped or expected but I knew they were heard. I learned that prayer takes many forms and God can speak to you through stillness, come alongside you in battle, bring healing for your hurts and forgiveness for your sins. It's a joyful experience!

There are different styles and ways to pray but all are acceptable to God. We are each unique and our prayers reflect this. It brings us close to Him and grows our relationship with Him. We don't need special words, they don't need to be long - he already knows the desires of our hearts, forgives our sins and helps us move on with him.

I'm passionate about prayer and it has certainly changed me completely over the years. If you ever want to talk further about this please feel free to have a chat with me. My journey with God has been life challenging and life saving, and I thank him daily.

Barbara Hills

Samara's Mission in Moldova

Hello church!

I last wrote to you at the end of November to tell you about my mission trip to Belo Horizonte in Brazil on 27 March - I can't believe it's come round already!

Over the past few months I have been busy at university, where I'm studying psychology with management. I have never written so many lab reports in such a short period of time before!

I have also joined a few voluntary projects at university, which has been an amazing experience. The first is a computing class for refugees through an organisation called STAR. We also raise funds and awareness at different events for these refugees and asylum seekers.



Another exciting project I'm involved with is CoachBright, where I coach teenage students, helping them academically and sometimes personally, building relationships

with them and boosting their confidence and self-esteem.

Because of the important role LMC has in my life, I'd like to share with you another great opportunity that I believe God is taking me to later this summer – to serve people in Moldova. I'd love for you to be a financial and prayer partner in this mission with me.

For the past few months, I have been thinking and praying about going on a mission trip with Operation Mobilisation. With the help of a few members of the church through their references, I was accepted into the organisation.

Moldova is the poorest country in Europe and during the weeks I'm there we will be working in small, remote villages that have poor access to resources. Our transport will be either train, trekking, horse or bike. We are devoted to serving the local people there and developing relationships with them, following Christ's model for

evangelism. The focus will be to run a kids' programme, pray with villagers, build relationships with the teenagers, visit families or elderly people with food parcels and listen to their stories, and share testimonies of encouragement. As I prepare for the trip, would you consider joining me in this adventure, by praying and/or supporting me financially? The cost of the trip is £550.

Please contact me directly at samarabedore12@gmail.com or on 07443 032658. I'd be happy to tell you more about the trip!

Thank you for always partnering with me and supporting me! You are a real blessing! And please do join me in prayer as I embark on my Brazil trip in a couple of weeks' time: specifically for the people in the community and that I may be alert to God's voice and His guidance about how He wants to work there. Thank you.

Samara Bedore de Alcantara

Contribute to coming publications

Contact us at janegooding@sky.com, marykateknapman@hotmail.com and annie@annick.co.uk or leave any articles for Jane, Mary and Ann's attention in the Church Office.

Coming Up Soon

Marriage and Relationships Discussion at 8pm	16 March
Midweek Meditation Service at 12.15pm	1 April
Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 8pm	9 April
Good Friday Service at 10.30am	10 April
Messy Vintage at 2.30pm	11 April
Easter Sunday Communion Services at 9am and 10.30am	12 April
Messy Church at 4pm	19 April
Annual Church Meeting after 10.30am service	3 May
Midweek Meditation Service at 12.15pm	6 May
Messy Vintage at 2.30pm	9 May
Christian Aid Sunday	10 May
AFC Plant Sale	16 May
Messy Church at 4pm	17 May
PALS Table Top and Cake Sale	30 May

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