

Contact Magazine

Chislehurst Methodist Church

PEACE IN OUR TIME?

It is fair to say that almost everyone, bar truly abhorrent people, think that peace between nations is better than war. It is also fair to say that this has been a theme throughout history, including Biblical history. Somehow, though, nation still goes to war with nation, people-group against people-group in bloody and destructive conflict. It would seem that, as long as sin remains in the world, this is an almost inevitable consequence of human interaction.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God declared that

He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

Still, over the last few thousand years since Isaiah walked the earth, there have been wars beyond count, millions if not billions of people falling to the sword, the bullet, the bomb, the biological weapon and many other filthy ways to inflict death upon humanity.

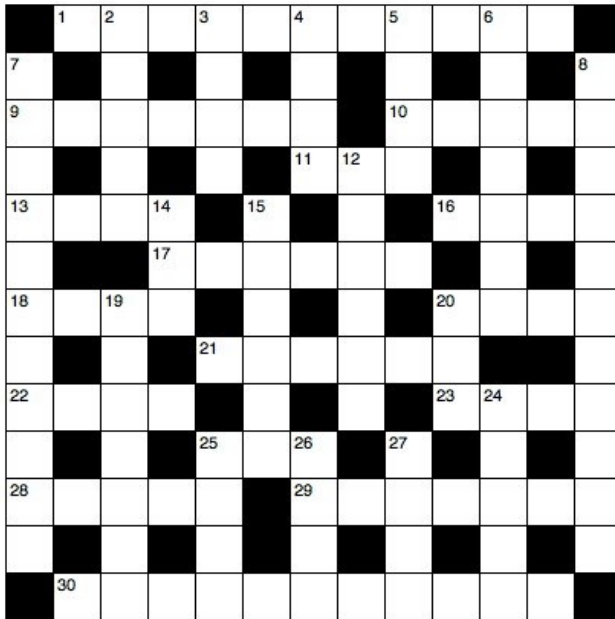
What has struck me with the latest episode of war - Russia's invasion of Ukraine - is that there is no clear way of saying that all the blame lies on one side or the other. True, Putin acted unreasonably in invading Ukraine, but there is more to this than meets the eye. I was struck by a recent tweet from Elon Musk about free speech, where he said, "All news sources are partially propaganda, some more than others". The story we are hearing in the West is about an absolute 'right' (us, of course) versus an absolute 'wrong' (Putin). The background to this is not as clear-cut as this.

Across

- 1 Overpowered (Deuteronomy 11:4) (11)
 9 'The — are mantled with corn' (Psalm 65:13) (7)
 10 'Each man—a sword to his side'(Exodus32:27)(5)
 11 On the death of Jesus the curtain in the temple was torn from— to bottom (Matthew 27:51) (3)
 13 Stagger(Isaiah 28:7)(4)
 16 'Anyone,then,who knows the good he ought— —and doesn't do it, sins' (James 4:17) (2,2)
 17 Stir up or provoke (Acts13:50)(6)
 18 Burden(Luke11:46)(4)
 20 'As far as the east is from the—,so far has he removed our transgressions from us' (Psalm 103:12) (4)
 21 Sign(Luke23:38)(6)
 22 'After that,Jesus poured water into a basin and began to—his disciples' feet' (John 13:5) (4)
 23 The nature of the seven ears of corn which swallowed up the good ears in Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:23) (4)
 25 Has(anag.)(3)
 28 'This is the account of Shem,Ham and Japheth,—sons' (Genesis 10:1) (5)
 29 'I will...make them drunk,so that they...sleep for—and— awake' (Jeremiah 51:39) (4,3)
 30 Paul said of him,'he often refreshes me and is not ashamed of my chains' (2 Timothy 1:16) (11)

Down

- 2 Worth (Matthew 13:46) (5)
 3 'A bruised — he will not break' (Matthew 12:20) (4)
 4 'Suddenly a great company of the heavenly — appeared with the angel' (Luke 2:13) (4)



- 5 Slip (anag.) (4)
 6 'Take an awl and push it through his — — into the door, and he will become your servant for life' (Deuteronomy 15:17) (3,4)
 7 Bountiful (2 Corinthians 8:2) (11)
 8 'Therefore, as we have — , let us do good to all people' (Galatians 6:10) (11)
 12 Acquire(2Timothy2:10)(6)
 14 Container cover(Numbers19:15)(3)
 15 'He...became obedient to death,even death on— —!' (Philippians 2:8) (1,5)
 19 Refrain(1Peter2:11)(7)
 20 'She began to—his feet with her tears'(Luke7:38)(3)
 24 One who worships Brahma,Vishnu or Shiva (5)
 25 'Give to everyone who—you'(Luke6:30)(4)
 26 'I lift up my eyes to the hills;where does my—come from?' (Psalm 121:1) (4)
 27 One of those whom the Lord said would be taken from Jerusalem and Judah as judgment on them (Isaiah 3:2) (4)

As ever, the to-ing and fro-ing of political deals has left us with a murky story, exemplified best for us in the estimated (more than) £258.8 billion of Russian investment in the UK (this is the figure quoted by Jacob Rees-Mogg as to the total value of Russian Bank assets currently sanctioned). We are effectively declaring an economic war against a country whose wealthy few we have openly encouraged to invest in our country. This is why there is no clear right or wrong in this war. Although we may not have committed the sin of violence against Ukraine, we have allowed the sin of greed to land us in an untenable position, one which is clearly influencing the decisions of our government.

I believe that the problem with war is sin. It is as simple and as complicated as that. I am not particularly Catholic in my theology, but I think there is some merit in the 7 cardinal sins: pride, anger, lust, envy, gluttony, greed and sloth. These apply not just to us as individuals, but to our governments, our corporations, and to our society as a whole. I am convinced that almost all things can be traced back to a failing in one point or another of these.

It is clear from the Isaiah quote that God's avowed intention is for us to live in peace and harmony, however different we may be. We will simply never reach that point until we come to terms with our individual and corporate sins. Until we become people for whom peace and honesty is not a nicety but a necessity, and this is entrenched in our politics and economic relationships, we will forever be at war. Worse than this, we will not be able to hold up our hands and say, 'We are right, and you are wrong'. For all who are affected by this war, I pray for peace and strength. God save us all.

Shalom, Duncan

IS IT TOO EARLY TO MENTION CHRISTMAS?!

It seems a little odd to be talking about Christmas in this Easter edition of *Contact* however, planning has already started for the 2022 Christmas Tree Festival.

After a two year hiatus, there was obviously some trepidation at the first planning meeting last month. Can we do a festival again? How will we approach things like getting participants, publicity and stewarding? After much discussion, the decision was made to 'go for it' even if it means re-shaping certain elements of the festival to make them more achievable.

The festival will run from Saturday 26th November until Saturday 3rd December and will be launching with the usual dance festival, refreshments and a couple of stalls.

When we last had the festival in 2019 we had 45 trees, a true 'winter wonderland'! Whether we will match this number of trees again this year is unknown at this stage but, we will certainly push for as many as possible and hope to draw in some new participants too.

Are you able to help??

Stewarding is going to be one of our key challenges this year, we need more volunteers! Might you or someone you know be able to spare a couple of hours during that week? They don't have to be a member of the church - do get in touch.

Finally, do you know any local businesses, groups or clubs who might like to enter a tree? Chat to them and get permission from them for you to pass me their contact details. Then I can get in touch with them when booking forms go out in September. We've already had two new groups interested in displaying trees so it's never too early to ask!!

Sarah Ridgewell

THE CHURCH GARDEN: AN UPDATE

The fence at the end of the car park was stripped of its dense ivy cover a few years ago. In the last 12 months, the rest of the fence from the chestnut tree down the length of the hall has also been stripped to enable repairs to be carried out by fencing contractors.

Overhanging trees and shrubbery have been cut back hard. The old leaf cage, no longer in use, has been dismantled and a better space made for the bins and traffic cones. The long low bank of soil has some good shrubs; we've added some more plants and generally refurbished the area. The aim of the planting is not to make it pretty, as it's really not seen, but to hold the soil off the path and provide some interest and habitat. The base of the old font, in 4 rather sad and very heavy pieces, also lives on that bank - we would love to see it moved somewhere more visible. One day, maybe.....

We have maintained and planted additional sturdy shrubs in the front beds which have to stand up to the wear and tear that goes with a well-used carpark.

Thanks to Tony Sawyer, Dave Stapley and Lynton Cope for their input with equipment.

Gillian BB and Sue S

BOOK REVIEW: HOPE NOT FEAR

I would like to draw everyone's attention to this book. Its author is Hassan Akkad, its publisher is Bluebird an imprint of Pan Macmillan (2021) and the ISBN is 978-1-5290-5981-6. It is not an easy read, but one critic stated, "If you are feeling bleak about the way things are going-this book will do much to restore your faith."

The book opens by describing Hassan's life in Syria where he lived happily with his family and friends in Damascus and his success in English, which gave him a good teaching post. Not interested in politics, his increased sympathies with those protesting against Assad's regime, its injustice and oppressive police led to a stage of imprisonment in the vilest conditions, torture and solitary confinements. He managed to escape but decided he must leave Syria.

Hassan always enjoyed making pictures and film. Miraculously he filmed what was going on in Syria and his extraordinary journey across Europe, managing to retain his record on film of all those times and ghastly refugee camps. His facility in English stood him in good stead. Having reached the U.K., he was able to use a television company to create a film of his experiences which won a Bafta! He took a temporary cleaning job in a Covid ward at Whipps Cross hospital in N.E. London. Britain's treatment of this under class of cleaners and porters is not flattering. These people, largely comprising immigrants from all over the world are as essential as doctors and nursing staff-yet our lack of respect for them is awful. He was able to speak personally to the Prime Minister and to change the government policy for the better.

His story was used by others, which led to interviews and a multitude of requests for talks across Europe to raise money for refugees.

So, I commend his book, but beware! It is strong meat and not without criticisms of what we too often take for granted. His terrifying and candid account is yet another reminder of how much we gain as a society when we welcome those to whom we owe nothing. If with all his disadvantages he accomplished so many things.... Therein lies his challenge.

John Sennett



MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING

The coffee morning, raising funds for Macmillan Cancer Care is in the diary for the end of September in the Church.

The Sales Tables always add interest and income to the event and this year I thought in addition to what is usually there, we might have a sale of jigsaws and similar boxed table games. Do you have any in good condition that you don't want to keep? They wouldn't sell for big money but if there were enough in hand, it could perhaps feature in the advertising for the event.

If you might have some, let me know, then keep them until nearer the time, or give them to me whenever, if that suits you better.

Gillian Beecher Bryant (020 8467 6906)

If you decide to switch, this is what you need to do:

If you use on-line banking, you can set up your standing order within the portal. If you are not on-line, please get in touch with a branch of your bank to make the arrangement.

Details are as follows:

Account Title: Chislehurst Methodist Church (Charity Account)

Sort Code: 40-02-06

Account No: 20012831

Description: monthly gift or monthly donation, or similar wording.

The title of the account from which the funds are being drawn will also appear on the church's bank statement

In selecting a date for the withdrawal from your account, I suggest you use a day up to 28th of the month.

We appreciate some of you will want to continue with the practices which are familiar and the current arrangements will continue for those who prefer to donate in this way.

Thank you for giving this suggestion your careful consideration.

Joan Mayes - Treasurer
(Registered Charity No: 1155090)

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS

Calling everyone who donates to the church by cash or cheque

Dear Friends

With effect from 1/11/21 the church's bank, HSBC has changed its arrangements for charity accounts. From this date, they are charging for any cheque or cash deposited over the counter. The rates are 40p per cheque (whatever the amount) and 0.4% of all cash deposits or withdrawals.

Changing banks is not a practical solution, because the majority have adopted the same practice, furthermore, since the beginning of the pandemic, it is almost impossible for charities to make a switch.

We are researching ways in which we can minimise our over the counter transactions. This is relevant because several branches in this area have or are discontinuing their counter service, with only Bromley remaining open after mid September 2022

Some members of the congregation have set up standing orders, contributing on a monthly basis. During the pandemic several people chose to switch to using this method.

We invite those of you who contribute by open cash or through the envelope system to consider changing your arrangement to that of a monthly standing order. Any gift aid arrangement you have will continue.

I know some used to say they felt uncomfortable not putting anything in the collection on a Sunday. However, we do not plan to return to taking a collection during worship. Instead we will retain the current practice of placing a plate at the entrance to the church where people can deposit their gifts.

WHAT ARE THOSE PEOPLE DOING HERE?

I'm sure you know that we have a very successful dance school and a nursery based at CMC but, these are just two of the 30+ groups who used our premises on an ad hoc or regular basis throughout the year!



We have a mindboggling range of activities that go on, from preschool music, dance and language classes, to after school drama and Kumon, pilates, tai chi, badminton, local society talks, blood donation and meetings for support and uniformed groups.

More recently, we have taken on new hirers including a weekly boxercise class and the Chislehurst Artists who meet once a month for talks and recently held their annual exhibition in the church.

Next month we are pleased to welcome back the May Queen group for their post-parade tea party and (for what I think is the first time) we will be a polling station. Phew, what a busy place we are!

Sarah Ridgewell

APPLYING CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES TO TODAY'S BIG ISSUES

This Easter period comes following a very challenging period. In recent years we have been through a very difficult economic environment with, most unusually, no growth in real incomes and now facing rapid inflation and declining living standards. We have had the Brexit debate and divisions. We have had the Covid pandemic with serious impacts on life, health and the economy. We have seen huge advances in new technology making possible wonderful advances in communications but also bringing all the perils of the social media as well such as increased anxiety, scamming and instant judgements. And we have moved towards a much more dangerous world culminating in the Russian invasion of Ukraine with the appalling suffering that has involved Easter reminds us again of our key Christian principles, but how do we apply those principles today to these big challenging issues around us? We begin, of course, by looking at the life and teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

That brings out clearly the messages of love for all including our enemies, seeking peace and showing mercy and forgiveness, along with the Easter messages of new life, hope, and joy. That is straightforward but applying those messages to the issues around us in today's troubled world is much more difficult. That is because while our principles and convictions are clear and are black and white, tackling problems in the world often involves very difficult choices between different shades of grey.

So, it would not be appropriate to suggest simple solutions to today's big issues but here are a few thoughts for us as Christians and the Church:

- We should keep firmly before us the messages of Jesus of love, peace, mercy and forgiveness;
- We and the church as a whole should be informed about and involved in the big issues facing people and should be ready to speak out;

- We should not be overwhelmed by the problems around us however daunting they seem, but should point the way to a better world reinforced by the Easter message of new life, joy and hope,
- We should always try to understand the other person's or side's point of view, especially when we don't agree with them,
- We should try as much as we can to get under the slogans, headlines and claims to the real facts, and always seek the truth.

We often fall short in these areas and so do churches. For example, it seems extraordinary and quite wrong at present that the Russian Orthodox Church is a strong supporter of Mr Putin's invasion of Ukraine. But then we recall how in the nineteenth century British Churches generally moved in behind the troops as Britain invaded many countries to form the British Empire believing, as we used to sing in the hymn in our youth, 'O'er heathen lands afar thick darkness broodeth yet'. So, we need to be very careful not to be swept along by the prevailing mood, and stand firm by our central beliefs.

While there are no simple and quick solutions to the huge problems which now confront us in this country and in the rest of the world, we as Christians and churches have an important contribution to make. And we do that by focussing on the central messages of Jesus - love, peace, mercy and forgiveness - and on the Easter message of new life, joy and hope even in today's very troubled times. That is our calling and that is what the world particularly needs today. So perhaps that is a way for us of reversing the rapid and continuing decline in mainstream churches in this country. And it could be the way forward for the church as much as the more traditional ways of 'making disciples for Christ' which the Church of England has recently tried with disappointing results.

Roger Dawe