

## **Keeping in Touch..... Number 11**

***Thank you again for keeping the articles coming. It is much appreciated by us and by many other people who get in touch to tell us how much it means to them. It is wonderful that every week I wonder if I will have enough material—and then it comes! Everyone has a story worth listening to.***

***Deadline each week is noon on a Wednesday—please send to [c.a.curtis@ntlworld.com](mailto:c.a.curtis@ntlworld.com) If you are not nifty with a keyboard simply ring 01480 350787 and let Alan or Chris know what you want to say!***

### ***My journey to the Free Church—my life so far —from Sindy Surtees***

*I was born in a small village in Staffordshire on 24 June 1950 and went to the local primary school which I enjoyed very much. My first teacher was a Miss Boakes who was amazed that I could already read at the age of 5 years old – thanks to my maternal grandparents who were both avid readers and obviously wanted me to be too. My paternal great-grandmother was a Methodist and went to the chapel twice on Sundays – she ALWAYS wore a hat and gloves. At the age of 5 she took me to her chapel and introduced me to the minister, Mr Bradley, who made me feel very proud indeed when he told me that I was an important young lady as I shared a birthday with John the Baptist.*

*Me, not knowing who on earth John the Baptist was, went back to my parents and, very proudly, announced that I was important (and the reason why). As both my parents were atheists, my mother said “and who on earth knows when John the Baptist was born anyway?”. Talk about being deflated !!!!!*

*I continued to attend the Methodist chapel until my paternal great-grandmother’s death and then my grandfather, their only child, decided he wanted to attend the local catholic church (St Michael’s in Chasetown) so I was taken (without choice) to the catholic church, where I soon discovered Catholicism wasn’t for me, so I returned to the Methodist chapel and joined their Youth Club. Our Youth Leader taught us all to swim at Lichfield Baths.*

*Over the years, I attended both the Methodist chapel and the local Anglican church, where my paternal great-grandfather sang in the choir, but I always returned to the Methodist chapel where I felt more at home.*

*In 1969, after finishing college in Staffordshire, I moved to live with my parents and siblings in Fenstanton where I joined the Congregational church, (Rev John Ballard was my minister). Much to the annoyance of my parents, I had met a local man and decided to get married at the Congregational church. Although my father disapproved, he looked very proud when he led me from the car to the church, but he made it clear that, not only was he against the marriage, but in a church too !!!!!*

*In 1989 I moved to Needingworth to live with my future husband (David Surtees) and explained to him that I wanted to find a church. He said “why don’t you try the Baptist church in the High Street”. I attended a few times, but it was eventually made clear to me that, unless I was fully immersed, I could never be a “proper” Baptist. I then decided to try St John the Baptist church in Holywell, where I attended off and on for some years. The church congregation was very small and I hadn’t yet found my niche until Easter 2002 when the congregation swelled to almost full. Being told by the then church warden that he was not allowing any more people inside, I angrily returned to my car thinking “I’m not going to miss out on my Easter Sunday service” so I drove to St Ives and went into the Free Church, not knowing what to expect as I was a complete stranger. Not only did I thoroughly enjoy the service, but a certain Rev Bill Mahood asked me to join him and others for refreshments downstairs in Tookey’s, which I did. I drove home to Needingworth and said to David “I have found where I want to be”. Unfortunately David died from a brain tumour in 2011 but I have continued to attend the Free Church and will continue to do so, as it is “the place where I want to be”.*

*Happy Birthday Sindy!*



## ***Some more memories..... From Geoff and Irene Carter***

### **THE NIGHT WE BOOKED OUR WEDDING**

Proposal accepted, Geoff secretly booked an evening appointment with Kate McIlhagga to arrange our Wedding date.

When he sprang it on me that it was to be that evening, I didn't believe him as we were always joking with each other and playing tricks. Anyway the evening came, dark, rainy, cold and I convinced myself this was another trick. A payback for all mine.

We got to the Church knocked and knocked on the door to no reply. We walked around and knocked again, we could hear voices, I think the Youth Club might have been going at that time in 1987 or maybe another group, but I began to think I was definitely right about a trick.

Geoff swore he had made an appointment, but as he was bashing at the door now the heavens opened and the rain fell in torrents. We were soaked, and still no answer!

Just then the man from Fishes Galore opposite the church came out to see what all the noise was about. He tried with us to get someone's attention, but he had no luck either.

He invited us to shelter in the locked up shop and said Geoff could phone the Church, which was kind.

Meanwhile I was now thinking, maybe it was a sign that we shouldn't be marrying at all?

Now, I have a terrible spider phobia, and just as I was beginning to think that we actually might have an appointment and there was no sign, I began to relax, and rested against the tank near the phone as Geoff desperately rang the minister

To my horror I casually glanced into the tank and a tarantula stared right back at me!

After the screaming stopped, and Geoff finally got through to Kate we thanked the Shop Owner and dripping wet carried on into the Free Church and set our Wedding date for 24th October, 1987.

We will never forget the night we booked our Wedding!



## ***And from Gill German***

My Great Uncle Bert and Auntie Elsie were caretakers at the Moravian church house in Muswell Hill. How I loved to go there as a child. The journey seemed such an adventure from our home in Paddington—several bus rides. The house had a church, a large library and a very large garden.

On the top floor was a missionary flat where many people came from all over the world my Aunt and Uncle looked after them and most stayed in touch when they went back home.

My Auntie always put on a good spread for tea and I was always sorry to leave. The journey home seemed so much longer but I looked forward to my next visit.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown

Photo from the archives from last week was of course of our dear friends Tom and Margaret McQuitty who joined us from Belfast and started our Bowls Club. This photo is taken of them on Red Nose Day 1989.

Jackie Ballard says she thinks it is her grandfather driving the baker's cart in the Globe Place photo from Char.

## **Biblical Commentary 1—the first in a series from John Williams**

### **IN THE BEGINNING .**

GENESIS I v 1-3 & v26

JOHN I v 1-5 & v 14

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...”*

Just suppose for a minute that our interpretation of “The Word” actually means “The greatest possible thing that you can think of...” The biggest *thing* that can think of is the universe, and in scientific theory this started with the “Big Bang”, the biggest action that ever happened. If our universe started with “The Word” can we think of *what* word? It could well have been “BE!”

The Big Bang of course, was accompanied by much heat and light.

Genesis tells us that God said “Let there be light and there was light...” an awe-ful lot of it!

The universe according to the great scientist Professor Stephen Hawking began with a “Singularity”, a pinpoint which exploded into stars and all the other debris of space. He concluded this from a long mathematical study, and during it thought sadly that there would be little room for God in his equations. Others, perhaps not so bound by the rigorous channel of mathematical thinking, have concluded that the 'Singularity' could well have been God's Word itself.

If we are to believe that God must be greater than anything else that we can think of, then surely we have to believe that He created the universe in some way - in a word.

Later on, according to scripture, His Word made Man and later still, the Divine Prophet and Teacher Jesus, whom Christians call The Son of God, some Hindus a reincarnation of Krishna (this word has a similar meaning as Christ = The Anointed One) and Muslims the Prophet 'Isa'. Christ is for everyone.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” In Him we see an echo of the very first Creation, and this Presence of God on earth is accessible to all, so that the same Word that sent stars into space becomes the Life of the Spirit in all of us.

John Williams, 2006

***Who and when?***

***And no points for spotting Stewart!!***



***From Philip Simpson—former Member and good friend of the church—now living in France.***

### **THE FREE CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Once upon a time, during and after World War II, the Congregationalist Free Church, St Ives, had a very active Sunday School.

It met on Sunday afternoons, for two hours, immediately after the Sunday roast. Needless to say, many St Ives Mums and Dads (if the latter were not fighting in the war) were delighted to get rid of we little darlings for two hours - of peace.

No less than 200 children would attend, I seem to recall. That's an awful mess of children!

I first attended, at the age of two, in 1940. The Sunday School Superintendent, Miss Agnes Green, lived next door, in Globe Place. And she would take myself, and sister Shirley (3) along. Much to the delight of my mother.

Agnes Green ran the Primary Department. And the Lord help any child who didn't turn up with ship ha-pennies, for the collection, to fund the missionary work of the ship, MV John Williams IV, spreading the word around the South Seas. The collection tally HAD to be four shillings. Or else!

Miss Holmes ran the Junior Department. Ditto. The Rev Nelson Bitten (who baptised me) ran the Senior Department. Ditto. We had little contact with the BIG church. But at such festivities as Christmas and Easter, we were permitted to congregate with the grown-ups. For a while. Just so long as we didn't sit in the pews allocated to the Families Bryant, Day, Robb, Steggles, Steele and the like. We sat on the floor at the front.

And so the Free Church Sunday School thrived, year in, year out. For years. It wasn't just a baby-sitting service for grateful Mums and Dads, there was THE WORD to indoctrinate the older children. Every year, we had the FREE CHURCH SCRIPTURE EXAMINATION to pass! There was the memory passage. Can you recite Psalm 46 by heart? I still can after 75 years or more. Then there was the COMPREHENSION PASSAGE. Read a large chunk of St Paul's Letter to the Galatians, have it removed, and answer questions about it. Yes indeed, the taking of the FREE CHURCH SCRIPTURE EXAMINATION was a serious time for we youngsters.

Strangely, no one seemed to fail! Ever! One Sunday afternoon, we would have to gather in the BIG church for the prize-giving. Always religious books -presented by His Worship the Actual Mayor of St. Ives, or his Actual Lady Mayoress.

Alas no more the FREE CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL. But I am proud to have been a part of it. Praise the Lord! And learn Psalm 46. You will need to in the coming Pandemic months.

PHILIP SIMPSON

*Note from the editor: I remember the ship ha'pennies well from my own Sunday School days in London.*

*When I took over running the Free Church Family Church Groups in the late 1980s we still had over 100 children on the books. We had a very strong team of leaders too. Well, actually two teams working month on, month off staffing, in pairs six groups—crèche, Rainbows for the 3-5s, Pebbles (5-7), Questers (7-11), Ichthus (11-13 and FURY 14+.*

*We worshipped with everyone else till after the second hymn and then split into our groups. I used to go out and settle all the new children in the right group and get their contact details. As an Elder they became my "Parish". I often wonder what happened to them all. Many, I know, have no church connections but at least two went on to be ordained.*

## ***Irene's Poem for this week....***

### **LOCK DOWN HAIR**

Lock down hair is wild and free  
Look around and you will see.  
Normal styles have grown so long,  
Desperation very strong!

Who's been hacking at their hair?  
No! don't giggle, it's not fair.  
I can't talk, I've hacked mine too,  
It drove me mad! What could I do?

From the front it looked okay,  
But oh - the back, what can I say?  
Geoff grabbed scissors, bade me sit!  
Then quickly got to work on it.

The cut if fine, I can't complain,  
But now it curls, can you explain?  
My hair was straight, made mum so sad  
Her curl attempts were always bad.

Rags, pipe-cleaners, curlers, grips  
Sleepless nights in roller clips,  
Nothing coaxed a curl or wave,  
Yet now I have the hair mum craved.

I hope from Heaven she wears a smile  
My Lock down hair is just her style.

cc IRENE CARTER



The Harrison Basket display from the 350th anniversary Flower Festival.

The person in the background is, I think, Pat Balfour a church member and pharmacist who retired to Cumbria.



Char's front lawn has benefitted from less mowing this year—many of us did “No Mow May!” and the bees are loving the birds' foot trefoil. Perhaps one of the good things to come out of lockdown will be less pristine and more nature friendly lawns and verges.

This is a link to an piece about Kings College in the Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/jun/16/plantlife-one-man-went-to-mow-but-maybe-he-should-wait>