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- The Cotteridge Church  
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- Catholic Church of Ss Joseph and Helen  
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Next Issue's Focus will be

**Water**

Bournville, Cotteridge, Kings Norton & Stirchley

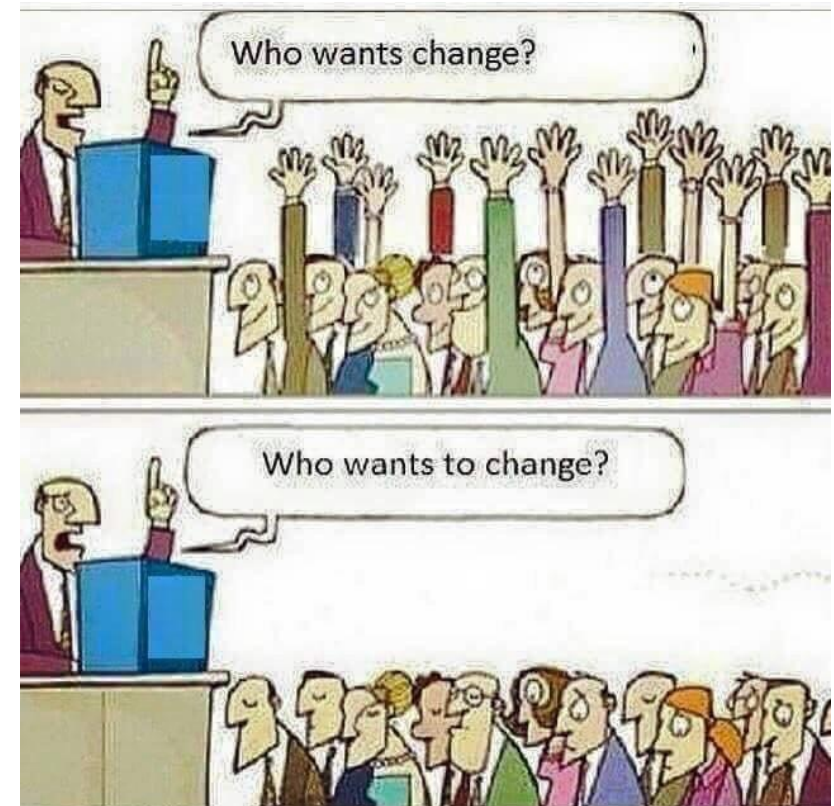


# Points



The bi-monthly mini-magazine of Churches Together in Birmingham 30

## Change





## Autumn thoughts by Jack Finch

When the first winds of autumn blow  
It makes us think of winter snow;  
Then comes the sun of autumn kind,  
And Indian summer comes to mind.

Michaelmas daisies raise their heads,  
But golden rod commands the beds.  
Garden's glory - gladioli,  
Grandmother's glory - apple pie.

Keen gardeners show their wares at shows,  
Where the plump leek vies with the rose.  
Harvest Festival gifts are laid,  
And plans for bonfire parties made.

Children prepare for Hallowe'en,  
Cricket winds up on village green.  
We say goodbye to busy bees.  
Pears and apples ripen on trees.

The countryside from day to day,  
Subtly changes its soft array.  
Acorns tumble on windy days,  
Horizons fade in blue grey haze.

Children go into warmer vests,  
And creatures build their winter nests.  
Bats retire to caves and towers,  
And skilful folk dry their flowers.

Motorists check their anti-freeze.  
Poplars rustle in the breeze.  
Time for grey seal pups to be born,  
Farmers harvest their golden corn.

Robins winter close to our doors.  
Swallows fly off to other shores.  
It's time for the chiff-chaffs to roam,  
But friendly blackbirds stay at home.

Grandads think of toasted teacakes.  
Dads see leaves and get out their rakes.  
Grannies look out their warmer shawl.  
Little boys get out their football.

Season beautiful and mellow,  
Woods turning red, gold and yellow,  
Bridging summer's green grassy days  
And winter's frosts and windy ways.

Priscilla was 14 years old when it was written and the youngest of the four Tolkien siblings (she's now 90). Incidentally, Frodo Baggins (as in Lord Of The Rings), was named after one of her teddy bears!

And now to my own Christmas story: When I was a little boy, Father Christmas came to see me every Christmas morning. I mean, really see me – face to face, and he would bring me a sack full of toys. Our parlour was tiny, dimly lit by fairy lights on an artificial Christmas tree and a coal fire that burned in the black-leaded grate. FC would ask in a DEEP VOICE: "HAVE YOU BEEN A GOOD BOY THIS YEAR?" Me: "Yes, Father Christmas." (squeaky voice). FC: "WHERE'S YOUR DADDY TODAY?" Me: "I think he's gone to work."

Some years later, when I was about nine, I was ferreting around in the attic and I found a red cloak and cotton wool beard – Christmas changed forever!

Mowgli



## Transformation

God's inexplicable power transforms  
the crucified 'defeated' Jesus,  
the broken recipient of humanity's worst hatred  
into the glorified risen Lord,  
beyond the scope of human evil,  
calling us into his realm of love.

God's inexplicable power transforms  
very ordinary powerless people,  
even those burdened with wrongs,  
inflicted by self or others  
into glorified wholeness  
if we come with open hearts.

Rev. Ros Murphy

## **“Organised religion will die of boredom long before it dies of controversy”**

So said the theologian John Shelby Spong in 2008. Change isn't something that everyone is comfortable with, but without change nothing new will happen. The world cannot become a better, more meaningful, more equal place if we all sit on the sidelines and watch and hope.

Every so often, it is really important that we make changes. Deliberately. Even if we don't know exactly what the change will bring. And sometimes the change is not to do anything immediately. It is to stop doing things and to clear personal space to think.

In this world where change seems to be happening around us all the time at a faster and faster pace, it is tempting to hold on to our own patterns: Mondays I go shopping. Tuesdays I clean the kitchen. Sundays I go to church. But there is a danger in patterns. They are comfortable. They are predictable. But patterns can become prisons. Constancy can become chains. Conveyor belts become cages. It is important that we see life more as a kaleidoscope: yes, this pattern is beautiful, but suppose we shake it a little and look again. It's possible that we have an even more beautiful pattern that we couldn't have imagined before.

A new year seems a good time for resolutions. A new decade can be a good time to take stock. To make a deliberate effort to meet new people, read new books, see new films, follow new people on Twitter. (And also realise this is from the luxury of a white, middle class, financially stable perspective.) One of the dangers of social media is that it reflects back at you the world you are comfortable with. If you buy one pair of shoes on line, it immediately suggests you buy more of the same. If you buy one book, it suggests others of the same genre that you might like. It's important to break that pattern and read things you know nothing about and suspect you don't like.

In a world where climate change is an increasingly frightening reality, we have to change ourselves and our behaviour. Unless we make a real effort to change ourselves, the world will change any way. And this will be painful, but it is possible – just. It requires thought, discipline and enthusiastic vision.

To quote Gretta Vosper, also a theologian, churches need, “deep down, ‘this is going to hurt’ change. It can be liberating and refreshing, but it comes with costs. Without it, there is not only no future for mainstream churches, there is also no need for one.”

Helen Gale

## **Stop Digging**

Do you remember standing on the water's edge at the beach and letting the sea lap over your toes? You enjoy a warm tingly feeling. After a short while the sand covers your feet and you start to sink slowly into the sand. How long do you stay there before it becomes too difficult to stand? Suddenly your feelings change. Panic sets in. You no longer want to stand in the shallows.



Heston Blumenthal gave people a glass of wine and told them it was an excellent wine. They loved it! Repeating the experiment he told them that the same wine was poor quality. Their attitude changed and with it their enjoyment.

What really changed? The environment didn't. They didn't. But their attitude did! How does your attitude impact on your life? When did you last take a long hard look at yourself and ask what effect you are having on those around you? Do you say “Well, I haven't changed, it must be her, or him, that's negativity!” You may be slowly sinking into the sand! When in a rut – stop digging! Ask for a helping hand - maybe a ladder. God knew we would need help so he sent us Jesus. He also surrounded us with people filled with charisms. Matthew 5:1-12 gives us hope in our weakened state.

John Slevin

## **Changing Places**

At church I often sit in the same seat; it's familiar, I know the people around me and I feel comfortable. Then one day it dawned on me that there were many people with whom I shared the peace but rarely spoke. I started to sit in different places; next to people I didn't know, those I knew but seldom saw outside church, people on their own, newcomers. Sometimes we struck up a conversation or shared a hymn book or a smile, sometimes we just sat alongside in quiet and companionable prayer and reflection. I felt closer to others.

Nowadays I find myself drawn back to that familiar seat, but sometimes I choose somewhere different and often when I do I am rewarded with an altered view of the diversity of God's people and richness of his creation.

Why don't you try it sometime?

Sally Slevin