

contact

CHICHESTER BAPTIST CHURCH

FEB/MARCH 2019

Ubuntu

As someone born into a mixed-race family, people often ask me if I am fluent in other languages. Disappointingly, I'm not. Even though I learned French and German at school I can still only speak the former well enough for holiday purposes.

I do love languages though, and I particularly enjoy finding words in other languages for which there isn't a direct English language equivalent.

For example, in Hindi there is a word 'Sthapana' which means to lay a foundation, either literally for a building, or metaphorically in terms of laying either a founding principle or relationship or perhaps a concept which is foundational to everything else.

I also love the word 'Ubuntu' used in several southern African countries. I have read several variations of a great story which illustrates this word.

An anthropologist set up a game for some children to play. He'd placed a basket filled with fruit underneath a tree and told the children that whoever reached the basket when he said "Go!" would win and could eat the contents all by themselves.

Unexpectedly, when he shouted "Go!" they all held each other's hands and ran off towards the tree as a group. Once there, they simply shared

the fruit, sat down and happily ate it together.

The anthropologist asked them why they had all gone together, especially if the first one to arrive at the tree could have won everything in the basket.

The children shook their heads and replied, "Ubuntu, how can one of us be happy if all the others are sad?"

'Ubuntu' is hard to translate in English but speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. We are all interconnected.

You won't find the word 'Ubuntu' in the Bible but you will very much find the principle throughout it. We are called to live, share and support one another. To find ways to include those who would lose the race and in so doing find that we all win.

Hopefully, the contents of this issue of *Contact* reflect this truth, with pieces inside about 'Heart for Parklands', the uniqueness of Jesus and a piece answering the question, 'If there is one thing I've learnt' – each of which point us beyond ourselves to the needs of others and our interconnectedness with them.

'Ubuntu' is a 'Sthapana' for Christians because Jesus, our ultimate 'Sthapana', pointed the way in living his life with and for the good of others.



Ken Benjamin

More than many sparrows



Compared to today's travelling generation, I have not travelled that much at all, but I have had the privilege of visiting a number of different European countries, as well as Egypt, Kenya, and Burundi. There has been one constant in all of my trips abroad, because wherever I have been, there have been sparrows.

I was particularly struck by this when I visited Burundi in 2011. I had never been to the country before. I hadn't spoken to the person who was picking me up and had no way of contacting him. I had no idea what I would be doing when I got there. It was a recipe for anxiety. But as I stepped off the plane and walked towards the airport buildings, there were my feathered friends, reminding me of God's presence.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care...So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows"

(Matthew 10:29, 31)

Sparrows may be the most familiar of all wild birds worldwide¹. I find it remarkable, then, that Jesus – with no experiential knowledge beyond the boundaries of the relatively small country of Israel – picked this bird of all birds as an object lesson of God's great care for all humanity.

¹ Firefly Encyclopedia of Birds

Unique

"I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love, and at this hour millions of people would die for him."

Napoleon Bonaparte

"Socrates taught for 40 years, Plato for 50, Aristotle for 40, and Jesus for only 3. Yet the influence of Christ's 3-year ministry infinitely transcends the impact left by the combined 130 years of teaching from these men who were among the greatest philosophers of all antiquity.

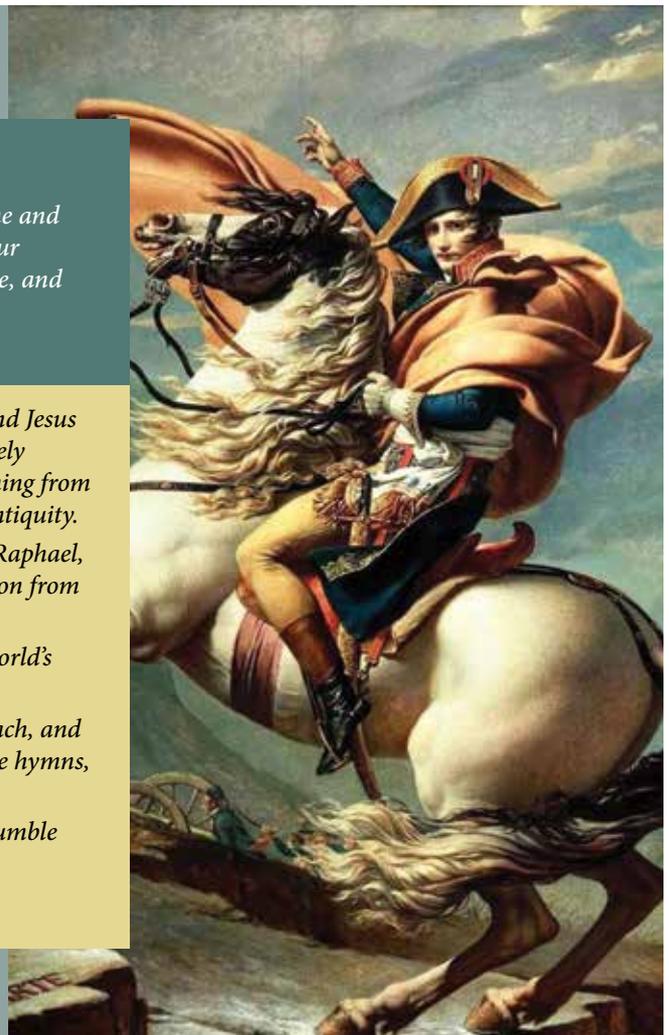
Jesus painted no pictures; yet, some of the finest paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci received their inspiration from him.

Jesus wrote no poetry; but Dante, Milton, and scores of the world's greatest poets were inspired by him.

Jesus composed no music; still Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, Bach, and Mendelssohn reached their highest perfection of melody in the hymns, symphonies, and oratorios they composed in his praise.

Every sphere of human greatness has been enriched by this humble Carpenter of Nazareth."

Author, Henry G. Bosch



SPOTLIGHT

On any given Sunday morning, in addition to meeting in the church building for a service, members and friends of CBC meet in other ways. Here we focus on



HEART FOR PARKLANDS

On the morning of the first Sunday of the month a small team of people can be seen leaving the church building in pairs. They are making their way to the homes of local people who, for a variety of reasons, find it hard to get out. Louise, who heads up the team, explains. "We believe the church should be at the heart of community, so we visit people within walking distance of the church, people who would value making new friends, and we have a good chat. That's pretty much it – catching up on news and building friendships."



People can become socially isolated for any number of reasons. Some will be elderly people with no relatives or next-of-kin living nearby. Others will find it hard to get out of the house due to limitations in their physical or mental health.

Louise describes one neighbour who had no local friends when the team first visited. The team has now become part of her friendship group, and it has given her the confidence to attend the church lunch club. There she has made more friends, and has expanded her network of support. Another person valued the team so

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much that when she passed away the family approached the team to take her funeral.

"People are very grateful for the visits. One person said, 'I rarely get the chance just to have a chat to someone.' And we get a lot of pleasure from the visits too. We really enjoy making new friends." Visits last

between 30-45 minutes, and there is an offer of prayer for those who would like it.

So, if someone finds it difficult to get out, and they would welcome a friendly chat and a regular, monthly visit, what should they do?

"They can contact the church office, or get a message to the team through a friend or neighbour. I will pop round to introduce myself and the team, get to know them a little, and answer any questions they might have. Then, if they want to go ahead, a few days before the team visit, we pop in a reminder card through the door. They can ring to cancel at any time, although visits are rarely cancelled, and no-one has asked the arrangement to stop yet!"

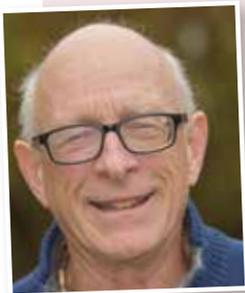
Heart for Parklands is for anyone of any age within walking distance of the church, whether they live in the Parklands area or not. Visits are from church volunteers, in pairs, all of whom have been DBS checked.



ONE thing



If there's one thing I've learnt it's that it's people that really matter.



I recently read of a Harvard University study from some time ago which concluded that the best predictor of a successful life was having close relationships, and this rings true for me.

In my late teens and early 20s I was fortunate to be part of a group of really good friends. We were geographically dispersed but saw each other at weekends and special events. These were friends I could rely on and talk to, people I fell back on when I needed support. Many years later, even though we are even more widely scattered, they are still there, and very precious to me.

I've observed the value of relationships in working life too. By nature I am a very task-oriented person. In the office I did invest time in those I managed, but I was not very sociable. By contrast my wife Janet works in a care home, and she views care not just in terms of performing tasks for residents, but spending time with people. It's clear to me how much she gets from it and how much they appreciate it too.

I feel like there's something missing in society, and that often we don't see individuals as real people. They are the driver holding up my journey, rather than the person who is anxious behind the wheel; they are the Twitter account I can attack from the safety of my computer, rather than a real person with feelings.

But they are more than drivers and Twitter account holders – they are people, and they matter.

Phil Coleman

sunday services

10am Morning service with children's and youth groups and crèche.

Please join us for tea or coffee and a chat after this service.

6.30pm Evening service

Sarcinarius

With 'Sthapana' and 'Ubuntu' on the front page, you would think that was enough new vocabulary for one edition of *Contact*, but here's one more new word with which to impress your friends. The delightful and obsolete word 'sarcinarius' means 'able to carry burdens or loads', and was typically used of animals like oxen, horses or donkeys which made an important contribution to transport in years gone by, and in some countries still do.

What about us, though? Can we be sarcinarius?

Jesus was critical of the religious hierarchy who placed a moral burden on the shoulders of the ordinary people with their numerous examples of "Do this" and "Don't do that." He said, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them."¹ We weren't designed to be sarcinarius in that sense – able to carry the burden of unreasonable religious demands.

We are designed to be sarcinarius in a different sense though: to help others carry their loads. Paul wrote, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ"². Some people go through life, or a stage in life, with too much to carry. It's good when we can walk alongside them and help them when the load is too much.

Life is a journey together, not a race against each other. We are to care for each other as God cares for us, because it's people that matter. May these thoughts be guiding principles for us over the coming year.

Verses from the Bible: ¹ Luke 11:46; ² Galatians 6:2



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