

The HOD Times

Annual Newsletter of the House of the Open Door Community
December 2020

From Gaetana

Dear friends,

I want to share a personal overview of how things are at HOD from the beginning of our Sabbatical last September, through to April and into the time of Covid restrictions.



Our Prayer life

In times such as these our prayer life is changing. The Lord is calling us to stay awake but even when we are lost, disappointed, suffering or mourning He walks besides us as he did with the disciples on the way to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-35)

At the beginning of the Pandemic, I felt a bit down because I couldn't go to morning prayers at HOD with everyone; I couldn't go into buildings reserved for residential community; there were no more Friday meetings in the Tithe Barn – all of this making it harder to pray together. And yet the Lord helped us to find new ways to communicate. Along with the rest of the country, we have become very familiar with Zoom.

The Friday speakers have been a blessing, and the Lord has often spoken to us through them about seeking him in prayer, about new vision, about repentance (both individual and corporate), about unity (including with our "older brother" Israel) and about interceding for the nations in this difficult time. On alternate Fridays, we have held prayer vigils, overnight Friday to Saturday, during which we pray in our different homes as well as in the Chapel at HOD, lifting our hearts to the Lord together in the Spirit.

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Please email us any feedback from this newsletter, e.g. if your contact details have changed or you no longer wish to receive the HOD Times.

Website www.houseoftheopendoor.org

www.facebook.com/houseoftheopendoor



Hospitality

As you may have seen from the [website](http://www.houseoftheopendoor.org) and [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/houseoftheopendoor), in a big change for us, the Retreat House and the Cottage reopened as self-catering facilities at the end of August.

At the beginning of 2020 we had already felt that this was the most practical way forward for running the Retreat Centre. When Covid arrived, we could only praise God for this decision as it made everything so much easier for our facilities to be **Covid-safe**, whilst still being able to receive guests.

So, over the summer a new kitchen was re-instated in [Childswickham House](#) in the room that was originally the kitchen when Community moved here in 1989! We had previously re-instated the kitchen in the [Cottage](#). We also saw God's hand at work as the end of our Sabbatical overlapped with lockdown which meant there were very few bookings to cancel and deposits to return. God is very good!

It's been encouraging to hear from people that they are just as blessed during their stay as when we served them meals in the dining room. The Lord still speaks to them through our beautiful home...what a precious gift!





Stewardship of what God has given us

Some members of residential community have had to be away much of the time (Lynda and Maria caring for their elderly parents, and Klara in Czech for the same reason.) With fewer hands on site to look after the buildings, gardens, and land, we are asking God to guide practical changes in how we organise our work.



We have a growing band of friends who come to help with practical work, both regularly and from time to time. Our thanks to you ... you know who you are!



By the time you read this we will have had 105 sapling trees delivered to us via the Woodland Trust to be planted out to form a little wild wood. The trees are being cared for at present, to be planted in the new year, and we would be very grateful for volunteers to help prepare the ground and do the planting. We are planting for the future!



These practical changes are only part of a wider seeking God for vision – though an important part. Please pray for God's guidance in these areas, and for His provision at a time which has been difficult for us, as for so many.



New possibilities for mission

In the middle of the restricted situation we find ourselves in, we have been praying for new ways to evangelise, and new possible openings for mission have been presented to us. Some of these are still in the early stages, so please pray that God will bring to birth what He has in mind. Included is a small support group for spiritual directors, art and craft quiet days, and links to a Franciscan led parish in Oxford where we have been invited to go once a month to sing and share the Gospel.

Please pray for these new beginnings, and also that we will find ways to connect with young people.

Seeking the way forward... and Vision for the next chapter

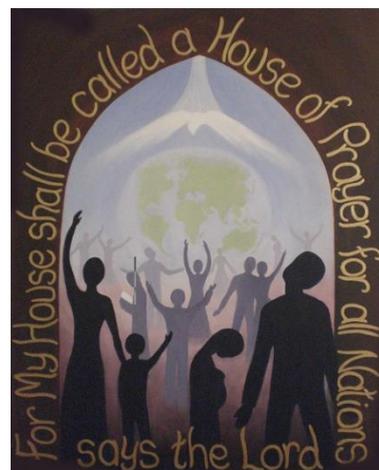
It's a miracle we can't forget that God had already led us into a sabbatical when Covid-19 struck. Our "Pause" to community life has become a bit longer than we expected in 2020! God is helping us to settle into a new routine with many changes, and it is very natural to continue praying, as we did in the Sabbatical, that He will show us what He wants for the next chapter. We also sense that God is speaking new things to many people and communities we know.

What is God saying?

If I were in a room with you, I would ask you: How are you doing? Do you manage to get some fellowship? Is the Lord speaking to you? And I can almost hear some of you asking me: How are you? How is HOD? What is the Lord saying to you? What's the vision?

I feel that the Lord is calling us to go back to the beginning of our community...to be a *House of Prayer for all nations*. Each one of us is a house of prayer, but we cannot be community on our own. What God spoke to us through Maria's painting in our chapel, of people in all walks of life praising the Lord, has not changed...it has evolved.

I love our prayer vigils. Being quiet in front of Jesus is not a place where I do HIM a favour (i.e. so He doesn't feel lonely!), but has become a place of safety where I ask the Lord to show me His mercy and teach me his way, and to lead us all. But if I am honest it is a place where I wrestle with Him too!



News

Men's Days

FROM TOM GORMAN

Our last Men's day at HOD on 12th September was a very enjoyable occasion. It was both the first time we had ventured into the hills together, and unknown to us, it was to be the last Saturday before the second COVID lockdown came into force.



One of our party was the Rt. Rev Pat Kilgarriff, a former Rector of the Venerable English College in Rome, now retired. "Fr. Pat" is a very experienced hill - walker and he led the walk - from Chipping Camden to Dover's Hill - and our day together, both spiritually and physically.

The sun was shining, and the views from the hills were beautiful. Altogether, it was a memorable experience, for all of us – the old and the young, the fit and the not so fit, as the photos show.

To belong to a community has been a great gift to me all my Christian life. (Even in Italy, before I came to HOD, I belonged to a community there.) And I know that even when I struggle, HOD is a gift to me: it's the spiritual family God has gifted me with. When I am at Childswickham, whether I'm doing a bit of garden work or just sitting in the chapel, I can't help but thank the Lord for the gift of this diverse spiritual family.

So, what is the Lord saying to us? We sense the Lord calling community to be a place of restoration and healing, a place where God "gives the lonely a home", a place for people to meet with the Lord, and a base from which to go out to share His love. This must be why HOD Community is still in Childswickham and is still entrusted with the stewardship of 60 acres of land. The place is significant because it belongs to the Lord!

Our responsibility is to be an expression of His Kingdom, and to affect the atmosphere with our praise and worship.

And yet we are so little now, so few of us! Maybe for some our littleness might look like a sign of weakness, almost a lack of blessing, if we compare the present with earlier days in HOD - but I don't think that at all:

'Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?

⁴ But now be strong, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord. 'Be strong, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the Lord, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty.

⁵ 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'

Haggai 3:3-5

I praise Him for where He has led us to so far. If we at HOD had everything sorted, in a cosy little bubble, we wouldn't have met or needed to meet the amazing people and organisations He has linked us with (I won't name names!), and what a great loss that would have been!

As we feel weaker, we learn more and more to cry out to the Lord! The land and all that we have belongs to the Lord, and "He will not give His Glory to another".

GAETANA TRIMMING

(Member of the leadership team, living in Broadway with husband John and son Manny)

Keeping in Touch!

FROM LYNDA

With our churches closed, and being unable to meet together to pray, the use of technology to share our faith and fellowship together, has become not just convenient, but necessary. As a complete technophobe (I have been described as a "dinosaur" by some of my younger friends) this has presented me with a great challenge! Thank God for those who know how and have been able to help people like me!



Our first experiments with Zoom gradually became more established, and as well as using it for business meetings and discussions, we have been able to continue our Friday night meetings too. Each Friday the faces on the screen are a mix of older and more recent friends, and although Zoom meetings can never substitute for being physically present to each other, the meetings are still a great blessing.

European Network of Communities

One of the greatest advantages was being able to attend the annual European Network of Communities (ENC) Conference in November. Usually we send three or four representatives, but this year we all had the opportunity to join the worship and talks from many European countries, online.

The ENC Gathering 2020 is online on [YouTube channel](#) - Session 1 is here (<https://youtu.be/LwSg1F-MyBc>) – there is a little slideshow of photos of us from 5:15 to 6:05, and Gae gives a 5 minute update from us at 1:21:00 into the session.

As a Community, we joined the ENC two years ago, and we now have a representative on the Council. The Holy Spirit is certainly moving among the Christian Communities across Europe and it is a privilege and blessing to be part of the network, with opportunities opening up to join with others in youth work.



Local connections

We have in fact been able to "meet" far more people than we would normally, by joining online events, and

having others meet us. We have maintained our contacts with the local churches, and remain part of the Evesham Prayer Compass, praying for Evesham and the Vale, and Silvie, Chiara and Simi have continued their work with Evesham Street Pastors in the times out of lockdown. Our good friends from the Mission organisation Blessed to be a Blessing (BTBAB) have been operating from their base in Murcot, but the new Trainee Director, Esther Price, has moved in to live with us here at HOD, which is certainly a blessing for us. You can find out more about BTBAB at www.btbab.org

There have been benefits within the difficulties of life in 2020, and we pray they will continue into the future, opening up new opportunities for evangelisation and mission.

Creative Retreats

FROM LYNDA

At the beginning of 2020 we had a programme of events planned, some of which involved developing creative retreats using artwork, pottery, and poetry. All these had to be cancelled of course, but in the moments between lockdowns, we did manage to make space for a few people to gather on different occasions in the craft studio and these proved very successful in their limited way. It is hoped that there will be many more opportunities to develop ministries of art and creativity in the future.



These will not require any previous experience or talent, as we are all made in the image of our Creator, so inside all of us there is beauty trying to escape in one way or another! A series of pottery workshops, for both adults and children, was also planned for the autumn, but these too had to be cancelled. Watch the [website](#) next year for opportunities!



Walking with the Lord on the Camino de Santiago

FROM KLARA

I am really grateful for the gift of the whole Sabbatical season. There have been many aspects of this grace, but perhaps the most significant was walking the Camino de Santiago. Just simply walking alone with the Lord. Silence. Simplicity. Beauty. Challenge. Pain. Sunshine and warmth. Rain and cold. Meetings. Above all deepening, re-kindling of my call to be single for the Lord. Re-commitment to Him through Mary.



I realise it's still hard to put in words all that these few weeks and 800km on foot meant to me. I set off from Santander, following the Camino del Norte. On reaching Santiago I knew I needed to go on, so ended up walking the Portuguese Route in the opposite direction, sometimes also called Camino de Fatima. I only walked to Porto though and finished the route by bus :o)

Looking back now I am filled with wonder



also at the timing of my Camino... It was the last opportunity before the pandemic. Like many other pilgrims, I can't wait to get back :o)

The pilgrims to the north!

FROM SILVIE



Simi and I also went on Pilgrimage while Klara was away, but nearer home - following Pilgrim routes in the Scottish borders and the North East.

On the journey we had a lot of fun with daily adventures as to trying to see where we would pitch our tent for the night, where we would knock to ask for water, and how to overcome the moors of the Cheviot hills in that horrendous rain. The crossing of the sands to Lindisfarne along the old pilgrim's path was the cherry on the cake.

Simi could only come as far as the Abbey there, but I stayed for a few days to enjoy my honeymoon with the Lord, after my first commitment to be single for the Lord.

I continued to the final resting place of St. Cuthbert in Durham Cathedral. Walking in the footprints of this saint and other Celtic monks, often on the course of an old Roman road was a little bit like time travel – and arriving at Cuthbert's tomb felt like meeting an old friend.

My time away remained the fuel and inspiration for the rest of the Sabbatical this year....

(Silvie has written a Poem - on the next page...!)



MY LINDISFARNE (By SILVIE)

*My feet, worn out a bit,
I set on the renowned sands.*

*They loathed what they'd longed for first,
getting more than wet
yet eager and excited.*

*Then my feet freed their speed
and they got to meet the rocks
where Cuthbert prayed.*

*The sea roared, and God heard that,
and I saw a huge joyful black glittering seal.
The tide was coming in and I didn't stay;
I waded back.*

*Then they took me
to a small sandy beach, on the other side
of the island, behind the white pyramid.*

*The pyramid is public, (maybe) a sign for Vikings
The beach then remote, (maybe) hidden.*

*Where there was a gap in the black
layer of seaweed, she seduced me to
not only feet, but everything, set in the sea.*

*Thus I was becoming part of the island
and the island part of me.*

The Leadership Team

In June this year, a new Leadership Team was elected for HOD. After much prayer and discussion, it was agreed by all the members to elect five people for a three year period, and the team elected is Chiara Pelazza, Gaetana Trimming, John Trimming, Lynda Watson, and Maria Skorupska.

We did not expect that all our meetings would need to be held remotely, due to the restrictions imposed by the Pandemic! It has worked well and helps to keep us focused! We are longing, however, for the day when we can all meet around a table in real life again!



Our Prayer Life

Prophetic words to community

FROM JOHN TRIMMING

*Prophetic Words from
God are precious –
signposts he puts on our
way individually and as
a group.*

*Here are some of the
words spoken to us over
the last three years –
mostly by friends visiting
as speakers in our Friday
Night fellowship
meetings held remotely
via Zoom:*

*Your mission is to be like
Jesus; you should be
"recognised as having
been with Jesus" - Acts
4:13. Choose to go
through the open door
set before you - Rev. 3: 8.
(2018)*

*He congregated here
people who are
wholeheartedly looking
for treasures - for gold;
who are willing to dig
deep, who are willing to go through the river of the
Spirit -... I will give them that gold and I will also give
them oil.... He wants to give you energy to give to other
people to keep on going. (2018)*

*[Picture of rebuilding a stone building]. I have been
working in your life. The fire of the Holy Spirit has been
burning and refining... You now turn to rebuild and find
that the cleansing, cooling rain of the Holy Spirit has
washed clean the stones that made up your life. Stones
that have been taken through fire. Rebuild with stones
of my choosing, those that have been tested in the fire.
(2019)*

*Be anchored to my word... Be set like a sentry on the
walls... You may feel you are under an attack which is
storming ramparts so that you almost despair. ...In the
shattering he has put a sentry who is going to guard
your life until Jesus comes. (2019)*

*"He loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Be
faithful in walking with the crucified Christ and offering
life to the world with Him. (2020)*



Prophecy in morning Prayers

FROM TOM GORMAN

Every day in morning prayers Tom faithfully records words from the Lord as we worship together. Here are just a few of the things God has said to us this year.

Mission

Saint John Paul's letter *Duc in Altum*: He said if you want to know the blessings of God, launch out into the deep.

The Beauty of the Cross visible in a suffering world, precious to those who need the Gospel and healing.

Praise

Our mission is to praise God - not to attempt control what is happening.

"Our God is a consuming fire...". Those who welcome the fire will be refined like gold. Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice - messages about going through a purifying experience to prepare us to evangelise.

Rebuilding

Nehemiah didn't use the old stones in building the new temple. God will show us the stones with which to rebuild.

The Desert and Crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land

Deuteronomy 1:6-8: *".... You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Move on, continue your journey, go to the highlands of the Amorites....as far as the great River Euphrates. Look, that is the country I have given you; go and take possession of the country that God promised on oath to give to your ancestors...and to their descendants after them."* (2019)

The desert as a place of encounter – Jesus driven by the Spirit into the desert.

Hebrews 4:3: *"Now we who have believed enter that rest"*. Trusting in God and resting from our own works enables us to enter into the Sabbath rest. The Battle is the Lord's.

I make rivers flow in the desert where you are going.

Blessing and Provision

Pictures of Quails and Manna in the Desert.

The Widow at Horeb with flour and oil that never gives out: we all give to each other, day by day, the oil and flour that God gives us.

Joel chapter 2: *"I will restore to you the years that the locusts have stolen"*.

Fragility - and Recreation

Psalm 39. *"I do not ask for sacrifice and burnt offerings but an open ear"*. Through the apparent failings and difficulties, the Lord is doing a new thing - he is bringing about a new thing through the brokenness.

Pictures of Broken pots, but with light shining through the cracks. In our weakness is his Strength.

A boat in the storm

A picture of a ship that is having its sails taken down to be repaired...

Maria's painting of a ship in a stormy sea – we had the sense of hanging on to the mast -which is the Cross - then the Lord would guide us safe into the harbour.



A ministry to bring healing

Community is like a field hospital where people come to be healed and refreshed before they go out again.

Protection

Revelations 3:8 ... "I have opened a door that no one will be able to close.... I will keep you safe in the time of trial that is coming on the whole world".

All I ask for you is to be faithful on the journey. Trust me for delivering the goods - Don't worry as you carry the parcel.

The Word of God / Obedience / Faithfulness

A lamp fixed to the wall, shining - Ezra reading the Torah for all the people. The word is a lamp to our path.

Picture of Moses holding the Word of God given to him close to his heart.

Psalms 95 "Today, if only you would hear his voice, Do not harden your hearts..." – We are all to seek fresh prophecy.

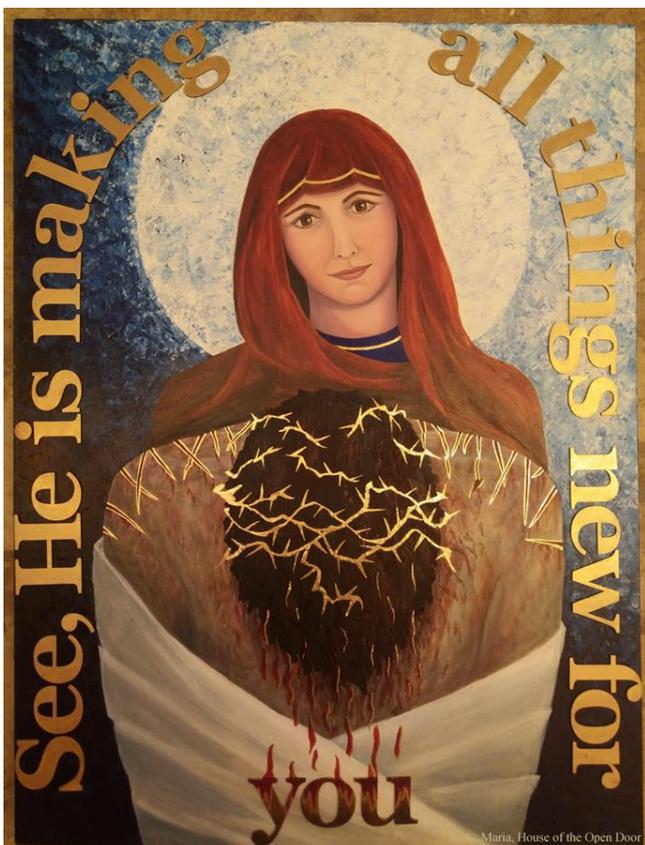
We need daily conversion, knowing we are totally dependent on the love of God: Isaiah 57: 15, "I live in a high and holy place, but I am with the contrite and humble"

Galatians 6:9. "... We should not lose heart doing good for in its own time we will reap, if we do not give up."

God is doing a new thing

Isaiah 43: 9 "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

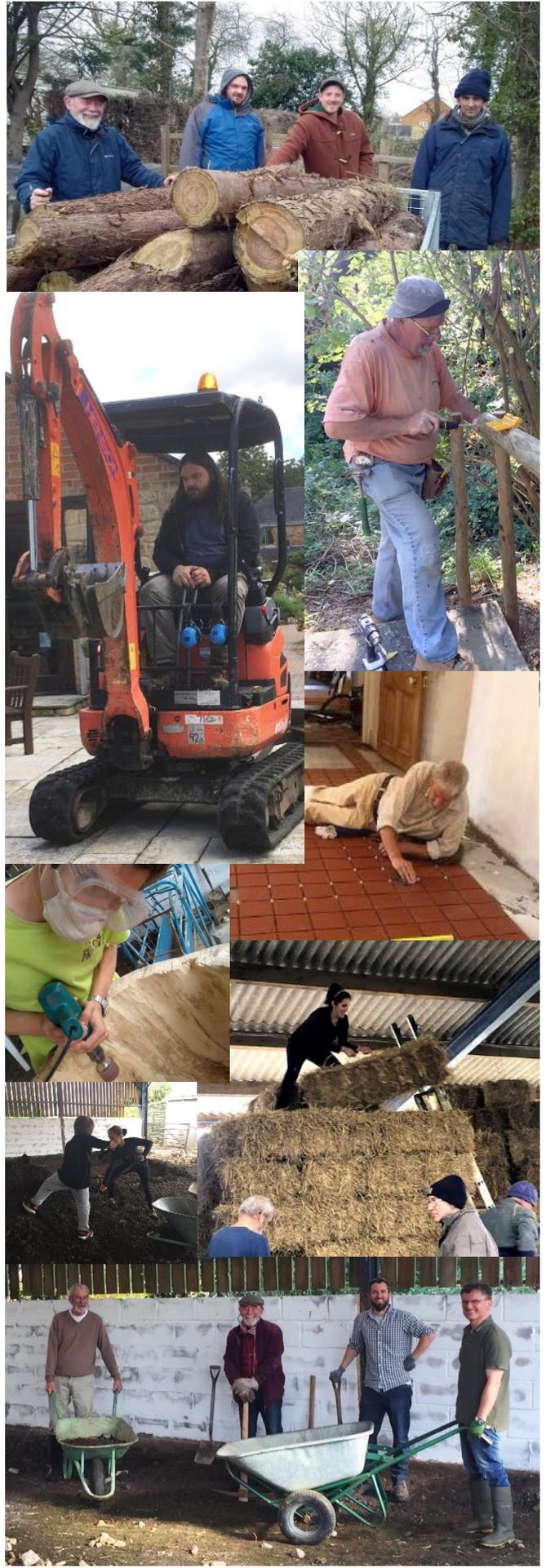
A beautiful recent painting by Maria...



Picture Gallery

Some pictures taken in the past year... Community members (and friends!) praying, working, and relaxing. God is good!







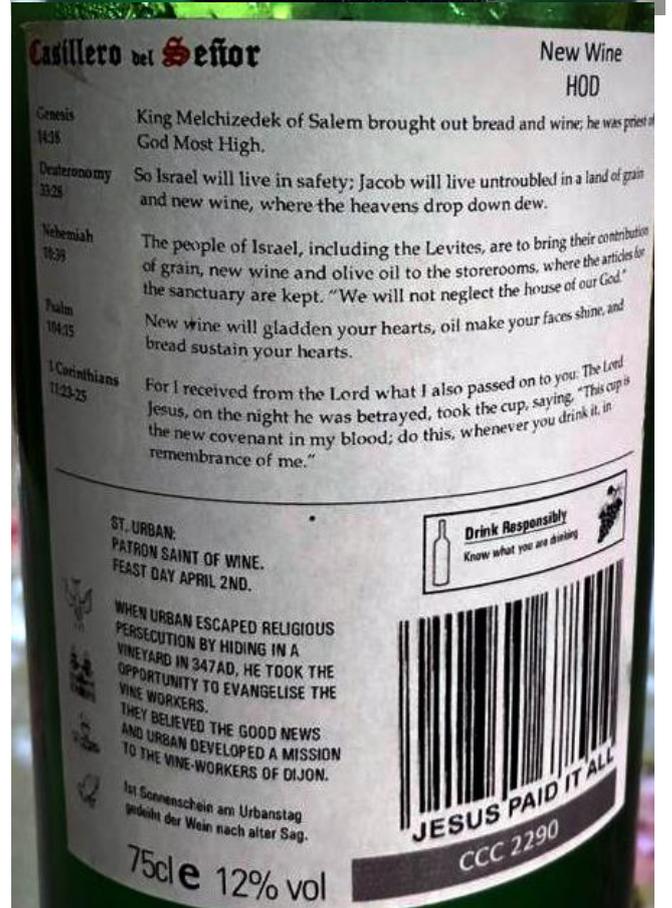
Support our Work

If you would like to make a donation to support our work, please see our [Support the Charity](#) page on the website, or [Contact us](#) for our bank details.

Footnote

"New Wine"!

Finally - we thought you'd like these pictures of a harvest of "new wine" – from the grapes in our courtyard! And the wine label we made to go with the harvest (thanks to brother Loarne)!



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