

St Mary's Church Newsletter

June 2018



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Twenty Five Years In...

By Canon Simon Butler | June 2018



Reflecting on 25 years a priest

I was ordained priest in 1993. John Major was Prime Minister, George Carey Archbishop of Canterbury and my ordaining bishop was holy, grand and known by some as 'the last of the Prince Bishops.' The senior clergy of the time had all been ordained in the late 1950s to the early 1970s and were products of their age: the prevailing theological tradition was broadly liberal, and we were prepared for a priestly ministry that was still essentially pastoral, with the task of the clergy to lead the church (probably as a lone ordained individual) and to do what clergy had done for generations: visit the sick, lead worship, represent the church in the community, and still to enjoy something of a status

as a community leader. That I served a curacy in middle-England Hampshire probably only emphasised that historic role and task. The Church of England voted to ordain women as priests in my first year of curacy – the woman who served alongside me as a deacon in Chandler’s Ford had to wait longer than I did to be ordained priest, even though she was ordained deacon before me. We had little or no experience of women’s ordained ministry.

How times have changed. Today we have a woman as Bishop of London, one of the more theologically-conservative dioceses in the country. A bishop who has pretensions of grandeur is something of an anachronism (the last one with any of that about him is soon to retire...no names mentioned!). Today it is a form of generous open Evangelicalism that is the prevailing theological mood of the time. The clergy – whether of that tradition or not – are far more theologically orthodox than a generation ago. Sixties liberal theology is seen as something as relic and aberration in the modern Church of England – even twenty-five years ago, at the beginning of the rise of the New Age Movement, the 1960s liberal claim that everyone was preparing to abandon superstition and that what we needed was a ‘secular Christianity’ looked very suspect. Today religion is at the heart of our public discourse and, to quote G K Chesterton, “when people stop believing in God they don’t believe in nothing, they believe in anything.”

Clergy in 2018 are viewed through very different lenses than they were even in 1993. In part we have made our own bed to lie in with the various scandals of sexual abuse and subsequent cover up, but alongside that, the collective loss of religious awareness in society has resulted in an indifference to clergy. Among the younger generations, our regular appearances in the media to opine on matters of sexual morality, make us seem part of the problem in society, rather than part of its solution. How refreshing it was to hear Bishop Michael Curry’s sermon at the Royal Wedding offering a compelling vision of what Christianity is meant to be: a revolution of love.

Today’s clergy are trained to be evangelists and collaborating team leaders rather than solo performers. It will be interesting to see how our new Associate Vicar goes about his role in Community Development and Mission: I am looking forward to learning from what he has learned and the way he has been trained.

Despite all the differences, and the increasing complexity and challenge of the role of a priest in the 21st century, there are still commonalities. People are still hungry for meaning and often struggle to find it in a marketplace of faith and spirituality, both fulfilling and ludicrous. Increasingly in our culture, with the self as the arbiter of meaning and morality, there is isolation, loneliness and atomisation. We know more about people in Syria than we do about the people next door. And so people long for community. Despite all the suspicion of institutions, therefore, when people discover for themselves what faith in Jesus Christ has to offer in terms of personal meaning, community life beyond individual fulfilment, and vocation to serve others for the sake of social transformation, the Gospel still has power.

Being a priest in 2018 is a far more challenging thing than it was in 1993, but it is in many ways much closer to the way in which primitive Christianity had to find a voice and a place to stand to live out and proclaim the Gospel. I cannot see that changing. It would be pointless for the rest of my ministry, let alone the ministry of the church, to be an exercise in attempting to reclaim a nostalgic past that probably never existed. So bring on the next 25 years with all that they will bring!

Deo gracias.

Your brother and priest.

Simon

Silver Jubilee Celebration: Everyone Welcome

By Canon Simon Butler | June 2018

Friends, elsewhere in this newsletter I reflect on twenty-five years as a priest in the Church of England. This article is to let you know what is happening to mark my silver jubilee and to invite you to come and join in celebrating with me.

I will be presiding at the Eucharist at 11am on Sunday 1st July to mark this anniversary of ordination. I'm delighted to say, of course, that there is more than one thing to celebrate on this day because it will also be the day that Bishop Richard will License Revd Aaron Kennedy as Associate Vicar of the Parish, with responsibility for Community Development and Mission. Bishop Richard is the preacher as well. Aaron will be inviting some of his friends along to join us too. For myself, I've invited members of my two previous congregations, Immanuel & St Andrew, Streatham Common and All Saints', Sanderstead, to join us. A good number will be attending.

The choir are working on a choral setting of the Eucharist, Haydn's *Missa brevis Sancti Joannes de Deo* with string accompaniment. After the service there will be bubbly in the churchyard and a bring-and-share parish picnic lunch to follow (do bring garden furniture and blankets). Details of the parish lunch will be available at the back of church very soon. Contact the office for more details.

Everyone will be very welcome to join us.

Simon

Junior Church

By Lucy Bacon | June 2018



It has been a great month in Junior Church!

We have now been doing Godly Play since January and it is fantastic to see how well the children have taken to it. The children now rush downstairs eager to go into the Godly play room to hear this week's story.

It is amazing to see how much more the children are engaging with the Bible stories. They're starting to see that the stories aren't just for adults but for them as well. They love that the story sets are theirs and unlike a lot of things in church they're allowed to touch them and play with them. Some of the things the children have done and said as they played have given me new insight to the Bible.

One moment that particularly stands out to me was when we did the parable of the great pearl. One of the children was playing with the set stacking all the merchants furniture and the pearls into a tower. After she finished making the tower she came over to me and said "I am not sure if I can give you everything but I can give you a hug."

This made me really appreciate that the lessons of the parables do not have to be distant almost unreachable goals but that we can implement them small ways right now in are every day life. We can slowly build up to everything.

Another wonderful thing about the Godly play sessions has been seeing how much the parents as well as the children are taking to it.

Everyone seems to understand that the children need to be given some freedom and space in their creative time so they can interpret the story in their own way. It's been really lovely to see some new families start to come to junior church because they enjoy Godly play.

We have really appreciated everyone's support as we have transitioned to Godly play, especially the choir who have been very understanding about us taking over their space. I hope everyone can agree that despite the hassle and stress that the translation was worth while!

Walking with the Martyrs

By Canon Simon Butler | June 2018



I am looking forward to leading what I hope will be a moving day's walking pilgrimage around the sites of Christian martyrdom in Central London on 30th June.

The idea for this walk came from a clergy day with my two previous colleagues, Peter and Phillip, as we took a day in Lent for prayer and reflection together. Starting in a very unprepossessing corner of south-east London, we will make our way to Tower Hill, and from there into the heart of the city, taking in Smithfield, Charterhouse Square, Clerkenwell and ending up (via the Tube) at Tyburn, today known as Marble Arch.

The sites of martyrdom are almost entirely associated with the Reformation, so it makes it particularly poignant to walk this route with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters from Sacred Heart Church, listening to the stories of faithful Christians, Catholic and Protestant, who bore witness to their faith in Christ to the point of the shedding of blood.

Our walk will end at Tyburn Convent where a community of Sisters pray constantly. I hope many of

you would like to join me on this special walk.

FAQ

How Far Will We Walk?	About six miles
Can we Use Public Transport?	Yes. We will try and provide options if you can't walk all the way.
Will we Need to Bring Anything?	You may wish to bring a packed lunch but we will stop for breaks near places where food and drink can be bought?
What are the Timings? will	We will meet in Battersea Square at 9.30am and our walk begin on the Old Kent Road at 10.30am. We will return to Battersea from Marble Arch around 4pm
How Can I join in?	Sign Up in Church or email vicar@stmarysbattersea.org.uk

Invitation

By Debbie Apostolides | June 2018



The Vicar and Churchwardens invite you to St Mary's Church on Sunday 1st July at 11 am for the Licensing of Reverend Aaron Kennedy as Associate Vicar for Community Development and Mission.

Please join us for lunch after the service.

The service will also include a celebration of 25 years of priestly ministry of our vicar, Canon Simon Butler.

RSVP FAO Debbie at office@StMarysBattersea.org.uk

St Mary's Church, Battersea Church Rd, London SW11 3NA

Open Church at St Mary's on Sunday afternoons

By Libby Bradshaw | June 2018



Thank you to all those who have already responded and signed up to help with Open Church this summer. We started this on the bank holiday weekend, 27th May, and intend to keep the church open from 1-5pm every Sunday throughout the summer months until the end of September or early October. We have two people on at a time, the first pair between 1-3pm and the second pair between 3-5pm.

Open Church gives us a chance to welcome people into our church who might not otherwise attend. People walking the Thames Path often stop by and are pleased to find the building open. Some visitors are especially interested in the history of the building and some make a special visit to see the links with, e.g., JMW Turner, William Blake and Benedict Arnold.

Having the church open also enables those who wish to come into the building to reflect and to pray. These may be members of our own congregation, the local community or those passing by. A warm welcome is much appreciated with the offer to show people around if wanted or to leave them to their own devices.

You don't need any special skills, knowledge or qualifications to join us in welcoming these visitors. There is a handout sheet available for those mainly interested in the building. We also point out the intercessions book, especially to anyone who may have come in for some stillness or time of prayer, in case this is of relevance to them.

Please consider joining us in welcoming our visitors. You can sign up on the sheet at the back of church or if you have any queries please contact me.

Thank you again to all those already helping.

Libby

Libby Bradshaw 07956 655037, libby.bradshaw@ursa.me.uk

Art exhibition - Call for Entries

By Newsletter Admin | June 2018



Private view 14th September, 2018

Open to Public Saturday 15th September, 2018

Artist are invited to submit up to three paintings for our RETURN TO SUMMER IN THE SQUARE.

Theme Local Artist/Local Scenes.

You can submit up to three pieces of work

Paintings, sculpture, ceramics or textiles £10 per work. With special children's section.

MORE DETAILS ON SUMMER IN THE SQUARE WEBSITE

CONTACT FELICITY PRAZAK

Concerts and an Exhibition

By Sarah Bryant | June 2018



I thought you might like to hear about a couple of events that I am involved in at the beginning of June. I'll tell you about the second one first, if you see what I mean ...

On 13th June [Vox Cordis](#), a choir in which I sing, is taking part in a concert given to raise money towards a fund set up in memory of Gloria Trevisan and Marco Gottardi, two young Italian architects who tragically died in the Grenfell Tower fire; Gloria had just started work in my brother's architectural firm, a promising career in front of her, and Marco was working in a practice elsewhere. The fund aims to sponsor young graduates to come from Italy for a couple of months in order to learn more about conservation architecture; the first one is expected to arrive this autumn. The concert has a strongly Italian flavour, as do the canapes at the reception at Fulham Palace afterwards ...

The concert will take place on Wednesday, 13th June at 7pm in All Saints Fulham, SW6 3LA (just north of Putney Bridge). The programme will include Monteverdi *Beatus Virâ*, Purcell *Dido's Lamentâ* and the Vivaldi *Gloria*.

Tickets are £20, or £45 including Reception (Students are £10, or £25 including Reception). They are available from www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/485001 and on the door (or you could always ring me on 0208 870 7167!) More information about the fund can be found at www.peregrine-bryant.co.uk (GeM).

The Exhibition I mentioned is taking place from 2-10 June, as part of the Saint Stephen's Festival of Arts and Faith, in St. Stephen's Church, Gloucester Road, SW7 4RL It runs concurrently with lunchtime and evening concerts and I will be exhibiting some of my paintings, many of which have musicians as their subject matter. You can find details of the concerts on St. Stephen's website and there are also some brochures at the back of St. Mary's Church.

Sarah Bryant

Here is Hope for the Hopeless.

By Gladys Ikeme | June 2018

Are You Hopeless in Life? Here is Hope for the Hopeless.

You have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice and no one can rob you of that joy. (John 16:22)

No matter how circumstances in life make us look at ourselves, we must remember that 'God's gift and his call are irrevocable'. (Roman 11:29)

Some of us feel totally disappointed in life to the extent that we blame God for what we're going through. Some have stopped going to church and joined all sorts of occultisms, thinking their achievement can now be guaranteed. This is a very great error, I believe, and I would advise to think again. Ask yourself, 'Who gave you life?'

Some have deviated due to strain and stress of life. We have to choose how we like to be recognised. At the same time, we are all alone when we stand on the Day of Judgement, with no occult members for support. We might say, or cry, 'Had I known!' on that day. We shall all face that, no matter how much we have accumulated or enjoyed. Nothing will accompany you out of this life. Now is the time to live a life honouring Jesus.

Others fear persecution that makes us turn our backs on the Lord. There is indeed a marked persecution against the church. Being a true Christian is costly for some. Some have been killed for their faith or are presently facing death. However, we should not fear since life without Christ is no life at all. Death is preferable to rejecting our Lord.

A Christian teenager named Leah Sharibu, from Dapchi, Nigeria, is being held by a terrorist group called Boko Haram. She is the only remaining prisoner, while 105 of her fellow students have been released, because she refuses to renounce Jesus. Her situation has gained international recognition. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, is greatly concerned about the ongoing violence in some parts of Nigeria. May God save countries going through the fear of persecution!

It's those who wear the shoes who know where they pinch. Though people still move about transacting their daily business, one can feel the anxiety. Some, like Leah, have made up their minds that they would rather die than deny Jesus. This is the situation in a number of African countries.

There is no doubt that the situation is critical. Many are jobless even after years of study at university and achieving a master's or a doctorate degree. In some countries there is gross starvation with only a few being able to afford 2 meals a day, not even thinking about 3 square meals a day. Recession is hitting hard on all of us. Money is scarce. People have to make cuts everywhere.

I personally believe that the road to Heaven is not paved with gold. I believe it is a narrow way for Christians involving suffering. However, we should never deny God. I cannot wait, for my joy will be overflowing. A friend asked me if I were sure that I would be around. Of course the answer is, 'No one can tell.'

In life there will be periods of bitterness and worry about the future. However, to those in the loneliness of grief, Jesus gave the words of invitation and comfort, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.' (Matthew 11:28) God also says, 'Do not be

afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.' (Isaiah 41:10)

Whatever situation we encounter in life, we should not lose hope, but pray always. I strongly believe that things will gradually get better. May God give us perseverance to continue our life's journey, putting our complete hope in God.

Amen

Gladys Ikeme

(Child of God)

Braving the Wilderness

By Sue Whitley | June 2018

Let no one tell you that following in the footsteps of the Lord is easy. During Lent, we were reminded all the time of the need to go forth, reminded all the time that our lives too easily become prisons - albeit cosy ones. Yet God does not make this an easy choice.

It must have been tough being Moses. Discovered by Pharaoh's daughter in the bulrushes, brought up as a prince in the Pharaoh's household - it would have been so tempting to have lived as a favoured child, ignoring the fact that the country that had adopted him had become a prison for his Jewish countrymen.

But Moses became the man he was destined to be. The Exodus story tells of the cataclysmic consequences of Moses confrontation with Pharaoh, in which he commands him to 'Let my people go'. Pharaoh is not pleased, and instead of allowing the Jews to prepare a feast to their God in the wilderness, they are condemned to make bricks without straw. Then, when eventually they do go, it is the wilderness - a sea of sand - that awaits them.

The Psalms are not exactly encouraging about sticking one's neck out either - 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?... The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted...'

And in Matthew's gospel, Jesus says: 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves...'

No words of comfort until the very end: 'Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.'

And yet - as if we know that our lives depend on it - fearful, mistrustful, doubting and generally faint-hearted - we go. The desire to seek out our God overcomes our fear.

When I was little, I had a picture on my wall of a small boy alone in a sailing ship. The prayer beneath it was: 'Oh God, I am sailing on thy wide, wide sea. Please guard my little ship for me.' And that image - of the sea as a metaphor for our journey through the storms of life - has endured for me as a constant reminder, not just of what God requires of us but of what we must ask of ourselves.

I once stood with a Spanish historian on the sea front in Cadiz, while he spoke about Columbus setting out for the New World. 'You see,' he said, 'he knew the winds and the tides would take them out. But he had no idea whether they could ever get back.' The sheer danger of it comes vividly to life in Joaquin Miller's poem:

*Behind him lay the grey Azores,
Behind the gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said: 'Now we must pray,
For lo! The very stars are gone.
Brave Admiral, speak; what shall we say?'
'Why, say, 'Sail on! Sail on! And on!'*

Such words load us with a longing for what we cannot know except through our hearts and souls, and for what we will never find if we play it too safe. Falling in love in human terms is invariably a step into the unknown ; why are we surprised that the steps needed find God are so much larger? We're used to having things proved to us nowadays. We're not used to taking things on trust.

I've always been a fan of the scientist Michael Faraday who said that that the most dangerous people in the world were those who were convinced they were right.

The Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai, deals with that:

*From the place where we are right
Flowers will never grow
In the Spring

The place where we are right
Is hard and trampled
Like a yard.*

But doubts and loves

Dig up the world

Like a mole, a plough,

And a whisper will be heard in the place

Where the ruined

House once stood.

In other words:

We are called to say yes

To this God who reaches out

And asks us to share

His crazy dream of love...

In the wake of Bishop Michael Curry's paeon to love at the Royal Wedding, saying 'Yes' is the least we can do. And when we feel so stricken and inadequate that we can hardly take another step, we have the words of St Augustine to reassure us:

'And behold, you are near and deliver us from our wretched Wanderings... You comfort us and say: "Run, I will carry you, and I will lead you to the end; and there also I will carry you."'

SUE WHITLEY

A prayer of Sir Francis Drake:

Disturb us, O Lord, when we are too well-pleased with ourselves. When our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little, because we sailed too close to the shore. Stir us, O Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture into wider seas where storms show thy mastery, where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.

AMEN

A Community Music Theatre Production

By Newsletter Admin | June 2018

Asinati

Presents...



Book online @ <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/moses-tickets-46505620563>
Or call 07400 692 777 to reserve your tickets

A Community Musical Theatre Production

Friday 6th July 2018 @7pm
Saturday 7th July Matinee @ 2.30pm
Saturday 7th July Evening @7pm

Battersea Central Methodist Mission
20-22 York Road
London
SW11 3QJ