

St Mary's Church Newsletter

February 2019



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A Rule of Life? What on earth is that???

By Canon Simon Butler | February 2019



Throughout the weeks leading up the beginning of Lent, I am inviting members of St Mary's to come and find out more about sharing in a St Mary's Rule of Life.

Most of us are rather ambivalent about rules: they remind us of school and strict regimens, of punishment and failure (how are those New Year's resolutions going now it's February?!). However, seen in the right context, a rule is a measure against which we can reflect on our way of life and to celebrate progress and see what the next step might be. The biblical word for 'rule' is *canon* (see Galatians 6:16 and the verses leading up to it): it's a measuring stick for progress not an unpleasant headmaster looking to spot our rule-breaking.

So far, about 15 people have come along to explore the possibility of a rule of life, based on a simple one developed by Bishop Paul Bayes in the Diocese of Liverpool (see ruleoflife.org.uk): Pray, Read, Learn, Tell, Serve, Give. I would warmly invite many more of us to 'come and see' - to use a phrase from the beginning of John's Gospel - to find out if this is something that could help you shape your Christian living more effectively and intentionally. Many of those who have attended so far have reflected on their desire for a closer walk with God - in prayer, through reading the bible etc - and for a more effective way of living to make a difference in an unjust world and to those who could know Jesus as a friend. I sense a hunger in our congregation to be just a bit better at being a Christian and being known as one. A Rule of Life could help you - and it could be a gift to others who join St Mary's in the months ahead.

So, there are three more opportunities to 'come and see' before Lent begins: **Sunday 10th February at our regular Parish Lunch; Sunday 17th February after the 8.30am service over breakfast;**

and Monday 4th March over a light supper in church. There are no strings attached to any of these sessions. Then, over the six Sundays of Lent, the preachers will focus on those six themes of the Rule that is being offered: Pray, Read, Learn, Tell, Serve, Give, and the focus will be on practical discipleship rather than much theological theory. By the time we get to Easter I hope many of us will have had a chance to discern whether a Rule of Life is for you, and how best we can support one another in following its simple but profound challenges.

One last word. St Augustine says this of the role of a bishop - take it as applying to all clergy: "with you I am a Christian, for you I am a bishop." If we adopt a rule of life, the clergy will be adopting it too and will be willing to share our own struggles and seek your help in following a rule, just as we hope you will look to us for support as well. But if we can help you in the weeks of Lent to discern if this might be for you - and the specific individual challenges you might face in following a rule of life - we would be delighted to spend time with you.

I warmly invite you to discern in the coming weeks if this will be a help for you in the way you seek to follow Jesus Christ, alone and with others, at church and in every place you spend time.

Simon Butler

Broken - An Award-Winning BBC Drama & St Mary's Lent Study Course

By Canon Simon Butler | February 2019



Some of you will have seen last year's powerful six-part BBC Drama *Broken*, starring Sean Bean as an inner-city Catholic priest facing ethical, social, spiritual and personal crises. It won the Sandford St Martin Award for Best Religious Programme of 2018, although it is a long way from traditional *Songs of Praise* broadcasting!

Following its success - and the discussion its subject matter generates - the Diocese of Birmingham's Theologian Paula Gooder produced a simple study guide for group discussion, following the watching of the programme. It provides a great way for a group to get into the issues raised by the story of Fr Michael Kerrigan and his parishioners. And it is to form the study material for our Lent Course in 2019, which we will be sharing once more with our Catholic friends from Sacred Heart, Trott Street.

Because the drama is an hour long, the sessions will be running a little longer than usual, about 1 hour 45 minutes, and the existing home group leaders are planning how best to manage this within the timeframes available to each group. So, with the finer details to be arranged - and the possibility that another group may well form if demand requires - here are the days and approximate times the groups will run:

Sunday Morning from 10th March to 14th April (Led by Sunday Morning Group Leaders)

(between 8.30am and 11am service - timings to be finalised)

Sunday Evening from 3rd March to 7th April (Led by Clergy)

(starts a week earlier to accommodate Palm Sunday Concert and replaces Evening Prayer at 6pm)

Tuesday Evening from 12th March to 16th April (Led by Tuesday Evening Group Leaders)

(probably about 7.30pm in a parishioner's home)

Thursday Afternoon from 7th March to 11th April (Led by Leslie Spatt & Thursday Study Group)

If you would like to register with any of these groups (or if you would like another group to form at another time/day), please sign up in the back of church or email Simon Butler directly (vicar@stmarysbattersea.org.uk).

What the PCC Are Currently Doing

By Canon Simon Butler | February 2019

(Time for you to think about Standing for Election?)

Our Church Council makes many of the vital decisions about the life and work of St Mary's and it is the body to which our Vicar turns for advice on how to grow and lead the church in its faith and mission. It had its first meeting of the year about ten days ago and here are some of the highlights:

- **The Church Council does vision and strategy:** In particular, we took a look at what the church had planned to do in the past eighteen months and how much of those plans had come to fruition; it also looked at a plan that the clergy, wardens and others had prepared for the next eighteen months or so and approved an exciting programme of faith development, built around the emerging idea of an optional Parish Rule of Life (see the separate article this month) and various ways we can improve our communications so that we can still feel part of the life and work of the Church even if we cannot be there every Sunday. In March the PCC will receive a report and recommendations from Revd. Aaron Kennedy on the work we can do to promote the common good and new expressions of church in the coming five years. Exciting stuff!
- **The Church Council does housekeeping and finance:** Any programme of work needs to be properly-funded and the PCC approved a budget for the coming year, a budget for a growing amount of new work alongside keeping the church running. Among the things that are on the cost side are the funding of the relighting and redecoration project and, subject to the proper consents, the PCC will be keeping an eye on the developing tender process and the costs involved in this important work of maintenance and development. The budget - which the Archbishop of Canterbury describes as 'the church's mission in figures' - also takes account of the funding of our Associate Vicar's role. The Council also received a report on the 2018 Everyone Campaign as we seek to fund our work through generous giving from our members. Finally, the Council receives a regular report from our Church Manager, which this month included news of a new Parish Secretary - Sue Bourke - and requests from Thomas's Kindergarten to improve the security of our building for their children.

- **The Church Council promotes A Safe Church:** Every PCC now has to take proper account of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Our receives a report every meeting and this month it also received an action plan for work to do on this following our annual internal audit of safeguarding. The Council agreed to provide a morning's training for all with safeguarding responsibilities at St Mary's later in the year.
- **The Church Council advises the Vicar about worship:** Although it is the Vicar's sole responsibility to make decisions on worship in a Church of England Church, Simon always likes to consult the PCC on matters of importance. At the moment, he is seeking their advice about changing the culture of our First Sunday Services so that they encourage a culture of invitation to which we can feel comfortable about inviting our friends and families. This is a priority for the coming year for Simon.

In a few weeks' time, we will begin to look for new members to replace the two whose terms of office are coming to an end. We are also beginning to look for a new PCC Treasurer and at least one new Church Warden, to serve as Vicar's Warden as Debbie Apostolides term of office comes to an end. We warmly encourage you to enquire about what is involved from the clergy, wardens or any PCC member.

Junior Church

By Cal Alphonse | February 2019

We had a busy time in Junior Church before Christmas. On Sunday 9th December we had a tea party after the Christingle Service. It was a lovely occasion and gave everyone the opportunity to chat and enjoy being together, as well as play party games! (Emrys - I will send you a photo for this separately).



The following weekend, the children of Junior Church put on a wonderful Nativity Play. A huge thank you to Jess Crawley in the choir who wrote the play and to the parents who got the children to various rehearsals and helped them learn their lines at home. The singing of the carols was really excellent (future voices for the choir?!), helped along by Pierre Alphonse accompanying on the piano. As you will see from the photo, everyone looked great in their costumes and we all really enjoyed ourselves.

We have new stories to tell this term using our Godly Play sets, please do come downstairs during the service and join us. Everyone is welcome, even if they aren't coming with children. We would love you to experience a Godly Play session, it is a unique experience.

York Gardens

By Aaron Kennedy | February 2019



On the future of York Gardens Children's Centre

Shortly before Christmas I had one of my regular meetings with Aaron Barbour, the director of Katherine Low Settlement. Aaron mentioned that KLS had recently found out that Wandsworth Council were planning a reorganisation of childcare services across the Borough, and that there would be implications for one of our local children's centres, York Gardens. Naturally enough, I was quite concerned to hear this, and thought it would be good to register that concern with the Council, and to encourage members of St Mary's to do so too. I drafted a template letter and took copies to church that Sunday, and some people certainly took the opportunity to send it on.

Since then I have had something of a baptism of fire in public life in Battersea, and have had conversations with quite a few councillors, civil servants, childcare and early years professionals; I have learned about different policies, the political process, and quite a few new bits of jargon. In the course of my research, having spoken to quite a few different people from across the political spectrum, I learned of a number of fairly serious issues I felt needed a response from the Council - and members of the Battersea Community Organising Group seemed to agree.

Together we drafted a letter addressed to Sarah McDermott, the cabinet minister for Children's Services. A copy of this letter can be found by [clicking here](#); please do have a read of it yourself if you would like to know more about our concerns. A few of us visited York Gardens Children's Centre on Monday 14th January, as we knew that Councillors were coming to have a tour of the venue, to help them make decisions about its future. We had a useful conversation with Rachel Egan, the civil servant overseeing the process, we handed out copies of the letter, and generally made our presence felt. And so the process rolls on Watch this space for more updates in the coming months.

It has been interesting to witness how important York Gardens Children's Centre is to local people, and that a threat to such a service will motivate people to stand up, make their voice heard, and

participate in the process. If you would like to join in our campaign to support York Gardens Children's Centre, please do come along to our next regular monthly meeting on **Tuesday 19th February, 7-9pm**, this time at **Silesian House, 47 Surrey Ln, SW11 3PB**.

The Council seem to have realised that their consultation process was not carried out in the ideal fashion, and have tabled new public consultation meetings. Unfortunately, they set it up so that you had to pre-book to attend, and the brief window for doing that has now closed; however, there's no reason not to come along to **Katherine Low Settlement**, for example, on **Monday 21st January, at 6.00pm**.

Aaron

A one-day workshop on the Common Good.

By Aaron Kennedy | February 2019

Aaron will be running an exciting new workshop designed by *Together for the Common Good*, on **Saturday, 16th February, from 9.30am - 4.00pm**. It will help us learn how we can become a community of the common good, fit for the 21st century, through our Suggest vocational responsibility, and alongside others with different gifts, backgrounds and views. Spaces are limited to 20. Email aaron@stmarysbattersea.org.uk if you are interested

Oscar Hansen

By James Potter | February 2019

Oscar Hansen, bass choral scholar

How did you get into singing?

I first got into singing (and music, more generally) when I was around 16 years old. I was lucky enough to be at a secondary school - Tiffin School in Kingston upon Thames - which has an excellent choir, director, and music department. Initially, joining the choir was something I saw as an academic and social necessity for my music A-level, but quickly I realised I really enjoyed all of the aspects of singing in a choir: the music-making, the community, the repertoire, the tours, the many pints, etc. Since then I have always regularly sung with a choir and have also developed my solo classical repertoire.



What's been your best or most enjoyable singing/playing experience to date?

There are too many to count! I've always loved choir tours and performing solos in recitals, but perhaps my most enjoyable singing experience lies outside of my choral career: playing Mack the Knife in a student production of Threepenny Opera whilst at university in Oxford will always be a favourite memory of mine.

What are you up to now?

Having just graduated this summer, I'm currently starting my first full-time job after university, working in sales for an intellectual property software company in Chiswick. Around this I'm keeping up my singing and learning to drive!

Do you have a favourite piece of choral music? Why that one?

Tough choice. One of my top choral pieces is Belshazzar's Feast by William Walton. It's a completely over-the-top setting of an already very colourful biblical text. For me it combines the best in English symphonic writing with huge choral parts and a fantastically lusty baritone solo. It sounds like it could be the soundtrack to a Star Wars film.

Dealing with Loss

By Gladys Ikeme | February 2019

What an interesting day I had in the Cancer Research charity shop. I greatly enjoy giving practical help in the shop and generating money for cancer treatment. It is my prayer that one day we will learn about a cure for cancer.

I lost a friend of mine last year to cancer. She was my mentor professionally, a friend, an advisor and a sister spiritually. She hid her illness from me until it was far advanced, just a few weeks before she went to be with our Heavenly Father. I saw her in the hospital before she departed. I wept very much and did not want to go back again as she was in a pathetic state.

Whenever I remember her look I think about all those working in specialist care. They must have wonderfully sympathetic hearts. I couldn't bear such sights, seeing patients declining drastically.

After losing my friend I decided to assist in raising money for cancer research by helping out at a cancer charity shop. It makes me think about my friend. Now I feel that I am doing something positive that would make her smile!

I have volunteered in several charity shops, such as the British Heart Foundation shops, just helping out. The workers are very dedicated. I would advise anyone interested in this work, especially in an area where you have had a personal involvement, to go ahead and volunteer, as more hands are needed to raise money for fellow human beings who have been attacked by wicked illnesses.

Not what you get, but what you give,

Not what you say, but how you live,

Giving the world the love it needs,

Living the life of noble deeds.

Not whence you came, but whither bound,

Not what we have, but whether found,

Strong in the night, the good, the true,

These are things worthwhile to you.

Francis Gay

I count myself in nothing else so happy as in a soul remembering my good friendship.

William Shakespeare (Richard II)

For those of us still alive, not because of our goodness, but the mercies of our Heavenly Father, I suggest we remember the words of the song , 'Rock of Ages'.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyes shall close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgement throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

It is a very solemn song and touching indeed. As I write, tears are flowing down my cheeks.

May her gentle soul rest in peace.

May God bless you all!

Gladys Ikeme

(Child of God)