

# THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

SEPTEMBER 2008

## **Expecting a Surprise**

During August I was finally able to find time to sort through the mountain of paper on the desk in my study and do some long overdue filing. Among the things I came across was a quote I had photocopied but had neglected to note where it had come from. I think it comes from Henri Nouwen, the Dutch priest and theologian who worked for many years with l'Arche, the communities set up by Jean Vanier with and for people with disabilities.

In a short piece entitled 'Expecting a Surprise', Nouwen writes that each day holds a surprise for us, but in order to experience it – to see, hear or feel it – we must expect it and not be afraid to receive it, whether it comes as a sorrow or joy. If we expect and receive the surprise, then, he says, it will open a new place in our hearts, where we can welcome new friends and celebrate more fully our shared humanity.

As the summer begins to give way to autumn and our daily lives return to their more familiar routines, I hope we can begin to live in expectation of a daily surprise that will enrich our lives, both personally and at St. Mary's, shaping us into community that supports and reaches out to others. I hope we can get to know each other a little better through taking part in activities, such as attending the Thursday and Sunday monthly lunches, attending a discussion group or going to listen to debates or talks that are all being offered this autumn and that are listed elsewhere in this magazine. I hope too that we will be able to continue as volunteers at St. Cuthbert and St. Matthias Primary School, helping the children with their reading, and that we can find other opportunities to make a difference in people's lives, so that they may experience God's love for them.

In addition to these activities the period between September and December is rich in worship as we celebrate Harvest Festival,

observe Remembrance Sunday, All Saints' Sunday and All Souls, leading us up to Advent, the Sunday School's nativity play and the Carol Service, which prepare us for our Christmas celebrations.

With all these activities I look forward to welcoming new friends and celebrating more fully our shared humanity.

*Ginny Thomas*

## **More Opportunities to Discuss, Think, Learn and Meet New People**

In addition to the series 'Images of God', which is being held at St. Mary's this autumn (details can be found elsewhere in the magazine), there are three more opportunities for discussion, thinking, learning and meeting new people.

### ***The Bible Tell Us So?***

St. Luke's and Christ Church, Chelsea, are hosting a series of talks by Dr. Paula Gooder, Canon Theologian at Birmingham Cathedral and Visiting Lecturer at King's College London. The topics covered will be: Homosexuality (Thursday 11 September), Finance (Monday 13 October) and Work/Life Balance (Thursday 6 November). The presentations begin at 7.30pm (with drinks in the Vestry from 7pm) and are followed by supper. To book supper please contact the Parish Office of St. Luke's and Christ Church on 020 7351 7365 (e-mail [parishoffice@chelseaparish.org](mailto:parishoffice@chelseaparish.org)).

Dr. Paula Gooder led two bible studies at the Kensington Area Conference in June this year, which were the highlight of the conference. She is an excellent and thought provoking speaker and I highly recommend this series, which St. Luke's and Christ Church have kindly opened to anyone who would like to attend. Please contact St. Luke's parish office if you'd like to attend (contact details above).

### **Day Pilgrimage to Westminster Abbey: Saturday 13 September**

We are invited to join a day pilgrimage, also organised by St. Luke's and Christ Church, which starts at Chelsea Old Church at 10.30am and finishes at Westminster Abbey, via several churches, at 12.30pm when there'll be a Mass at St. Edward's Shrine. Lunch (either bring a packed lunch or buy locally) will be at 1.0pm followed at 2.0pm by tours of the Abbey and Evensong at 3.0pm. Alternatively you can join everyone at the Abbey at 12.30pm. There is a donation of £5 per adult to the Abbey; there is no charge for children. Please register by paying with name and contact details to St. Luke's and Christ Church Parish Office: tel: 020 7351 7365 or e-mail [parishoffice@chelseaparish.org](mailto:parishoffice@chelseaparish.org).

### **St. Paul's Institute at St. Paul's Cathedral**

The Institute is holding a series of four public debates at the cathedral entitled 'Seeking Truth: Science, Mystery and Human Identity' with well-known scientists and theologians taking part. Admission is free and no booking is required. The debates start at 6.30pm and finish at 8pm. The topics are:  
7 October: The Battle for Truth? 14 October: God and the Universe: 21 October: Stories of Evolution: 28 October: Body and Soul.  
Brochures giving details of these debates and other related events are available at the back of the church. Please take one if you'd like to find out more about the series.

### **Small Change; Large Reward**

When the brother and sister-in law of my friend Jane opened their ruby wedding card from her, they were somewhat amazed to see that she had given them a flock of chickens. Just as Felicity was wondering how she was to explain to her neighbours in their corner of leafy Bucks that they were in future to be woken by a cockerel at 5.0am, she noticed, from the small print, that the flock were in fact destined for a farmer in Kenya. That was five years ago. The following autumn I was invited to the wedding of an old school friend in Scotland. 'No gifts please; just bring yourselves' was what the invitation said. Well, it was the 'second time' for them both: he was widowed; she was divorced. What more could they be wanting for the house at their time of life?

Not wishing to go empty-handed, following Jane's example, I ordered a flock of goats, destined for a farmer in Bolivia (through Oxfam). I sought for details. Where exactly would the goats be living? I enquired. No-one could answer my question, as these were 'virtual' goats. 'Not good enough,' quoth I. I wanted one day to be able, when I had saved up enough, to visit 'my' goats; perhaps combining this with a walking tour in the Andes. The idea of my virtual goats chewing virtual green grass, clambering over a virtual stony hillside, did not appeal. Well, it was explained to me, 'it's the thought that counts': the donors' wishes cannot be considered because of the practicalities of administration. The aim must be to distribute those cash gifts offered on the basis of need, according to criteria set by the NGO or charitable organisation in question. Those of us who give from emotional impulse would no doubt otherwise flood the developing world with fluffy chicks, in preference to what was actually required, i.e. free-standing toilets and standpipes. Maybe; maybe not.

In the intervening years since then, virtual giving has become commonplace. Even those whose homes are not yet equipped - young newly-weds - are managing to incorporate one or two options on a wedding list for those friends who would like to better the standard of living in areas where it is well below ours.

Virtual giving is now all around us; not merely aiding developing countries, but reflecting the major concerns of our time: climate change, conservation, our children's heritage. Where will this lead? I ask myself. Will the Royal Academy be demanding contributions to a virtual Gainsborough, as yet undiscovered, lurking in an attic? Will the National Trust be approaching me for funds for a virtual piece of coastline, as yet unidentified (but the option to buy, on behalf of a grateful nation, may arise)? How our imaginations might run free... For some of us, it would be a virtual purchase of a wide sandy sweep such as Woolacombe, or Studland Bay; for others, it would be a secret rocky cove in Cornwall or Pembrokeshire!

Seriously, we know this is unlikely, because sufficient real objects and places already exist, waiting to be purchased; there is no need for

'virtual' giving in those organisations. Where people are able to identify with a real object, person or project, giving is more satisfying and rewarding. Why? Probably because we can follow up on our giving by seeing what has actually been achieved with our gift.

I well remember the satisfying glow I felt when sailing past Ramsey Island off Pembrokeshire, knowing that I had helped to purchase it for the breeding of generations of seabirds. Now there are some charities, the RSPB among them, that recognise the importance of money gifted going to the advertised product only. Money donated to save an acre of rainforest, or albatross protection kit, goes straight into their respective bank accounts. It was my particular wish that donations made for Fair Trade initiatives should, similarly, go to a definable project. My researches, so far, have come up with only one catalogue that specifies the goal of any donations. The Good Gifts catalogue guarantees that 'what you see is what you get'. It does this by acting as a sort of clearing house for many different, usually small, charities. The charities are highly specific in criteria/field and guarantee delivery of donations to that end only.

Normally, money given to the tin at coffee time after church on Sunday mornings is sent by our Coffee rep. Betty Greenland to the Papua New Guinea Fund, supported by our diocese. That is where my first Fair Trade coffee morning takings went also, but a very little money goes a long way in developing countries. Cash from Iona Thomas's Fair Trade coffee venture -perhaps twenty minutes' selling time - has, via the Good Gifts catalogue, bought a whole sheep for a villager in India.

Cash from my raffle - perhaps half an hour's selling - has bought the dowry for a child orphaned in Africa. Such children are usually taken in by their village's extended family system, but an extra contribution is so useful to already-impooverished 'step-parents.

The contents of the small-change box, kept on the Traidcraft stall (labelled CHANGE the World!) has in the past been either ploughed back into stock purchase, or sent to Traidcraft Exchange (which funds development assistance

that Traidcraft provides to producers: for example training in bee-keeping to producing honey in Chile.)

If something in the Good Gifts catalogue takes your eye and you would like it to be a focus of our 'occasional giving' and small-change box cash in future, do please let me know. This would be in addition to the two main foci of charitable giving under discussion by the PCC. Many Many Thanks.

*Mary-Gabrielle Blanchet*

Details of Good Gifts bought: in narthex.  
[www.goodgifts.org](http://www.goodgifts.org)

### **Exploring our faith: Images of God.**

At the well attended Lent course this last Spring, the general view was that it would be good if we could continue with another course, possibly between the usual Lent and Advent meetings. Consequently there will be a series of three meetings exploring images of God and our understanding of Him/Her.

The meeting will take place on the following Wednesdays: September 24 October 1 and 8 October, from 10.30 am until 12.00 midday. The meetings will take place at Margarete Geier's flat in Bramham Gardens and the facilitators will be Ginny Thomas, Clare Ziegler and Ann Tait.

The first meeting will explore our own images of God and how they may have changed over the years and will include exercises to help us reflect on the images. The second meeting will explore our images and understanding of God through reading and discussing three of Jesus' parables. The third session will explore our understanding of God through Christ's passion and crucifixion.

Please phone the parish office, 020 7835 1440, if you would like to take part. Although each meeting leads onto the next, it is not essential to come to all three meetings; if you can manage only one or two, we would be delighted to see you.

*Ginny Thomas*

### Thursday Lunch Club

The speaker on Thursday 11 September will be John Barker. The title of his talk will be Operatic Aspirations (with harmonica accompaniment)

### Key Dates

Please note some upcoming key dates for your diary;

#### September

- Sunday 7 Sunday School begins  
Thursday 11 Our highly popular Thursday Lunch Club restarts, speaker tba.  
Sunday 14 St Mary's Patronal Festival  
Thursday 18 PCC meeting 7.30pm

#### October

- Sunday 5 Harvest Festival. All Age Service with guest preacher Cannon Rosalind Brown of Durham cathedral.  
Sunday 5 Parish Lunch  
Thursday 9 Thursday Lunch Club speaker Pat Schleger.

#### November

- Saturday 1 Confirmation at St. Paul's Cathedral  
Sunday 2 All Saints with Parish Lunch  
Monday 3 All Souls day Eucharist 7pm  
Thursday 13 Thursday Lunch Club

December and 2009 dates will follow, but just one to note now: **Sunday 14 December** Advent Carol Service.

### Septembers Year Mind

Elizabeth Richardson  
Hilda O'Connor  
Vera Gregory  
Pamela Bryceson  
Allan Campbell  
Kevin Kendrick  
Kathryn Carr  
Michael Quin  
Hans Schleger  
Alexander Pringle  
John Christie  
Claud Hawker  
Angela Lambert

### Visitor Pass for St. Paul's Cathedral

We have four passes for entrance to St. Paul's Cathedral for the use of parishioners and friends to use. Please call the parish office to arrange collection.

### Bible Study Group starts again on Monday 15 September at 8.0pm

The bible study group has reinvented itself and will be a discussion group that will discuss a variety of subjects from a Christian point of view. All meetings will take place at the home of Dorothy Patrick, 72 Chelsea Park Gardens, starting at 8.0pm and finishing at approximately 9.30pm. It meets every other Monday.

You are welcome to attend any meeting or meetings that interest you and you are not asked to commit yourself to attending regularly. We do hope you will find this an interesting program, Come and join us. If you would like any further information please ring Pat Schleger on 020 7589 2359.

*Dorothy Patrick*

The program is as follows:

Monday 15 September  
subject: Doubt

Monday 29 September  
subject: Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd

Monday 13 October  
subject: The Holy Spirit

Monday 27 October  
subject: Church music

Monday 10 November  
subject: The consumer society: 7-day trading

Monday 24 November  
subject: Christmas customs and their meaning

Monday 8 December  
subject: The Lordship of Christ

### Mari

My friend Mari who who was forced to flee from Basra, Iraq in 1995 with her daughter Angham, and Angham's children Uola (Heaven), Salam (Peace) and Masara (Happiness) is becoming more fluent in English. She thoroughly enjoys her course in learning English, which she attends twice a week. Mari

also keeps busy with sewing and she is grateful every time she gets a new commission.

The news about her son Mazin is not so encouraging. You may remember that Mazin fled from Iraq much later and only arrived in England last Christmas. His family, wife and three children were given a home in Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, while Mazin was put into a detention centre near Cambridge. After a lengthy court battle, which caused Mari and her daughter-in-law much anxiety, Mazin was refused asylum. On 4 July 2008 he was extradited to Greece, his first European port of entry. Mazin, who is a Christian, like all of Mari's family, is sharing accommodations with other Iraqi refugees in Athens. He is without a job and suffering from depression, worrying about his wife and children back in England.

Recently I read the following: Daily Mail (19 July 2008) 'Many Christians were tortured or simply murdered. By now, most have fled the country.' Canon Andrew White, Anglican leader in Iraq. 'There was a small but lively (Christian) community in Basra - thought to be the oldest in the world. It is now virtually extinct.' Barry Humphries, journalist and broadcaster.

So what can we do? At the moment we can only pray that Mazin and his family will soon be reunited and that peace will finally come to Iraq.

*Anne Swift*

### **Behind the hymn**

#### **Immortal, invisible, God only wise by Walter Chalmers Smith**

'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen.' This resounding expression of praise is from 1 Timothy 1:17, and it is the verse on which (1824-1908) based his hymn Immortal, invisible, God only wise. It is one of the great hymns of the 19th century, and its doctrinal orthodoxy and deep spirituality mean that it is sung in every Christian tradition.

Smith was a Free Church of Scotland minister throughout his life, serving mainly in Scotland though his first pastorate was at the Chadwell Street Scottish Church in London. He was steeped in the Bible and had a deep sense of

the majesty of God. The hymn is a beautifully unforced and serene expression of awe at God's greatness. It draws on imagery from the natural world – 'Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above/ Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love' – but everything is majestic and full of wonder. God is 'Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,/ Almighty, victorious...' He is the 'Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,' whose 'angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight'.

Some hymns take as their themes God's dealings with his people, and reflect the emotional and spiritual side of faith. Others deal with Kingdom issues like peace and justice. Immortal, invisible is focused solely on God. In this hymn, human beings are there to highlight his otherness. 'We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,/ And wither and perish—but naught changeth Thee.' All our human achievements are put firmly in their place; only God is eternal.

There is a wonderful prayer at the core of the hymn. Having framed a powerful statement of God's greatness, which in spite of its link to 1 Timothy has more in common with the Psalms, Smith brings it firmly back to the New Testament. In Exodus 34 we read of Moses, who would talk with God, and whose face would reflect a glory so bright that he would have to cover his face to prevent the Israelites from being blinded by it. In 2 Corinthians 3:13-15 Paul says, 'We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away... Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.' In other words, it was the people's lack of capacity that prevented them experiencing the glory of God for themselves. The hymn asks God to 'Take the veil from our faces, the veil from our heart.' Through Christ, each one of us has access to the throne of God himself. We need not be afraid, because we have become his children.

Through the mighty power of God, the Christ in the story has become Christ in our hearts. Smith wrote several books of poems and devotional works. His only other hymn to

remain popular is the evocative advent hymn 'Earth Was Waiting, Spent and Restless'. 'Immortal, invisible' is usually sung to St Deniol, based on a Welsh folk-tune and usually attributed to John Roberts (1822-1877).

Mark Woods

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### **A Funny**

A tiger was walking through the jungle one day and saw two men relaxing under a tree. One was reading a newspaper, and the other was working feverishly on a manual typewriter. The tiger leapt on the man with the newspaper, and ate him up.

The tiger did not bother the other man at all. (Are you ready this? It's bad – really bad!)

That's because any predator knows that reader's digest but writer's cramp

### **World Literacy Day**

With our continuing support with reading at St Cuthbert's and St Matthias Primary School it is right to flag up World Literacy day on 8 September.

Literacy is a cause for celebration since there are now close to four billion literate people in the world. However, literacy for all – children, youth and adults - is still an unaccomplished goal and an ever moving target. A combination of ambitious goals, insufficient and parallel efforts, inadequate resources and strategies, and continued underestimation of the magnitude and complexity of the task accounts for this unmet goal. Lessons learnt over recent decades show that meeting the goal of universal literacy calls not only for more effective efforts but also for renewed political will and for doing things differently at all levels - locally, nationally and internationally.

International Literacy Day, observed annually on 8 September, focuses attention on worldwide literacy needs. More than 780 million of the world's adults (nearly two-thirds of whom are women) do not know how to read or write, and between 94 and 115 million children lack access to education.

September 8 is an occasion to give hope to the millions of women, men and children who cannot read or write even their own names. International Literacy Day is a timely reminder to the world about the importance of literacy

for individuals, families, communities and whole societies.

### **World day of Peace**

Established by a United Nations resolution in 1981, the International Day of Peace was first celebrated September 1982. The International Day of Peace provides an opportunity for individuals, organizations and nations to create practical acts of Peace on a shared date. Use the International Day of Peace annually to highlight the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001 to 2010.

Peace day is celebrated to mark our individual and collective progress towards building Cultures of Peace, and serve as a reminder of our permanent commitment to Peace, above all interests and differences of any kind.

This year World Peace Day fall on 21 Sunday September when we will be offering prayers at both services.

For more information please go to;

[www.worldpeaceemerging.com](http://www.worldpeaceemerging.com)

[www.internationaldayofpeace.org](http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org)

### **Patronal Festival at St Mary's**

Our Patronal service will take place next Sunday, 14 September at 10.30am. The Reverend Rosalind Brown, Canon at Durham Cathedral will be joining us a guest preacher.

### **Harvest Festival**

We will be celebrating Harvest Festival on Sunday 5 October. On the two preceding Sundays there will be retiring collections for the flowers and fruit/vegetables which will be bought to decorate the church. In the week following the service the perishable items will be donated to the Earl's Court Community Project, based at St. Jude's Church

### **A privilege to pray**

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. It's a familiar line from that well-loved hymn, but it is also far more than that: it is a Christian truth that we should take to heart. Whether it's a quick prayer uttered in a time of crisis to getting down on your knees and giving heartfelt prayers of intercession, the simple truth is that we can carry everything to God – and he hears our prayers.

When you stop to think about it, it is incredible. We come to God in all kinds of mood – angry, sad, happy or placid – and he listens. David knew this when he was writing his Psalms, coming to God with all kinds of requests, petitions, praise and songs of joy. He was happy to talk to God at all times, in all situations and at every point, something from which many of us can learn.

For us as humans, that listening part is equally incredible. Praying all at once, God can cut through the babble to hear each and every request. It is a mystery of faith but one on which we can depend.

The Bible also assures us that God answers our prayers. Again, this can be difficult to accept because he doesn't necessarily give the response that we want. Of course it is silly to expect God to provide us with a flash new BMW because we have asked for it, but what about the people facing serious illness, relationship problems or other bad news? It is hard to give an earthly answer to this question. How can we, when we don't know God's plans?

This does not mean that we should not pray. And it does not mean that we should only pray in one manner. The idea of hands together, eyes closed, is burned into people's minds from the days of primary school assemblies and it still prevails. It is a dangerous fallacy. Likewise, we do not need to kneel on carefully knitted cushions, be in church or use elaborate and fancy language.

We have the opportunity to come to the King of kings just as we are. We can use our normal everyday language. We can sing songs, write poetry, draw pictures or just speak our prayers. But we must never forget that it is our privilege to be able to carry everything to God in prayer. After all, we have direct access to God thanks to Jesus – what a privilege indeed

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### **Church Water Rates**

As you may be aware, Water Companies are ignoring Churches' charitable status and starting to charge Churches for the amount of area (i.e. roofs and car parks) that will collect rainwater and discharge it into the sewer network. This

will effectively raise most Churches' water bills by hundreds if not thousands of pounds. There is an online government petition that you can register on. Please register and pass on to anyone else you think will sign it. It needs to have 15,000 signatures to be 'noticed' to allow for a change in policy. At the end of August the numbers on the petition is 34,145. Supporters include The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams; Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor; Prunella Scales; and Sir John Mortimer the writer. Deadline to sign up by: 06 December 2008. <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/ChurchWaterBills>

### **Thank You Letters.**

We have received thank you letters from monies raised at St. Mary's. The first is from the Lent collection for ALMA. We sent a cheque for £401.26. The funds raised by the appeal will be split evenly between the three Link dioceses for the building of primary schools in Angola, Niassa and Lebombo.

The second letter was from International Health Partners, one of the two charities to benefit from half the proceeds of the Summer Fair. They wanted 'to convey to the members of the church our sincere gratitude to them for the generous donation of £2,970 towards our work. Such tangible support is really encouraging.

The money will pay for specialist eye medicine to be sent to The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone.'

The final thank you came from Universal Beneficent Society, the second charity from the Summer Fair. They added: 'Many thanks indeed for continuing to support our work with isolated and impoverished older people by making a donation of £2,970 from your Summer Fair, which is very appreciated and was a fantastic surprise when we spoke this week. Please do pass on our thanks to all those involved in the fair'.

Copies of all the letters are on the notice board in the Narthex.

### **October Clarion**

The Sunday school will be contributing articles and work for the October Clarion.

**Contributions for the October Clarion should be sent in to the church office by 22 September**