

THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

MARCH 2010

Journeying through Lent

Our journey through Lent has once more begun and I'm delighted that a good number of people have signed up for the Lent study groups. The groups not only provide an opportunity to study together and learn from each other, but also to get to know one another a little better. We are a community of faith – a community which is open to all – and it is through community that we flourish and grow in our faith and so in our lives.

Traditionally in the first weeks of Lent we turn to look at our own faith, but in Holy Week our attention turns to Christ and the Passion of Holy Week as we draw nearer to the celebration of Easter Day. I am delighted that this year the Rev. Dr. John Hughes will lead us in our Holy Week worship and meditations from Palm Sunday to Easter Day on the theme *The Heart of Christ: The Heart of Our Faith*

Holy Week, as the name implies, is the holiest week of the Church's year and I hope that as many of us as possible will make every effort to take part in the Holy Week liturgy as John Hughes leads us through the week. The last three days of the week form a climax: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Saturday. Each day has its own particular liturgy, and among them the Easter liturgy, the Vigil, is the least well known.

On the second Sunday of Easter last year my sermon began with a description of that service. It is printed below, in order to give you a flavour of the service and to encourage you to attend.

I look forward to our continuing journey through Lent in our study groups, in our worship and especially in Holy Week and on Easter Day; may it be a time of many blessings.
Ginny Thomas

'Of all the services which we hold at St. Mary's between Palm Sunday and Easter Day – and there are ten of them – none is more dramatic or symbolic than the Easter Vigil, which takes place on Easter Saturday in the evening.

Sadly it is the least well attended of the services which mark the great Triduum, the three days leading up to Easter Day; this year there were fewer than two dozen people present. To go to church at 8.00pm on a Saturday evening is certainly un-Anglican; for most of us, church going is firmly fixed to Sunday mornings and rarely wavers from that fixed point in the week. But to have missed celebrating the Easter Vigil service is to have missed what the Bishop of Gloucester, Michael Perham, has described as the most powerful and life-enhancing liturgy of the year that lies at the very core of our life and spirituality.

The liturgy encapsulates the whole of the Easter story, God's salvation of the world, marking the transition from death to resurrection.

The service started outside the west door where in the growing darkness Dave made a fire. The Easter or Paschal candle was marked with a cross, an alpha and omega and the year, and with nails representing Christ's wounds. It was then lit from the fire.

Once it was alight, Ruth carried the candle into the dark church with the congregation following her. She stopped three times, holding the candle high, to sing 'The Light of Christ' to which we responded 'Thanks be to God'. When she reached the sanctuary, the congregation lit their own candles from the Easter candle and in the darkness broken by flickering candle light Ruth sang the Exultet: an ancient song of praise that celebrates the mighty act of God in the Passover of the Israelite people, and rejoices in the significance of Easter night and blesses the candle.

In the continuing darkness we listened to stories from the Old Testament with the account of the Exodus that prefigures God's greater act of deliverance in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This led to the Easter acclamation 'Alleluia, Christ is risen' and the congregation's response 'He is risen indeed'. Then all the lights came on and we sang the Gloria, the great hymn of praise.

This movement from darkness into light continued in the next part of the service when we all renewed our baptismal vows. This year we also had a baptism – a most holy time to be baptised – and as a reminder of our vows we were all sprinkled with water from the font. The service ended with one of the great Easter hymns and we were then ready to continue our celebrations in fitting style with a party in the north transept.

This year the service will be on Saturday 3 April.
Ginny Thomas

Lent Course 2010

It is not too late to join our Lent courses. Three groups are meeting on:
Tuesday afternoons 2.30pm
Wednesday mornings 10.30am
Thursday evenings 8.00pm
Please speak to Ginny or Ruth for further information.

Lent Talks at St. Luke's Church, Sydney Street, SW3

An excellent series of Lent talks is being held at St. Luke's, Sydney Street this year. The evenings begin at 7.00pm with drinks, the talks with questions follow at 7.15pm and there is supper (optional) at 8.00pm. If you would like to attend the supper (cost £5) please ring St. Luke's Parish Office: 020 73517365.

Tuesday 2 March: The Creation

The Rev. Canon Professor Ben Quash,
Professor of Christianity and the Arts at King's College, London

Tuesday 9 March: The Miracles

The Very Rev. Dr. Jeffrey John, Dean of St. Alban's Abbey

Thursday 18 March: The Parables

Dr. Jane Williams, Visiting Lecturer at King's College London and Lecturer at St. Paul's Theological College

Thursday 25 March: Heaven and Hell

Rev. Robert Thompson Lead Chaplain at the Royal Brompton & Harefield Hospital

On retreat

Before I set off for my recent retreat a friend reminded me that retreats are all about 'being'. On the second evening, as I was sitting in the tiny Oratory in my hut, and watching the full moon come up behind the bare trees, my thoughts turned to 'being'.

The moon indicated a kind of 'I am-ness': it just 'is' and does what it is there to do. Watching it, the logical next thought was 'I am who I am'. Like the moon, I am, here, sitting quietly, watching. It is me, the person who I am, with my life history. I am who I am because of how I think and feel and act, but also because of what others have given to me and taken from me, what I have become and have gradually come to accept as 'OK'.

'I am who I am' is the usual translation of Yahweh, the strange name God gave as an answer to Moses when he asked who this One God was. To give such a non-descript answer can in a way be a cop-out: don't ask. A more spiritual stance is that as 'being', God is the basis of all being. Hence every human being is a 'I am who I am', consciously or not. As human beings and co-creators with God, we create each other's humanness, and in essence, as human beings we become divine, and the divine becomes human.

I let a few of the other 'I am' sayings in St John's gospel go through my mind: I am... the light, the bread of life, the vine, the resurrection, etc. Each of these seems to be a further stage in Jesus' self-awareness of his own 'I am who I am'. In the same way each of us has regularly and at crucial points in our lives, to explain to ourselves mainly, but eventually to others too,

what our 'I am-ness' is about, maybe not necessarily using these words.

The Desert Fathers and Mothers – those hermit monks and nuns of the 4th century in Egypt – have left behind a collection of Sayings that are increasingly well known. One of them, 'Go into your cell and your cell will teach you everything' is useful advice for a retreat, i.e. stay put, do not get distracted, stick it out when the going gets tough.

One of Jesus' sayings is 'I am the gate' (John 10:9). It suddenly struck me that to get to my hut from the road I had to go through four wooden gates, each one smaller than the earlier. Staying in the hut brought me to think more closely and directly about 'being' and about 'I am', and the gates suddenly had a much wider meaning than simply keeping people and sheep out.

At which of the gates am I? The outermost or the innermost, nearest the 'world' with its demands, or nearest the 'cell' with its silence? Or somewhere in between? How open are my gates to let in new ideas, truths, questions? What do I keep in or out in terms of forgiveness, forgetting, challenges? What sort of gate am I for myself and for others? What sort of gatekeeper am I to myself and what gates do I open or close for myself, and for others? How willing am I to be challenged and to respond to the challenges? Who am I when I come to a gate? Am I still confident that I am who I am, or indeed am I who I am or have the potential to be when I enter the last 'narrow gate' before I am willing to hear God's still small voice?

These and other questions posed themselves. Like Moses, challenging God to reveal himself and being given a puzzle instead, these questions may never have clear answers. Maybe, as soon as one answer presents itself, other questions come up, or some questions change. However, the retreat (and silence) enabled the questions being presented, asked, and turned over. Back in SW10, and after closing the largest gate behind me for another year, I am more keenly aware of my 'I am-ness', the moon, the wind, God, banks of snowdrops, the universe, and indeed everything. I AM is

everywhere, and retreats can be wonderful times to discover new aspects of it.

Verena Tschudin

UPCOMING DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 7 March:

12.00 PCC meeting to approve accounts

12.30pm Parish Lunch

Sunday 14 March: Mothering Sunday

10.30: All Age Worship

Wednesday 24 March:

Feast of the Annunciation

7.00pm Eucharist

Sunday 28 March: Palm Sunday

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES 2010

Led by The Revd Dr John Hughes

Chaplain of Jesus College, Cambridge

The Heart of Christ: The Heart of Our Faith

Palm Sunday 28 March

8.00am Said Eucharist

10.30am Sung Parish Eucharist with

Procession of Palms

Is love powerful?

Monday 29 March

7.00pm Said Eucharist

Is love reasonable?

Tuesday 30 March

12 noon Said Eucharist

Does love demand sacrifice?

Wednesday 31 March

7.00pm Said Eucharist

Love, abandonment and obedience

Maundy Thursday 1 April

7.30pm Sung Eucharist of the Last Supper

Vigil until midnight

The gift of love

Good Friday 2 April

10.30am Informal Service for Children and Adults

Noon – 3.00pm: Prayer and reflection on

The Seven Last Words of Christ

Easter Eve Saturday 3 April

8.00pm Easter Vigil and Lighting of the Paschal Candle

Easter Day Sunday 4 April

8.00am Said Eucharist

10.30am Sung Parish Eucharist

Dying and Living

Summer Fair: Saturday 20 June

Rev. Dr. John Hughes and Holy Week

Ruth and Ginny asked me to write a few words to introduce myself as your Holy Week preacher this year, so here goes:

I grew up in a sleepy village outside Exeter and went to school by the seaside in Devon. Not a church-goer as a child, I discovered faith in my late teens and decided to be confirmed. By the time I left school I already had the first stirrings of a vocation and with this in mind, I chose to read theology at Cambridge. This is where Ruth and I first met, when she was across the road training for ministry at Westcott House and we both studied under Janet Soskice, whose book *Sisters of Sinai* was the Radio 4 book of the week recently.

On graduating I moved to Oxford to do a Master's in political theology and ethics and was accepted to train for ordination. I returned to Cambridge for my training, which I combined with a PhD on theologies of work, supervised by Catherine Pickstock of the 'Radical Orthodoxy' movement. The thesis looked particularly at the overlap between religious and secular forms of socialism in Marx, Ruskin, William Morris, Eric Gill and others, and has been published as *The End of Work*. During training I also spent two months in India studying other religions and the role of religion in Indian society.

I was ordained in 2005 and returned to Exeter as a curate in the parish of St David with St Michael and All Angels, where I spent a very happy four years. The parish was lively with a lot going on: children and young people's groups, a soup evening for homeless people, two church schools, a sixth form college, a prison and a university. The two churches encompassed different traditions from the modern central style of the parish church to the traditional Anglo-Catholic style of the daughter church. While in Exeter I did some ethics teaching at the medical school and finally learnt to drive, so I could explore the delightful villages of Devon on my days-off. Just before leaving Exeter I went out to Kenya for a month to teach in a seminary there, which was an interesting, if somewhat solitary experience.

At Easter I returned to Cambridge to become Chaplain of my old college, Jesus. Chaplaincy

has different challenges from parish life, but lots of energy and excitement about it too. I teach a bit for the philosophy and doctrine papers, take the round of services in our Chapel, try and get to know the students through being around College and offering hospitality, and pick up the pieces when things go wrong. When I get spare time I enjoy travelling (particularly Southern Europe), swimming, art and music (classical and popular).

One of the unusual things about chaplaincy is that I find myself free at the busiest times of the Church's year, Christmas and Easter, so I was very happy to accept Ginny and Ruth's invitation to come and join you for Holy Week.
John Hughes

Women's World Day of Prayer

You are invited to the International Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP), which takes place at St. Augustine's Church, Queen's Gate, 11.00am on Friday 5 March.

This year's service has been prepared by Christian women from Cameroon. They have chosen the theme 'Let everything that has breath praise God'.

The service lasts approximately one hour and is followed by light refreshments

Thursday Lunch Club

On **Thursday 11 March** we have a Eucharist at 11.45am followed by the popular Thursday Lunch club at 12.30pm.

Paul Marriot-Clarke and Jayna Mistry from Metro Bank will be talking about their experience of the local community and the first weeks of setting up a community bank. If you would like to attend, please put your name on the sign up sheet at the back of the church.

Where do you come from?

Those attending the Thursday lunch on 11 February were entertained by the choir from the St Cuthbert's and St Matthias' Primary School, and by a talk by Stephen Boatright, the Headmaster. This is the school at which members of our congregation and their friends help the children to learn to read.

Fourteen students from the school sang some lovely pieces in various languages, without music in front of them, and impressed us by the quality of their singing. More than 50 people then had lunch, the children enjoying pizzas, salad and choc ices. The members of St Mary's congregation had soup, cheese, pâté and fruit, with choc ices available as well.

In a fascinating talk, Stephen Boatright explained that the school was founded in 1874 as St Matthias' church choir school for boys. The buildings were completed in 1899, and several additions were built thereafter, including the children's centre completed last year. Bombing in the 1939–45 war destroyed the church. The school has 219 pupils, almost at maximum capacity, and 40 staff. Its budget, largely funded by the Government with help from the Church of England and others, is currently £1.4m. Sixty percent of the children are Muslim, with the same proportion speaking Arabic as their first language; 90% have English as an additional language; 37 home languages are represented in the school; and 15% of the students are from refugee families.

Stephen emphasised that this international spread has very positive aspects to it. The children become at least bilingual, which often strengthens learning capability. With hardship common in their backgrounds and student turnover sometimes as high as 30% from one year to the next, the culture tends to accept trauma and change in matter of fact ways. The school's strong Christian values of hospitality and welcome aim for happiness, with emphasis on enjoyment as a key part of education. 'WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?' is a common friendly question asked around the school, with much interest in the answers.

The school seeks to help the children to look to the world outside, for instance abroad with regular links with a Spanish school, and locally singing in the Royal Albert Hall for the world wildlife cause, and with their art work decorating the entrance to the Earls Court Underground station. The school also works hard to help the children's inner character and spiritual development. There is much emphasis on 'small things' such as politeness and good manners. And the rate of academic

improvement achieved by the school in most subjects is up to or ahead of the national average.

Stephen concluded with warm thanks to St Mary's for the reading support provided to the children. The value of one-to-one time with a child unfamiliar with the English language cannot be over emphasised. 'You really make a difference'.

Arthur Tait

Environmentalist of the Year' Award to ex-curate Geoff Davies

A recent release to the South African media contained the following:

The Nick Steele Memorial Award: SAB Environmentalist of the Year

Geoff Davies, founder and executive director of the South African Faith Communities' Environment Institute

The award is given in honour of the late legendary game ranger Nick Steele. Bishop Geoffrey Davies is the executive director and founder of SAFCEI (South African Faith Communities' Environment Institute). Known affectionately as SA's 'green bishop', Geoff passionately believes that human beings cannot live separated from nature, nor see nature as an object to be exploited. For members of AFCEI, who come from all religious walks of life, the overriding priority is the health of the planet, and for communities to take on their environmental responsibilities. The body has actively established partnerships between faith communities and with environmental bodies. He was praised by the judges for bridging the gap between the environment and the spiritual life of people.

Geoff was an Assistant Curate (or 'Curate' as the position was usually known) at St Mary's in the early 1970s before moving to Serowe in Botswana and subsequently being appointed a Bishop in South Africa.

Unfortunately the organisation he heads has just run into financial difficulties, as he explains:

Dear Friends

I have not kept you up to date with SAFCEI's funding crisis as I kept thinking we would just make it. The irony is that having received the SAB

Environmentalist of the Year Award, SAFCEI right now has no funds!

The reason for our dilemma is that Kerkinactie had agreed to support us for three years at 30 000 Euros a year, but on joining ICCO they have had administrative problems. They keep assuring us that the third instalment will come, but it has not yet arrived. Bread for the World are promising to fund us but their Board deferred their decision from November to March and Christian Aid had to halve their support in 2009 because of the recession. I therefore write to ask if you can find funding for SAFCEI, even if for this month of January. We need R30 000.00 to carry us over.

*With all very best wishes to you,
Bishop Geoff*

If anyone feels moved to respond to this appeal personally, they are welcome to make a donation to St Mary's (Gift Aided if possible) with a suggestion that its onward transmission to SAFCEI would be a desirable outcome. Please contact the Gift Aid Secretary (020 8571-0737) if you would like to do this.
John Barker

Communicant Attendance

Members of the congregation sometimes compare views as time passes about the levels of attendance at St Mary's services and other activities.

Researching for the small book about St Mary's some years ago, I found that the only statistical evidence throughout its history to show the levels of attendance was the Register showing the number of people receiving communion. I gave a 'health warning' that the numbers recorded should not be taken too precisely because the accuracy of the daily totals entered in the Register could be questioned, as could my additions. However the figures showed trends with some conviction.

It is good to note that under Ginny's leadership, and with help now from Ruth, communicant attendance at St Mary's has held up well in recent years and is trending slightly upwards. Under Gerald Beauchamp's leadership the levels of communicant attendance rose from the low 4,000s to the high 4,000s, and to 4,983 in 2003, his last full year. Since then the communicant attendance levels have held firm

and in two of the last three years have exceeded 5,000 in 2009, reaching the highest level since 1985, when it was 5,190.

Overall attendance levels recorded recently in the Register, events such as weddings, baptisms and funerals are typically about twice the level of communicants, at total attendances recorded in 2009 about 10,150, for instance.

If anyone wants more information about attendance levels, both communicant and other, please contact me.

Arthur Tait

In a Foreign Land

In the midst of all our business and rush, our road sweepers move slowly along, making our roads and pavements leaf and litter free. It is a lonely job and so often they are in a foreign land.

Ivan had been on our road for sometime. We eventually smiled at each other and then in due English fashion would comment on the weather. And so our friendship began. I learnt about his family in the Ukraine and he would sometimes meet some of my family. One day he asked if I could teach him English. I could not do that but suggested he could call in his lunchtime some days and we could just talk if that would be a help.

I learnt that he was a Doctor but had come here to earn enough to send his eldest daughter, Victoria, to train as a dentist. He shared a room with several others from the Ukraine and seldom went out. He did admit that was mainly because he was too tired. He eventually went home about five years ago. We have kept in touch ever since. He says he has now forgotten most of his English, but his daughters help him. Victoria has now trained and is working as a dentist like her mother. She has ambitions to train as an orthodontist. Her sister Olga is at University in Kiev. I always receive a parcel at Christmas, which they celebrate on 7 January as they are Greek Catholics. We now correspond by e-mail and the last one I received had two photos attached of their family celebrating Christmas.

Margaret Stephenson

Green Group Top Tip

Even in early March it is not too early to sow salad vegetables indoors on a warm window sill. This year I shall definitely be planting Rocket again after growing pots of it for the Big Lunch last year. Sow it in a moist multipurpose compost, cover lightly with more compost and if your pot is small enough, cover it with a clear polythene bag until the seeds have germinated. Sow it in early March and you should be able to enjoy it in the early summer. Sow another pot two weeks later.

At harvest time just snip off a few leaves at a time and the plants will sprout again, on and on right through the summer into late autumn and provide more salad than the cost of the seeds. St Mary's will not be hosting a Big Lunch this year, but look out for one in your neighbourhood and join in and maybe get to know your neighbours rather better.

Saturday 13 March 7.30pm
St James's, Piccadilly W1J 9LL

Miserere

Seasonal sacred music from the 16th, 17th & 20th centuries

Allegri – Miserere

Palestrina – Stabat Mater

Gesualdo – O vos omnes & Ave Regina coelorum

Victoria – Super flumina Babylonis

Martin – Mass for double choir

Bax – Mater ora filium

Nonsuch Singers

Lynda Sayce *lute*

Graham Caldbeck *conductor*

Tickets: £15 (£12 concessions) available at the door

Tube: Piccadilly or Green Park
www.nonsuchsingers.com

What's on in the natural world?

Lent has started, the lengthening of the days is already apparent and the natural world is waking. Already the first crocuses have appeared in the more protected areas of our parks and gardens. Another sign of the emergence of spring is the departure from the Thames of the migratory birds that come to winter in its sheltered waters. I shall miss particularly the teal, our smallest duck. The

drake is easily recognised by its chestnut head, green eye patch and lovely speckled breast. They are abundant on the Thames between Putney and Hammersmith during the winter months. As spring approaches, however, I shall be on the lookout for the elaborate mating rituals of the grey heron, which involve lots of hopping, skipping, flapping and snapping and the occasional blood-curdling cry.

You do not have to go far from St Mary's for an opportunity to see this exciting performance. Battersea Park is home to one of the largest heronries in London and for the first two weekends in March, RSPB guides will be on hand to help visitors to get a good view of their courtship rituals. Guides will be there on 6, 7, 13 and 14 March between 10.30am and 4.00pm. For those who would enjoy a longer walk there is another heronry in the local nature reserve by the Thames on the tow path half way between Hammersmith Bridge and Barnes. This is not to be confused with the London Wetlands Centre, which is downstream from Hammersmith. The Leg of Mutton near Barnes is just a small local reserve. It is free to enter, there a few benches with good views of the large pond, and dogs on leads are permitted. During the week there are fewer people and also many other birds to enjoy, as well as the herons and a good walk on the tow path.

Leo Fraser-Mackenzie

Years mind

Ivy Cooling

Olive Smith

Rhoda Bolton-Dignam

John Gairdner

Christie Parkinson

Maximilian Heyer

Dorothy Buss

Florence Lidderdale

Ivor Howlett

Elizabeth Ledochowska

Michael Wilson

Aida Gowan

Simon Perks

Vera Owen

Hugh Pringle

Dorothy Hale

Contributions for the April Clarion should be sent in to the church office by 22 March 2010.