

THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

rooted in faith • open in thought • reaching out in service

February 2015

Ash Wednesday and Lent

On Ash Wednesday we place ashes on the foreheads of Christians as we say, 'Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return'. This sounds like the ultimate reductionist view: Humanity is nothing but dust. There is nothing pretty about dust. To call someone dust in any other context would be fighting words. Don't call me dirt.

Ash Wednesday reminds us of our creation. Genesis 2, the second creation story, has: In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground... then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being. First, dust is the material of a beloved creation. We cannot and must not despise this loving work. Remember that you are dust. You are not worth much as a commodity, but you are loved, beloved, shaped, moulded, caressed, nurtured by the Loving God who made the stars and the moon, all the creatures of this world.

Second, this day reminds us of our mortality. 'Dust you are and to dust you shall return'. We are reminded of the words from the burial office, 'We commit this body to its final resting place, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'.

It is not morbid to think about death; it is the reality we all face. Death is the great equalizer. In death there are no presidents of corporations, no deans of universities, no lowly janitors, no prisoners, no homeless people, nor rich nor poor. All of us are in the hands of the loving God; that's it. The trinkets of honour and position are dust and ashes. When we remember, to dust you shall return, we

remember that we are made for more than trinkets or shame. We are made for life with God - now and forever.

'And to dust you shall return'. Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are mortal, and in so doing confronts us with a simple question: We have only one life. How do we want to spend it? Third, when we understand how precious we are to the One who created us from dust, and when we understand that we are made not just for this life but for eternity with God, then we can be free. Freedom comes from knowing who we are and where we are going. We are free from being affected by other people's judgment of us.

We are human beings, dust, beloved of God; we, each one of us, are of ultimate worth. We are created for eternity! What is someone's criticism compared to that? We are free of others' judgment.

We spend so much energy on things that don't matter: how we look, what people think of us, what we have or what others have, if we will get a promotion, whose sports team is going to win. We spend so much energy on things that don't matter.

This is why Lent is a period of self-examination and penance. We need to stop and look at our lives, remember what we are made of, remember where we are going, and let go of all those things that don't really matter, all those things that get in the way of loving God, loving others, and being loved by God and by others. Remember, you are nothing but dust: Precious dust, moulded and formed in the womb by a loving God, precious, precious and beloved are you.

Remember, you are nothing but dust, and to dust shall you return: Unique and precious, you are created for eternity.

Remember, you are nothing but dust: And that makes you free, free from human ambition, free from prideful denial, free from fear, free at last! Remember, Dust you are, and as dust you are loved and free.

Adapted from: Rev. Ward B. Ewing, from *The Freedom of Being Dust*. From: http://www.farsinet.com/easter/ash_wednesday.html

Prayer for the interregnum

God of love and joy and peace,
strengthen our rootedness in faith,
kindle our openness in thought
and renew our reaching out in service
as we discern the future leadership of the
parish, and guide us individually and together
in the decisions to be made,
through Jesus Christ. Amen

Interregnum Update

The Parish Representatives (Ann Mulcare and Leo Fraser-Mackenzie) had a useful meeting with Bishop Paul and Sir Laurie Magnus, our joint patrons, at the being of January. Following on from that meeting, further candidates are to be presented and interviews are scheduled for late January and early February.

Next Thursday Lunch

The next Thursday Lunch will be on Thursday 12 at 12.30pm. This month's speaker is Mrs June Williams, the former Mayoress RBKC. She will talk about being a Mayoress. If you would like to attend, please put your name on the sign-up sheet at the back of the church or call the Parish Office.

Upcoming Dates for your Diary



February

Sunday 1, 12.30pm, Parish Lunch,
Thursday 12, 12.30pm, Thursday Lunch,

March

Sunday 1, 12.30, Parish Lunch
Thursday 12 12.30pm, Thursday Lunch
Sunday 15, Mothering Sunday, All Age Worship
Sunday 29, Palm Sunday
Holy Week
Monday 30, Eucharist 7.30pm,
Tuesday 31, Eucharist, 12 noon

April

Wednesday 1, Eucharist, 7.00pm
Thursday 2, Maundy Thursday
10.30am, Blessing of oils at St Paul's Cathedral
7.30pm, Sung Eucharist followed by Vigil
Friday 3, Good Friday
Services to be announced
Saturday 4, Easter Eve
8.00pm, Vigil Service, 8.00pm
Sunday 5, Easter Day
8.00am, Said Eucharist
Sunday 12, 12.30pm, Parish Lunch,
Saturday 20 June, Summer Fair



Ash Wednesday 18 February

Our Ash Wednesday service is at 7.00pm.

Advent and Lent Groups

The Formation Group had planned and led the Advent Discussion Groups last year on the theme of the three aims of the parish: *rooted in faith, open in thought and reaching out in service*. Kind volunteers took notes at each of the meetings and these have been collated and are now being prepared for publication in the March *Clarion* and for general information, and hopefully for use and guidance for a new vicar. The same group has planned the Lent groups; see details below.

Lent Course

In our Lent course this year we are doing something different. Using the film *Chocolat* as its starting point, a small book by Hilary Brand explores questions about God, the world, and what it means to be as truly human as God intended. *Christ and the Chocolaterie* is described by its publishers as an 'original,

innovative and lively Lent course based on the story and characters of the Oscar nominated *Chocolat* from the bestselling novel by Joanne Harris'.

Christ and the Chocolaterie opens up the themes of the life changing opportunities that Lent presents to Christians through a better understanding and application of the Bible. It explores issues around giving up and the prelude to change, and the power of a gift to initiate change. It looks at how getting real and growing up are also involved in real life change. This course has been widely used since it was first published in 2002, and has been republished five times, most recently in 2013. The Author has written novels for children and teenagers and was co-author of *A Sceptic's Guide to Reading the Bible*, published by the Bible Reading Fellowship.

We will pursue our study of the film in three groups: two on Sundays after the 1030am service and one during the week. The groups will each meet on four occasions. Look out for full details on the sign-up sheets at the back of church.

The course works best if you have seen the whole film before the study groups start. There will be an opportunity to see the film on Shrove Tuesday, 17 February, in church. Look out for full details and sign-up on the sheet in church.

PCC Report

The PCC met at the end of January. We heard an oral update from the Parish Representatives about the search for a new Vicar, and then went on to approve a working budget for 2015. This, and outline budgets for future years, show that expenditure will exceed income this year and in the next few years. As part of the process of setting the budget, we also approved hall and other letting fees for 2015, as well as charges for music at weddings and other additional services. Our financial position and the actions we need to take to improve it will be considered again at the PCC's 'Away-day' meeting in early February.

There were two other significant items on the agenda. Firstly, there was the approval of new terms of reference for the Charities

Committee. These terms had been drafted by the Charities Committee and establish a clear framework for their activities, and how we allocate funds for the Charities Pot. Secondly, the Council considered in detail the professional advice received in respect of the proposal to install radio telecom equipment in the tower, covering legal, valuation and building matters. We also discussed the fact that radio telecommunication may contain adult or other material that some people would find offensive. However, as the telecom companies operating the equipment through the licence and sub licences, are reputable (NET, Vodafone and O2) and such items are not the purpose of the businesses, it was felt that we could live with this. We noted that the Church Commissioners have a statement about pornography as part of their ethical investment policy to set limits to the proportion of revenues a company could earn from it before investment in it would be prohibited. The matter of how best to deal with replacement of the tower windows at the end of the 20-year contract has still to be determined, but the PCC has now approved the project. This will mean that, subject to completion of all the necessary documentation, at some point in the coming weeks, scaffolding will go up and work will be undertaken to install the equipment and new GRP windows in the tower, to upgrade the ladder access and to lay in appropriate supplies of electricity. In return, the PCC will receive an annual rental of £14,300. Finally, the PCC reviewed attendances at services over the Christmas period, as well as the number of charity Carol events that we had hosted for the first time, and heard about plans for Lent study.
Leo Fraser-Mackenzie



Women's World Day of Prayer, 6 March

The Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP) is an interdenominational worldwide movement of Christian women and in spite

of its name, men are also included, who come together to observe a shared Day of Prayer on the first Friday of March each year since 1919. The Day of Prayer begins on the International Date Line in Tonga and as the world rotates, so

the prayers and praises of the International Order of Service rise from east to west in more than 170 countries around the world until it ends some 36 hours later in Samoa.

You are cordially invited to join in this year's international Women's World Day of Prayer on Friday 6 March at 11 a.m. at the Kensington United Reformed Church, Allen Street, W8, which is South of Kensington High Street.

The 2015 service has been prepared by Christian women of The Bahamas. They have chosen the theme 'Jesus said to them: Do you know what I have done to you?' The service lasts for approximately one hour and is followed by light refreshments.

The mayor of Kensington and Chelsea will be in attendance and also The High Commissioner of The Bahamas. This year for the first time two men from our congregation are playing a role in the service. I will not tell you who is portraying Jesus and Peter but you will soon find out when you come to the service.

Anne Swift

We raised £7,500 for the 2014 Charitable Pot

It is estimated that last year we raised the excellent amount of £7,464 for St. Mary's charitable giving programme, which is the highest figure we have achieved since funding from the Redcliffe Gardens Trust for our Charitable Pot came to an end. The exact amount cannot be confirmed until the church accounts are finalised. The money will be distributed to the charities approved by the PCC for 2014, with the allocations provisionally estimated to be:

St. Luke's Redcliffe Gardens FoodBank:
£2,370

Medic Malawi: £2,370

Together for Sudan; The Bishop Mubarak Fund: £250

Children of Sudan: £250

The Upper Room, St. Saviour's UR4

Driving Project: £750

First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY):
£750

Sponsorship of Sunday School's Alex:
£488

2014 Bishop's Lent Appeal: £245

We now have the task of refilling the Charitable Pot so that we can make meaningful donations to the charities that the PCC has approved for support during 2015. The Charity Committee thanks everyone who responded to our appeal for suitable charities last autumn. We had a difficult time assessing all the excellent proposals we received. Every charity put forward was worthy of support and we hope you will not be too disappointed if your charity was not selected. We had to be very rigorous in testing all of them against this year's criteria, which included the objectives set out in the Diocese of London's Capital Vision 2020.

The charities for which we shall be raising money during 2015 are:

Medic Malawi as a principal charity; this will be supported for a second year.

www.medicmalawi.org

The new charities are:

Arts4Dementia (A4D)

This is our new principal charity and will therefore also be supported from our 2016 Charitable Pot. A4D is a new charity that uses the arts to re-energise and inspire people with memory loss. Helping people with a long term mental illness is a specific aim of Capital Vision 2020. A4D helps to develop activities and facilitate creative projects at arts venues. The charity is run from the Putney house of its founder and unsalaried Chief Executive and our funds will be used for a project in our local area. www.arts4dementia.org.uk

Iraqi Christians in Need

This charity works to address the immediate and urgent need of Iraqi Christians of all denominations who have lost their homes and livelihood and have ended up as refugees in neighbouring countries or displaced within Iraq. Its aim is to cover their needs, which could be financial, emotional, medical or educational. By supporting the charity we will be able to supplement our prayers for our fellow Christians in a practical way.

www.icin.org.uk

Fulham Good Neighbours

This is a long-established local charity, working towards a community where

neighbours look out for each other and offer assistance when it is needed. The charity aims to provide practical help to overcome isolation and loneliness and enable elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to live independently and contribute to society. Helping isolated elderly people is another specific Vision 2020 objective. The charity's area of benefit is in the Diocese. The charity makes no charge for its services.

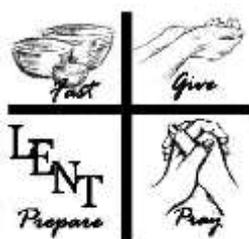
www.fulhamgoodneighbours.org

The Sunday School's Alex. We will continue to support him via Compassion UK.

The Bishop's Lent Appeal. St. Mary's will be responding with a donation of £200.

The **Lent Retiring Collections** are a very important source of revenue for St Mary's Charitable Pot and this year the Charity Committee is appealing to the Congregation to respond in a different way. Instead of giving ad hoc amounts as we usually do, we are asking you to consider donating a sum each week that is equal in value to what you have given up for Lent. Perhaps you give up chocolate, or buy one less cup of coffee a day or drink one less bottle of wine a week? It doesn't matter what it is; we shall be most grateful, however large or small the amount. We realise that this is a big ask and very much hope you will respond generously. The Sunday School will be joining in with this appeal, but the children will each be putting their money in a special jam jar rather than on the collection plate at the end of the service.

Anthony Williams, on behalf of the Charity Committee



Giving in Lent

The Charities Committee has challenged us to contribute generously during Lent to our Charitable Pot. This

article reflects and responds to the discussions that went on around the challenge faced by the Charities Committee to maintain the level of charitable giving following the loss of the ground rent from 11 Redcliffe Gardens. It is set

out as a discussion between a Learner and a Mentor because it touches matters where, perhaps, the presence of a Mentor may have brought out other points or taken us to a different conclusion. If any teacher feels that points need to be corrected, correspondence via the Editor is welcome.

Learner : How about focussing on giving during Lent. Lent is a time for giving, is it not?

Mentor. Good idea. The Three Pillars of Lent are traditionally Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving
Learner: Thinking of giving, could we relate our challenge somehow to giving up? Why do we give up things in Lent anyway?

Mentor: Lent traditions reflect the period when Jesus went in to the wilderness. He faced down three temptations while he was there. You can focus on the temptations that Jesus faced during this period, but another way of looking at it is to see that in the wilderness Jesus shows us how to serve God more fully. Jesus survived his experience in the wilderness, both the physical and spiritual dangers and emerged strong enough to serve God in a way that ultimately led to the Cross. We can perhaps all too easily overlook this aspect of the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness: that it led to a profound change in the life of Jesus, and the start of his ministry.

Learner: So, if change is so important in Lent why the focus on Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving?

Mentor: We probably all recognise that it can be very difficult to make fundamental and lasting changes in our lives and there are many routes to doing it. Withdrawing to a quiet space away from the pressures of day to day life is a good start and probably makes it easier to see and understand fundamental issues in a different light, by stripping them down to bare essentials. Fasting and abstinence develop self-discipline and are traditionally said to heighten spiritual awareness. For me, it is in the life of the spirit that change can be supported and wildernesses survived.

Learner: That is quite dense, but I think I get the drift, and it puts the importance of prayer and fasting and dealing with temptations in a new perspective for me. I suppose that the emphasis on change also means that giving up something

for the 40 days of Lent is only half the story. The real benefit is if the period of abstinence from say, chocolate, has helped us into a new way of looking at it/consuming it.

Mentor: Yes that is a good way of looking at it, but be realistic too, and work on achieving the abstinence as the first step in the change process. We may fall by the way but hopefully we do not give up and each Lent presents another opportunity to work on some aspect of how we live out our Christian faith.

Learner: How does almsgiving fit in?

Mentor: We began our journey with God at our baptism when we were also charged with the responsibility of showing Christ's Love to the world. Lent is a time when we focus on the temptations of life that keep us apart from God and focus on the changes that we need to make, and stick to, in order to live out lives in the way that Jesus taught us: works of charity and the promotion of justice are integral to the Christian way of Life. Put it another way: we cannot love God and ignore the pain, hunger and distress of fellow human beings. Generous giving in Lent is a sign of how we understand our life in Christ. As St Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver'.

Leo Fraser-Mackenzie

Common Fund 2014

This month we received the following letter from The Ven Stephan Welch, Archdeacon of Middlesex.

'Dear Friends

The I want to write to you before the New Year gets any older in order to share some very good news indeed. By the year's end the Middlesex Archdeaconry (Kensington Episcopal Area) had raised 99.35% of its Common Fund commitment for the year! This is an outstanding achievement and one for which I am profoundly grateful. A not insignificant part of this success is down to Mary Spredbur your Area Finance Adviser, to our Area Deans, Deanery Treasurers and others responsible for developing Common Fund policies in our six

Deaneries. We have got a system of vigilant governance within the Area that is bearing fruit. Fundamentally, this word of thanks goes to every member of every church who is contributing to the life and work of this Diocese in a responsible, generous and planned stewardship fashion.

Mary Spredbury, very modestly, says that the result owes something to luck in that 2014 has been a year free from major downturns in the fortunes of significant parishes. I understand that point of view but am convinced our result does reflect the serious intent we share to properly resource the life and work of the church. The proof for that will be in the pudding when we look at our result for 2015 this time next year!

The challenge remains for us as an Archdeaconry to cover our full cost to the Diocese. The Area Finance Group continues to think about how to make further progress on this. Please share my expression of gratitude as widely as you can with the members of your congregation'.



Earl's Court Community Project

The Christmas Day sponsored lunch for the ECCP was a great success. We collected over £300, which purchased several turkeys and the remaining money covered all the other costs for the day. They fed 170 guests and helpers over three days. A very big thank you to everyone who contributed.

Margarete Geier

Visions and knowledge

In the December/January Clarion Hugh Beach addressed the practice of contemplation, wondering if it is 'talking to myself'. In this article he puts visions and mysticism in contemplation under the microscope.

It has always been the Christian teaching that we can have the knowledge of God by a natural process of reasoning (natural theology) and through the inspired works of scripture, above all those purporting to convey the words and works of Jesus (revealed religion). Beyond these two kinds of knowledge there is a third by which God can be directly known and experienced. This is recognised by the person concerned as being utterly different and more real than all their previous experience of the knowledge and love of God. It is felt as taking place at a deeper level of the personality than that on which the normal processes of thought and will take place; something wholly distinct from the reasoning mind. While the experience is completely uncommunicable it brings absolute certainty to the mind of the recipient. This is traditional mystical theology in its purest form. (David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition*, Burns and Oates, 1961, pp. 2-3). The term 'mystical' derives from the title of a short treatise called *Theologia Mystica* (literally the secret knowledge of God), which purported to have been written by Dionysius [Denis] the Areopagite, the disciple of Paul in Acts 17:34. It was probably written by a Syrian monk, living several hundred years later, who is now known as 'pseudo-Denis'. This treatise was translated by an English author (whose name is unknown) writing in the latter half of the fourteenth century and became the basis for his book *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Together these books were highly influential in founding a 'Dionysian tradition' that included such authors as Walter Hilton (1340-1396), St John of the Cross

(1542-1591), Augustine Baker (1575-1641) and William Law (1686-1761).

God, according to pseudo-Denis, is incomprehensible, beyond our language and imagination, beyond anything we can describe. The only language appropriate to address God is silence. Only in silence can we enter into the great mystery we call 'God'. The vast realms of silence where God dwells mean that God is much more than a bigger version of Abraham or Moses. God is beyond being, beyond our imagination, beyond the limits of our speech. If you want to talk to God, pseudo-Denis says, don't say anything at all. God will listen. Too often our prayers are projections of our own needs and desires and we give God little room to enter into the conversation. Talking all the time to God without ever listening is like a phone conversation with constant static, it is deafening to God. Silence is a language God can speak without being constantly interrupted because God is a mystery of incomprehensible love, and love speaks for itself. If we could really be attentive to the mystery of God in our lives we would realise that God is both beyond our thoughts and imaginations (though these can bring us closer to God) and very near to us. Augustine, in his *Confessions* and speaking to God says: 'But you were more inward than my inmost self and superior to my highest being.' (*Confessions of Saint Augustine*, 3.6.11). God is a mystery of silence and intimacy. God is incomprehensible and ineffable, far beyond our wildest imaginations, yet nearer to each of us than we are to ourselves. (Ilia Delio *The Humility of God*, Franciscan Media, 2005, pp 16-17).

It is on such a footing that the whole art and practice of contemplative prayer has been built, and brought alive for our time by writers such as Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), Bede Griffiths (1908-1993), Thomas Merton (1915-1968), and Richard Rohr (b.1943). It is clear that for Christian mystics the person of Christ is central to their spirituality. How did a man as simple as St Francis of Assisi arrive at this mystery of God? The answer is Jesus Christ. Francis came to know the God of humble love by meditating on and imitating the poor and humble Christ. So we are back where we started. Conversely, it is important to notice that the practice of

mental prayer embraced by mystics is common across all the great religions (Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi and Taoist as well as Christian). As Aldous Huxley explains: 'Philosophia Perennis – the metaphysic that recognises a divine reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to or even identical with divine reality; the ethic that places mankind's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being – the thing is immemorial and universal' (*The Perennial Philosophy*, Chatto and Windus 1945, p. 1). The only proviso, Huxley says, is that the nature of this reality cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfil certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit (He does not know why). If this is true, then the creeds, structures and practices of any particular religion are of quite secondary importance. In our own time the practice of contemplation is being adopted as a healthy mental discipline with no religious connotations at all. The way is open once again to say that all the doctrines and trappings of religion are human constructs, projections of our own 'needs and desires' and ultimately irrelevant to the quest for the immanent and eternal self.

The Christian might well reply by saying that this is where faith comes in. This might mean no more than holding fast to received teaching with the dogged determination of Bunyan's pilgrim. Or it could go further, with Tertullian, in saying that 'the fact is certain because it is impossible' (*De Carne Christi*, Chapter V, Part II). 'Faith' is an elusive notion. The author of *Hebrews* defines it as 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' (11.1). In Greek the words here translated 'substance' and 'evidence' are strong. Tyndale translated them as 'sure confidence' and 'certainty'. They qualify things that are no more than 'hoped for' and evidently 'not seen'. If one wanted to drive a sceptical line one could say that Christian hope stands exposed as no more than wishful thinking. If so, it plays straight into the hands of those who, like Freud, want to make Christianity no more than a projection of our own desires for justice, fairness and life after death.

The inconclusiveness of this discussion should come as no surprise. Those who follow the quest for the historical Jesus are confronted by similar uncertainties. Let Albert Schweitzer (1895-1965) have the last word. Speaking of Jesus he says: 'As one unknown and nameless He comes to us, just as on the shore of the lake he approached those men who knew not who He was. His words are the same: 'Follow thou me!' and He puts us to the tasks that He has to carry out in our age. He commands. To those who obey, be they wise or simple, He will reveal himself through all that they are privileged to experience in His fellowship of peace and activity, of struggle and suffering, till they come to know, as an inexpressible secret, Who He is...' (Albert Schweitzer, *My Life and Thought*, George Allen and Unwin, 1933, pp. 71-72).

Hugh Beach



Report of Thursday Lunch on 11 December

At this lunch twenty five people heard a moving talk

by Pauline Hennessey about the Kensington and Chelsea Foodbank. Started at St Luke's Church, Redcliffe Gardens, a couple of years ago, and sponsored by twelve churches, including St Mary The Boltons, this Christian charity offers help to needy people regardless of religious interest.

The Foodbank movement seeks to help people with no money for food, and desperate for support. Their difficulties are typically due to social security issues (more than half due to benefit changes and delays), rising costs against low and static income, and high unemployment. Almost eight hundred people, including 200 children, were helped by the Kensington and Chelsea Foodbank last year. Two thirds were single people and most were below age 65. In total the parent organization, Trussell Trust Foodbanks, helped 913,138 people last year compared with 61,468 four years ago.

Food is received from various sources including churches, schools, businesses, and supermarket collections. Over six tons were received last year and 7.8 tons were given out. Volunteers sort out the food, nutritionally balanced, and put it into emergency food bags. Care professionals such as doctors and social workers issue vouchers to deserving people, ensuring that help is given only to those genuinely in need. The food is intended to last three days, and people are allowed three vouchers every six months.

There is a collection box for food donations at Tesco on the Cromwell Road and at Waitrose on the King's Road; they also supply bags for distribution. Donations can also be received at St Luke's church during Foodbank sessions.

The intention is not only to provide food, but to give time to listen and demonstrate care, and where appropriate to point to the forms of support that are available. At St Luke's Redcliffe Gardens, the foodbank facility is open between 12.00 and 3.00p.m. on Tuesdays and between 1.00 and 4.00p.m. on Fridays and clients are greeted with coffee and light refreshments. The staffed are seventeen volunteers who give time on a rota, weekly, fortnightly or monthly. The volunteers include Nicky (see below), and David Ireton from St Mary's. Their objective is not only to provide food and refreshments, but most importantly to offer hope.

For supporters wanting information and advice about the kinds of food especially welcome at a particular time, the Kensington and Chelsea Foodbank is on telephone 020 7370 0338. It is also on email

KCFoodbank@stlukeschurch.co.uk, and on

Facebook at www.facebook.com.

Arthur Tait

Volunteering at the Foodbank

When revisiting the church where forty years ago I was confirmed, I was drawn to a simply worded A4 poster saying 'People are still starving in the village'. My initial reaction was one of disbelief. 'Surely not, are people really still starving in this village?'

When we lived there, my mother had fallen on hard times following her divorce. Despite her privileged background, our family became

reliant on handouts and bursaries to exist. Many times my sister and I, then aged 12, walked the two mile distance in darkness to the village, clutching a note for the shop keeper requesting more credit, or with directions to visit acquaintances asking for handouts in food. Our house, notably pretty from the outside, was cold and bleak inside. The family furniture had been taken by bailiffs and their empty spaces were replaced with fear, anxiety and shame.

We had no gas or electricity, thus no heating, hot water or lighting, and no wood for the fireplace. At night we sat around a table by candle light with a transistor radio, rationing the battery. This difficult period of abject poverty left deep scars of hopelessness on us all. No organised food banks were available in the early 70s, and help was in the lap of the gods. For some people, despite all efforts made today, this is still the case.

On returning to London I realised the Trussell Trust Foodbank was the same organisation to which St Mary's was making donations. Very quickly I was on board, feeling my childhood experience must have something to offer. Not everyone working in the foodbank has personal experience of deprivation, but all can empathize and give loving support to the people who attend.

It is not always possible to tell those among us who are struggling; location, education and clothing can often be deceiving.

Without food, a basic need for human survival, every day becomes long and dark. It can be difficult for the mind to concentrate and to find the physical energy needed to continue, to remain hopeful and positive and believing that things can change.

At the food bank I have come across many wonderful people. Several clients tell stories similar to my own brought on by family upheaval. Others have fallen through support networks or had benefits withdrawn. In these challenging times, hard working people have been made redundant, some now living in hostels or temporary accommodation. A few arrive discharged from hospital, others rehabilitating or reintegrating society. Food poverty is not choosy about age, gender or

religion, and circumstances can change for any one of us.

One woman I remember showed great strength of spirit after her house had burnt down. She had escaped alive with her children in the clothes they stood up in. Whatever the reason for needing a foodbank, it is always a genuine call for support. Every life, every spirit, comes with a story to tell.

I have now been volunteering at the Kensington & Chelsea Foodbank for about nine months and on every shift I witness the sense of relief and sincere gratitude from people who have been helped.

Nicky, Foodbank Volunteer



Mansion Tax: threat or opportunity

According to a recent survey, around three quarters of retired

people in London are concerned about increasing taxes on higher value properties. The Autumn 2014 Budget saw, with no prior warning, an immediate increase in Stamp Duty, hitting people with properties over £1.25m particularly hard. Many believe that the currently quoted threshold of £2m could be dropped to £1m in the future. Taxing wealthy landowners to fund the NHS, with a Mansion tax on all properties over £2m could be seen as a big vote winner. Unless you live in Kensington and Chelsea, it probably will be.

The Land Registry confirms that the average price for a 2-bed flat within walking distance of St Mary's is well over £1.25m and in some streets, exceeds £2m. The Church is keen to help people who may be anxious about the future of living in what is now called 'a high-value home', but which for many is just 'home'.

St Mary's will facilitate access to advice that aims to maximise the potential of your home, minimise exposure to avoidable liabilities and crucially provides for a comfortable future without moving away from old friends and neighbours. This advice will be effective, creative,

pragmatic, clear and simple and will cover three key areas:

- **Development management:** Coordinating all aspects of development advise, Planning Application, neighbour consultation etc.
- **Architecture and building:** Generating and delivering bespoke plans responding to the owner's unique personal and financial needs
- **Tax planning:** Creating and managing the process in a tax efficient manner

Solicitor/Tax expert, Mark Nichols and Architect/Surveyor, Philip Challinor will provide initial advice on a pro-bono basis to members of the congregation or their friends. A very affordable, flexible and transparent fee structure is subsequently agreed, out of which a donation will be made to the Church.

Case Study

A retired lady known to Philip Challinor and Mark Nichols was living alone. After dementia was diagnosed by her GP, she was whisked away from home without any warning and taken to a mental health unit many miles away. The local Social Services department attended this stressful removal but merely compounded anxiety levels by making the comment that the lady had nothing to worry about because her house was more than valuable enough to cover future care costs. However, local Estate Agents advised that an immediate sale of the house would produce a low price as it was in need of investment. After paying-off the high interest equity-release mortgage, the cash released by the sales process would yield less than £250,000 (after fees). With care bills alone running at more than £5000 a month, what would happen in just over four years, when the money ran out?

Renting the property in its present state would yield less than a £1000 a month. Fortunately, the family sought creative advice from Philip. His scheme added around 50% to the value of the house, while providing an independent and accessible garden level apartment for the lady.

A builder has now been appointed who is willing to finance the building costs on the basis of a share of the sales price, and a care-at-home package has been agreed with the medical team and Social Services. Within six months the lady

could be living with no debt, inheritance monies managed and looking forward to many years in her own home totally tailored to her long term needs, and of which she and her family have fond memories.

Mark and Philip are both long-standing members of St Marys. Mark is a former churchwarden and parish councillor. Both live near the Church.

Mark Nichols is contactable on 07771674376 or mark.nichols@ngmtaxlaw.co.uk

Philip Challinor is on 07900 682662 or challinor@dmp-architects.co.uk



Coffee after the 10.30am Service

Could you volunteer to join the Coffee Rota? We are in need of some extra helpers as some of our volunteers have been faithfully serving coffee at St

Marys for many years and now wish to retire. Please speak to Joanna Hackett if you are willing to join the rota. Thank you.

Summer Fair

The Summer fair takes place on Saturday 20 June

February Year's Mind

Edward Lidderdale
Mary Pilkington
Peter Hamilton-Davies
Robert Priest
Thomas Spicer
Anthony Clives
Storm Larkins
Thomas Barclay
Anjoli Fernando-Kleinsorge
David Hancock
Simon Perkins
Lily Dwight
Lynette Hopper
Gary Marshfield
Derek Pilkington
Iris Warwick
Madeline Habgood
Kinbarra Morse



Passes for St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey

We have four free passes to get FREE entry into St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

If you would like to pick up the tickets please call or e-mail John at the parish office.

SUNDAY SERVICES

8.00am Eucharist, 10.30am Sung Eucharist

The meeting room at the back of the church is available for people with pre-school children.

There is a baby changing facility in the wheelchair accessible toilet in the hall.

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Usually Morning Prayer is said daily at 8.30am (Eucharist on Feastdays); except Public Holidays. Wednesday 7.00pm Eucharist

Readings in February 2015

Sunday 1

Readings at 10.30am

Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

*Malachi 3. 1-5;
Hebrews 2. 14-end;
Luke 2. 22-40*

Wednesday 4

Eucharist with Prayers for Healing
*Hebrews 12. 4-7, 11-15;
Mark 6. 1-6a*

Sunday 8

Readings at 10.30am

Second Sunday before Lent

*Proverbs 8. 1, 22-31;
Colossians 1. 15-20;
John 1. 1-14*

Sunday 15

Readings at 10.30am

Sunday Next before Lent

*2 Kings 2. 1-12;
2 Corinthians 4. 3-6;
Mark 9. 2-9*

Wednesday 18

Readings at 7.00pm

Ash Wednesday

*Joel 2. 1-2, 12-17;
2 Corinthians 5. 20b-6.10;
Matthew 6. 1-6, 16-21*

Sunday 22

Readings at 10.30am

First Sunday of Lent

*Genesis 9. 8-17;
1 Peter 3. 18-end;
Mark 1. 9-15*

