



Gateway

August 2021



Hoverfly (Two wings - no stings)

St Michael's, Alnwick
The magazine for the people of the Church and the Town



WEEKLY WORSHIP

SUNDAYS AT ST. MICHAEL'S

8.30am

HOLY COMMUNION (Said)

A quiet celebration of Holy Communion with a sermon. Using Common Worship except for the third Sunday of the month when the Book of Common prayer is used.

10.00am

THE PARISH COMMUNION

Usually sung with hymns and a sermon and using Common Worship. The main service of the day followed by tea/coffee and the chance to meet up with others.

On the first Sunday of the month the worship will be more informal, using a variety of resources and 'thinking outside the box'.

This service will be live-streamed on YouTube each week.

4.00pm

'SUNDAY PLUS'

Monthly. An informal time of worship and reflection with a particular theme each month. Usually available to watch live on Zoom.

6.00pm

EVENING WORSHIP

On the first Sunday of the month a traditional Sung Evensong according to the Book of Common Prayer with sermon.

On other Sundays a variety of worship including Compline and worship in the style of the Iona Community.

WEDNESDAYS ST. MICHAEL'S

10.15am

HOLY COMMUNION

A said service followed by tea/coffee and the opportunity for fellowship. Once a month, in term time, we are joined by a class from St. Michael's Church of England Primary School and once a term the service takes place in the school.

DENWICK CHAPEL

A small chapel-of-ease built by the Duke of Northumberland in 1872.

Usually a service of matins or Holy Communion once a month.

Following the pandemic the provision of services is under review.

From the Vicar

St. Michael's Vicarage
Alnwick

Dear People of Alnwick,

I want to begin by thanking many of you for your cards, good wishes and the assurance of prayers during my recent, somewhat unexpected, bout of chickenpox. How I wish I'd experienced this illness as a child rather than at this stage in my life. To be certain, it takes much more effort (and a deal of patience) to recover for those of us who fall into the category 'of riper years'! Being laid low did, however, help me to realise how much of our lives we take for granted; perhaps, even, assume as our right Chief of these must be our health.

My morning routine has always been to get out of bed, jump into the shower, get shaved and dressed and then be ready for what the day brings. Just at the moment, by the time I get to the end of those simple tasks I'm quite exhausted. I know, of course, that each day will see me getting a little stronger and that my supplies of energy will increase but I have resolved to try and be more thankful for such simple yet profound good fortune.

Thankfulness really does need to pervade every aspect of our being. We have a roof over our heads; there is food in our stomachs; we know love and companionship from family and friends; as lockdown eases, we are increasingly free to go where we want and see whom we will.

Equally, in our lives of faith, we have untold freedom to worship without hindrance: a right which is still denied to many across our world. So let's not take that wonderful freedom for granted either. Rather, let us be thankful for all that is good and, more importantly, to actively seek out and enumerate each day the good fortune that is ours.

I worry that a perfunctory 'nod' to God that 'all is well' each day has been my attitude for far too long and am increasingly convinced that a real acceptance of his goodness and his bounty should feature much more in my prayers. In sickness and in health we can, I am convinced, train ourselves to accentuate the positive.

Continued on page 5

Principal Readings for August

Sunday	Holy Communion	Evensong
1st	Exodus 16. 2-4, 9-15	Job 28
Trinity 9	Ephesians 4. 1-16 John 6. 24-35	Hebrews 11. 17-31
8th	1 Kings 19. 4-8	Job 39. 1- 40.4
Trinity 10	Ephesians 4. 25-5.2 John 6.35, 41-51	Hebrews 12. 1-17
15th	Proverbs 9.. 1-6	Exodus 2. 23- 3.10
Trinity 11	Ephesians 5. 15-20 John 6. 51-58	Hebrews 13. 1-15
22nd	Joshua 24. 1-2a, 14-18	Exodus 4. 27-5. 1
Trinity 12	Ephesians 6. 10-20 John 6. 56 - 69	Hebrews 13. 16-21
29th	Deuteronomy 4.1-2, 6-9	Exodus 12. 21-27
Trinity 13	James. 1. 17-27 Mark 7.1-8,14-15,21-23	Matthew 4. 23-5.20

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms
17.07.21

Emma Ann Gattens

Funerals
22.07.21
30.07.21

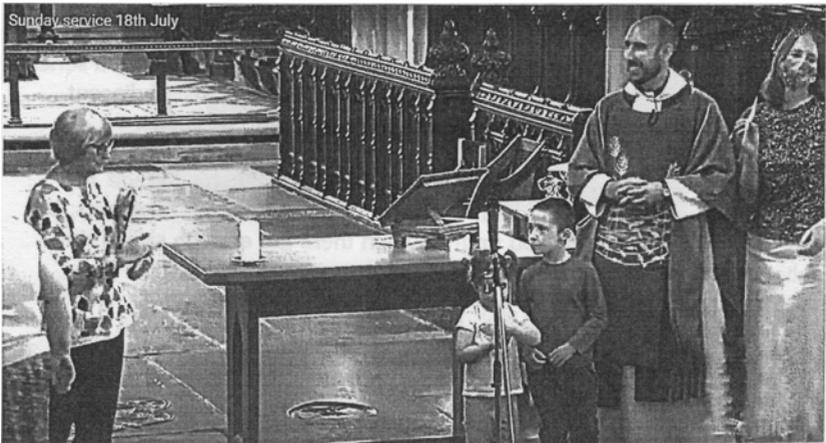
Elizabeth Ann (Beth) Angus
Andrew Gordon (Andy) Graham

With Jane, I used to visit a former parishioner of hers who, bent double with arthritis, had been bedridden for many years. In a residential home, with a brick wall for a view, that dear lady gave thanks each day for the tree behind the wall as she watched the buds appear in springtime, then the blossom and then the glorious colours of autumn.

And so I lay before you, too, the suggestion that we should actively look for reasons to be thankful and praise God for our good fortune.

With every blessing,

Paul



Gerard's farewell, with Pheobe, Theo and Karen

Thought for the Month

Bellringing

OVER 60 years ago I was on a work visit to Newcastle upon Tyne. I had never been here before and one evening I was mooching around the city centre, not knowing a soul, when I heard the friendly sound of church bells ringing.

I had learnt how to ring as a teenager and we were always encouraged to visit other towers on practice nights. I found the cathedral and I could tell that it was a practice night because the bells would ring for a few minutes, stop and then start again. I walked into the tower and up the spiral staircase. When I reached the bell ringing chamber, I waited outside the door until the bells stopped ringing. Then I knocked and walked in. Are you a ringer, they asked; what do you ring? I replied that I had rung several quarter peals of Bob doubles. They were really friendly and asked me to choose a bell to ring.

Ringling church bells is a very friendly and enjoyable occupation. By the autumn we will have 10 bells in our Church Tower but to begin with, we will only hear all ten bells ringing very occasionally. We will have to attract and teach people how to ring.

There are several stages that have to be learnt. First we have to learn how to ring a bell.

Handling a bell doesn't require great strength but, like riding a bike or swimming, we have to acquire the knack.

Then when we have got a small team of bellringers and beginners, we learn how to ring Rounds. 1 2 3 4 5 6, 123456 and repeating it until the bells sound evenly spaced.

The next stage is called Call changes. The leader calls out a series of commands that two adjacent bells are to swap positions.

After that, the next stage is months ahead for the beginners; but when there are enough skilled ringers they will be able to ring seven bells, plus the tenor behind, changing the order every time and never repeating the order and after about 3 hours ringing they will have rung every possible combination. This is called a Peal.

Dorothy Sayers wrote a detective story called "The Nine Tailors" which introduced bell ringing, and attracted a lot of people to bell ring- ing.

I probably won't be able to take up bell ringing again, because after about 50 years as a ringer, I trapped a nerve in my neck – not ringing bells but doing something quite different. When it got better, I was advised by the hospital not to take up bellringing again!

But I hope a lot of people, both in our congregation and outside it, take up Bellringing and enjoy it as much as I have.

Martin Turner

Bamburgh Church Bells “up”



A special date for your diary

MONDAY AUGUST 9th will be a very special day for Alnwick. On that day 10 bells will be delivered to St. Michael's and for the only time they will be on display in the church for all to see before they are lifted into the belfry.

We are hopeful that the bells will be unloaded and in church by mid-afternoon for public viewing. At 7pm there will be a short service of blessing by The Right Revd. Mark Wroe, Bishop of Berwick, in the presence of Her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland, Patron of the project. It will be followed by light refreshments and further opportunity to see the bells. We are looking forward to welcoming all who want to take advantage of this once in a lifetime chance to see this magnificent ring of ten bells.

A Farewell Reflection from Gerard

IT'S HARD to believe that my time in Alnwick has drawn to an end.

Three years have flown by in a flash (not helped by half of it being in a pandemic and under restrictions of one sort or another!). But the time has come, and by the time you read this my final service will have been and gone, and I'll probably be busy trying to fit all our accumulated junk into a new garage!

There is a huge amount that I could say about my time here. It has been a privilege to serve the church and the town as Curate. It has been a privilege to know so many of you, to sit in your living rooms and be treated to a cup of tea (and maybe a bit of something sweet), to pray with you, to laugh with you, to be fellow members of the body of Christ with you. It has been a privilege too, to work with a wonderful group of people who have supported me in my ministry here. Most of all Paul, of course, to whom go my hearty thanks for being such a wise and supportive Training Incumbent. Also to all the others, whether churchwardens, readers, retired clergy, or members of the congregation, who have offered encouragement and inspiration over the last few years. I will be forever grateful for the joy of having known so many kind and generous people, and will take what I have learned

from each of you with me for the rest of my ministry.

There's a huge amount, too, that I will miss. I'll miss Mini Michael's, and the joy of seeing babies grow into toddlers, and move off up to school, starting of course with our two - it's hard to believe that Phoebe was only crawling when we arrived and now she's a force to be reckoned with (particularly if Theo has something she wants!). I'll miss Messy Church, and the little community that started to blossom there. I'll miss St Michael's school, even if it's been a year and a half since I last got to do an assembly there. I'll miss Barter Books, and Strawberry Lounge, and Shere Khan takeaways. I'll miss having such beautiful beaches just 10 minutes drive away. And of course, most of all, I'll miss the wonderful folk of St Michael's and the joy of worshipping God together, gathered whether virtually or in person, to hear God's word, share in Christ's body and blood, and be filled with the Spirit's gifts in prayer and praise.

So, to all of you who have been a part of my life, and Karen and Theo and Phoebe's lives, thank you. It's been a great blessing. I'm sure we'll be back from time to time, the call of Barter Books and their Malteser Crunch will surely tempt me back, but as we say goodbye, we

want to offer our very grateful thanks to you all.

And as we go, a final request for your prayers. Prayers for a smooth transition and settling into a new home, new routines, and new schools for the children. Prayers for Karen's work as she establishes her teaching in a new area. And prayers for my ministry. It will be a very different context in a different role. I'll have a clergy team, which I'm very much looking forward to joining, but it will bring new challenges of oversight and leadership. There are exciting opportunities with new

housing developments, and a new church community meeting on one of them for me to help guide into growth. And there's the existing communities, particularly the church at St Aidan's Brunton park, for me to get to know, learn to love, and discern how best to serve. I would hugely appreciate your prayers for all of that over the coming months.

So, from all the Rundells as we move on to new things, thank you deeply, and may God bless you all.

Gerard Rundell

Heritage Open Day: Saturday September 11th

AN OPPORTUNITY to visit the final resting place of Alnwick's most eminent and notorious residents, see behind the scenes at the Playhouse, appreciate the story of how Alnwick's unique townscape was formed, visit the workshops at Aln Valley Railway, see the yard where 19th Century wrongdoers were corrected, explore a thousand years of Christian Heritage, and more....



Examples of Alnwick's hidden heritage abound. We encourage you to put September 11th in your diary now, invite your friends and family to visit Alnwick, and watch out for further details.

Duke of Edinburgh's Awards

MMAGIC MEMORIES, of a staunch supporter and encourager of young people, and of the efforts they made to gain their awards

My first encounter was indirect but a lesson to be taken aboard. My late husband was a DofE expedition assessor and was involved for many years with encouraging youngsters in outdoor pursuits. On this occasion he was reading the expedition reports from a group, in which they said that they had seen a field of ostriches looking over the hedge at them (in Shilbottle!). He was about to tell them off for 'telling fairy stories' when he decided to check with the local farmer – sure enough at that time, they had 11 ostriches as the start of a breeding program.

The interesting point here was that, as part of any expedition, they should observe and report on what they see, which they had quite correctly, but surprisingly, done.

On another expedition (Bronze, I seem to recall) which involved 2 days hiking and 1 night camping; the route included Plenderleith, Buchtrigg, Pennymuir and Middlesknowes. I recall seeing a big notice saying "Morebattle Angling Strictly Private Fishing" – at the edge of a small, roadside stream (possibly a tributary of Kale Water).. Somewhere in this northern side of the Cheviots, there was a level grassed area beside a small river and, luxury indeed, a toilet block with running cold water. Tents were pitched, a hot meal prepared and then a young lassie who wanted to wash her hair, was a bit taken aback when there was no running hot water and no power point. I suppose the prior indoor tutorial sessions made sure they knew how to use a Trangia and could put a tent up, but it maybe didn't occur to them that out in the hills there are not very many luxuries. It says much for the fortitude of that girl that she took it in good part, and washed her hair anyway!

All participants are required to plan their route, including an 'escape' path if the weather turns very bad, and all are advised to carry enough food, a change of quick-drying clothing, a map and compass and small amounts of toiletries etc.

The best-laid plans do, however, have to be altered. I recall one time (3 days and 2 nights) when the permission to go across an area was rejected rather suddenly and aggressively by the landowner, and the planned first overnight stop was altered on the advice of a Land Ranger. This was agreed by the expedition assessor and the group were seen safely into a bothy

somewhere in the hills of Dumfries. The only problem there was that the delay meant that the assessor had to spend that night trying to sleep in a car since it was too dark to pitch a tent.

Well, we made up for it the next night by finding a welcome B&B near Balmaclellan, where we were well-fed, introduced to their new tup 'Rameses II'

The expeditions are not a test, so there is no 'fail', but if rules weren't followed, some might be asked to retake that part. I recall one time in the hills near Alnham when the weather closed in and became very misty. We spent some time searching and were helped by the tutors and a local farmer.

Eventually, most of the group arrived at their destination, wet but cheerful; there were some though, who turned up dry and mocking – with their maps on their backs and jubilant because they had got a lift from an Army truck. Definitely not on lads, you will have to try again another time.

Perhaps for me the most emotive day was waiting and watching in Baldersdale, parked on the B6278 in damp, chilly weather – looking out over the farm where Hannah Hauxwell lived. She had moved out of there by then, but the whole scene was reminiscent of her hard lifestyle. It was with great relief when we spotted the group coming along on the other side and making their way across the dam wall.

This is a reminder of all who take, or have taken part – tutors, helpers, accredited assessors, the band of young folk who work so hard, give so much joy and prove themselves able and willing to succeed. Most of all though to Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh who made all this possible and who will remain always in our hearts with gratitude.



Joan Dunn

BIRDS

WATCHING SOME more, but this time – learning a few facts

As usual, I have spent many hours watching the wildlife (and some not-so-wild), mainly in my front garden. Being in my car means that I can self-isolate, wave and smile to folks, and see all the wonders of nature.

Because my garden faces south, I decided to try growing some veg in containers! I have tried beetroot, cabbages, purple podded beans and potatoes in big bags. Spuds are coming along nicely, the beans are disappointing because they don't stay purple when cooked. I netted the cabbages and beetroot, but found that the beet leaves get eaten – not slugs or caterpillars, but little cheeky sparrows. They were also nibbling the cabbages until I moved the beet away.

Well, friends, I feel ashamed of my treatment of the little feathered ones – I would only discard the leaves, and I have found out that they are very nutritious to birds, so the cover is being removed for them to help themselves – maybe that will stop them eating the sweet peas!

Something very special in the last few weeks –for once I was at back garden window and saw this big, beautiful bird squashed into my bird table – it was pinky-brown with bight

blue barring at the end of its wings – yes! A Jay! The first I have ever seen – what a striking creature.



As if that wasn't enough, a few days later I was sitting in car on my drive, looked out and there, on the ground near a water bowl, was another stunningly beautiful bird, It had a brown-and-buff barred tail, and sort of speckled breast, bright yellow eyes and legs and a hooked bill. I had to look it up in a book – it was a sparrowhawk. I now know why the blackbirds and others birds look up to the sky before they eat – just being more watchful than me.

All this, however, has made me reflect on my not-so-good opinion/attitude to wild things. I have no right to interfere with how they live – I should just observe, care and learn from them.

I am reminded of a poem that our English Literature teacher read to us way back in the mid-1950s, and in particular the last lines.

The poem is 'SNAKE' by D. H. Lawrence, when he talks about throwing a log towards a snake that was drinking at the water trough.

*.....And so, I missed my chance
with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate: A
pettiness.....*

J.M.S-S

ST MICHAEL'S C E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Year 6 Leavers' Picnic

8th July 2021



We were blessed with lovely weather today as we said good bye to our Year 6 children in our leavers' picnic. Families and friends joined us on the field to maintain social distancing and we were able to enjoy food before the celebration. The event included certificates for each child which celebrated their individual talents. We also heard about what they children want to do by the year 2041 - this included football, occupational therapy and restaurant management!

All the children were presented with a survival kit for their next adventure, as well as a St Michael's medal and bible. In addition they all proudly wore their new leavers' hoodie.

We gave three special awards too:

Head Teacher Shield for outstanding achievement to Daisy.

Adam Lawton Star award for kindness to Reagan



Sporting Achievement and leadership award to Liam

Well done Year 6!

Year 6 Beach Day!

15th July 2021



Our year 6 class had such a fantastic time at the beach together yesterday, making memories to last a life time!

We will miss them very much, and want to wish them all the best of luck for the future!

Sports Day 2021



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

A series on the Commandments, but in the reverse order.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT YOU SHALL NOT KILL

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS are the basis of God's law for mankind; but no one pretends that they are an adequate statement of Christian duty.

The Sixth Commandment begins the second half of the Ten, giving our duty to our neighbour, quite baldly stating, 'You shall not kill'.

People have argued about the precise meaning of this, which you might think was pretty clear. But I suppose that most people would agree that it doesn't refer to taking the life of animals, or if you are a strict vegetarian, you would agree that it doesn't mean we must not kill plants. Some people would say it does not permit us to kill humans in any circumstances, whereas others say that so-called 'just' wars and judicial killing – capital punishment – are permitted.

I don't want to waste space now arguing about pacifism or capital punishment. Let us take the Commandment at its face value and in the way the Prayer Book takes it: Thou shalt do no murder.

Now this seems pretty obvious, We know that murder is wrong. Any

other injury we do to someone, we can ask forgiveness and receive it from the offended person. But if we take someone's life deliberately, we can make no amends, seek no forgiveness from the dead person.

The Law was given by Moses to the newly liberated community of ex-slaves in the desert of Sinai, Without this law we can imagine what would have happened. The strong and ruthless would rapidly put down all opposition and rise to the top, while the weak would either have to give in or be killed. The awkward, the feeble minded, the old, the disabled, who were a burden on the economy, could expect nothing better than to be put out of the way.

Indeed we don't have to think back to the early Jewish community. Think of Northern Ireland where a small, but significant proportion of the population are prepared to set aside this law, not to mention terrorism and the rise of knife crime among young people.

Against this sort of situation the 6th Commandment still applies: You shall not kill: you shall do no murder. A man's life is his possession, given by God, and our duty to each other includes the fundamental duty of respecting his right to live which must not be taken from him by any individual, whatever the State may be allowed to do for the good of the total Community.

So far, so good. I dare say that few of us have offended against the letter of this commandment, or even seriously been tempted to kill anyone.

But we have to go on from the bare rule to look at what lies behind it. See what Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill and whoever kills shall be liable to judgement’. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother without cause shall be liable to judgement; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says ‘You fool’ shall be liable to the hell of fire”.

It seems that Jesus is more concerned with motives than with results. He says, Of course you know you must not kill, but the point is, you must not nourish anger and bitterness against your brother. Because it is here that murder has its beginning.

The first murder in the Bible was the killing of Abel by Cain. And the cause of this murder was Cain’s anger and jealousy at his brother.

This was the motive for the murder. Murder is the crime which sprang from the sin of pride and jealousy and bitterness.

Now this is clearly very much more searching. Have I murdered anyone?

No, mercifully I have not. But have I been angry with anyone?

Have I had feelings of bitterness and jealousy? Yes, I admit I have. There can be few of us who have not.

But even here there is room for misunderstanding. Because when we read of terrible things happening in Northern Ireland, or even in this country; when we hear of children being mistreated, of Indian peasants starving when the shops are full of expensive food, we feel angry, and if anyone does not feel angry we wonder where is his sense of right and wrong.

Are we not right to be angry at obvious greed and cruelty and sin, where the evildoers carry on their evil with impunity and the weak and helpless are trampled down?

The answer to this is contained in that surprising incident in Jesus life when he went up to the holy Temple and found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons and the money-changers at their business – swindling the poor. Jesus was so angry that he made a whip of cords, and drove them out, saying, “You shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade”.

Now sometimes when they hear that Jesus was sinless, people point to this incident and say, ‘Jesus lost his temper once’. This incident was so unlike the usual picture of Jesus, gentle and meek, that they feel it was out of character.

I am glad of that little detail John gives us in that story: “Making a whip of cords”. Jesus did not take this action hastily, in temper. He stopped to make the whip to use on the cattle and sheep. This was Jesus in anger, but not losing his temper. God’s attitude to sin is wrath and the Christian’s attitude to blatant sin should be anger.

Paul puts it clearly: ‘Be angry, but do not sin’. (*Eph 4.26*)

Anger is the correct response to some situations. When we see God’s law flouted, the evil openly flourishing, then we can be angry. But the anger must be against the sin not against the sinner. Paul goes on, ‘Do not let the sun go down on your anger’. In other words, it must be over quickly. The very worst form of anger is the anger that broods, turning to bitterness, and turning from anger at the sin to hate of the sinner.

God hates my sin, but thank God, he still loves me. God’s response to our sin is wrath, but his response to us is always love. Perhaps that is difficult to understand but it is vital that we try to, if we are trying to follow Jesus who prayed for his executioners, ‘Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing’.

We learn a lot when we become parents. We love our children, but we are made sorrowful when they do wrong. If we are good parents we do

not reject the child because of the child’s wrongdoing. We hate what he does perhaps, but we still love the child. And, what we know we should do for our own children, we should also do for other people.

Not take a light view of their sin, but being ready to forgive and all the time loving the person.

The sentimentalist says, ‘There is a spark of good in the worst of us’ and thinks that this spark is the part that should be loved. But the Christian is more realistic and knows that the inside of human nature is evil, yet still we are to love each other, as God loves us.

The two alternatives are clear. We can respond to someone else’s sin in the anger which we keep alive, we let it stay in our hearts, turning into bitterness, so that we can find no good in the offender, and if we are sufficiently passionately motivated we might even end in taking his life.

Or we respond to someone’s sin by anger at the sin which we resolve perhaps by challenging him to repent or repay or whatever is appropriate in the case, but certainly by continuing to love and care for the sinner. And that is the only way we can deal with anger without ourselves falling into sin of hatred, or bitterness, or lack of love, even if it does not lead us into the crime of murder.

Colin Perkins

Noctilucent Clouds

ONE NIGHT last month as I prepared for bed I looked out towards the north and there in the sky shining with a bluish glow was a fine display of night shining or noctilucent clouds. They may be seen very occasionally in the summer months from temperate latitudes. This most recent sighting was at about 11:30 pm (BST) an hour and a half before true midnight. They remain visible so late because they are still in sunlight and that is because they are so very high; high above even the stratosphere at the top of the mesosphere, the mesopause and so they are also called polar mesospheric clouds.

At this height the atmosphere has reached its lowest temperature at around -100°C . Strangely it is at its coldest in the summer and this is time when these clouds form. The atmosphere is expected to be very dry at this altitude but nevertheless it seems that the clouds are made of ice. Why they occur is not clear. Interestingly the first reports date back only to 1887, two years after the eruption of the Indonesian volcano, Krakatoa. This may not be such a coincidence and results merely from many more people looking at the sky at dusk to witness the greatly enhanced red sunsets caused by the volcano. Still, it is curious that there are no unambiguous report of these clouds before that time.

Stanley Trafford

After centuries in St Michael's tower our two medieval bells were removed in March, cleaned by Whites of Appleton and returned to spend an honourable retirement in the south aisle.



Anniversaries

ON 27TH June I celebrated 50 years since I was ordained priest, which occurred in Southwell Minster, the cathedral of Nottinghamshire, while I was a curate in Nottingham.

I had been made deacon on Trinity Sunday the previous year, and that turned out to be the last Trinity ordination. Trinity Sunday of course is a moveable feast depending on the date of Easter, and did not fit in well with final examinations. So the decision was taken to have future ordinations at Petertide: the nearest suitable day to 29th June. For me, the effect was I served 13 months as deacon instead of the usual 12 and I was priested in the first of the Petertide ordinations.

The celebration of my Silver Jubilee in 1996 was rather more elaborate than I was able to manage this year. Then I was Priest in Charge of three churches in the south of Nottinghamshire, close to the Leicester border. Our postcode was that of Leicester. As it happened, one of our organists was strongly connected with Leicester Cathedral and he arranged for some of the cathedral choir to join our choir for the celebratory Eucharist. The preacher was Roy Williamson, then bishop of Southwark (south London), who had been my vicar when I was ordained. A lot of people came, including my family and a good few from my previous parishes and the church was full – big eats afterwards!

So I am sorry I was not even able to attend church for my Golden Jubilee, this year, as a result of problems following hip surgery. Never mind: only ten years to the Diamond anniversary!

Colin Perkins

Smile

Lessons From Nature

A recent study of 12 million waste items revealed that eight out of ten pieces of litter found in the world's rivers and oceans were plastic. Definitely not something to smile about. If, however, it was all biodegradable plastic, the picture would obviously be very different. And so to the good news. A group of scientists at Cambridge University have been working on a new type of biodegradable film inspired by studying the structure of spiders webs. While webs may appear to be fragile, the bonds of which they are made form one of the strongest structures in the natural world. Professor Tuomas Knowles and his team have reorganised the bonds between the molecules in plant proteins to mimic those found in the homes of our little friends and of course, because it comes from vegetable matter it is capable of breaking down when composted. Hopefully this new material will in time come to replace much single use packaging.

This though is some way off, but there is more good news much closer to home!

Coop supermarkets now have receptacles into which we can put our soft plastics for recycling! !

(They classify 'soft' as meaning anything which, when scrunched up, will spring back into shape).

Their website offers the following information about items which can be popped into their bins:

thin plastic lids of all types, fruit and veg nets, ordinary carrier bags, bread bags, bags from crisps ,cereals and porridge, cling film, biscuit and sweet wrappers and much much more, the list is extensive. Please go to www.coop.co.uk/soft-plastics and scroll down to 'See what you can and can't recycle'

At the present time the co-op on Wagonway road is offering this service.

Finally, thank you so much for the wonderful response to the request for glasses (which will be eventually sent to Zambia). At the time of writing, in mid July, the total is 61! This includes glasses from other churches as well as St Michael's and also from Robert Adam Court. Thank you so much everyone.

Sue Wiltshire

A Mystical Experiment

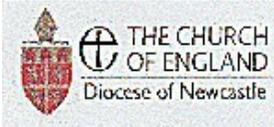
THERE IS a strand of Christian mysticism which emphasises God's transcendence, and which follows St Augustine in describing God as "other, completely other". This branch does not deny that God was made man in Jesus Christ, or that the things the Church teaches about him are untrue, but it stresses, over and over again, that the infinity of God is far more than our finite minds can ever comprehend. This mystical path (known as the apophatic, or negative way) wrestles with the limitations of human speech by saying, and then unsaying things about him, not because they are not true, but because they are not enough. Its aim is that there, in the space between the things we say, and the things we then unsay, when the mind is bewildered and trusting only in faith, we may encounter God's presence, beyond the limitations of our minds.

But how do you put those ideas into practice? That was the question a group of monks asked a mystical theologian of the later medieval period, and, in return, he gave them an "experimental practice" to help them. That theologian was the church reformer, mystic, and Cardinal, Nicholas of Cusa, and in response to their query, he sent them an icon to be placed in a room at the monastery. It was what he called an omnivoyant, or all-seeing icon of Christ – the kind whose eyes seem to follow you around a room. The Cardinal then

asked them to take part in an almost liturgical practice – each monk was to walk around the icon, observing how it seemed to watch him wherever he went. The monks were then to ask one another, finding out that each of them had seen the icon look at him alone. Individual brothers were then to contemplate the impossibility of this: that the icon looked at him alone, even as, invisible to him, it also looked solely at his brother. From this icon, a likeness of God, they were then to meditate on the reality of God's vision: that he looks at every person and every thing, individually together, and to use this experiment to think, with prayer, more broadly about how infinite God is, and how inadequate our reason is to the task of understanding him. Cusa's intention here is to jolt us into a realisation that God lies beyond what the intellect can perceive, and that before God, all our knowledge is really what he calls learned ignorance.

Acknowledging the limits of what we know about God, while asking he who is greater than our minds can comprehend to help us, can be a valuable exercise, whether done communally or individually. As Cusa says, using exercises like these can help us to "leap...beyond the image...[to turn] incomprehensibly to the incomprehensible truth." Perhaps you might enjoy trying it yourself!

Emma Mavin



Staying connected during this pandemic

At the Cathedral

<https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/coronavirus/live.streaming>

Newcastle Cathedral ministry team

<https://www.facebook.com/NewcastleCathedral>. Facebook live stream of morning prayer led from home by one of the ministry team daily Monday to Friday at 8.30 am <https://tinyurl.com/NclCathedral>

Subscribe to their channel on YouTube for notifications of the Daily Reflections (also Monday to Friday).

At St Michael's Alnwick

The Church is now open for private prayer from 9 am to 4 pm. Entry through the Duke's Door.

On Sundays at 10am, we are able to worship in person in church. The service will still be live-streamed for all those joining us from home. On Wednesdays there is a celebration of the Eucharist at 10.15 am.

Do join us if you feel comfortable, as we once again gather together in the flesh!

Following the Sunday service, at 10:45am, we will enjoy a get together over coffee.

For other services see page 2.

Copies of **The Gateway** can be obtained from St Michael's Church or ordered for delivery in this version or **large print**

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