

Vicar's Letter – October 2014

There's so much more to praying than asking. Cardinal Basil Hume (former Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster) defined prayer beautifully as, "*trying to raise my heart and mind to God.*" Prayer is essentially a way of expressing and developing our relationship with God, and this may involve our senses and emotions as well as our intellects. No mature relationship is based merely on one-sided requests. Also involved are listening, seeking advice, sharing visions, expressing sorrow, seeking forgiveness, letting off steam and simply enjoying each other's company. As with our human relationships, so in our relationship with God.

The Education Group has devised a 'Prayer Workshop' to enable us all to explore the nature of prayer. Entitled *Food for the Soul*, it will take place between 2pm and 3.30pm on Saturday 18th October. It is designed for young and mature, for those who are relatively new to Christian prayer and also for those with many years of experience. We all have something to learn – after all, the word 'disciple' literally means a 'learner'. We hope that many members of the All Saints congregations will come along, but the event is also open to all.

There will be a series of 'stations' around the church and the atrium offering 'tasters'. *Food for the Soul* will provide a buffet of different approaches to prayer – through words, symbols, icons, drama, art, colours, posture, music and the senses. We shall explore the meaning of the Lord's Prayer and the Angelus, but we shall also learn to pray with coloured ribbons, pebbles and flags! There will be opportunities to write intercessions and to engage in *lectio divina*, but we shall also be able to pray in cyberspace!

Each station will be directed by teams of lay and clergy. A bell will sound every 15 – 20 minutes to encourage people to move on to a new station, and so hopefully the 'prayer pilgrims' will have the chance to experience four or five different approaches during the afternoon. The Prayer Workshop will end with refreshments. Intrigued? Then please do join us for what promises to be a fascinating way to spend 90 minutes of an October afternoon.

Unfortunately, numbers are not strong in our regular Sunday Evensongs. This problem is also experienced in most churches in our Diocese and indeed across the nation. Many have simply closed down their evening services, but at All Saints, we do not want to do this. Consequently, the Ministry Team and PCC have approved a change to the pattern of our Sunday evening services from this month onwards. The new monthly format will be:

- 1st Sunday – **Evensong & Benediction**
- 2nd Sunday – **BCP Evening Prayer** (said)
- 3rd Sunday – a 'carrousel' of **Songs of Praise, Taizé, Meditation, Celtic Prayer**
- 4th Sunday – **Compline**
- 5th Sunday – **Mass** (with laying on of hands for healing)

Hopefully we shall adjust to the new pattern quickly as there will still be a consistent approach month on month. However, the third Sunday will give us the opportunity to offer worship styles and approaches which may well be particularly appealing to some of our members and indeed to others who do not usually attend All Saints. It is unapologetically an experiment! However, there has been a strong feeling that we must give it a try.

October is traditionally the month in which Harvest is celebrated. Our Joint Harvest Mass takes place at 10.30am on Sunday 5th October and it is followed by a marvellous Harvest lunch. Our Harvest collection this year will support the charity *Save the Children* with a particular focus on the Middle East crisis. Also on that day we host Patrick Lumumba, a member of the visiting group from our Deanery Uganda Link, so we shall certainly have a strong international focus for our Harvest celebrations this year.

A word about the first few days of next month. We look forward to welcoming the Venerable Christine Froude (Archdeacon of Malmesbury and acting Archdeacon of Bristol) to help us to celebrate our Patronal Festival of All Saints on Sunday 2nd November at 9.30am and at 11am. For those who are unable to be present on this occasion, there will also be a celebration of Mass for All Saints at 10.30am on Saturday 1st November at which the vicar will preside.

Finally, I would like to thank all who worked so hard and gave so generously of their time to make the *Doors Open Day* such a success. We were visited by 135 people and more than £250 was raised for our Harvest charity. So, well done to the bakers, stewards, welcomers, servers of refreshments and all who engaged our visitors with the fascinating story of All Saints Church past and present.

Yours in the service of Christ,

Fr Kim Taplin

St Paul and Prayer

God is not a 'cosmic genie' who grants our every wish or whim. There is much more to *prayer* than asking for personal, divine favours.

The great Christian missionary, St Paul, helped to establish numerous church communities around the Mediterranean during the first century C.E. His letters of pastoral encouragement and doctrinal instruction to some of those churches - and individual disciples - constitute 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament. In one of the letters, Paul informed his readers about an affliction which hindered his ministry; he described it as a "thorn in the flesh". Many commentators have tried to decode the metaphor of the 'thorn'. Suggestions have included chronic earache, migraines, epilepsy, malaria, defective eyesight, gallstones and leprosy. Possible psychological 'thorns' have been stress, anxiety, depression and even hypochondria! Ultimately, the lack of firm evidence means that all conjectures remain inconclusive (serendipitously, the 'thorn's' anonymity has allowed generations of Christians to identify more personally with Paul's experience).

Paul repeatedly prayed to God, asking that his ailment might be healed:

Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

(2 Corinthians 12. 8 & 9 – R.S.V.)

Why did God permit such a key player in the early Christian mission strategy to carry an injury? Surely more could have been achieved by a fully-fit apostle? It's always worth remembering that God's ways are not our ways. The Lord did respond to Paul's prayer, but the divine wisdom was not to change the apostle's circumstances, rather to enhance his ability to cope. Sometimes, God answers a prayer by changing the *pray-er* himself.

If God does not lighten our loads...he might just strengthen our backs!

Address given at the funeral of Nesta Thomas at All Saints on 5th September 2014
by Jessica Smith, Parish Lay Minister.

Born just 13 days before the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, when the First World War ended – what a long life! A life that began for Nesta as the 7th of 8 children in Skilgate, Somerset. An inauspicious start in some ways, as Nesta's father William had been badly injured in the last days of WW1 and Nesta was herself rather a weak child who was not expected to thrive. Clearly no one quite knew then what a potentially strong character was contained in that frail body and she certainly held her own among her older siblings! In spite of being in a wheelchair some of the time she took full part in their hair-raising games, which once involved her being careered by them downhill at breakneck speed and another time being deposited in a meal bin during a game of hide and seek – after which they left her stranded!

She was taken by her mother to regular hospital appointments in Exeter - by pony and trap as far as Brushford station, then onwards by train. Because of her frail health she had very little formal schooling, learning instead domestic skills from her mother, which were to stand her in good stead during some tough times later on. She never really took to gardening, however. That particular gene seems to have skipped with a great bound to her daughter Judy, whose green fingers are legendary throughout Clifton and beyond!

Nesta got her first job at the age of 16, much to her mother's dismay, as she believed her frail young daughter was not strong enough to work. It was at a local hotel, the Carnarvon Arms. Later she moved to Taunton to work in the newly opened Marks and Spencer, living with her sister Doris.

In 1939 she got married to Cyril. Their first home together was in the village of Bridgetown in the Exe valley, where Cyril was manager of the Corn Mill. During the war years the two of them played a full part in village life at a time when community spirit was not just desirable but essential. They welcomed into their home the American soldiers billeted nearby, and an Italian POW sent to work at The Mill remained in touch with them long after his return home. They all found warm hospitality and fun, it seems, in Nesta's home, which was invariably pervaded by the smell of baking. The Mill continued as a hub for visitors after the war ended. Food was still rationed, of course, and so being able to catch trout from the kitchen window of The Mill was an extra incentive to call round!

In 1943 their lovely daughter Judy was born. Very sadly Cyril died in 1955, at the young age of 39, soon after they had moved to Exton, and while Judy was at St Audries School in West Quantoxhead. Nesta was resourceful, though, and well-used to hard work, so she kept going in spite of continuing poor health, one of her jobs being as a dinner lady at the local school. A couple of years later she married her second husband, Edgar, and their daughter, Deborah, was born in March 1963. Tragically, though, Deborah lived for only three weeks, a devastating blow to Nesta and Edgar.

They moved from Exton to Burrow Farm in the Brendan Hills valley and here Nesta developed a lasting interest in, and affection for, pigs. Perhaps, like Winston Churchill, she formed the opinion that while cats look down on you and dogs look up to you, pigs treat you as equals! I understand, though, she was a great all-round animal lover and that must be the reason a part of today's collection in her memory will go to the PDSA. She had a job in Taunton Vale Industries packing kitchen items, during which time she met Doris, who was to become a life-long friend.

Nesta was in her early sixties when she came to live in Pembroke Road, settling into a very different life from the rural one to which she had been accustomed. She had a job as a care worker with Brunelcare, (or Bristol Old People's Welfare, as it then was,) and she took in lodgers, one of whom was Bob – who is here today, I understand, with his wife Ellie. She began coming to All Saints after being visited by Gordon Williams, a longstanding member of the congregation here. It wasn't perhaps what she had been used to in terms of worship style, but she developed a lasting affection for All Saints, and she made some good friends here. She went on the Walsingham pilgrimages; she was a member of the Mothers' Union, and did stints of church-watching. Judy and her daughters Anna and Sorcha came to Mass with her and I can vividly remember the girls helping with the babies in the crèche. Judy, Anna and Sorcha moved into Norland Road in 1986. Nesta joined them in 1989, along with their dog Lotty, remaining there until fairly recently, after which Nesta went to live in Katherine House, near the Downs, where she ended her days.

You, the family and friends of Nesta, will all have your own special memories which you will enjoy sharing later over tea. Life was clearly not always easy for her, as we've seen, but she was a survivor. Her strength of character, adaptability and determination kept her going, as did the love of those around her. She was faithful to them all, a devoted mother and grandmother, an integral part of the family, one who could make any place into a home, whatever the circumstances. What more could a grandma ask than the accolade her granddaughter Sorcha gave her in her poem just now? "You were all I could have asked you to be". What a lovely way to be remembered! Our hearts go out to Judy, Anna and Sorcha especially today as they begin to come to terms with the loss of a beloved mother and grandmother.

Outgoing, party-loving and hospitable as she was, there was a certain reserve about Nesta, especially in matters of faith, but there was no doubt that it was there sustaining her, underpinning her life. It was a privilege to take her Holy Communion at home when ill health prevented her from coming to church. Judy told me that her mother was always faithful in her prayers and taught her to pray as well - a great legacy. Judy looked after her mother devotedly into old age, and her loving care must be a major reason for Nesta deriving the enjoyment she did in her later years. Nesta gave out generously to others and received richly from them in return. As her longstanding friend Josephine said recently to Judy "She always had a strong character and she was a loyal and loving friend". Loyalty, constancy, devotion, adaptability, steadfastness, all characterised Nesta's long life, for which we give thanks today to God. Now the homemaker has gone to her heavenly home with God, who has loved her all her life and will love her for all eternity. We can be confident that as God receives her, his words are those of the Master in the parable of the talents: "Well done, good and faithful servant." + May she rest in peace.

CHURCH UNION LECTURES 2014

Many of the congregation will be aware that the Bristol Branch of the Church Union organises one or two lectures during the year, more often than not at All Saints in the Randall Room.

This year the lecturer is the Dean of Bristol, The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle, who will speak, with illustrations, on Art & Faith on **Tuesday 14 October** and **Tuesday 21 October**,

on both occasions at 7.30pm. Coffee will be available from 7.00pm, and the start is delayed to give those who have been to the 7.00pm Mass a chance to attend.

This is a unique opportunity to hear a noted communicator speaking on a subject of which he is an acknowledged expert, an opportunity which should not be missed.

Chris Verity

ALL SAINTS PARISH RETREAT 2015

Our next Parish Retreat will take place at Abbey House, Glastonbury on 6-8 February 2015. As usual we will gather at around 5pm on Friday 6 February and aim to finish by around 3pm on Sunday 8 February.

Our conductor is yet to be confirmed.

I will be putting a notice up in the porch soon with a list for people to sign.

Liz Badman

Soup Run and Food Bank

Thank you to everyone who contributed, in any way, towards supporting our Saturday lunchtime visit to the Bear Pit during August. As well as the contributions of time and money, you also gave an astonishing 43 loaves of sandwiches, 12 fruit cakes and 152 bananas!

We know from the many comments received whilst talking to our customers, that the support is very much valued. Equally, many of you have told us that this part of our Christian ministry is both important and moving; to live out the message "Love one another as I have loved you".

As a result of the ongoing need for food and support, the Social and Welcoming Committee are proposing that during Advent this year, All Saints' participate in the North West Bristol Food Bank. More details about the scheme are available at: <http://bristolnwfoodbank.org.uk/> The Bank helps hundreds of people each week who are going through a period of crisis and are struggling to feed themselves and their families.

We will start collecting food from the Feast of Christ the King on 23 November 2014 and will be asking for donations of non perishable food. Examples of the types of food the Bank need include: cereals, tins of puddings, long life fruit juice, pasta, rice, UHT milk, sugar, soup, tea bags, instant coffee. If we all add one item to our shopping list each week, we can make a big difference.

The items we donate will be taken each week to the Food Bank collection point and from there distributed to people in need.

Notices will be going up in church to remind you of the dates, together with suggestions for donations

We look forward to a successful 'Food Bank Advent'

Caroline Griffiths on behalf of the Social and Welcoming Committee

**THOMAS TRAHERNE,
Poet, Spiritual Writer**

When I came into the Country, and being seated among silent Trees, had all my Time in mine own Hands, I resolved to spend it all, whatever it cost me, in search of Happiness, and to satiate that burning Thirst which Nature had rekindled in me from my Youth. (Centuries of Meditations, III, 46)

The Anglican Church remembers many different sorts of people from all walks of life, as well as the well-known Saints, and Fathers and Mothers of the Church. This is excellent as we get a rich cross section of what it is to be a part of the Christian Church.

October has a good variety of these people and Thomas Traherne is one of them, he is remembered on 10 October, the date of his burial in St Mary's Church Teddington.

I have a great affection for Traherne's writings because of his connection to Hereford and the surrounding villages, mostly Credenhill, the village next to the one I lived in as a young girl.

He was born in Hereford in 1636, and although his birth is not registered in parish records his father is possibly Philip Traherne an 'innkeeper and twice Mayor of Hereford. He was well educated, first at Hereford Cathedral School, then Brasenose College Oxford where he gained his Baccalaureate in 1656, MA in 1661 and Bachelor of Divinity in 1669.

In 1657 he became rector of Credenhill, about 5 miles outside Hereford. He wasn't ordained, but was a preacher. He was ordained in 1660. He held other livings as well, one at St Mary's Teddington, but his heart was with the parish and people of Credenhill and he continued to hold that living until his death in 1674 at the age of 38. His Church Warden at Credenhill said of him 'our minister is continually resident amongst us.'

His church wardens also described him as 'a good & Godly man, well learned ... a good liver' who 'visited the poor and instructed the youth'. He also worked closely with Hereford Cathedral clergy.

Traherne is rooted Hereford, it was his childhood home, it is where he held his first living, it influenced his writings. I can empathise with that as I lived near Credenhill and then in Hereford and was much influenced by the beauty of this lovely Border county, I hold it closely in my heart.

Traherne's imagery of the natural world runs through his writings, in an exploration of the glory of Creation and his passionate description of an intimate relationship with God. It

reminds me of some of the writings of Medieval women mystics, though he has been compared to later spiritual writers – Gerald Manley Hopkins, Walt Whitman and William Blake.

His best known works are *Centuries of Meditations*, an example of which I have put at the beginning of the short article.

Some other examples of his writings:

You are as prone to Love as the sun to shine.
(Centuries 2.65.)

Those that think our union with God so incredible, are taught more in the sacrament. He gives himself to be our food, is united with us. Incorporated within us, for what doth he intimate by the Bread and Wine, but as the Bread and Wine are mingled with our flesh, and is nourishment diffused through all our members, so he is Love mingling with our love as flame with flame, Knowledge shining in our knowledge as Light with light, an omnipresent sphere within our sphere.
(The Meditations II.66)

Love is deeper than at first it can be thought. It never ceases but in endless things. It ever multiplies. It benefits and its designs are always infinite. Were you not Holy, Divine, and Blessed in enjoying the world, I should not care so much to bestow it. But now in this you accomplish the end of your Creation, and serve God best, and please him most: I rejoice in giving it. For to enable you to please God, is the highest service a man can do you. It is to make you pleasing to the King of Heaven, that you may be the Darling of his bosom.
(Centuries I.11)

His path to God was based on happiness and Love.

Liz Badman

IN THIS MONTH... OCTOBER 1939

Excerpts from NOTES OF THE VICAR-DESIGNATE, FR. CYRIL TOMKINSON

A strange vicar's first letter to his new parish is bound to be personal. But who wants to be personal at a time like this?

On August 28th I came over to Clifton and after consultation with the clergy and one available churchwarden it was decided we should seek the Bishop's permission for me to begin work here at once in the event of war. I was due to start my holiday that very Monday evening, but holidays are not to be thought of. I thank you very much for the kind welcome you have given me in my anomalous position when you must be feeling more acutely than ever the loss of your vicar and friend of 28 years standing.

Continuous intercession was maintained daily in this church throughout the last war. But the circumstances of this war are very different. Many more of the civil population are engaged in various kinds of war work; with billeting and other difficulties many more people are tied and even burdened with home duties and house work. But the matter is of course under consideration; and we hope before long to get out some practical scheme. Meanwhile I need not urge you to pray much for victory and a lasting peace, if it be God's will, for all who are fighting, for the wounded, the dying and the dead, for the chaplains, the doctors and the

nurses, for all who have to make momentous decisions and so on. Let the church and indeed your whole life be a spiritual munition factory, but one which is really efficient.

As regards days of fasting and abstinence: Fish is likely to become scarce and expensive. There may be meat which needs to be “finished up”; and economy must be observed. I wrote therefore on this subject to the Bishop, who replied, “I am very willing to dispense your folk from the strict observances of days of abstinence should the need arise.” But we will of course when we avail ourselves of this dispensation, try to mark these days with some other small act of self-denial.

The church will, if all is well, be kept open with very subdued lighting till 8 p.m. on all weekdays. Please remember NOT to turn on any extra lights. Be careful not to bring into the church hand-bags or other oddments which may be put down on a chair and then promptly lost in the dark.

Please notice that during the present emergency when many people are extremely busy, a priest will always be in the confessional by the font on Sundays at 7.35 a.m. and after High Mass. The Faithful are urged to live in a state of grace and to frequent the sacraments with great devotion so that they may be ready for any and every call which may be made upon them.

You must all be overburdened with intercessions at this time. I fear to make this request. But my need is as great as is the work I have been called upon to do amongst you. Of your charity spare me an occasional place in your prayers as All Saints’ is ever in my own.

Organ News

As you know, we have been busy since February raising money for the rebuild of the organ, and I am most grateful to all those who have contributed in any way to this ambitious enterprise – from donations to collecting money in ‘pipes’, attending events or producing delicious cakes.

I know some have expressed the view that the organ sounds ‘all right’, and it is true that it does sound good, but a lot of the instrument is not working and can’t be repaired because of a lack of access, and the action is proving increasingly unreliable and unmanageable. So, on 13th October, the organ firm, Nicholsons will spend two weeks dismantling the instrument, and will store most of the pipe work at their base in Malvern whilst a new console chassis and action are built. The dismantling process will, inevitably, lead to some inconvenience in terms of the use of the church for insurance reasons, and details of this will be forthcoming.

Whilst our organ is out of action, Nicholsons are lending us an electronic organ, and the re-installation will, hopefully, take place over a three week period in late-February and March next year. Visually, there will be no changes to the organ, apart from its concrete base, where there will be insertions for access doors. Tonally, the organ will sound much the same, although three new ranks of pipes will replace three which do not blend in currently, and give us considerable extra versatility, and there will be ‘revoicing’ of some stops as they are put back to give the organ a more cohesive sound. In the end, I am sure we shall have a much more versatile and reliable instrument, which will not only serve our needs liturgically, but also be a first-rate teaching and recital instrument.

We have raised the creditable sum of £23,500 (plus £125,000 in place prior to the launch) since that memorable ‘Promises Auction’ in February, but our target of £250,000 is still a long way off, so we shall continue to have fund-raising activities for a while yet, so please continue your support and keep filling those ‘pipes’. We have spares in the choir vestry!

John Davenport

NEXT EVENT

Something for everyone to enjoy - 'Going Places'- an entertainment devised by Ken and Jessica Smith which 'rejoices in the English Landscape in Song, Verse and Place Names'. It will include a delicious English-themed Supper and the Bar will be open! Tickets (including supper) £15

Book your ticket now and get 'on board'! We depart at 7.30 p.m.

Bishop's Message for August – Life with just the good bits?

As he was nearing the end of his cycle ride last month Bishop Lee was asked to write something for the Western Daily Press. A sign on the road from Wigan particularly caught his eye as his article explains:

As I write this I am expecting to complete the final leg of a cycle ride from John O Groats to Land's End. I say 'expecting' knowing very well how expectations can be disappointed or frustrated. In September last year all the preparations had been set for this ride - the route decided, accommodation booked, time set aside, and a partner recruited to join and support me in the journey.

All this planning and anticipation seemed to be in vain when three weeks before I was due to start I was diagnosed with Hodgkin Lymphoma and immediately scheduled to begin four months of chemotherapy, followed by radiotherapy. As you might imagine, the contrast was extraordinary and could hardly have been further from my hopes or expectations.

Elements of my story have been told elsewhere and I do not want to replay them here, but one thing I began to see was how often there can be a blessing in what appears to be anything but. I also learned more about holding lightly to expectations and embracing the Christian conviction that in all things God works together for good for those who love him. It is not that 'all things' are good - being diagnosed with cancer is not 'a good thing' of itself - but that God can use such adversities positively, and to bring a blessing.

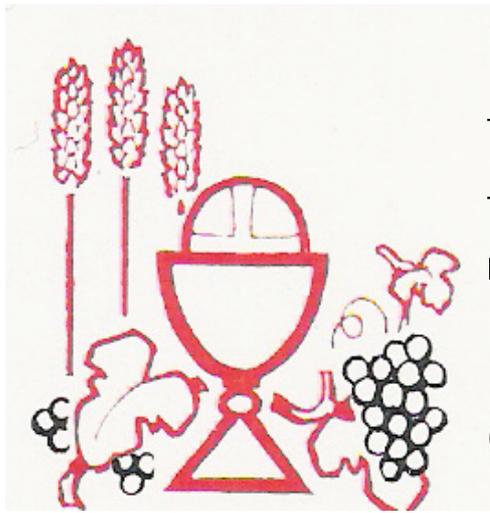
Earlier this week, as I was riding the stage from Wigan to Church Stretton in Shropshire, I passed a new development of retirement homes. There were several posters showing happy couples in their twilight years with the tagline "Life with just the good bits". It was seductive, but ultimately somewhat shallow and begged the question as to what are the good bits? Over the years time and again I have noticed that it is through challenges and hard realities that people often say they grew most. By growing I mean becoming more mature, more responsible, deeper and more real. These are times when character is tested and we are given an opportunity to develop and see ourselves in a fresh light.

Two people who have been especially powerful examples of this in recent months are Stephen Sutton and Denise Inge. Stephen was the teenager who became an inspiration and remarkable fundraiser through the way he faced a diagnosis of incurable cancer, touching the lives of millions through social media and always looking for the positive. Denise's story, the wife of the Bishop of Worcester, did not have the coverage of Stephen's but was exemplified by both positivity and deep reflection on life and death from a Christian perspective. Denise said that she found that, contrary to expectations, learning to live was intimately bound up with learning to die - echoing the insights of Jesus. Her funeral was marked with profound grief but also a powerful sense of faith and hope. The fact that she died at Easter only added to this

My desire to cycle the 'End to End' may have been a personal aspiration and challenge but I have made it an opportunity to raise funds to support a country and cause dear to my heart. Uganda is a beautiful land with a lovely climate which has been regularly torn by violence and blighted by corruption and poverty. Church leaders have a key role in helping their communities to face these challenges and to overcome them. I have set myself a goal of raising £10,000 to support them in this and you can read more about this and make a donation by visiting the Virgin Giving site under my name - or put 'Le Tour de Lee' into a search engine.

My eldest son, Matt, sent me a text early on in the ride asking whether I was enjoying myself or simply enduring. It was a good question as muscle stiffness and saddle soreness had begun to take a toll. I was able to reply that I was loving it - the wonderful scenery, amazing landscapes, and even the hard climbs! Enjoying the good in life is not accomplished by extracting all the bad times but by experiencing them through a lens which transforms them.

*Lee Rayfield
Bishop of Swindon
Diocese of Bristol*



All Saints Clifton

HARVEST THANKS- GIVING

Sunday 5th October
10.30 am

Our 9.30 and 11am congregations come together for

**HARVEST FESTIVAL
PARISH MASS**
for everyone

All very welcome