

Vicar's letter – April 2015

Dear Friends,

By now, you will have heard the news of our departure in May to return to a ministry in school chaplaincy. For those who have not been able to read the letter which was shared with the parish at the beginning of March, I write some of the key sentences below:

“This church community has given us so much in such a short time. You have welcomed us, taught us, prayed with us, laughed with us and cried with us. Our Church Wardens, Philippa and Andrew have been hugely supportive and encouraging of the Vicar and his wife, and I want to publicly pay tribute to them both for their love and very practical care and commitment. My fellow licensed priest, Fr Charles, has become a great friend, a reassuring colleague, and a wise guide.

I have worked particularly closely with a number of you in worship, education, administration and in committee work. I want to thank you all for the kindness and support you have shown to the Vicar, and for the depth and breadth of your knowledge and expertise. Members of our congregations - Chryssa and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your friendship and trust; for sharing your precious stories with us and allowing us to walk alongside you.”

You will probably be reading this at Easter or just afterwards. We will have just celebrated the most significant event in the history of the cosmos – the Resurrection of Jesus Christ! When people reflect on resurrection, they usually think about the past or the future. The focus may be upon the events at a garden tomb just outside the walls of Jerusalem. Alternatively, there may be musings about life after death. But this is not the full story. What about the ‘here and now’? If the Resurrection of Christ is to have any meaning, it has to make sense for us in the present.

There is a marvellous cameo in St Luke’s narrative of the resurrection. Two dazzling angels ask the startled women at the empty tomb of Jesus, *“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”* (St Luke 24.5) They were seeking the corpse of a mere rabbi but, after Easter, nothing would ever be the same again. The Resurrection of Christ opened up the possibility of something new and revolutionary – eternal life experienced as a new quality of living in the here and now; a perceptive way of seeing; an authentic way of loving.

However, so many of us are still searching in the wrong places for the Risen Christ. He is not to be found, *“among long-dead dogmas, in old decaying fears and hurts, in the guilts and resentments we inhabit like a coffin.”* (from *Looking in the Wrong Places* by Kathy Galloway) In fact, the new life of Christ is to be found precisely within the ordinary routine of our lives. God’s resurrection life is revealed where enemies forgive each other; where the estranged are reconciled; where the humiliated are celebrated; where the deserving are rewarded; where the exhausted receive refreshment and where those who cannot cope with living find fresh strength to carry on.

For Christ, nothing was lost in his death which was not recovered in his Resurrection. And for us too, nothing in our lives is wasted or left behind. We may only glimpse the light, reflected and refracted through our partial vision. But, even the smallest action, word or thought for good is somehow celebrated in Christ’s resurrected life.

As a church we must look forward to new things. The Bishop of Bristol is committed to the place of All Saints in the family of this Diocese. Archdeacon Christine Froude has been meeting with Philippa, Andrew and Fr Charles to plan for the vacancy, which God willing should be much shorter than last time. There is good reason to be optimistic that a new incumbent could be in place in a matter of months. We pray so.

At the time of writing this letter, we are about to enter Holy Week. It has been quite instructive to reflect for a few minutes on the Resurrection, even as we are preparing to wave our palms and enter Jerusalem with our Lord! I am reminded that darkness and death do not have the final word. The darkness is passing because the Son has risen! There will be a happy ending. Light and love will rise phoenix-like from the ashes of darkness and evil. Optimism and hope will overcome pessimism and despair. This is our faith and it is the message which we proclaim to a needy world.

Yours in the service of the Risen Christ,

Fr Kim Taplin

Alison Watson 1921-2015

Those of us who have been at All Saints for 15 years or more will remember Alison Watson, a small sprightly blonde Scottish person. She arrived in Bristol in the 1980s and settled at All Saints, becoming a stalwart of the Mother and Toddler Group, the coffee rota and our welcoming team. She came to Bristol to be with her daughter, Aileen, who was ill and later died. She returned to her native Scotland in 1998, settling in a flat in Edinburgh with stunning views of the Pentland Hills where she was visited by passing All Saints friends on many occasions. She died on February 5th in a nursing home in Edinburgh, after a year of increasing infirmity that had curtailed her customary frenetic activity.

Alison was enigmatic. No-one really knew how old she was until her 85th birthday when she divulged her antiquity with some pride. We knew she had been born one of five children of a tenant farmer near Melrose, that her first husband, a sailor, had died in action by 1942 and that she had married at least once more and had lived in Hong Kong and on Ascension Island with a husband who worked for one of the secret services.

She settled into her local Scottish Episcopal parish, St Salvador's in Stenhouse where she was much loved and supported as the years passed. Her ministry there was much the same as it had been at All Saints, brewing coffee by the bucket-full, spotting and welcoming newcomers and admiring and making friends with babies and small children. It was clear at her funeral that she had been very much loved by the congregation who had turned out in force. The rector had taken her communion every Sunday since she had not been able to come to church. She had left clear instructions as to how her sendoff should be, favouring the best of an All Saints-style funeral model, carried out beautifully by the slightly less high church rector, the Revd. Nicola Moll, with reception into church and mass the evening before. Incense, something feared by most Scots, was used and had apparently caused a stir. The funeral tribute left us not much the wiser about the earlier parts of her life. It did confirm that she was always on the lookout for shapely calves in kilt hose, and that she had great zest for life. It was attended by several of the nieces and great nieces that she spoke of. It was arranged by her niece-in-law who had visited her almost daily and who with her cousin had enabled her to stay in her own home for so long. Her ashes will be buried beside her favourite nephew in Co Sligo at Easter.

Bishop's Message – April 2015

Science, faith and the resurrection of Jesus

As we approach Easter, Bishop Lee describes the place the resurrection holds for him as a scientist and disciple of Jesus.

Yesterday evening I had supper with a colleague and friend who is a senior scientist and a philosopher. We always seem to have great conversations and this one was no different. My friend – let's call him Alan – describes himself as an atheist but is one of the most open people I know. At the heart of his openness is a genuine pursuit of truth. For Alan, scientific endeavour offers the surest route for establishing what truth is.

One of the reasons our conversations are so engaging is because Alan genuinely wants to know how Christians who are scientists hold tensions between their faith and a scientific worldview. This theme emerged again as I recorded a piece on local radio for British Science Week. The presenter asked me which had taken precedence in my life – Christian belief or scientific understanding. My experience is that they have always interwoven.

Having gone along to 'Sunday School' from childhood I cannot say whether there was a period that God, and in particular the person of Jesus, was not absent from my thinking. Yet as a young teenager I also came to a point where I realised the significance of questions related to truth and commitment to the Christian faith. Put simply, was belief something I had been brought up with but now needed to put behind me - or was it something that needed to more radically shape my life and choices? If God has truly come among us in Jesus, been crucified and buried but raised to a new life, that reality required a serious response and a commitment. Was this true and how might I judge?

One aspect was undoubtedly the impact I saw in the lives of peers – they provided examples of what being a disciple entailed. However, what might be called my scientific mind-set (albeit less well developed then than now) caused me to focus on that fundamental event – the resurrection. In particular I reflected on what could have caused Jesus' followers to become the people they became, and proclaim the things they did, if there had not been a transformative experience after Christ's brutal crucifixion. For me, the weight of evidence was critical in making that step of commitment. It could not be solely described as rational, but it was reasonable, coherent and consistent.

In my dinner conversation with Alan it was the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus which I marked as the datum point – and not only so for me but for Christian faith and understanding. These linked events change everything. One of the quotes the radio presenter had for me was attributed to Professor Stephen Hawking: miracles are not consistent with scientific understanding. I humbly do not believe that to be the case – the core miracle of Jesus' resurrection gives birth itself to a worldview which does not diminish the place and importance of scientific learning but sets it within a far greater reality.

In the Church of England, we regard the insights of science as vital and often reframe or challenge our assumptions, prejudices and practices. Yet the resurrection of Jesus, with its promise of a new beginning for creation itself, refutes the trajectory science predicts for the cosmos. The resurrection declares that the universe is not ultimately destined for futility but transformation. This is a truth which Alan recognised as holding a life changing hope even if he personally cannot embrace it. Our task is to make it visible and what is at work in us is the very power which raised Jesus from the dead.

+Lee

IN THIS MONTH ... APRIL 1915

[Excerpts from the Vicar's, Canon Gillson's, plea for marking St George's Day]

It would have struck our forefathers of the 14th century as strange that it should be necessary to make a solemn announcement in a 'High Church' Parish Magazine that 23rd of April will be St George's day! ... This year it must be different; we are beginning to feel now that we

are a nation and that we have a life and a heritage to preserve, for which we are daily giving the best of our Country's life-blood. If we have a Patron Saint, let us at least recognise him, enlist his sympathy, seek the aid of his prayers, and make his Festival a day on which to focus our intercessions for the War and the Empire, and to offer to God our thanksgivings for his mercies to us as a people. In Edward VI's first prayer book, St George is given a Red Letter Day; in a later edition he is reduced to the rank of a Black Letter Day; but the day is still marked in our Calendar and it should at least form a natural rallying point at which we meet to bring our Country's needs before the King of Saints.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN CLIFTON, COTHAM AND REDLAND

BRISTOL WEST HUSTINGS 2015

SUNDAY 19 APRIL 2015

REDLAND PARK UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
WHITELADIES ROAD BRISTOL BS6 6SA
FROM 3PM TO 4.30PM

Conservative:	Claire Hiscott
Greens:	Darren Hall
Independence for Bristol:	Dawn Perry
Labour:	Thangam Debbonaire
Left Unity:	Stewart Weston
Liberal Democrat:	Stephen Williams
UKIP:	Paul Turner



Holy Week & Easter at All Saints

PALM SUNDAY 29 March

8.00 am Mass & Palm Distribution

9.30 am **FAMILY SERVICE**

10.45 am **PALM PROCESSION & SOLEMN MASS**

6.00 pm Evening Prayer

MONDAY, TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

7.00pm Mass with address

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2 April

9.00am Mass

7.30 pm **SOLEMN MASS OF THE LAST SUPPER**

followed by Watch of the Passion until midnight

GOOD FRIDAY 3 April

10.00 am **GOOD FRIDAY FAMILY SERVICE**

12 noon 'THE WAY OF THE CROSS'
Good Friday Devotional Service (one hour)

1.30 pm **SOLEMN LITURGY OF GOOD FRIDAY**

HOLY SATURDAY - EASTER EVE 4 April

11.00 am Children build the Easter Garden
followed by Blessing at 12 noon

8.00 pm **GREAT EASTER VIGIL &
FIRST MASS OF EASTER**

EASTER DAY 5 April

8.00 am Mass

9.30 am **Short EASTER DAY FAMILY MASS**

11.00 am **PROCESSION & FESTIVAL MASS**

6.00 pm Compline by candlelight

