

February 2016, thoughts from Father Charles:

A Pilgrim People with Purpose

As you'll probably be aware, our theme for Lent will be 'Pilgrimage'. Whilst we typically think of pilgrimage in terms of a physical journey toward a sacred goal, it can also take on the meaning of not being in the place you want to be. This has the sense of being in transit.

The church is a good example of a pilgrim people in this way. We, the church, have a purpose, this is our mission. We think of mission in terms of 'proclaiming the Gospel' and 'furthering the Kingdom'. Historically we have placed great energy in this activity sending missionaries overseas, engaging in mission activities, planting new churches – these are all activities that we have seen to be the task of 'the church'.

Partners in the Purpose of God

An alternative perspective is that mission is not the primary activity of the church but is an attribute of God. This idea has led to Moltmann (1975) saying 'it is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world, it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the Church.' This means that the role of the church becomes that of being God's chosen partner, to participate in the work he is already doing in the world.

This activity of God, that's already up and running and in which we participate, impacts on the whole of creation and flows from his very own nature. The term used to describe it is '*Missio Dei*', and it tries to capture the overflowing of the love of God's being and nature into God's purposeful activity in the world.

As the mission of God flows from his very being it will reflect the nature of God as three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A characteristic of mission must therefore be about relationship, since the Trinity exist in a perfect relationship of love. This means that justice, human well-being, right relating, care for the created world become features of our missional activity as we partner with God's purpose.

When I was first ordained (back in the 1980s) the Anglican Consultative Council (one of the 'three instruments' of the Anglican Communion – see the article on the Primates Meeting) attempted to define the 'five marks of mission'. This they saw as 'partnering' with God to:

- Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- Teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- Respond to human need through loving service
- Seek to transform unjust structures in society
- Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation

These five marks are still very relevant, possibly more so, since the traditional structure of the church is increasingly challenged by limited and reducing resources and what feels like an increasingly secular culture. The need to reflect on what we are and do, and reimagine what we might be and how we might go about this becomes increasingly urgent. In the way of 'pilgrimage' we may see ourselves in not being in the place we want to be or need to be.

Our Pilgrimage

If it is God's will that the church as believers comes to share his heart for the world and therefore become participants in the *missio Dei* then we need to be guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

There are all very fine ways of understanding mission and our place in participating in the work of God, but the problem comes when we translate this into the reality of what we

actually do. How we invest our energy and focus our thinking, as individuals and, specifically, as the church at All Saints Clifton. How do we recognise and stay true to our foundation, become active in our context here in Clifton (and Bristol) yet also have sight and influence more widely, and participate, as partners, in the *missio Dei*?

The Parish Conference

On Saturday 5 March, during Lent and whilst the Pilgrimage theme is running, we will have our Parish Conference. The purpose of the Conference will be to allow ourselves to listen to, be guided by and enabled through the Holy Spirit to reframe our place in participating in God's Purpose here. My expectation is that we will develop a real sense of purpose with some clear actions and objectives that are in keeping with our foundation and will both give us a real place in the *missio Dei* and also re-energise and motivate us for the next episode in the life of All Saints.

With Prayers and Blessings,



The Anglican Communion and the Meeting of Primates - Canterbury 2016

What is the Anglican Communion?

Christianity is the world's largest religion with more than two billion followers. Anglicanism is one of the traditions or expressions of Christian Faith (along with Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and the Protestant Churches). The word 'Anglican' springs from *ecclesia anglicana* (a phrase dating from 1246) meaning the English Church.

Anglicanism formally emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries in England, through the Reformation, when new Protestant groups split from the Roman Catholic Church across Europe. It attempted to forge something of a middle way; consequently Anglicans described themselves as 'Reformed Catholics'.

It spread through Anglican missionaries and is particularly strong in Commonwealth Countries and other areas with historic links to the British Empire, but not exclusively. Today there are estimated to be up to 85 million Anglicans in the world, worshipping in 38 independent national churches - known as Provinces. Additionally, there are six semi-autonomous 'extra provincial' churches in places such as the Falkland Islands and Bermuda.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, is effectively the spiritual leader of Anglicanism but has little direct power. He is viewed as "first among equals" of the Anglican leaders – or Primates.

The Meeting of Primates

The **Primates' Meeting** was established in 1978 by Archbishop Donald Coggan (101st Archbishop of Canterbury) as an opportunity for “leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation” and has met regularly since. The Primates' Meeting is one of the three ‘Instruments of Communion’; the other two ‘Instruments’ being the **Lambeth Conference** and the **Anglican Consultative Council**.

This meeting of the Anglican Primates (the senior bishops of the 38 Anglican Provinces, joined by the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of North America - ACNA) took place in Canterbury between Monday 11 January and Friday 15 January at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The first morning was spent in prayer and fasting.

What happened at the 2016 Primate Meeting?

There was a unanimous agreement acknowledging, and despite, the significant differences that exist between the meeting members, they would ‘walk together in the grace and love of Christ’. This would demonstrate the ‘commitment of all the Primates to continue the life of the Communion with neither victor nor vanquished’. The significant differences related to the Doctrine of Marriage.

The critical feature was the fact that the Episcopal Church of America (TEC) at its General Convention in July 2015 changed the canonical language that defined marriage as being between a man and a woman, so as to authorise two new marriage rites. These two rites have language allowing them to be used by same-sex or opposite-sex couples. For many this was unacceptable, primarily on grounds of theology, in particular the authority of Scripture. An additional argument concerns national culture, suggesting that in many parts of the world such relationships are wholly unacceptable. The ‘many’ who found this decision by TEC unacceptable were essentially the more conservative African Archbishops and others with a strong Evangelical position.

It was expected that at the meeting there would be an exodus of conservative African Archbishops, this did not occur. However, Archbishop Stanley Ntagali, of the African Church of Uganda, did leave. Prior to the meeting he said that this is what he would do unless ‘discipline and godly order’ were restored in the Anglican Communion. In other words that TEC should be brought back ‘in to line’.

The result was that a majority of Primates, voted in favour of a recommendation prepared by the Standing Committee, and determined that the Episcopal Church should be sanctioned and no longer participate in the working of the Anglican Communion for a period of three years. The presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church (TEC - Michael Curry) said that such exclusion would bring pain, especially to ‘a Church where all should be truly welcome’. Additionally, they approved a further recommendation that Archbishop Justin be asked to appoint a Task Force to maintain conversation, restore the relationship, build mutual trust and explore the differences.

Apart from the issue of Same-sex Marriage, what else happened?

This subject of same-sex union dominated media attention. Yet other subjects were discussed by the Primates, these were associated with Relief and Development Work; and the Response to War and Conflict.

The key elements (not including the exclusion of TEC) within the final communique were:

- Primates condemned homophobic prejudice and violence and resolved to work together to offer pastoral care and loving service irrespective of sexual orientation. This conviction arises out of our discipleship of Jesus Christ. The Primates reaffirmed their rejection of criminal sanctions against same-sex attracted people.
- The Primates recognise that the Christian church and within it the Anglican Communion have often acted in a way towards people on the basis of their sexual orientation that has caused deep hurt. Where this has happened they express their profound sorrow and affirm again that God's love for every human being is the same, regardless of their sexuality, and that the church should never by its actions give any other impression.
- That consideration of the application for admission to membership of the Anglican Communion of the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA – this is the break-away group from TEC) should be passed to the Anglican Consultative Council. This application, were it to come forward, will 'raise significant questions of polity and jurisdiction'.
- Following the climate change conference in Paris there has been a petition of almost two million signatures co-ordinated by the Anglican Environment Network. This demands a response from the Anglican Communion and reports were made about moves to divest from fossil fuels, the expansion of the African Deserts and the struggle for survival of the peoples of the Pacific as island life is threatened in many places by the rise of sea levels.
- Primates also discussed the reality of religiously motivated violence and its impact on people and communities throughout the world. Primates living in places where such violence is a daily reality spoke movingly and passionately about their circumstances and the effect on their members.

They also agreed that the next Primates Meeting would be 2017 and then 2019; and also a Lambeth Conference in 2020.

What are the questions we might reflect on?

There are all sorts of questions and thought that arise from this event and its outcomes. I put the following four into your minds for reflection.

- Would it matter if there had been a schism of the Anglican Communion?
- Is the decision to 'exclude' the Episcopal Church (TEC) for three years, and allow the Task Force to address the topic, a good one?

- Did the desire for 'unity' win over the challenge of redefining the Doctrine of Marriage?
- Why did the topic of same-sex Christian marriage dominate media attention (and become the primary focus for the Primates) whilst there were other hugely important topics under discussion?

IN THIS MONTH...FEBRUARY 1930

Excerpts from the vicar's (Canon Gillson's) notes

In response to a number of requests the Social Committee is arranging for a Parish Social in the All Saints' Hall to take place on February 19th, 7.30 to 11 p.m. Refreshment tickets price 1/- may be bought at the Choir School or from Mr Probyn, Alma Vale Road. We learn from experience how to run these evenings; the most popular programme seems to be to keep the first hour as informal as possible and to encourage conversation by items of music. The fact that our conversational powers have to be repressed for a few moments ensures that we shall break forth into an even more scintillating manner when the musician has done with us. At 8.30 we have refreshments, which should lead to a general post so far as seats are concerned and draw us into fresh groups. Then at 9 o'clock we all become very formal and solemn while those slow movements are executed on the floor of the house to which the present generation apply the term dancing: at least that is how it appears to an ancient Victorian who used to enjoy a polka, or a gallop to John Peel - no doubt he is sadly out of date. This year we shall provide some whist tables in the small hall for those who prefer that form of entertainment.

That the church should have been made warm, and kept so for several weeks, in mid-winter is so astonishing an accomplishment that it deserves to be put on record. It reached what I hoped was a climax on a singularly warm Sunday when the temperature was high enough to satisfy any lizard with normal circulation. Whether the change is desirable or not is of course entirely a matter of opinion, but I hope that those who have complained so long and bitterly of the arctic cold in church may feel that for once their needs have been attended to and fully satisfied, and will not forget the coal bill.

Lent Charities 2016

Each year, the PCC selects two charities for the congregation to support through self denial, one home and one overseas. This year, the home charity is local, Crisis Centre Ministries.

Crisis Centre Ministries (CCM) is a Christian charity that has been working in Bristol for over 30 years, dedicated to helping those with life disrupting problems, such as homelessness and addiction, to enjoy a healthy independent life.

CCM is rooted in the Christian faith. God commands his followers to love him, love their fellow neighbours and to help those less fortunate than themselves. Workers believe in loving people as God loves them and their practical work is an expression of the love that God has for every human being.

Most of the staff and volunteers belong to local churches and would identify themselves as Christians. Funding comes primarily from gifts and donation from individuals, churches and trusts who support the work done.

Some of the projects operating currently are:

i. Wild Goose Drop-in centre and café which opens five days and six evenings per week, providing free hot food, practical support and signposting to other social and voluntary services.

ii. The LIFE course helps clients who are in recovery to develop resilience through the development of practical life skills.

iii. The Spring of Hope Womens' Night Shelter provides emergency accommodation as well as emotional support and practical support, to women fleeing from abuse, relationship breakdown and sex work.

iv. The East Bristol Foodbank provides short-term emergency food provision to those in extreme need.

For the overseas charity, await the March edition.

CATHOLIC DEVOTION 2016

The Bristol Catholic Societies ASSUMPTIONTIDE FESTIVAL will take place this year on SATURDAY 20th AUGUST.

Solemn Concelebrated Mass in Bristol Cathedral at noon, at which the Principal Celebrant and Preacher will be the Rt Revd Michael Langrish, formerly Bishop of Exeter. Vespers of Our Lady and Benediction in the Lord Mayor's Chapel, College Green, at 3.00pm.

All Hallows, Easton, will celebrate their Festival of the Nativity of Our Lady on SATURDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER. Solemn Mass at noon, Benediction at 3.00pm

THE GLASTONBURY PILGRIMAGE will be on SATURDAY JULY 9th. The Preacher at the Solemn Mass at noon will be the Rt Revd Philip North, Bishop of Burnley. Procession of Witness and Benediction at 3.00pm.

All are welcome to all these functions. Further details will be published in due course.

Chris Verity

From Jesus to Jill Masefield 21.03.14

“Come, dance with me amongst the stars and see how the seasons are changing. See how the flowers break forth out of the cold hard earth. It’s my miracle to symbolise the truth that there is joy and refreshment from the hand of God after pain. See the carpets of bluebells in

the woods and hear the heavenly singing of birds in the trees above. Walk therefore with me to the shady glade and let's rest here beside the stream and put our toes in the ice cold water and rejoice in laughter and fellowship – you with me and me with you for that is the true treasure of what I bought on the cross for humanity” saith the Lord.

Lent 2016

The Theme of 'Pilgrimage'

Our theme this year will be 'Pilgrimage'. As indicated in the Vicar's Letter, this is appropriate at a time in which we are taking stock of where we are and where we would like to be, or want to be, as a church engaged in the Mission of God on this earth. This is the topic we will be visiting, also during Lent, at the Parish Conference.

Pilgrimage is present in so many cultures, traditions and historical contexts. Often with the same or similar characteristics; pilgrims separate themselves from the 'everyday world', they often wear different clothes or carry and wear symbols of the pilgrimage, they may abstain from physical comforts or particular life comforts, often they commence a journey to a sacred place, and link this to a sacred time.

In the New Testament, and in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, Christians are pictured as 'pilgrims and strangers'. They are seen as a people on earth who have turned away from the things that separate them from God's presence and so, as hopeful citizens of heaven, they try to follow a path of daily obedience to God, which leads ultimately to a true homeland in God's presence.

This Lent we have the opportunity to participate in a number of activities which will enable us to make our pilgrimage toward Easter and to a better understanding of our own faith – individually, as the Church (here at All Saints) and as 'The Church' - partnering in God's Mission.

The Pilgrim Diary for Lent

Ash Wednesday 7.30pm Festival Mass 10 February 2016

Here we are marked with the sign of the Cross, in ash, on Ash Wednesday. The Festival Mass will be at 7.30pm (the daily Wednesday Mass will also be at 9.30 am) at which we wear the symbol of pilgrimage, a sign that, with the words spoken to Adam and Eve ("Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return" – Genesis 3:19), makes explicit that we try to turn away from those aspects of this world that separate us from God.

The Five Sundays in Lent

The theme of 'Pilgrimage' will be visible in the sermons and expositions during the course of the Sundays in Lent.

Tuesday Evening Reflections 7.45pm 'The Tough Sayings of Jesus' **16 and 23 February and 1, 8 and 15 March**

On Tuesday evenings during Lent the usual Mass will take place at 7.00pm. This will be followed by reflections on the 'The Tough Sayings of Jesus'. Within the Gospels we find a number of examples where Jesus is talking pretty plainly and it's difficult to understand or interpret. These are often 'tough sayings' such as "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" or "to whoever has, more will be given, and he will have in abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away".

Each Tuesday, there will be a reflection on one of the tough sayings, so that we, as pilgrims, can use the 'discomfort' of Christ's teaching to confront the everyday world.

Stations of the Cross and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 20 March 6.00pm

During the evening of Sunday 20 March, which is Palm Sunday and the start of Holy Week, Evening Prayer will be the *Stations of the Cross* followed by a conducted meditation at an **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament**. This will mark the final step in our 'Lenten Pilgrimage', as we enter that sacred time and space which is Holy Week.

Sermon preached by Neil Shepherd, Trinity College student, on January 10th 2016

Readings: Isaiah 43:1-7, Psalm 29 and Acts 8:14-17

Main Reading: Luke 3: 15-17, 21+22
Jesus

Theme: Baptism of

'In the wilderness John proclaimed a baptism of repentance. As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Mary Ann Evans, the English novelist, journalist and translator, who is better known by her pen name George Eliot said:

'It seems to me we can never give up longing and wishing while we are thoroughly alive. There are certain things we feel to be beautiful and good, and we must hunger after them.'

At the start of the passage from Luke's Gospel we hear that the people are expectant - they are waiting for, longing for something. John's words and actions are causing them to ask the question; Is John the Baptist the Messiah? God's people had been waiting for the Messiah – the promised deliver as prophesied in the OT - to come and rescue them from oppression and suffering. The God's people had been under the rule of many nations and they are currently under the rule of the Romans. As we look into this passage and ask what does it mean to the people who first read this gospel and what does it mean to us today – my first question is 'What are you longing for God to do? What have you been waiting for God to do?'

The people, God's people, have been waiting for the promised Messiah to come but they hadn't heard anything afresh from God for 300 years – the end of the prophets in the Old Testament. It seemed that God had gone silent, perhaps even abandoned them and his promises. Into this time of waiting comes John the Baptist preaching a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; a call to prepare for the arrival of salvation. John says 'A voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths

for him.’ His call was causing the people to ask whether he was the promised Messiah. John replied ‘I baptize you (a symbol of the salvation preparation) with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.’ The rest of the statement speaking of the winnowing fork on the threshing floor in the barn a picture of the harvest and a symbol of the final harvest and ultimate judgement that is to come. As John continues to baptise the people, Jesus arrives at the river Jordan to also be baptised.

After this passage Jesus’ proclaims his own message in Luke 4 he says ‘The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.’ In Mark’s Gospel, He states ‘The time is now, The Kingdom of God is near, Repent and Believe the Good news.’ Jesus is coming to herald in a new Kingdom – to fulfil all the promises of the Old Testament and He has come to be the long awaited for Messiah. But before Jesus starts his ministry of preaching, healing, casting out demons, raising the dead we have this narrative that describes the baptism of Jesus.

In Luke’s Gospel, we hear that Jesus was baptized with the people and in a moment of prayer the heavens were opened. In Mark’s Gospel the scene suggests that this moment happened as Jesus came up out of the water while Luke’s gospel points to a more private moment. Whichever it was they both agree that the heavens opened and the spirit descended like a dove. In this moment we see the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit all in the same place enacting the work of heaven here on earth. The phrase ‘the heavens opened’ points to a moment of divine revelation as described in Ezekiel 1 from which the Spirit of God rests upon Jesus. He would then head into the wilderness and, through trial, would return full of the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has come to be baptised and in submitting to the washing, he is declaring that John’s message is true and that people must get prepared to receive salvation. As the spirit descends, a voice speaks from heaven and said ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’ The phrase weaves together 3 Old Testament allusions. In the part ‘You are my Son’, Jesus is identified in Psalm 2v7 as the messianic son. In Isaiah 42v1 we see the servant whom God has chosen and in Genesis we see the allusion to the loved one from the passages between Abraham and Isaac in the story of faith when Abraham is asked to sacrifice his own son. In the baptism Jesus comes fully approved by the Father. He has a sovereign authority as the promised Son over the blessings of Salvation. For the people of God, everything has going to change, no longer will the family name or having Abraham as their father guarantee salvation as part of the elect family of God. Only through a life lived in repentance and forgiveness can they now become part of God’s family.

Over Christmas, I got to watch the next episode in my favourite series, Star Wars. In the film there is a young orphan girl who is waiting on a planet for her family to return. Hoping that things will return to normal on their return. Through a chance meeting she ends up flying off to another planet and is left with the dilemma of pressing on in the journey or to return to her home planet waiting for her family. At this point – a wise female sage steps into the picture and speaks words of prophecy to her which I think strike a chord was us today. ‘The belonging you seek is not behind you, it is ahead’

For the people of Jesus time, his arrival changes everything. They could stop looking behind them for a return and restoration of the old and, for those who accepted Jesus, they could look forward to a new Kingdom.

What does this mean for us today? There are two aspects of this story that I want to focus on today for us?

Firstly, the significance of who Jesus is. Many people will point to Jesus as a prophet, others say a teacher and still others will see him as a good role model. In this passage we see that in Jesus all of these roles are perfectly combined into the over-arching role of God's Son. In his famous book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis makes this statement:

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg--or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us."

Secondly, at the start of this talk I asked you the question; what are you longing for? Where do you want to see God at work in your life or your family and friend's lives? In the baptism of Jesus, he is anointed by the Holy Spirit for a unique mission. As we have said Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God – a message that brings forgiveness, healing and wholeness. The ultimate work of Jesus was his death on the cross. The passage in Isaiah 43 we also heard this morning said 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.' In Jesus' death on the cross and in his final words 'It is finished', Jesus has paid the price for our redemption. In the fulfilment of the covenant that God had made between him and us, the price had been paid and in Jesus taking our place in judgement we get to stand in the place of Jesus - whether he was in the river still or in a private place – we too get to hear the words of God the Father spoken over us – 'You are my child; whom I love, with you I am well pleased.'

The fulfilment of our longings and desires, the breaking in of God's kingdom, starts in the place of knowing who Jesus is and who we are because of what Jesus has done. This is a regal appointment, a sovereign moment. The king of heaven and earth, the Lord enthroned as king forever, as Psalm 29 said this morning, is inviting us into a relationship with him. Not a relationship of servanthood but as a child of the King who is dearly loved. As we come to the Altar in a moment, taking the bread and wine, as a reminder of all that Jesus has done for us, allow the words of truth to be spoken over you afresh or even for the first time – 'You are my child, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.'

Bishop's Message

A season for curiosity, time and courage

As we are invited to make Lent a particular season for prayer across the diocese, Bishop Lee reflects on our struggles to listen to God and how we might grow in our practice of prayer.

In the opening chapter of her book 'Everyday God', Paula Gooder writes about discovering God in the midst of the ordinary and finding it transformed into the extraordinary. The challenge that we face, says Paula, is whether we have sufficient curiosity, time and courage to turn aside and listen to what God has to say.

Bishop Mike has invited us to make this Lent a season for prayer, with a particular focus on our diocesan aim of creating connections with God, with each other, and with our communities. Prayer may be foundational to the Christian life yet many of us acknowledge our prayer life is not all it could or should be. A primary task of ordained ministry is teaching people to pray but we deacons, priests and bishops have our own struggles with prayer. Tom Wright tells the story of the clergy at Notre Dame Cathedral when German bombs began to fall on Paris. Apparently the cry went up, "Stop the Daily Office, let's pray!" One

wonders what these ministers thought they had been doing each morning and evening in their liturgy.

In sharing a little of her own journey into ways of praying and listening for God, Paula recognised that different chapters of her life have needed changes in what helps her be present to God. Pressed for time as a busy mother she adapted how, when and where she prayed, reminding me of the wise saying 'Pray as you can and not as you can't'. Some clergy find the Daily Office endlessly sustaining and energising; others (and I admit to being one of them) require more variety in the liturgical resources they draw upon, as well as how they use scripture as a place of encounter with God and a springboard for prayer.

As a commuter to London for many years, the crowded Metropolitan Line train became a chapel for me though no one would have realised this. Reading the Bible and using aids for prayer have since become a wonderful resource with the advent of smart phones and tablets. Most days I spend time in quiet with God before commencing work but for early journeys to Bristol I have discovered 'Pray as You Go', the daily podcast produced by the Jesuits which I can listen to via Bluetooth in the car. There is music, reflection on a Bible reading, and a lead into prayer. You will be pleased to know that being attentive to God has not prevented me being attentive to the traffic! Of course prayer is something for any time and in any place, yet it is in making its practice a habit that we grow more attuned at listening for Christ and to him.

Just as Moses encountered God when he turned aside to examine the burning bush, so God offers moments with the potential to transform our walk with God. In a conversation with a car salesman this week, I realised that his curiosity had been sparked when he discovered I was a scientist as well as a bishop. It turned out a previous customer – an old lady as he described her – had also spoken to him about our Lord and given him an embroidered cross. In pointing out that it seemed Jesus was trying to catch his attention I invited him to go away and pray that, if this were so, God would provide a third and unmistakable encounter. I think he has sufficient curiosity and time but he will need courage to make that prayer and truly be ready to respond.

Curiosity, time, courage. Which of these needs attention if you are going to put yourself in the way of listening and responding to God? This Lent is an opportunity to do just that.

+Lee February 2016

Churches Together in Clifton Cotham and Redland Lent Conversations 2016

Life in all its Fullness

John 10:10

Conversations in spiritual, ethical, and social issues in health and care today

Evenings will open with tea at 7pm. Talks start at 7.30pm and end by 9.10pm.
There will be time for discussion and questions.



Wednesday 24 February Professor Ruud terMeulen

Professor Emeritus, Ethics in Medicine,
Centre for Ethics in Medicine,
School of Social and Community Medicine,
University of Bristol

*Solidarity in health and social care:
what could it mean today?*

Christ Church, Clifton Down Rd,
Bristol BS8 3BN

Monday 29 February Rev Dr Jonathan Pye

Chair of the Bristol Methodist District and
Honorary Research Fellow in the Centre
for Ethics in Medicine/Research Associate,
School of Social and Community Medicine,
University of Bristol

*Negotiating the moral maze... what theology
has to offer medical ethics*

Conference Room, Redland Park URC,
Redland Park Road, Bristol, BS6 6SA (please
use Redland Park Road entrance; level access
available through front of church)

Monday 7 March Dr Zara Ross

Director of Development and
Transformation, St Monica Trust

*Social and spiritual life at St Monica Trust
– a gift of 90 years*

Conference Room, Redland Park URC, Red-
land Park Road, Bristol, BS6 6SA (please use
Redland Park Road entrance; level access
available through front of church)

Monday 14 March Professor Malcolm Johnson

Emeritus Professor, School for Policy Studies,
University of Bristol

*What will my parents think of me?
What will God think of me?:
Spiritual concerns of older adults*

Cotham Parish Church, Cotham Rd,
Bristol BS6 6DR

Our Place in God's Purpose

The Parish Conference

Saturday 5 March 2016

Mass will be at 9.30am on this Saturday

10.20am	Introduction
10.30am	Our Strong Foundation
11.30am	Coffee and Tea
11.45am	Building for the Future
12.45pm	Lunch ('working' sandwich lunch)
1.30pm	Our Place in God's Purpose
2.00pm	Prayer and close