



# Witney Way



Late Summer 2017



*Parish magazine  
for St Mary's, Holy Trinity,  
St John's Curbridge, and St John's Hailey*

## Editorial introduction

As I write this on a so-called 'summer's day', I can't help wondering where we will be this time next year, with all the problems and uncertainties surrounding us, and I found myself musing on the words of the American journalist and satirist, H. L. Mencken, 'For every complex question, there's a simple solution, – and it's wrong'. Or as Oscar Wilde wrote, 'The truth is never pure and rarely simple.' Mind you, he is also reputed, amongst others, to have written, 'An expert is an ordinary man (sic) away from home.'

Now the question uppermost in my mind is, have I come to the end of my second co-editorship of a parish magazine? Having written a 'piece' for all but one edition, I joined Ruth, a consummate professional, as a sort of additional commissioning editor, trying to cajole others into contributing copy. But it is Ruth who has put together each edition single-handed; arranging and collating the received articles with suitable artwork, then dealing with advertisers' and printers' deadlines. No mean accomplishment, for one with a fulltime demanding job, a young family, and all the other activities with which she is involved. No wonder, 'enough is enough.' I'm sure you join me in thanking Ruth for all she has done to produce a regular magazine of such high quality. What comes next, I wonder?

Howard Brayton

Co-editor

August 2017



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# The world is changed by hope-filled people

It is very good to know that we have made a fantastic appointment as the Rev'd Ness Whiffin joins the ministry team as our Team Vicar. Ness brings many skills from her curacy and from previous work as a musician and community psychiatric nurse. We have been delighted to welcome her and her family and I am sure you will all extend a very warm welcome.

Ross's ordination was a very moving occasion and well supported from across the parish. It is wonderful to be able to welcome him and support him as this new stage of his ministry begins.

Changes, changes! I was struck recently by the saying that:

The genius of any successful organisation is always going to be in its receptivity towards change and renewal, and open-ness to go where good ideas can be found.

As we experience the changes in our team, we also see the momentous shifts within our national life as the Brexit negotiations continue and momentous shift within our international life as the complexities of ballistic missile testing, acts of terror and rising refugee numbers continue to challenge us.

In the challenges of the months ahead we must look again to the power of the Spirit, the redeeming work of Christ, the truth of the apostolic faith, the deep personal faith of her people, the profound prayer and worship offered. And we must question how we ourselves are growing in our faith, in order that we can share it with others. For as we know, God doesn't have any grandchildren – just children who are all called to share in building the kingdom and in growing new disciples.

Four years ago, a number of us from the parish went to a Leading your Church into Growth conference. The leader Robin Gamble, a renowned evangelist, said he had now abandoned nearly all of the evangelistic aids he'd learnt over the years. He did this because he has simplified the process down to three simple questions:

- Who are you?
- Where are you at with God?
- Why don't you?

This simple process starts where people are at themselves and takes their context seriously. It challenges us to think about our relationship with God and enables us to open up conversations that sometimes we struggle to find ways to introduce. And then it leads to an invitation for people to respond by joining us for something where further questions can be explored. An invitation that often involves food!

So why not spend time reflecting by yourself on those three simple questions

- Who are you?
- Where are you at with God?
- Why don't you?

and see where the Spirit leads you in your walk with Jesus.

Finally, I would ask that you pray for the Spirit to guide us, our parish and our nation in these times of change, that we might hold fast to the hope within us: for the world is changed by hope-filled people.

### **A huge, huge thank you**

I would like to express an enormous debt of gratitude to Ruth Sheppard who has been editor of the *Witney Way* since we completely renewed it in 2010. Ruth has brought immense skill to this task and it has been one of the points of unity for our parish to spread word of the amazing things that God has been doing among us. The quality of the *Witney Way* has been exceptional – and it isn't an exaggeration to say that this is because of the way in which Ruth has brought her skills to bear.

On your behalf I am delighted to thank her for all that she has done to support this life of the parish in this way as she steps down as editor!

Love and prayers,  
Toby Wright  
Team Rector



## Farewell to Alastair

The Parish Picnic was the ideal setting for a fond farewell to Alastair: sunshine, sandwiches and yes a few tears were shed. Alastair generously shared his box of beer (and there was still plenty left for his send off the following Tuesday from the Men's Curry group) and we all appreciated the bowls of fresh strawberries, plates of brownies and delicious quiches. As usual, the highlight was the rounders match: Team Alastair and Team Francis. Francis and team did the honourable thing and let Alastair's team win.... Helped by Stu and Charlie Morrison and Charlotte Tremain all scoring rounders and two superb catches by Robin Brunner Ellis.

Lousia Nuttall



# Feast 2017

We look forward to our Feast celebrations from 9 to 12 September this year. On Saturday 9 we shall have a special evening in St Mary's which will include drawing 'Golden Tickets' to give free Fair rides to the winners through the night – watch out for details!

On Sunday 10 September we look forward to welcoming the new Bishop of Oxford, Steven Croft, back to Witney as he joins us for the civic celebrations and the Gallopers service.

On Monday 11 and Tuesday 12 September, the art exhibition and modellers will be in church and we'll be welcoming school children to come and explore the history of the Feast and Fair in Witney.

This will be helping to build for 2018 when as a parish we will be celebrating 775 years of the current parish church, with a year of celebrations to help focus on this.



## Oktoberfest

On 7 October we look forward to our first Oktoberfest in S Mary's. This will be a good chance to welcome the community into S Mary's and, we hope, some friends from our link town of Unterhachen. Oktoberfest began with the German Royal Wedding on 12 October 1810, when Crown Prince Ludwig married Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen. Traditionally it is a festival of love and life.

We are working with some local businesses to develop the festival and we look forward to having a genuine Oompah band – do get this in your diary.

# Introducing Ness Whiffin, our new Team Vicar



I'm Rev'd Ness Whiffin and delighted to be moving to Witney in August to become your new Team Vicar. I was ordained in 2014 following my theological training at STETS (Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme) in Salisbury.

For much of my professional life I've worked as a psychiatric nurse in the NHS, with adults initially and then children and adolescents, spending my last three years as a specialist nurse in the Youth Offending Service. I loved (almost) all of it and was slightly reluctant to relinquish it all to become ordained!

I'm also a violinist and pianist, and worked freelance before starting nurse training in my late twenties. I've not completely given up playing, but these days you're more likely to see me leading worship and singing with my lovely new guitar. I get to the gym and swim as often as I'm able, and I'm looking forward to cycling (more than I usually do) around Witney.

Witney holds an exciting time ahead for me, a place where the Eucharist and Daily Office are central to the life of the Church. It's also obviously a place where I can continue my passion for connecting the sacred with the secular. Social justice is close to my heart.

As a family, we're looking forward to living in such a lovely parish, and we're delighted to be discovering so many great pubs! My children Nadia (13) and Barney (16) have two passions, drumming and baking, and you'll soon find out which is which! My husband Martin, a psychiatric nurse, specialises in end-of-life dementia care, and loves to spend as much time as he can on an allotment. We also have Oscar, a rather un-adventurous, but sweet cat, and at some point, a rabbit will be joining us!

I look forward to living and serving this next stage of ministry alongside you.

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## The Day I Became A Deacon

The night before the day I became a deacon, we had come out of silence on our pre-ordination retreat and I found myself drawn to the sky. It was an epic sky and a profound night, and I sat on a bench and watched the unfolding landscape shift in colour as the late sun set, leaving the somewhat turbulent clouds to grey and darken into night. My last sunset before the diaconate – it felt good to mark it simply by enjoying God's creation.

The next morning, after a bus journey into Oxford, we were ushered into our waiting room where it seemed to take an age before anything happened. We robed, we pledged our allegiance, and then we were waiting in the cloisters for the service to begin – another age to wait. The anticipation was an itch among us that could only be scratched by silence or silliness. And then the hymn struck up, 'O Jesus I Have Promised'.

We processed into the Cathedral, and I kept seeing people from all over my life tucked away in corners: friends from University, family and family friends further up near the High Altar. The service itself was wonderful. Despite our terrors that we'd trip or forget what happened next, it all went smoothly as far as I could tell.

Bishop Colin preached an excellent sermon that drew out the nature and purpose of a deacon, and I was grateful throughout on behalf of my unchurched friends for whom this whole occasion would be a wonderful if alien experience.

The moment of ordination itself was wonderful. I knelt before the Bishop, felt his hands on my head; I focused on not allowing

my mind to be distracted with silly thoughts such as I am prone to have and forced myself to utter in my head the phrase 'Breathe on me, Breath of God', a hymn that has come to mean a lot to me this past year. And, so I was ordained a deacon.

Toby helped me with my stole, encouraging me to kiss the cross on the back of the neck before I put it on, further falling into the sacred mystery of servant ministry perfectly presented in the Person of Jesus.

And then, the Peace and the hymn 'Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You' – another favourite that has come to mean a lot in recent years. This was our opportunity to find family and friends, to offer them a sign of peace, and to be briefly reunited after days of silence. I dashed around that Cathedral like a whirling dervish! Straight up the aisle to parents, grandmothers, brother and family friends. And all around the building, seeing family, colleagues and friends from London, from York, to see the priests who have led me here – Frs Tim, Peter, and Philip. And back in to my seat in time for the final verse and the Eucharist.

The service ended and we were sent out with the Bishop. Thus began the melee of photographs and hugs and laughter and joy and madness. What the Bishop of Oxford must have made of me shouting my godmother, 'Anne! Get into the photo!' And her response, 'I want a hug first!'... There is a peculiarity of being surrounded by people from all over your life in one place at the same time. They all know a different Ross, or a younger Ross, and so they each expect something different. Yet instead of feeling divided into different identities, I felt a fullness of my identity suddenly released.

I felt very humbled to see such a strong support from Witney Parish represented. Thank you so much for your prayers and your warm welcome over the past weeks and months.

So I went to bed that night a deacon, ontologically changed to serve God for the rest of my life because, as Bishop Colin preached, 'once a deacon, always a deacon'. And for the next three years that diaconal ministry will be lived out with you all in Witney as we minister together to share God's good news with the people who live here. May God bless our time together!

Ross Meikle

# Stardust

I am a member of the Third Order Franciscans and the members in the Oxford Area have recently embarked on an exercise to write some modern scientific parables. What would Jesus teach us today about nuclear physics, genetic studies and cosmology? I believe that scientists and theologians should look at each other's field of expertise to see how God reveals Himself to both. What follows is my attempt to write a scientific parable, such as Jesus might have taught us today.

## **The Triune nature of Stardust**

Jesus the Teacher asked His students: 'What are we made of?' They gave various answers. Some said 'atoms', and others said 'molecules'. Some also said, 'Electrons' and still others, 'Protons'. But Jesus said, 'We are made of all of these things; but what are these things made from?'

The students fell silent but, hungry to be taught, urged Him to tell them. 'Everything that came into existence,' he said, 'and everything that can be built up to form any kind of material thing is made from Stardust. Stardust was formed in the Big Bang, when God the Father said, "Let there be light." This light is what scientists call "The Big Bang." Out of the Big Bang came all the substance of the universe, starting as an infinitely small bubble of energy that rapidly grew into the infinitely large panoply we see today as the stars in the heavens. Every bit of the universe, including atoms, cosmic dust, light and radiation is formed from Stardust.'

'Your scientists describe stardust as being made from "Quarks" and find there are six different sorts having six different weights. The strangest thing about quarks is that none of them can exist on its own. They are forced by the laws of the universe to exist in groups of three. One quark by itself would fall to bits, two quarks would destroy each other but three quarks are stable and form all the atomic particles in creation.'

'All matter and life in the universe, including humans, is based on a trinity of three quarks. God is a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and thus, it follows that every human being is formed in the image of God!'

Nick Hance

# A Year of Listening



For over a year now, I've been listening. In the months before I arrived I met with each of my new senior colleagues and have spent time reflecting on the qualities the diocese said they would like their new bishop to have.

Over the summer months I was gathering facts and figures and maps in preparation for an intensive discovery process. Then, in October and November, I visited all the clergy in my own episcopal area, and in December I began a tour of every deanery in the diocese.

As I travelled around the deaneries I asked two questions: What kind of Church is God calling us to be as we look ahead together? And, What are we therefore called to do together?

I've now completed 21 out of 29 deanery visits in which I have learnt so much about the challenges and opportunities in the many different places we serve. Each visit has involved a Eucharist and lunch with the clergy; inspiring visits in the afternoon to meet the people who make a difference in their community; an evening meal with about a dozen lay people, and an evening gathering for PCC members and others to share something of my story and to listen to questions and concerns.

I've not kept count, but so far, I would guess over 2000 people have come to those evening gatherings. I've begun each evening by introducing myself and then answering what I think is the first question people should ask me: Steven, what's your vision for the Church in the Diocese of Oxford?

The talk that I give has changed and evolved a lot as I have gradually tuned in to what is happening in our parishes day to day, and where we are and where we might be going. I've been grateful for people's honesty, and feel privileged that people have shared their experiences with me. There are still many more conversations to be had as together we envision the future for the diocese but my talk has now reached a fairly settled form.

Scriptures have been a key part of this process and I've returned in a deeper way to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5.1-10 as a guide as we look to the future.

As I met with the Bishop's Staff and Bishop's Council and in the annual meeting of Lay Chairs and Area Deans in January, I reflected on the Beatitudes, and some provisional answers to the questions about what kind of church we are called to be, and what we need to do together, began to emerge.

Now we are moving onto the next stage of this process of discernment. Next week, 120 people from across the diocese will come together for three days at the High Leigh Conference centre. At this meeting, I'm going to share with them some of what I have heard through all of this listening, and seek their wisdom and counsel as we look to the future.

In the coming months, there will be other ways for you to be involved in envisioning the future for the Church in our diocese.

It's been a real joy to make this journey, and to try and catch the heartbeat of this wonderful diocese. The next part of the journey is also about making sense of all that I have heard and, with others, finding good ways forward for the future.

In Christ  
+Steven

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## **The visitation of Bishop Thomas Secker**

In 1737 Thomas Secker was appointed as Bishop of Oxford, and in the following year he carried out a Visitation of his parishes, as our Bishop Steven is currently undertaking.

He recorded that in only 78 of the 180 parishes was the vicar resident in the parish. Another 14 of the parishes saw their incumbents for only half of the year. The remaining 88 parishes were served by curates, most of whom received disgracefully low salaries. Many of them were Fellows of Oxford colleges, and most did no more than ride out to the villages on Sunday morning.

In advance of Bishop Thomas' visit, each Rector was required to submit answers to a series of questions. The following is but one example of the responses. The Rector of Oddington was Rev. Thomas Dickinson, and his report to the Bishop was as follows:

The extent or Circumference of the Parish I guess to be about three Miles only one little Village five and twenty Houses the Parsonage House ten Farm Houses fourteen Cottages Houses for labourers and other poor People. We have no Family of Note in it.

1. There is no Papist in it.
2. There is no Presbyterian Independent or Anabaptist in it.
3. There is no Quaker in it.
4. There are not in my Parish any who profess to disregard Religion tho' there are some few who commonly absent themselves from Church on the Lord's Day.
5. I do not constantly reside upon my Cure. I have a tenant in part of the Parsonage House who rents the Tithe and Glebe the other part of ye Parsonage House I keep to my own use where I frequently come as there is occasion. I live at Islip a mile distance.
6. Public Service is duly perform'd twice every Lords Day in the Church and one Sermon preach'd Prayers are read on most Holy Days in the year. There's no Chapel in the Parish. The children are constantly catechis'd in Lent. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is administer'd four times every year and a pretty many receive it each time.
7. There is no Free School Hospital or Alms-House in the Parish.
8. There is no voluntary Charity School in the Parish.
9. There is no money given at the Offertory.
10. There is no other matter that I know of proper to give Your Lordship in formation of Witness my hand this 22nd day of July 1738.

Thomas Secker became Dean of St Paul's cathedral in 1750, and was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury on 21 April 1758.

Howard Brayton

### **Find the Parish of Witney online**

The Parish of Witney website: [www.witneyparish.org.uk](http://www.witneyparish.org.uk)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pages/The-Parish-of-Witney/](http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Parish-of-Witney/)

The Witney Deanery website: [www.witneydeanery.org](http://www.witneydeanery.org)

Diocese of Oxford website: [www.oxford.anglican.org](http://www.oxford.anglican.org)

# 1,100 pancakes, 500 sausages and counting!

## Holy Trinity Charities and Outreach Team

This small team has been operating for a number of years. It was originally set up to raise money for external charities, and gave itself the target of raising monies equivalent to 10% of the church income. In many years this target has been well exceeded, but clearly in more recent years when we had the large floor appeal, the charities income could not keep up in percentage terms but grew in actual cash.

Our main regular fundraising events have become major social events for Holy Trinity. These are a Quiz and Pancake evening held as near to Shrove Tuesday as possible, and a Summer BBQ. This year to be on Thursday 13th July. We have also supported Christian Aid in Christian Aid Week, and the Children's Society with a sale of produce in January. We are also active in supporting the shoe box appeal, which takes shoe boxes of toys to children in deprived countries. We are currently planning a potato bake harvest supper with Line Dancing for 29 September.

In the last two years, we decided to divide the proceeds from our major events between three charities voted for by the congregation. A local charity, CAB Citizens Advice Bureau, a large international charity, Water Aid, and a smaller less well known charity, Hope & Homes for Children, (giving children in orphanages, loving stable families). We always wish to hear about other charities especially those that members of the congregation are involved with.

Phil Platt  
Chairman of Holy Trinity Charities  
and Outreach Team



## A Fifth Year of Festival Fun

The fifth Witney Festival of Food and Drink yet again enticed thousands of local people to enjoy a vast array of delicious, artisan fare in and around St Mary's church. The many and various stalls of fresh produce and pop-ups never fail to impress with their diverse offerings, all from within a 35-mile radius of the town. Judging by all the positive comments received, trading was brisk and takings were good, despite the occasional downpour. West Oxfordshire businesses and charities were also exhibiting in the Local Focus Area, adding further interest.

On hand to open proceedings and support the organisers throughout the day was Festival Champion Bruce Young of Shaken Oak Products. Bruce has been a friend of the festival from the very beginning and is always on hand to advise and help in any way he can.

The festival is not just about food and drink. It provides an opportunity for home-grown talent to shine and, despite changeable weather conditions, the crowds happily soaked up live performances from the many different musicians and dancers that collectively create our very special, festive atmosphere.

The entertainment didn't stop there. We had tractors on display, a brilliant and busy Children's tent featuring the Hungry Caterpillar and popular music sessions plus a challenging Clerical Cookery Demo! Toby and Alastair outdid themselves making fantastic meals from limited ingredients. Hats off to Toby who managed a full three-course meal in just thirty minutes!

Hundreds of volunteers give up their time and talent each year to make the Witney Festival of Food and Drink the huge fundraising success that it is. Many thanks to them and to our faithful sponsors who make this community event possible and huge fun. A special vote of thanks are due to the organising committee and particularly to Elpie Lewis whose brainchild the festival is. Thank you Elpie – you make it all look so easy and you never stop smiling!







## Baptisms

Nell Crowther, Kade Oliver Morris and Henry Philip James Carre were baptised at St Mary's on 7 May.

Charlotte Faith Edwards was baptised at St Mary's on 14 May.

Ava Evelyn Tanney was baptised at St Mary's on 21 May.

Olivia Lewis and Samuel James Lewis, Leanne Long and Rafe David Long, Jack Finlay George Stewart and Freddie Maurice Miles were baptised at St Mary's on 2 July.

Reuben Jesse Nadin was baptised at Holy Trinity on 9 July.

Harry John Hester was baptised at Curbridge on 23 July.

Blake Robert Aldridge, Cody-Lee Aldridge, Elena Sophia Dredge, Florence Catherine Green, Edith Isla Madeleine Thomas and Marley Dean Treadwell were baptised at St Mary's on 6 August.

Alfred David James Walter was baptised at Curbridge on 6 August.

Dylan Kieran Byrne was baptised at Holy Trinity on 13 August.

Beatrice Hudson Armstrong was baptised at Curbridge on 27 August.



## Weddings

Stuart Davies and Nicola Morris were married at St Mary's on 24 June.

Karl Madden and Joanna Olliffe were married at Hailey on 1 July.

David Juler and Ashlie Jackman were married at Hailey on 1 July.

Daniel Haining and Jodie Henshaw were married at Holy Trinity on 15 July.

Andrew Turnbull and Olivia Lucey were married at St Mary's on 22 July.

Andrew Cobb and Clare Bowthorpe-Weller were married at St Mary's on 5 August.

Ryan John and Emily Eldridge were married at St Mary's on 26 August.



# The Ministry Team



Toby Wright  
Team Rector



Ness Whiffin  
Team Vicar



Ross Meikle  
Curate



Joy Hance  
Associate Priest



Sally Wright  
Associate Priest



Mark Thomas  
Associate Priest



Joanna Collicutt  
Assistant Priest



Chris Howden  
Ecumenical Minister



Jonathan Brooks  
LLM



Shukrananda Gant  
Part-time Pastoral Assistant



Sonia Gooderham  
Part-time Pastoral Assistant

## Contact the Parish of Witney

<b>Team Rector</b>	Revd Toby Wright	704441	<a href="mailto:rector@witneyparish.org.uk">rector@witneyparish.org.uk</a>
<b>Team Vicar</b>	Revd Ness Whiffin		<a href="mailto:nesswhiffin5@gmail.com">nesswhiffin5@gmail.com</a>
<b>Curate</b>	Ross Meikle	779553	<a href="mailto:ross@witneyparish.org.uk">ross@witneyparish.org.uk</a>
<b>Associate Priest</b>	Revd Sally Wright	704441	<a href="mailto:sally-wright@btconnect.com">sally-wright@btconnect.com</a>
<b>Associate Priest</b>	Revd Joy Hance	707935	<a href="mailto:joysmail@talk21.com">joysmail@talk21.com</a>
<b>Parish Office</b>	St Mary's, Church Green, 9am–12.30pm Monday–Friday		
<b>Parish Administrator</b>	Michelle Bailey-Wells	779492	<a href="mailto:wtparish@btinternet.com">wtparish@btinternet.com</a>

# Sunday Services

8.00am	Holy Communion (followed by breakfast on 4th Sunday)	St Mary's
9.15am	Holy Communion	Curbridge
9.15am	Holy Communion (occasionally Matins)	Hailey
10.45am	Sung Eucharist (with Junior Church)	St Mary's
10.45am	Sung Eucharist (with Sunday School)	Holy Trinity
6.00pm	Evensong (first Sunday of the month)	Hailey

# Weekday Services

Mon-Sat	9.00am	Morning Prayer	St Mary's
	5.30pm	Evening Prayer	St Mary's
Tuesday	10.30am	Holy Communion	Holy Trinity
Wednesday	11.00am	Holy Communion	St Mary's
Thursday	10.00am	Holy Communion	Hailey

*These are the normal service times; please see the website and the weekly notice sheet for any changes or special events.*

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**Baptism Enquiries** Esther Partridge 864926

**Wedding Enquiries** Revd Ness Whiffin 07774 524756

**Parish Church Wardens** Charlotte Tremain 705442, Josie Holmes 705215

## Deputy Wardens:

Curbridge	Gary Mulligan	
Hailey	Sue Drew	Elpie Lewis
Holy Trinity	Lorna Whitehouse	
St Mary's	Claire Hermon	Nicola Carter

# What's on in the Parish?

**St Mary's choir**, practice Sundays 9.45am, contact Francis Rumsey, 01993 779331.

**Holy Trinity choir**, practice Wednesdays 7.30pm, contact Paul Francis, 01235 848215.

**Bell ringing at St Mary's**, practice night Tuesday 7.30–9.30pm. Ringing on Sunday, 9.45–10.45am. Contact Jeannie Tognola, 07721862103.

**St Mary's Junior Choir**, keen young singers welcome, contact Sally Rumsey, 779331.

**Holy Trinity House Groups** meet fortnightly on Monday and Tuesday evening. For information on the Monday group contact Sally Down and for the Tuesday group contact Alan Gentry.

**Book Circle** meets third Tuesday of the month, 2.30pm, Winchester Room, St Mary's. Open to all. Contact Julia Collie 702115 or Bridget Walton 702934.

**Hailey Village Lunch**, third Wednesday of the month, Hailey Village Hall.

**Hot Pot lunches for seniors**, fourth Wednesday of the month. Contact Esther Partridge, 864926, for details.

**Mothers' Union**, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 2pm, Winchester Room, St Mary's. Corporate Communion is held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 11am at St Mary's.

**Acorns Toddler Group**, Thursdays in termtime, 9.45–11.45am, Holy Trinity. A welcoming toddler group for 0–5 year olds and their carers.

**Late Spring Group**, Second and fourth Thursdays of the month, 10.30am–1.30pm in the Winchester Room, St Mary's. A group for people who have been bereaved. Contact Parish Office or Age UK for information.

**Acoustic Room**, Third Thursday of the month, 7.30pm, Winchester Room, St Mary's. £3, free for performers. For info contact Colin or Jean Greenway, 705026.

**Witney Wider World**, A group from across the parish concerned with peace and justice issues. Involved with promoting our links with Sweden and India, and support for our work with CMS and Us. Contact Martin Peirce.

**Late Night Café and Street Pastors**, weekends, 10.30pm prayer at St Mary's, 11pm on the street. For information contact: Pastors coordinator Paul Graves. Café coordinator Nick Hance.

# An Area Dean in Rural Oxfordshire

The title 'Area Dean' (AD) or 'Rural Dean' is not peculiar to the Church of England and there are such people in other denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church. In this part of God's world the Area Dean is Revd Toby Wright, our Rector, and he combines the AD responsibilities with his duties within the Witney Parish. This is no mean feat! The AD is responsible to the Bishop and the Archdeacon, with whom the Area Deans have regular meetings, and the AD provides an important link between the parishes. There are 38 churches in the Witney Deanery. Toby has been in this role for more than three years, and when he was invited by Bishop Colin Fletcher to take it on Toby requested some assistance. A key appointment was that of Mandy Studley, as his PA/Administrator, and I also endeavour to provide support to him as the Assistant Area Dean. We both try to keep up with Toby by holding on to his shirt tails!!!!

The AD has a whole variety of roles which keep him extremely busy. He brings the Deanery Clergy together for Chapter meetings, where they discuss topical issues, both local and national. The role of a parish priest can be a lonely one, and these meetings enable them to exchange experiences and thoughts with each other. Toby and I also provide pastoral support to the clergy in the Deanery, for those appointed to parishes and also to the retired clergy in the area who have Permission to Officiate (PTO). The AD also leads Deanery Synod meetings as Chairman, together with the Lay Chair, Kevin Rillie, from St John's Church, Burford. Deanery Synod consists of lay people representing the parishes in the area, and representatives of the clergy, and this provides the link between the parishes and Diocesan Synod. Our Synod meetings cover things like staffing of parishes, finance, planning for mission and resourcing, and time is always devoted to studying the bible and discussing issues raised.

Both Toby and I visit the parishes on a rolling programme each year to carry out Inspections on behalf of the Archdeacon. These visits are not just designed to ensure that the necessary books, records and paperwork are up to date, which is essential in the world that we live in today. They give us the opportunity to get to

know the parishes a bit better and to discuss and understand the joys and the challenges facing each of our churches in the Deanery. The information gathered is reported back to the Archdeacon, the Venerable Judy French. The AD also brings together the Churchwardens from the Deanery for discussion and to improve communications across the parishes, again providing a useful opportunity to share experiences and to discuss topical issues. This also applies to meetings for parish Treasurers in the Deanery.

When you consider all of these responsibilities, (and more), in addition to that of being Rector of a busy and demanding group of churches, it's a wonder that Toby can ever find time to relax and to simply BE with his family and also to BE with God. Getting the work/ life balance right is always a challenge for a parish priest, as I know only too well, and it demands that someone be highly organised as well as sustaining a love of God and His people. But with these additional AD responsibilities life can become incredibly stressful. With this in mind we should never underestimate the need for us to be holding Toby and his lovely family in our prayers, and I would encourage you to be doing this on a regular basis, which I know he would greatly appreciate.

Ron Curtis, Assistant Area Dean

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## **A Prayer in response to terror**

Weep  
Pray  
Repair bridges  
Love your neighbours  
Cherish friends and family  
Live life to the full  
Be courageous  
Hope

+ Steven

# Praying the Daily Office:

## Morning and Evening Prayer

One of the well-kept secrets of the Anglican Church is that of praying Morning and Evening Prayer in public. This pattern of prayer is one which has its roots in the mists of the history of the Church and is properly seen as a gift for all the baptised – not just for the clergy. In this article there will be a bit about the nature of prayer and why the Daily Office is important.

A vital starting point for Christian prayer is that it is one. The prayer of the Church is the total prayer of all Christians. Each member of the Body of Christ offers that prayer as part of the whole, whatever form that prayer may take. For it is Christ who is praying in his Church.

There are, we all know, lots of different ways of praying, but there are three particular strands worthy of emphasis. First, the sacraments – especially the Eucharist where the Church is most fully herself. Second, daily liturgical prayer offered either individually or together. Third, the intimate prayer of individuals.

It is daily liturgical prayer which we are particularly concerned with here. Daily liturgical prayer is a gift to the Father, covenanted and offered in its own right as part of the prayer of the whole Body, regardless of who is around or absent. As part of the prayer of the whole Body, the public Daily Office is grounded within the vocation of the whole community. In other words, those who pray the Daily Office do so on behalf of everybody.

One of the gifts of the Daily Office is that it unites the Church in time (tradition) and space (the contemporary worldwide Church) and reminds us that our prayer is part of something much bigger than ourselves. The same prayer is offered by countless Anglicans – and others - across the world as we pray the same psalms together – though apart – and are fed by the same passages of scripture.

One of the things which is indispensable to the life of the Church is finding a pattern of daily prayer. While not all

Christians are called to direct participation in this classical form of Christian prayer, it is a gift to the Church and one which can enrich our lives and our patterns of prayer. In an extraordinary note of clarity the Second Vatican Council spoke of the pattern of liturgical prayer as ‘...the voice of the bride addressing her bridegroom.’ This image looks back over a rich history of connection between the Church’s prayer and the language of love, through the Song of Songs to the Lord’s word himself.

All very well you might say, but I’m no great prayer! Well join the club. But for those of us for whom this is our lot, we need to work harder. Not all of us are called to be great pray-ers, but the Church as a body is. The prayer of the belongs to each of us. The liturgical prayer of the Church in the daily office will always go on – often hidden: an offering by a few on behalf of all. And, as with all prayer, all we are called to do is to surrender ourselves so that the Spirit can cry out within us (Romans 8). Through hearing the word of God; reciting the psalms quietly together (trying to unite our voices to sound as one); through prayer; singing and silence, we express our calling as the Body of Christ and present ourselves to the Father, through Christ and in the Spirit.

So why not come and join in this small part of the life of our parish? We’re there Monday-Saturday at 9am and Monday-Thursday and Saturday at 5.30pm. A good number already share in this aspect of ministry and it would be lovely to strengthen the voice of prayer with you coming to join us.

If you would like to explore your prayer life in more detail do please feel free to contact me or one of the other members of the Staff Team, or another person you trust. Such a step could be vital in the renewal of your Christian life. For there is no more necessary step to be taken in any renewal than that of taking God more seriously.

Do come and join us...

The Rector



# One World Week at Hailey CE Primary School

One World Week took place in the week after half term. We had lots of visitors to the school and took part in lots of activities to celebrate cultural diversity around the world. Each class chose a country, continent and religion to learn about and activities included aboriginal art, designing Rangoli patterns, learning Swahili, making carnival masks and drums. All of our children took part in a cooking lesson and made a recipe from their country. We also had some visitors into school who taught us Polish, German and about life in South Africa. On Thursday we were lucky enough to have a visit from Zoo Lab where we learnt about and had the chance to handle exotic animals. It was great fun and very informative.



*Zoo Lab visit.*



*Designing Rangoli patterns.*



*Making Brazilian carnival masks.*



# Summer at The Batt School

## May Dancing 2017

The traditional annual May Dancing, performed by St Mary's Infant School and The Batt Primary School, took place on Church Green on Wednesday 23 May. This joint venture has been part of the history of Witney for over 60 years and as always it was a very colourful affair with a wide variety of Maypole and Country Dancing.

The afternoon began with the Year Six pupils from The Batt School processing through the town with their garlands, followed by the crowning of the May Queen, Chloe Morgan, accompanied by her attendants, Erin Griffin and Eleanor Carter-Brown.

The children from both schools paraded around Church Green carrying posies of flowers which were later sold to parents and members of the public. The proceeds from the flowers went to the charity 'Dementia Oxfordshire'. This charity was chosen partly in

recognition of the recent Dementia Awareness week and partly because The Batt School is working towards becoming a Dementia Friendly School this year. Over £600 was raised from the sale of flowers and other donations. Headteacher Chris Payne said, 'As always, it was a wonderful spectacle in a beautiful setting, and great to see approximately 420 children from both schools enjoying entertaining the crowds with their dancing.'

The children looked wonderful, the weather stayed fine and the dancing was enjoyed by all!



## Young Carers

At The Batt School, we have been working towards the Young Carers' Award this year, trying to support those children in school who sometimes care for other members of their family at home.

A group of Young Carers, from a variety of year groups, enjoyed a wonderful afternoon at the Blue Boar. The children enjoyed learning about nutrition, pizza dough and a mouth-watering choice of toppings. The new wood-fire pizza oven at the Blue Boar reaches temperatures of 300 degrees and some of our group were brave enough to place their own pizza in the oven. All the children

wore special chef hats and aprons and as well as trying their pizza were able to bring the rest back to school in take-away boxes.

Many thanks to Mr Ungaro, general manager of the Blue Boar, and all his staff for making us feel so welcome and giving our Young Carers a memorable afternoon.

Chris Payne



## Theology and Ethics

Throughout May, in the Batt C of E School, we have been discussing theology and ethics with Revd Toby Wright. Theology means to study systems of religion whilst ethics means a set of moral principles. In the Theology and Ethics meetings we asked questions to challenge Revd Wright or we had debates about other questions.

In our first meeting, we were discussing about theology and asking questions to Revd Wright who answered them how he thought the answers were. Some of the questions we asked were: 'If you were to meet God what do you think He would look like?' and 'how do we know that God exists?'

Revd Wright amazed us by saying: 'There is more evidence that Jesus exists than there is Julius Caesar exists and people don't walk round saying Julius Caesar doesn't exist.'

In the second meeting we didn't say questions to Revd Wright; we debated about the questions between ourselves. This was fun because you could hear other people's points of views and then share your own. We debated about: 'is it alright to have guns?' and 'is it alright to kill?' In the end we all pretty much had the same ideas.

We would like to thank Revd Wright for giving up his spare time to come and do this for us and Mrs Lockwood for organising it.

Nick Wells and James Smith





## Summer at St Mary's CE Infant School

Every Wednesday a member of the Parish ministry team joins us to lead collective worship as part of our programme, and this contributes greatly to our close relationship with the Parish, and helps the children to understand better the Christian message and ethos at the heart of our school. Those who join us are: the Rector, the Revd. Toby Wright; the Curate, the Revd. Alastair Blaine, and David Exham, as a lay minister rather than as a Governor. Alastair is leaving us to take up a new ministry as a Royal Navy chaplain; we thank him for all that he has done for us, and wish him well for the future. We look forward to welcoming his successor as Curate, the Revd. Ross Meikle.

At St. Mary's our core value is 'Love'. We live this daily through our vision, 'Together we love to learn and learn to love'. During our Friday celebration we celebrate both our love of each other and of learning; both staff and children are able to nominate a member of our school community for a love certificate. Each certificate is accompanied by a small heart which is hung on to our love tree. Some of our most joyous moments this term have been listening to children describe why they have nominated someone for a love certificate. Their accounts are a reminder to us all of how love is the greatest gift we can



give to each other.

Once again our traditional May Day merriments were held on Church Green. The weather was glorious and the children skipped, danced and paraded with great poise and enthusiasm. Our Year 2 children took centre stage as they danced the 'Maypole Medley' around our beautiful maypole. It was a wonderful occasion celebrating a Witney tradition that goes back over 60 years. All the children brought in beautiful posies which were sold off at the end of the event to support this year's nominated charity, Dementia Oxford.

At the end of term and the close of the academic year, our Leavers' Service at St. Mary's the Virgin Church brought both sadness and pleasure as we celebrated the many qualities of our Year 2 children, including their boundless energy and their love of learning.

Mrs Sarah Grier, Headteacher

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## Moral Dilemmas

The year before last I received 14 Christmas cards with unfranked stamps on the envelopes. My dilemma was, should I soak off the stamps and reuse them, thus defrauding Royal Mail of £6.42, or throw them away? There being no mechanism for refunding Royal Mail, I used the stamps, hence avoiding the time which would have been otherwise wasted queuing at a post office, and gave the money saved to charity. Last Christmas's unfranked stamps totalled five first class at 63p and 11 at 54p, giving a total of £9.09. So I have donated £10 to a local good cause. I would suggest Royal Mail too has a dilemma; should it continue to waste money, or take steps to tighten up its procedures? Nationwide, it represents a considerable sum.

By the way, what do you say when you receive unwelcome gifts, a scarf that you wouldn't dream of wearing, or that set of mugs you have no intention of using, and the donor asks, 'Did you like it?' Do you tell them the truth or did you smile and lie, thus preventing their disappointment, and a possible break down in relationships?

I received the welcome present of a satnav, which has given

me another moral dilemma – I quickly developed a love/hate relationship with it. Never having been one to toe the line, I often ignore its advice. St. John (pronounced ‘sinjun’) is courteous, well-spoken and merely says, ‘Recalculating route’ or ‘Turn around where possible.’ However, he is a tad insensitive and over precise; each time I stray over the speed limit by just one mile an hour, he reminds me, ‘You are over the speed limit.’ My dilemma is, do I say ‘sorry,’ and slow down, or do I swear at him and carry on? You see when I was accepted into the Institute of Advanced Motorists years ago, I promised to travel ‘... quickly, safely and courteously,’ that means within the law.

Trivial I agree. But what about the question of abortion? There are cogent arguments on both sides of the debate. There are no absolutes here; well not according to me, certain religions and lobbies might not agree ... and how about celibacy? ... ‘a law that has to be changed. It’s a law made by men, not by Jesus.’ (Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots*, 2013) And, for some, the uncomfortable question of gay rights, Civil Partnerships and Gay Marriages. ‘... homosexuals need to have recognised rights, including civil unions, but not same-sex marriage,” that from Pope Francis ... whom the Anglican Archbishop of Argentina described as ‘... not so much a Catholic, as more of a Christian, Christ-centred and Spirit-filled.’ (Vallely, *Pope Francis*, 2013) Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury has apologised to GLTG for the Church’s attitude, whilst at the same time barring the US Episcopal Church from the Anglican communion.

The debate surrounding assisted suicide, call it what you will, is not going to go away. Is life so sacred that we have to inflict it on those whose dignity has been lost, whose pain is insufferable, whose paralysis is total, and who long to die? Civil liberties, human rights and many other lobbies have a lot to say, supporting both sides.

I trust none of you ever find yourself in a war, or terrorist or torture situation. Have you ever considered how you would react if you were interrogated, the choice being your life if you don’t tell, or the lives of your comrades if you do? Of course it’s rhetorical; none of us knows until we are actually in the situation.

At God’s command, Abraham built an altar and prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. After he had bound him, Abraham drew

his knife to kill him, but at the very last moment, an angel let him off, suggesting he sacrifice a ram instead. I have to tell you dear reader, that if my faith was thus challenged, I would disobey God and spare my child. So where would that leave my so-called faith; my disobeying the will of God? I only ask, because one dictionary definition of sin is exactly that, ‘... deliberate disobedience to the known will of God,’ and as we know, ‘... the wages of sin, is death.’ (Romans 6:23)

On the other hand, Archbishop Justin says, “Difference is part of being Christian”. Therefore, the key was to find a ‘safe way of disagreeing.’ ‘... Christians must learn to disagree “in a way that honours the gospel...”’ (Andrew Atherstone, *Archbishop Justin Welby: The Road to Canterbury*, 2013) A further quotation from Archbishop Justin, ‘...Anglicans are too prone to dodge tough questions’ and ‘even more prone to have hissing fits, and throw their toys out of the pram.’ (Ibid)

A charismatic Catholic priest in a slum parish of one of our cities, ran a highly successful church; the numerous services were oversubscribed, there were meetings and clubs and societies for any and all groupings of people of all ages. Money for buildings and maintenance and supporting charities was no object. One of his parishioners even left him a London taxi in his will. This he used in any spare time, to raise money for the church and supporting the needy in the parish. Alas he fell in love with a girl in the back of his taxi and broke his vow of celibacy. He had to leave the Roman church, but was offered a position as an Anglican priest. The point is, behind all his success in bringing people to church, he didn’t believe a word of it. (Paul Burke, *Father Frank*, 2001) Is it so dishonest to do the right thing?

At harvest time, with its annual reminders that ‘All is safely gathered in’, pictures of countless tons of ‘passed sell-by date’ produce being bulldozed and converted into bio-fuel, are juxtaposed with the statistics about the dire need for food-banks in this country and the starving, dying millions around the world. ‘What’s it got to do with me?’ Well...? Daily examples are legion. So, what would you do? Answers please on a postcard to ... anyone, but me.

Howard Brayton

# Lasting happiness in a changing world

*The Book of Joy, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Abrams (2016, Penguin Random House)*

A week spent in the company of two of the most eminent people in the world has produced a book which answers one lasting question, how to find happiness in a changing world?

The author Douglas Abrams has compiled a book about spending a week experiencing the meetings of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Southern Africa, on the occasion of the Dalai Lama's eightieth birthday. The book covers the conversations, humour, love, friendship and shared spiritual practices that have developed between them, despite the many years they both endured various times of hardship, violence and exile, and was still as strong and instrumental in the teaching of finding that lasting happiness in a changing world.

The title of the book sums up the main topic of the week: how to keep a sense of joy in your life despite other conflicting emotions which intrude into a life lived on this earth. The book is divided into three parts. After the introduction, in which Douglas Abrams – who has previously written about visionaries whose aim in life is to create a more happier, wiser and just world – explains how he spent a week in the company of two of the great spiritual leaders of our time, accompanied by five video cameras and technicians, recording all the conversations that took place in the meeting room of the Dalai Lama's house in Dharamsala India.

In each chapter, we have the conversations between the two men, specific teachings on finding happiness, on the nature of true joy, how that to experience joy oneself is to bring joy to others, and scientific references by professionals covering such aspects as having a purpose in life. All these are interspersed with moments of humour, gentle teasing of one another and observations by the author all combining to produce a book which will enable readers to realize how to develop a sense of joy into their lives and into a world which is in desperate need of happiness.

As the conversations between the two men progressed, it



emerged that there are positive qualities that allow us to express joy – eight pillars of joy. Four are qualities of the mind; perspective, humility, humour and acceptance. Four are qualities of the heart; forgiveness, gratitude, compassion and generosity. There is a chapter in the book devoted to each of these qualities.

Towards the end of the book is a wonderful chapter describing a surprise party of over 1,750 Tibetan children, and 1,000 adults who were waiting to celebrate the Dalai Lama's eightieth birthday, delighted that he would be accompanied by a very special guest, Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Throughout his life the Dalai Lama has met numerous people, thinkers, scientists, educators etc. and the conclusion he had arrived at was that the only way to truly change the world is through the teaching of compassion. Our society lacks an adequate sense of compassion, sense of kindness and a genuine regard for others' well-being. The only way to promote these values is through education, teaching young people that the source of happiness is within themselves, not technology, money or power.

Summed up in the final chapter is how, during the past week, the conversations between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu, true joy is explained as a way of being, not a fleeting emotion. Joy comes from daily thoughts, feelings and actions and brings joy to others.

At the start of the book we are told how to keep a sense of joy in life despite other conflicting emotions. Two days after the departure of the film crew, Nepal was struck by an enormous earthquake and recalled are the words of the Dalai Lama spoken on the first day of the meeting. 'The suffering of natural disasters we cannot stop but much of the rest of our suffering we can.' The more we turn from our self-regard to help others the more we transcend our own suffering. This was their true secret to joy.

The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu both believed that spiritual practices were essential to sustain and support them through their lives and there are many suggestions and examples of these joy practices in the final pages of the book.

The Book of Joy is a book which has, in every sentence, food for thought. So take your time reading it and benefit from the lives and thoughts of two of the most joyful men on the planet.

Claire Titcomb

# A Hymn of Intercession

In the last edition of *Witney Way*, Paul Francis wrote about the expected premiere of Howard Brayton's musical offering of the intercessions. It was indeed used and appreciated by many who have asked for the words. Here it is with the music accompaniment by Daniel Bishop of Liverpool Cathedral.

- 1 Heav'nly Father, hear our prayers,  
Let our cries come unto thee.  
Cast away all woes and cares,  
Answer every plea.

Chorus

*Pray the Father, holy Lord.  
Pray to Jesus, blessed Son.  
Holy Spirit, be out poured,  
Bless us everyone.*

- 2 Heav'nly Father bless the church.  
And the people meeting here.  
Help us in our daily search.  
Drive away our fear.

Chorus

- 3 Help us mend the broken lands.  
Change the hearts of warring folk.  
Let us see them holding hands,  
Taking up your yolk.

Chorus

- 4 Hear the cries of those in pain.  
Heal the sick and troubled mind.  
Grant their healing's not in vain.  
Seek, and they will find.

Chorus

- 5 Hold the souls of those who died –  
In your loving arms above.

Be with loved ones who have cried.  
Bind them with your love.

Chorus

- 6 Bless us all who intercede.  
Help us when we often fail.  
Give us grace that we succeed,  
And see beyond the veil.

Chorus

Musical notation for the first system of the chorus, measures 1-4. The music is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The melody consists of quarter notes and half notes, while the accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern.

Musical notation for the second system of the chorus, measures 5-8. Measure 5 is marked with a '5' above the staff. Measure 6 contains a first ending bracket labeled '(x6)'. The notation continues with the same melodic and accompanimental patterns as the first system.

Musical notation for the third system of the chorus, measures 9-12. The word 'Chorus' is written above the staff at the beginning of measure 9. The notation continues with the same melodic and accompanimental patterns.

Musical notation for the fourth system of the chorus, measures 13-16. The notation continues with the same melodic and accompanimental patterns, ending with a double bar line.



*Crowds flocked to the many stalls and events at this year's Festival of Food and Drink at St Mary's (see page 16 for report).*



*Walkers on our second annual Parish Hike on 13 May enjoyed decent weather and a scenic circular route from Bruern Abbey via Bledington with a pitstop there at the King's Head. Thanks to Charlotte for again organising this enjoyable day out in the countryside.*