

The Newsletter

Number 111 — Pentecost 2024

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Association culturelle déclarée à la Préfecture de Police de Paris le 22 avril 1982
(Journal Officiel du 14 mai 1982) conformément aux lois du 1er juillet 1901 et du
9 décembre 1905 SIRET 333 257 558 00010 URSSAF : 967320162907001

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Well, this is it ! as the song says. But, instead of 'Merry Christmas', the good news is that, after months of anticipation, St George's, Paris, has reached the milestone (or *la borne kilométrique*) so long awaited. We are, officially, two hundred years old !

That said, I do hope that none of our readers actually feels that age ! But, should you feel even the least bit jaded, I have every confidence that the contents of this bumper edition of the Newsletter will soon have you sitting up and giving thanks "for all that is past".

In addition to Fr Mark's welcome, we feature a very special letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who sends his personal greetings to the Chaplaincy on the attaining of our Bicentenary. This is followed by specially-penned contributions from a number of our former Chaplains and Assistant Chaplains, both reminiscing about a past that some of us may recall and looking to the present and the future of the Church's life and work here in Paris 16e and further afield.

As you read of the beginnings of our church here, of developments in ecumenical relations, of the achievements of our young people, of the impressions of visitors to our church, and as you engage with the points of view set out in various articles, I hope that you will be encouraged by the signs of life and vitality exhibited in so many ways by our life together.

All of this should surely help us focus on our God of grace and lead us to say, in the words of the hymn, "We'll trust him for all that's to come". Here's to the next two hundred !

John C

FROM THE CHAPLAIN'S DESK

One of the challenges of any significant moment, be it a wedding, a birthday gathering or a Bicentenary, is an ominous sense that one's words should be heavy with meaning, lightened with significance, able to bear eternal truths... so, I thought I'd look in the archives to see what went on during our 150th anniversary in 1974 for some inspiration.

I well remember, on my arrival, Fr Matthew reminiscing about his own beginnings at St George's, when the memories of the congregation were about who was the last to leave Paris in 1940, and who caught the last boat from Bordeaux back to Britain as the Nazis powered through western France. I've discovered living memories about members of the congregation who were alive in the 1920s and 1930s, and our Service Registers are a rich mix of hard fact and social history: in 1916 Fr Cardew was clearly very excited to mark the shift from Choral Matins at 10.30am to a Sung Eucharist at 11am as the main act of Sunday worship. Matins, of course, continued at 9.30am after the 7.30am and 8.30am Eucharists at which the congregation would, fasting, take Holy Communion.

But it's in the 1970s, with the Newsletter, that the past leaps from the page! It was a packed decade: in 1972 there was a proposed joint church centre with the English speaking Methodists in Paris, resulting in a Newsletter (Issue 1 – December 1972) to facilitate communication between the congregations; Fr Greenacre (Issue 9 – June 1974) wrote of the 'character, charm and atmosphere' of the old church, but firmly represented that repairs to the existing church and presbytery at 960,000 francs were far beyond the resources of the congregation or of FACEA; in 1975 Fr Greenacre moved to Chichester Cathedral and Fr Livingstone, already well known to St George's, took his place as Chaplain; in 1979, after a long period of an 8.30am Holy Communion in rue Auguste-Vacquerie and the 10.30am Solemn Eucharist at rue Lübeck, the congregation was again worshipping permanently in the new church; there were also anniversary celebrations at the monastery of Le Bec, a freshness and unexpected joy in ecumenical cooperation, the inevitable announcements about bazaars, jumble sales and fêtes, as well as a congregational survey which discussed the use of incense (Number 11 – December 1974) at the main Sunday service!

Looking back, we've survived revolutions, sieges and endless rioting (if my last five years are any guide to life here in Paris), as well as the two European wars of the 20th century. We've moved from a rather cramped original church built next to a smelly dairy off the old Champs-Elysees through very different buildings to today's warm, welcoming and splendidly liturgical space. But anniversaries that depend on a sense of Schadenfreude are not in the spirit of the Gospel. Whilst today we have a very great deal to be thankful for: a devoted and faithful congregation here in Paris, a wide and committed circle of Friends around the globe, the stability and security of life in France, the beauty and joy of life in Paris, all of which is undergirded by the prayers of the saints and the generosity of former worshippers here; all of that doesn't begin to account for the real reasons for celebrating the Bicentennial of St George's.

A SPECIAL BICENTENARY GREETING



The Reverend Mark Osbourne
Saint George's Church, Paris
7 rue Auguste Vacquerie
75116 Paris
France

LP Ref: 96586/AG

18 April 2024

Dear Mark,

I am writing to extend my congratulations to you all at St George's Anglican Church in Paris on the occasion of the church's bicentenary.

I hope that the Bicentenary Festival Evensong will be a joyous occasion for all, and an opportunity to reflect on the church's long and rich history.

I am greatly encouraged to hear of the many ways that St George's fosters a sense of community in Paris, as well as bearing witness to Christ, through the Young Adults Group, an active choir, and as a home to a Malagasy congregation. In the last two centuries, the church has built a diverse and thriving community, and I am profoundly grateful to all those who have worked and continue to work for the ongoing life of the church.

Please be assured that I will keep St George's and its congregation in my prayers.

*In the peace of Christ
+ Josh*

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury

1824 - 2024 - LINKING PAST AND PRESENT

In our Bicentenary year, we recall with gratitude the History of St George's penned almost two decades ago by Fr Matthew Harrison. We today are no less grateful to long-standing member of St George's, Julia Campbell, who has been looking through the Chaplaincy Archives. Here Julia sets out for us an illustration of the church over two hundred years as seen in the early church registers and notebooks of the time.

In late July 1824, an advertisement in Galignani's Messenger appeared on three consecutive days announcing the opening of an English chapel in Paris. It read:

CHAPEL AT PARIS

Notice is hereby given that the Chapel in the Hôtel Marbeuf, rue Chaillot in the Champs Elysées, for the use of English Residents and Visitors at Paris, will be opened for Divine Service, according to the forms of the United Church of England and Ireland, on Sunday August 1 under authority from the French Government and under the protection of the British Embassy. The Services will begin at half-past 11 in the morning and at 3 in the afternoon. Hotel Marbeuf. July 26, 1824.

Lewis Way, A. M., Minister.

The notice ends with details on how and where to apply for tickets of admission. There is an engraving of this first chapel where worship continued for another twenty years before the redevelopment of the area resulted in a new chapel having to be rebuilt nearby.

By the late 1870s however, it was deemed necessary to build a new church, again nearby in the rue des Bassins, later renamed rue Auguste-Vacquerie. In 1883, a new Association, FACEA, had come into being, and Sir Richard Wallace became the Chairman. It was a wise choice. The FACEA Minutes Book, which covers the period 1883 - 1899, illustrates the challenges and financial difficulties faced

Which begins very simply with God and God's being. For we are here because we are called, through our baptism, to bear witness to God's own passionate love. A love that encompasses speakers of English, French and Malagasy; Paris, London and Antananarivo; shoppers on the Avenue Montaigne and in Tang Freres; night owls or early birds; folk just passing through or those who have forgotten where they keep their passports... However old we might be (or feel) or however young, we are here because we are called to the fulness of life that can only be found in Our Lord Jesus.

The joys of priestly life are very much like the joys of the Christian life. It's one of the real joys of St George's that responding to God's call to the fulness of life *can* mean changing lightbulbs or mopping up floods or mixing a vinaigrette alongside the Called; it can mean seeing small children return in all their joyful noise to St George's, alongside quietly mulling over the significance of thirty, fifty or even sixty-plus years of participation in the congregation. It does mean responding to the call of God, in daily prayer, in the regular celebration of the Eucharist, in pilgrimage and in study, in this place and in this time, to learn to love and allow ourselves to be loved, to fulfil all that God asks of us (Galatians 5.14)



So, while our Bicentenary celebrations began with a magnificent Eucharist and sermon by Bishop Richard Chartres on the 10th February, continued on St George's Day with Choral Evensong marking our commitment to Our Lord's command in John 17:21 that we might all be one - that the world might believe - we can continue to look forward to more moments of enlightenment and fun both before and after the Olympic Games. In the midst of all this, our real joy can be found in remembering that St George's has been for people, like you and me, who:

'...confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, [who]... are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.'
Hebrews 11.13b-16 NRSV

Regardless then if your memories of St George's are fresh and only a week or two old, or if your memories stretch back to people and events a lifetime ago, this year give thanks for a very special kind of citizenship: the privilege of your baptism, the joy and comfort of the Eucharist, and the strength and challenge of your fellow disciples in this place. Pray too for our going forward - seeking a homeland... a better country - where we, with all God's beloved can sing the praises of our Saviour.

Fr Mark

in building a new church and it was only due to the great financial support by Sir Richard Wallace that it all went ahead.

1887 was the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, and Sir Richard Wallace wrote to Her Majesty's private secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, stating the desire of the committee to name the chapel The Victoria Chapel (in other correspondence even 'The Victoria Jubilee Chapel'). Her Majesty was graciously happy to accede to this request. However, Bishop Wilkinson, who was to consecrate the church on 5th April 1889, requested that it be dedicated to St. George, and this was agreed. In subsequent years, however, the church celebrated the consecration on the 23rd April instead, along with the Patronal Feast of St. George.

However, by the 1970s, the very poor state of the building and its facilities meant that the only option was to rebuild. The architect for the new church was André Gutton, and in a Newsletter in 1979, he explained his ideas for the new church. Faced with a curved wall formed by the garage ramp, he wanted to give rounded forms to the whole church, including the pillars. He chose yellowy-brown *briques de Vaugirard* for the walls because a multitude of tiny rectangles would make the surface seem larger and allow for excellent acoustics. The shiny, black ceiling would give the church greater height and would reflect colour and movement from down below. His choice of Jacques Loire to design the stained glass windows was an inspired one. This, our present church, was duly consecrated in 1979.

St. George's church continues to celebrate its consecration on its anniversary but, by its presence, also reminds us of a previous church.

As a reminder of the 1824 building, The George IV Royal Coat of Arms from the Marbeuf Chapel is on display at the back of the church. In the



Newsletter celebrating the 120th anniversary in 2009, Christopher Chantrey explained the direct link from the site of the Marbeuf Chapel to the present church and that the canvas of the Royal Arms, painted in oils, formed part of the decoration of the church dedicated in 1889. It had been carefully restored thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor and continues today to be a visible reminder to us of the origins of St. George's. The bronze inscription for the dedication of the 1889 building was rediscovered only recently and is now back in place near the sacristy. The processional banner of St. George and the humeral veil from that period have also survived, the latter still in use during Holy Week until recently. The large processional Cross, seen in a photo taken during the last Service in 1975 before the church was demolished, is now in the sanctuary. In 1884, a generous benefactor gave silverware, including the chalice and collection plate still in use every Sunday, while another donor gave the church a paten, with the words, 'To the Marbeuf Chapel 1857'. The oldest censer, given also as a gift, is a 19th-century copy of a 12th-century censer now in a museum in Lille.

Many different kinds of liturgical offerings have been given as a memorial by church members over the years, and these leave their own legacy. It is also important to remember that the church today continues to receive gifts, many of them from people who prefer to remain anonymous.

Finally, words from the Service Notices book, originally dated 1918-1919 but now dated from 1938 -1940. On the 23rd April 1939, the church celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the 1889 building: Fr Cardew, for twenty-seven years the Chaplain of the church until his retirement in 1934, had been invited back to preach. The numbers present show the church to have been packed out. These words* were found in this notebook when addressing the congregation on that occasion:

... Today as you all know, we thank God for three things: the Jubilee of the Consecration of our Church; The Festival of its Patron Saints and the Festival of the Patron Saint of England... Give thanks to God for all who have founded and adorned this Church, especially Lewis Way, Priest, George Washington, Priest, and Sir Richard and Lady Wallace. For the souls of those who have departed this life, and for the souls of all who have worshipped here and for the brethren and sisters of members of our congregation, pray that God may grant to them, His mercy, rest, light and peace. Amen.

[*A prayer which we today might like to make our own. Ed.]

A MEMOIR OF ST GEORGE'S - PARIS 1971
Former Chaplain, Fr David Houghton, writes specially for our Bicentenary edition, recalling his experiences of Paris and St George's before most of us were associated with the church...



A week in Paris? 'Yes, please'. I was a keen 23 year old. What would you have said?

In early 1971 Fr Leslie Houlden, then Principal of Cuddesdon College, where I was an ordinand, suggested a visit to Paris. But there was a catch. It was a sort-of study visit when we would encounter unusual and revolutionary aspects of Church life in that City and make a report. We were guests of St-Pierre-de-Chailot (the parish church) and St George's, then with Fr Roger Greenacre as Chaplain. It was to be a brilliantly fascinating visit, which is just as well, as I cannot trace any written record! Despite assiduously, if not obsessively, keeping all diaries since the 1960's, that for 1971 is missing, and there are no saved tickets either. Moreover, I unwisely lent my Report and it was never returned. But please believe me!

As a mark of my conceit as travel wizard I persuaded Fr Houlden to book us on the little known 'Silver Arrow' connection to Paris. This was an ingenious precursor to the Channel Tunnel, and a cheaper, and I think more exotic, alternative to the iconic 'Golden Arrow': it involved taking the train from London Victoria to Gatwick Airport, a hop over by BAC 1-11 to Le Touquet airport, then a special train from the tiny airport terminal to the Gare du Nord. All in around 4 hours 30 minutes.

I have since researched all this and discovered on YouTube a 1959 promotion for the service, which then ran via Margate, Manston airport in Kent (near to where I now live) and over to Le Touquet in 20 minutes, and still time to sell duty-free cigarettes on board!

We were all put up in a seminary somewhere – perhaps in the rue de la Source?– and were treated to hospitality at St George’s and St-Pierre-de-Chailot. Of course this was the ‘old’ St George’s in all its Gothic splendour. We indulged in the ‘colourful’ sumptuous liturgy then de rigueur at the old church. (Nowadays, it’s simply good liturgy!)

A main purpose of this week was to introduce enthusiastic ordinands to the worker-priest movement that had taken hold in France. This was quite a phenomenon of the age, and even at traditional Cuddesdon we had been introduced to this radical variation of ministry.

The background to this : according to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the priesthood or the taking of the veil were no longer the only ‘true Catholic’ vocations, as the laity were given the same rights and duties with respect to holiness as the Church hierarchy.

L’Action Catholique Ouvrière is a Church movement in France under the responsibility of lay people and an association under the Law of 1901. Created in 1950, it bases its mission on that of Christ and the whole Church; its members undertake to live faithfully both to God and to the world of work.

So off we went on the Saturday evening to Mass in the chapel of the Gare Montparnasse (is it still there?). And on another day we took the train to the northern banlieue to meet a priest earning his living as an antique dealer while ministering as *prêtre ouvrier*. It was quite a novelty for us, and I admit it caused just a little bewilderment and amusement. But the experience stuck with us all. We also had a memorable meeting with Cardinal Marty, Archbishop of Paris. For the first time, many of us became aware of a wider Church than our limited experience in England, and I remained impressed by the ecumenical work taken on at St George’s and which still is a crucial element of its ministry. Tragically, the week concluded in a massive anti-climax, as the farewell dinner was held at a Hippopotamus ‘restaurant’, which I seem to recall was then on the Champs-Élysées! Whoever chose that?

One more memory. In late 1977 I was assistant Chaplain in Madrid and travelled overnight from Madrid to Paris, the next day taking the train-boat connection to London. I had heard of Fr John Livingstone, so made my way to 7 rue Auguste-Vacquerie. The building was occupied but the church not yet complete. John gave me a warm welcome: ‘Why didn’t you tell me? You could have stayed here!’ And so began a lifelong friendship.

PS does anyone have a pre-1971 memory?

THE TREE OF LIFE

Not everyone who finds themselves in church on a Sunday morning will know the significance of our magnificent set of stained-glass windows. These were installed when the new St George’s was built in 1976. In this Bicentenary year, we have the opportunity to (re)acquaint ourselves with them and their deep significance thanks to an article written for the

Newsletter by our former Chaplain, Fr Matthew Harrison, back in 2009...

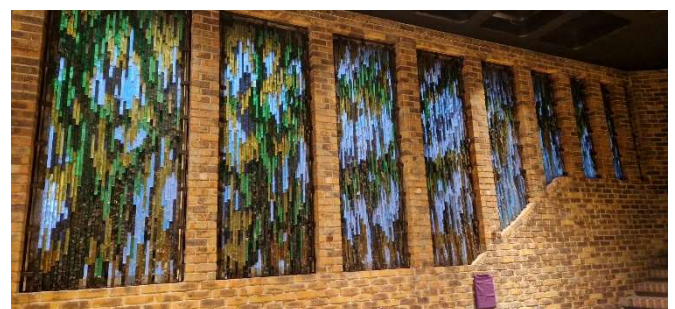
In March of this year (2009, Ed.) I met with Jacques Loire, the *maître-verrier*, down in St George’s church, and we contemplated his work of thirty years before: the stained-glass wall that runs along one side of our church and chapel.

It was a happy coincidence that only a month after we had celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the consecration of the church, Jacques Loire passed by, unannounced, to see how his work had been faring all these years – and that he agreed to come by a week later to talk to me about its conception and realisation.

The rebuilding of St George’s was done with an eye to using the best materials and the best craftsmanship, and it was no different with the stained glass. From his birth in Chartres in 1932, Jacques Loire was predestined to be a *maître-verrier* like his father before him – the well-known stained-glass artist, Gabriel Loire. Examples of their work – and the work that continues to be made by their workshop in Chartres – are spread around the continents of the world, gracing great cathedrals and humble chapels.

At St George’s, the architect, André Gutton, envisaged a window the length of one wall, to bring light and colour into the liturgical space. This was all the more important since the church itself was designed to be somewhat plain: a space that would encourage a sense of contemplation in the midst of the city, the rounded forms of the interior and the rosy colour of the brick helping to keep the atmosphere warm and prayerful. The space would be able to benefit from natural light, but natural light filtered and abstracted by the stained glass.

For Jacques Loire it was an exciting prospect: the chance to work with an architect on a whole new church within a unified concept. In response to the architect’s commission, Jacques Loire suggested a ‘wall of light’ to cover the openings to the outside in the left-hand wall. It was to be a window symbolising the Tree of Life – a Tree of Life for this sunken church...



To make the windows, Loire used slabs of coloured glass (*des dalles de couleur*), manufactured at the Boussois *Halle à Pots* workshops. This technique involves pouring stained glass onto beds of sand to produce large slabs of thick colour; in fact, the factory no longer exists, so the technique used at St George’s is no longer possible. A revolutionary advance at St George’s was the use of translucent mastic (instead of cement) to glue the pieces of stained glass together edgewise: this enabled the light to be captured in the very depths of the glass and to penetrate into the church with varying degrees of intensity.

The stained-glass windows at St George’s are also the fruit of precise engineering, as the pieces were only lined up in

the workshop and not actually put together until they reached the final site. Jacques Loire remembered that the largest pieces of window took six men to bring them down into the church on improvised 'stretchers'. The largest individual window weighs 600 kgs, and the overall weight of the glass in the windows, which together measure 22 square metres, is four tonnes.

Having heard about the revolutionary glue and the huge weight of the windows, I rather nervously asked him if we were likely to have problems with the maintenance of our splendid windows. He was comfortingly dismissive: "At Chartres", he replied, "we talk in centuries!"

But what did he feel about his own work here at St George's? It was a search for "*l'irréel*", he said – an atmosphere at once *nul part et partout*, a search for another world and another dimension. And, of course, that is the point of having something that is not clear.

In the Bible there are three Trees of Life (in addition to Ezekiel's vision). The first Tree is set in the heart of the Garden of Eden as described in Genesis. When Adam and Eve disobey God and eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they are expelled from the Garden: expelled, to stop them also eating of the Tree of Life, which would result in sin becoming eternal. So the first Tree of Life stands in the midst of the original, un-fallen, paradise world, to which mankind looks back with regret and longing.

The third Tree of Life appears in the last book of the Bible, in Revelation. In the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem the Tree of Life grows, yielding its twelve kinds of fruit, fruiting each month, and with its leaves for the healing of the nations. In that city the blessed shall see the face of God and reign with him for ever, and they shall have the right to the Tree of Life. The third Tree of Life stands then as a symbol of paradise regained and a fellowship with our Maker that has been restored – to which our hearts are already restless to return.

And, between the two, stands the second Tree of Life: the Cross of Christ. As St Peter says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." And each Good Friday we sing to the cross, "Faithful Cross, above all other, one and only noble Tree! None in foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit thy peer may be; sweetest wood and sweetest iron, sweetest weight is hung on thee!"

At St George's we are surrounded in our worship by the spreading branches of the Tree of Life, luminous and calm: the Tree of Life that reminds us of the whole of the life-giving love of God in Christ that surrounds us in the pilgrim Church.

'IN ST GEORGE'S, PARIS'

A poem reflecting on our remarkable stained glass...

Growing in the greenish-yellow dusk
along our basement's northern wall,
its presence gently insinuates itself:
sacred space.
Fixed between earth and heaven, but
living, glowing from a depth
that fertilises all its reach, here
rises the Tree of Life.

The artist imagined all six hundred kilos
of the greatest pane:
that day the workmen, doing their job,
must have struggled with its weight,
their arms nearly out of joint,
holding it up
so all could stand unmoving, seamless, on the day.

And in our day, like those
gone before, yet still with us
in the numinous of this same dusk,
we, in turn, have sometimes felt that pull
of hands and voices raised
towards what lies beyond, above;
called from across the world to witness
to light's Origin, filtering
through the cascading
layers of leaves.

To small people
it may seem to stand never-ending,
pointing dimly
to an unseen
land of promise.

To older folk,
who've seen it all before,
an appreciation of the aesthetic
now and then mingles with
a wrenching, musing on
things that lie deeper than words.

For, hidden in the tendrils, the
veined, gnarled sinuousness
encircling all our Sundays,
we sense the germ
of that most ancient, rebel pride.
And somewhere, sprung from the same stock,
are the bare, ugly planks,
accepting the splitting nails,
that form a figure,
symbol of both loss and gain.

The words, ringing from the knowingness of Eternal, still
ring true:

'An enemy has done this'.

Thus our implacable accuser, and our connivance, are
arraigned.

And every time-bound cortège, every
huddled group of mourners,
witness to that deepest truth,
where willing life must wither into death.

But there is healing here:
and those estranged from Eden sense it so.
The One whose substance of our mortal flesh was marred
leaves little doubt of timeless, innocent identifying
with all our deserving deaths.

And those not sure of friendship
can cry out, however awkwardly,
their own need to be held, and welcomed.
We will be befriended at our last:
the healing of our nations.
Here, God's ultimate answer to our 'why':
because Love sowed the seed,
this Tree of death
is Life for us.

And so, that lattice-work of branches
woven long ago by master-hands
means that a gracious shadow falls
on our own dying path:
a Cross-shaped place of refuge.

For Love it is
who carries all our weight:
leaving to us that long-sought Tree of Paradise,
which we shall share.
And even those who fear their Fall is final
can find themselves rescued, borne up, at the last:
for underneath are
Everlasting Arms.

JC

LE PERE NICOLAS PARLE

Vous vous appelez Georges, n'est-ce pas ?

Au moment du Bicentenaire, Père Nicolas nous donne un aperçu émouvant de son parcours personnel et spirituel...

Un jour, de passage à Madagascar, je rends visite à Amédée, un ancien paroissien de Saint-Georges. Âgé et malade, il est un peu déboussolé. Il ne se souvient pas de moi et ne se rappelle que vaguement de Paris, où il a vécu de nombreuses années. Je me présente, et lui explique que je suis l'ancien catéchiste de Saint-Georges, et suis maintenant prêtre. Amédée semble dubitatif, mais après quelques instants, il me regarde et demande : « Vous vous appelez Georges, n'est-ce pas ? ». J'ai d'abord été surpris, puis ai finalement trouvé assez plaisant, voire honorable, d'être appelé par ce prénom, celui du saint patron de notre église.

L'église Saint-Georges représente en effet quelque chose d'important dans ma vie. En septembre 1989, je débarquais à Paris en provenance de Madagascar, pour commencer des études en classes préparatoires aux Grandes Ecoles. C'était un grand saut, mes parents étaient désormais au loin, et tout était nouveau pour moi : la France, les gens, la langue, les études... J'avais l'impression d'avoir changé de planète. Le dimanche après mon arrivée, je me suis rendu à l'Eucharistie de 10h30 de Saint-Georges. C'était une joie de retrouver une liturgie et des prières qui m'étaient familières, même si c'était dans une langue différente de la mienne. En entendant le P. Martin Draper entonner le Crédo (« I believe in one God »), ou la grande prière d'Action de grâces (« The Lord be with you, lift up your hearts... »), chantés de la même façon qu'en malgache, je retrouvais un peu de mon pays d'origine. Et quelques semaines plus tard, j'ai assisté à la messe malgache, célébrée par le P. Philippe Toutain.

Les années qui ont suivi n'ont pas été faciles pour moi. Mais j'ai pu trouver à Saint-Georges une communauté qui m'a aidé à vivre ma vie à Paris et avancer dans mes études. Je suis ensuite retourné vivre à Madagascar en 1996. De retour en France en 2000, je me suis remis à fréquenter Saint-Georges. Le P. Ernest Rakotoarison, prêtre malgache qui a succédé au P. Toutain, m'a proposé de devenir « catéchiste » pour les Malgaches, rôle que j'ai exercé avec le soutien des chapelains successifs de St-Georges, le P. David Houghton puis le P. Matthew Harrison. Quelques années plus tard, encouragé et aidé notamment par le P. Richard Fermer, chapelain assistant, je me suis lancé dans un discernement de ma vocation, qui a abouti à mon

ordination comme diacre en 2016 et comme prêtre en 2017. Aujourd'hui, je fais partie du clergé de notre église, aux côtés des Pères Mark et Jeffrey.

Ma fréquentation de Saint-Georges a maintenant duré plus de la moitié de ma vie. Cette église représente pour moi un endroit pour me ressourcer, pour écouter la Parole de Dieu, approfondir ma foi, recevoir les sacrements et, depuis mon ordination, les célébrer. Elle m'a surtout offert des amis et une communauté qui m'a soutenu dans les moments difficiles. Aujourd'hui, c'est aussi l'église de Manitra, mon épouse et de nos trois enfants, nés en France.

Saint-Georges est aussi l'église des Anglicans malgaches et de leurs familles. Au fil des années, beaucoup d'entre eux y ont été baptisés ou confirmés, de nombreux couples s'y sont mariés et, surtout, un grand nombre y a pu prier, écouter la Parole de Dieu, recevoir l'Eucharistie, trouver réconfort dans les moments difficiles. Il n'est pas rare aujourd'hui qu'en cas de décès d'un Anglican malgache résidant en France, la famille mentionne « église anglicane Saint-Georges Paris » dans le faire-part. L'église elle-même a pu adopter un peu de la culture malgache : « Fitiavana rano velona » (ce qui signifie : « l'amour, une eau vive »), chant typiquement malgache, est devenu familier pour beaucoup, et nous le chantons souvent dans les moments où toute la paroisse (anglophones, francophones, malgachophones) se retrouve ensemble, comme à la Pentecôte.

Quand il avait fondé Saint-Georges il y a deux cents ans, le P. Lewis Way n'imaginait sans doute pas que cette église deviendrait un jour un lieu d'accueil d'Anglicans de Madagascar. En effet, l'anglicanisme n'a été introduit à Madagascar que quarante ans plus tard, en 1864. Pourtant, aujourd'hui, Saint-Georges est aussi devenue une église des Malgaches de la région parisienne, et bien au-delà. Pour beaucoup, elle est une place familière, un havre de paix et de stabilité dans un monde changeant. Le mot Saint-Georges reste gravé dans les mémoires des Malgaches qui ont fréquenté l'église, à l'image d'Amédée. Et au fond, dans tout cela, c'est Dieu qui est présent et est à l'œuvre ! A Lui la gloire.

THE REVISED ENGLISH HYMNAL

At the beginning of our Bicentenary year our former Chaplain, Fr Martin Draper, gives a unique insight into the production of the Revised English Hymnal, a book which has more than one special association with our Chaplaincy. We trust it will soon be used to enrich worship in church...

At long last, the *Revised English Hymnal* Full Music edition has been published.

St George's must be agog with expectation, because whenever I see or hear from anyone in the congregation, a question about its progress is almost always the first thing they ask!

The *Hymnal* is unique in that, while it is designed for use in churches everywhere, it has been designed, especially as regards its contents, for use at St George's. Two of the seven editors – Michael Stoddart and myself – have strong links with the Chaplaincy, and throughout the compilation process we have been aware of what the church needs for its present use and would appreciate in terms of new material.

As far as hymns are concerned, it contains, I believe, almost all of what you use from the *New English Hymnal*. I can think of only one item in regular use which did not make the new book: Isaac Watts's 'Nature with open volume stands', to a fine tune by J. S. Bach. An editorial committee of seven requires a majority of votes for the inclusion of an item, or at least a major effort to convert others to your point of view. For some reason, that did not happen in this case. If you want to continue to sing it, you have a simple way of doing so...

But the *Hymnal* also contains a lot of new hymns. There are more Office Hymns for use at Morning and Evening Prayer, enough for the whole Liturgical Year and the days of an ordinary week. There are new texts, often firmly established since the appearance of the *New English Hymnal* in 1986. And there are many fine new tunes. There is a small selection of Taizé chants, well-known in France, which would serve your ecumenical engagement.

Altogether, there must be about 140 to 150 texts in the main body of the book which were not included in the *New English Hymnal*. Some are reintroduced from the original *English Hymnal*, but others come from a wide variety of sources. There's plenty of new poetry for private use, as well as for congregational singing.

The Liturgical section, in particular, was enlarged and updated with (for Michael and me) St George's largely in mind. So you will find absolutely everything you already use in Holy Week or for, say, Candlemas, together with a contemporary English language version of many of the same items, such as the psalmody at the Easter Vigil, if you prefer it. There will be no need for bits of paper for the choir during such celebrations, with music and words for such things as *Vidi aquam* or the Easter Alleluyas.

There are eight congregational mass settings (with music supplied in all editions of the book): four in traditional language and four in contemporary English. It is no coincidence that six of them are already in use in the Chaplaincy, thus ending the need for paper copies of the *Missa de Angelis*, or the Thorne or Gregory Murray settings, for example. Of the two you don't already use, the 'New Anglican Folk Mass', from the *New English Hymnal*, is simple and attractive, and I have no idea why we never tried it when I was the Chaplain. The other is a 'Mass of St Cedd' by Peter Nardone.

A final anecdote illustrates particular sentimental connection for some members of the present congregation. One editor produced a tune from *Songs of Praise* – the hymn book many of us used at British State schools in the 1960s and 70s – to a hymn already in the *New English Hymnal*, but never, I think, sung in my time as Chaplain. It is not possible for a church to sing more than a selection – although wide in the case of St George's – of any hymnal. The hymn is 'Lord, as I wake, I turn to you'.

The new tune provided in the *Revised English Hymnal* isn't outstanding, but its name caught my attention. It might not have gained the necessary four votes, but as it is serviceable, it got Michael's and my votes for a quite different reason. Its name is PHILIPPINE and, yes, it was given that name by its composer, Mrs Lawson's uncle, Robert Edwin Roberts (1878-1940), the then Vicar of Ashwell, Rutland. The tune was written to be sung to a

hymn text written, I assume, by her aunt, and the hymn was sung at her own baptism. I knew of its existence, because Philippine used to get a few pence a year for its inclusion in *Songs of Praise*. I preached at her funeral, with Fr Matthew celebrating and Michael playing the organ.

The editor of the *Newsletter* wanted me to write this article in the hope that the Chaplaincy would adopt the book. I don't think that was ever in doubt, but I do urge you to place your order before the 30th April – though check, in case that date is further extended – to obtain a generous 30% grant for bulk orders. Only the Full Music edition is available at the moment. We are expecting the Words Only edition to be published in February or early March and the Melody edition after Easter. If, as I hope, St George's will need a significant number of the latter, it will still be worth making your order before the grant is reduced to its normal 25%. You will only pay for the books as they arrive.

If the many wonderful opportunities of living in Paris leave you with an idle moment, you could always watch a recording of the launch, at St James's, Paddington, last November:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2024/12-january/audio-video/video/the-revised-english-hymnal-launch>

You don't need to be a subscriber to *Church Times* to watch it.

(Michael is accompanying for the first six of the thirteen items we sang, and you can watch me fumbling with notes and having difficulty with the St James's sound system – O the joy of celebrating or preaching at St George's! The quality of the sound on the recording, which used separate equipment, is not affected.)

THE CHURCH AND MUSIC

For our Bicentenary edition, Fr Jeffrey muses on a human activity central to our worship at St George's, and, as ever, draws some fascinating conclusions...

The relationship between the Church and music has always been rather ambiguous. Consider this splendidly robust view of music and musicians by Philip Stubbes, a Puritan divine of the sixteenth century:

I say of music that it is very ill for young heads, in alluring the auditory to pusillanimity and loathsomeness of life. Music may be compared to honey, and suchlike sweet things, which when received into the stomach do delight at first, but afterward make the stomach queasy and weak and unable to admit meat of hard digesture. So sweet music at first delighteth the ear, but afterward corrupteth and depraveth the mind, making it weak and queasy and inclined to all licentiousness of life whatsoever... Who indeed be more bawdy than the company of music-making men and singers? Who more loose-minded, who such drunken sockets and parasites as they? Therefore, sir, if you would have your son soft, smooth-mouthed, affected to bawdry, scurrility, untimely talk and inclined to every kind of abomination, in short, if you would have him turned into a woman, or worse – then set him, sir, to learn music, and you shall not fail of your purpose.

There is lot of truth in it, you must admit... But the Puritans were on shaky ground here. There is too much music embedded in Holy Writ to claim that it is wicked *per se*. The weight of biblical evidence is that, on the contrary,

God is rather keen on music, and that furthermore the mystery of music - why it does to us what it does - is bound up with the mystery of God's own nature.

According to the Book of Job, the first thing that happened when God finished creating the universe was that the morning stars burst into song and all the angels joined in. This may reflect the ancient idea that the stars and planets themselves make music, 'the harmony of the spheres' which is inaudible to humankind but echoes the harmony of God. At the other end of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation, the singing angels appear again. If St John is to be believed, heaven will resemble nothing so much as an eternal Matins with angels chanting everlasting canticles – a worrying thought for some of us, but at least Revelation mentions that there is incense as well to cheer it up!

In England most Puritans compromised their hostility to music by concluding that the human voice was acceptable, but instruments clearly devilish because they were artificially made. So unaccompanied psalm-singing was tolerated, but organs and other instruments had to go - which is why there are almost no pre-Commonwealth organs in England. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland still takes much the same view, and so do most Eastern Orthodox churches.

But of course the idea that God likes voices but not instruments won't wash biblically either. In the Old Testament David has his harp, and the use of horns and trumpets by priests goes back at least to 1200 BC when they brought the walls of Jericho down. We know too that the Temple liturgy in Jerusalem was accompanied by an exotic selection of brass, woodwind, strings and timpani, which is listed in long and loving detail in the Second Book of Chronicles. According to the Talmud the Temple sacrifices *had* to be accompanied by music and chant, otherwise they weren't held to be valid; God wouldn't accept them - and since the sacrifices were pretty well continuous, the poor temple musicians must have been at it morning and night...

Both Jews and early Christians believed the Temple worship was a reflection of what happens in heaven. So the Book of Revelation has plenty of instrumentalists as well to accompany the angelic choir. Heaven will be Matins with incense *and* orchestra!

We can safely take comfort then in the fact that, biblically speaking, Church music, vocal and instrumental, is not only acceptable, but practically mandatory: God is positively an enthusiast. John Donne's assertion that in heaven 'there is neither noise nor silence but one equal music' is scripturally unassailable.

Yet, even discounting the Puritans, it is surprising how often Christian literature warns us about the danger of music. St Augustine in his treatise *De Musica* was worried about it on the principle *Corruptio Optimi Pessima*, 'The Corruption of the Best is the Worst'. He makes the point that it's the very fact that music can give us a spiritual high, and can even appear to put us in touch with the divine, that makes it dangerous. Music creates powerful emotions that can seem spiritual when they are not; and so it can easily be taken for a spiritual end in itself instead of the means. The gift can usurp the Giver, and become an idol. Thus, laments Augustine - anticipating the grumbles of countless clergy

down the centuries – even church singers can sometimes forget that music is the servant of worship, not vice-versa...

Even so, Augustine and the mainstream tradition of the Church remain a million miles from the sour view of Philip Stubbes. Music is not an invention of the Devil. On the contrary, it is one of God's greatest gifts – maybe even, as Addison thought, 'the greatest gift that mortals know, and all of heaven we have below'. The crucial point is: *realise* it is God's gift, and enjoy it with him, not instead of him - and then it will bring you closer to him.

A VISITOR TO ST GEORGE'S

A significant part of our Bicentenary Year got going even before the Year itself had started! It was the call for a new hymn text for our Chaplaincy, followed by the request for a hymn tune to which the words could be sung. Judging of the words entries took place in the spring of 2023. Revd Dr Janet Wootton, former Director of Studies for the British Congregational Federation and Executive President of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, generously agreed to put her time and considerable expertise at the service of St George's as one of our three judges. Here Janet describes for us what it was like to encounter our Chaplaincy and take part in our worship from the inside...



Some time ago, a request came to me to be part of a judging panel for a Hymn Competition for the Bicentenary of St George's, Paris, the celebration of which would begin over the weekend of 10-11 February, 2024. This was my introduction to St George's. Apart from knowing John Crothers as a fellow member of the Hymn Society of

Britain and Ireland, and a friend, I was unaware of the church, or the part it plays in Parisian church and community life.

But I was thrilled to be involved. Hymn competitions are wonderful events. Writers and composers pour their hearts into words and music, and the results lie before you. It is such a responsibility, and such a delight.

Hymns have a unique place in our worshipping life. At their best, they provide a feast that tantalizes the spiritual taste buds on first singing, and then offers a lifetime of nourishment, when we return to them again and again.

Singing, in a worshipping congregation, is such a powerful experience. We each bring individual recollections and responses, and sometimes there are collective memories of having sung these words in this congregation over years, or they surprise us with new insights in new contexts. *Then* God, wonderfully present, builds us into a body of praise, or lament, or commitment, and we open our hearts as we sing.

So, I fell on the competition entries with a hearty appetite, but also resolved that, come what may, I would be at the service in February when the winning entry was to be sung.

We were guided in our deliberations by the Competition Rules. Texts should take into account the mission of St George's: "Drawing on our Anglican heritage, we celebrate and proclaim the reconciling love of God in Christ"; and be guided by the information that: "George, our Patron, is believed to have been a soldier, exhibiting values of conscience, integrity and social justice" and "we have been active in Paris since 1824; we have a tradition of welcoming people from around the globe who have found new life in the 'City of Light'".

Our deliberations concluded, we sent news of the winning entry to the organisers, and I started making travel plans. We were hoping that the author of the winning hymn text, Doug Constable, a long-term member of the Hymn Society, would also be able to be there, but in the end he was not able to travel.

What a pleasure it was to be there! The Bicentenary Dedication Service was a fabulous occasion. We were led by an impressive gathering of clergy, and an amazing choir and organist. I am not an Anglican, so relied on John Crothers to guide me through the mechanics of the worship.

And the hymns! Big, powerful words and tunes. 'Thy hand, O God, has guided', by an Anglican Priest and educationalist, married to the daughter of a Unitarian Minister, writing 'One Church [on that terrific high note when sung to THORNBURY], one Faith, one Lord'. John Newton's 'Glorious things of thee are spoken', with its challenge: 'Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in thy name'; and verses from John Mason Neale's translation of the thousand-plus-year-old Latin hymn, *Urbs Beata*.

Finally, the moment arrived when Doug Constable's text was to be sung, the climax to the service: 'Strong Sovereign at the heart of every soul': a carefully constructed text, which placed us in the presence of the Holy Trinity, alongside Saint George, in commitment and worship.

It was good to be part of the congregation on that day, representing the Hymn Society, of which until recently, I was Executive President; a joy to worship alongside the saints gathered to celebrate; and aware of the great cloud of witnesses, from the last 200 years of St George's, Paris, or 1000 years and more through the worship and music of our worship.



[Chaplaincy members will recall the Festival Eucharist on 11 February when we sang Revd Doug Constable's words to the tune, ST GEORGE, MARTYR, written by the winner of our tune competition, the composer Alan Bullard. We had another chance to sing both at the Festival Evensong on St George's Day, 23rd April - Ed]

'A CHANGED VIEW'

Changing Perspectives on the Land of the Holy One

Between 2009 and 2012 our Assistant Chaplain at St George's was Fr Richard Fermer. He left us to become incumbent at The Grosvenor Chapel in London's Mayfair. Just last year he was appointed Dean of St Christopher's Cathedral, Manama, in The Kingdom of Bahrein in the Persian Gulf. Here Dean Richard reflects deeply on his experiences in the Middle East and the extent to which they have already shaped his thinking about conflict and peace...

"The more one is able to leave one's cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision. The more easily, too, does one assess oneself and alien cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance." (Edward W. Saïd, *Orientalism*)



Context contributes much, even if not fully determining, a person's perspective on the world. Now I am ministering in the Middle East, the current round of conflict in the Holy Land takes on a quite different perspective. For a start, I am part of an Anglican Province that has Palestinian Christians; indeed, my Archbishop, Hosam Naoum, is one.

On the night of October 17th, I was leading an Interfaith Service of Prayer for Peace. At the end of the Service, we returned home to discover that the Diocese of Jerusalem's Al Ahli Hospital had been bombed, killing those who were taking refuge in its compound. We were able to get through to a doctor from the hospital, Ghassan Abu Sitta. We asked him what gave him hope, and he spoke of the "great acts of love" he had witnessed amidst the unspeakable horror.

The complexities and contradictions of international politics have left the onlooker of this conflict with a sense of powerlessness at the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe. While politicians debate what is an acceptable level of "collateral damage", people have been starved of aid, and the civilian population of Gaza and the Israeli hostages put in last place. Where else could I turn to invoke their humanity than the very words of people caught up in this conflict?

Palestinian poet Refaat Alareer was killed in an Israeli bombardment in early December. Poignantly, he imagined his passing in a poem written a few days before:

"If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story

to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings".

These are the materials for a kite, and in the poem he imagines those who survive him flying it, so that:

"....a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself—
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love.
If I must die
let it bring hope,
let it be a tale."

Even in the killing fields of Gaza, the poet can provide a vision of hope.

So too the female poet, Hiba Abu Nada, killed at the age of 32 by an Israeli airstrike in southern Gaza on October 20th, who, in the midst of the lottery of death, and the trial of survival and sanity, asserts boldly that which is "Not Just Passing": truly an act of faith.

"Yesterday, a star said
to the little light in my heart,
We are not just transients
passing.
Do not die. Beneath this glow...
You were first created out of love,
so carry nothing but love
to those who are trembling."

In what Hiba writes, there is a belief in the fruitfulness of our lives, despite their transience and the futility of violence that engulfs her people:

"One day, all gardens sprouted
from our names, from what remained
of hearts' yearning."

In the lifeless prison that Gaza has become, longing and creativity were all the poet could hold on to and yet we can "heal others/with our longing,/how to be a heavenly scent/to relax their tightening lungs:/a welcome sigh,/a gasp of oxygen." Even in the prison of such circumstances, we can be the perfume of charity.

Tragically, the "little life" of Hiba Abu Nada was snuffed out, and yet the longing, the grandeur of spirit, cannot be:

"O little light in me, don't die,
even if all the galaxies of the world
close in.
O little light in me, say:
Enter my heart in peace.
All of you, come in!"

It is as if the charity and spirit of a heart is cavernous, large enough to welcome all who come in peace, to offer unassailable protection and shelter, of the "little light in my heart" that is not just passing. It reminds me of words from Paul's Letter to the Romans: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor

depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God...".

Thank you Refaat and Hiba for showing us that the human spirit, like a kite, can keep hope alive and be a medium of God's Spirit in the affirmation of what is "not just passing". Your vision is more powerful than the bringers of death, with their bankrupt belief that it is through violence that lasting peace may be achieved.

OTHER BICENTENARY NEWS...

Our Bicentenary Year events continued with a visit to St George's from Barbara Lambesis, President of the *Association des Fontaines Wallace*. In a fascinating illustrated lecture on 27th April Barbara gave her enthusiastic audience, gathered in the church, multiple insights into the life and times of this relatively unknown philanthropist and art collector.

There can be little doubt that the memory of Wallace deserves to be revived – not least for his remarkable



generosity in providing the wherewithal for St George's to move to its present site and flourish in those early years. It's to be hoped that our Bicentenary celebrations, together with the

June event at the Château de Bagatelle (the Wallace family home in the Bois de Boulogne) will provide at least part of the impetus to enable that to become a reality.

The Bicentenary of our Chaplaincy has attracted interest from beyond our shores! The BBC have decided to broadcast their regular Radio 4 morning programme *Sunday Worship* from our church on 21st July, to coincide with the opening of the Paris Olympic Games. The programme, which will feature familiar voices from within our Chaplaincy, is to be recorded on Saturday 22nd June, when we hope a full church will provide the reverent and enthusiastic participation in worship which is one of the hallmarks of St George's.



Senior Religious Producer at the BBC, Andrew Earis, came across to Paris in April to meet clergy, lay leaders and musicians in order to plan the programme. He declared himself well satisfied and, like us, is much looking forward to the occasion.

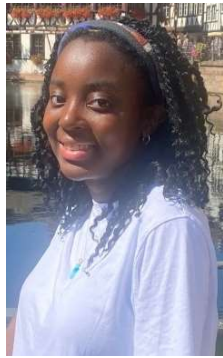
OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SUCCEED...

CONGRATULATIONS !!

In this Bicentenary year, a number of our young people have brought great credit to themselves and their families (and, by extension, to St George's) by winning national competitions.

Mmeso Mba has come first in all of France in a national poetry competition. Her father, Chude, gives us the details...

Mmeso has won the UK ELSA 'Poetry by Heart' competition, becoming Champion of France for 2024! The France competition was among fifteen leading international schools. Students learn two classic poems by heart and perform them solo – the poets' words, the students' natural speaking voices and their dramatic interpretation of the poems. Mmeso performed "A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General" (1722) by Jonathan Swift and "What the Chairman told Tom" (1967) by Basil Bunting.



Through much of Mmeso's life, she has loved singing, drama, and public speaking and being able to transmit her singing voice into speech through drama! She entered the 'Poetry by Heart' competition at her school, Ecole Jeannine Manuel, not so much to win but to enjoy participation and competition.

Mmeso has been invited to the Globe Theatre in London on 1 June 2024 for the Finals among UK and international schools around the world. We wish her all the luck!



Congratulations to Arun Thampirasa on completing the Paris Marathon on April 7th this year. Thanks to his all efforts, he ran in 4 hours and 3 minutes, and your generosity in sponsoring him we'll be sending 300€ to Christ Church, Istanbul. Built as the Crimea Memorial Church in 1858 today it welcomes an international congregation and recommended that Arun find St George's when he moved to Paris. Thank you, Christ Church!

And Timothé Razafindratsima has achieved a long-sought ambition by becoming Under-18 Chess Champion of France. His proud parents write...

Champion d'Europe en 2022, Timothé a toujours été à la conquête du titre de Champion de France depuis 10 ans. Il vient enfin de l'obtenir le 21 avril 2024. Dans nos méditations quotidiennes Dieu nous donnait un signe que Timothé sera champion. Un titre de médiation disait "Tu as le potentiel de ta destinée" avec le verset « Vous serez la tête et non la queue » (Deutéronome 28:13). Un autre : "L'impossible : une possibilité pour exercer sa foi". Le texte explique : Dieu t'a donné des talents naturels pour faire ce qui est naturellement possible, mais Il t'a donné la foi pour rendre l'impossible possible. Ce n'était pas facile pour nous de rester sur ces promesses, surtout quand certaines parties de Timothé étaient



perdantes. Mais au final, il gagne le tournoi avec 8,5 points sur 9. « Tout est possible à celui qui croit » (Marc 9:23). Nous rendons grâce à Dieu pour son talent.

OBITUARY : ELIZABETH DURAND (1950 – 2023)
Rosemary Chavez recalls a loyal member of the Chaplaincy congregation, whose life spanned the old and new St George's...

Elizabeth had been a member of St George's church even before the new church was built in the 1970s. She was confirmed in the old St George's.

I made her acquaintance first at church in 1971 in the old building, and on my return to France (and the new building) in 1978 we became good friends and remained so until her death.

Elizabeth was English by her mother and French by her father. Her 'English side' predominated, of course, whenever she was amongst English-speaking friends, at church or elsewhere. She was very proud of that side, having been born in London and partly educated in the UK. As a child, school holidays were spent mostly with her English grandparents at the seaside in Weston-super-Mare. Although she she was a true Parisian, having lived all her life there, she also loved English traditions, especially tea-time with scones and jam, and hot cross buns, which, even after M&S closed their Paris shops, she would endeavour to seek out elsewhere. Occasionally, I bought her scones on my way back from the UK !

Before her health prevented it, she loved to travel and had visited many different parts of the globe with her partner. Among these places, Ireland held a special place in her heart, where she returned year after year to visit friends.



She was a very loyal friend to me and my family, and never missed our birthdays or special occasions, often spoiling us with « gourmandises », such as chocolates from Le Nôtre. Moreover, she was a very sociable, generous and kind-hearted person, who was almost always cheerful, even

when tragedy hit her family, which happened on more than one occasion. Sometimes misunderstood by others, she nevertheless faced up to life positively.

Her favourite time of year was the Christmas Bazaar, which she attended regularly and gave generously to, followed of course by Christmas, which she again celebrated in the English tradition - turkey, mince pies, pudding, not forgetting the crackers! She never missed the Carol Service at St George's either.

Most of her professional life was with the French Ministry of Economy and Finance, first in their offices in Paris, then later when they moved out to Noisy-le-Grand. She became quite an expert on financial bonds by the end of her career !

She was fluent in English and French, of course, but also spoke German and loved practising Spanish when she had the opportunity.

In Paris she enjoyed going to her local market at rue Poncelet. She liked cinema, ballet and theatre too, and going out to restaurants or a *salon de thé* with friends. She could be quite determined about what she wanted, and if the French waiters didn't bring COLD milk for her tea she was likely to kick up a

fuss ! Her favourite tea room was « Le Stübli », the Austrian pâtisserie in rue Poncelet.

I believe and indeed know that her faith was strong and helped her through life. In the last few years, owing to her declining physical health, she wasn't able to attend the church services in person. Father Jeffrey kindly took communion to her at home.

The circumstances of her tragic death have left many of us in shock, but she will continue living in our hearts through the many shared memories.

Let us pray for her and trust that she is now at peace.

BISHOP DAVID RETIRES

Bishop David Hamid retired on the 27th February this year after 21 years as a bishop in our diocese. We are very glad to have benefited from his ministry and were overjoyed to have an opportunity to bid him farewell with our thanks and gratitude for all he has been and done during his ministry as bishop in our Diocese. Colleen and he were with us on Sunday 14th January at 1030 and then the Parish Lunch that followed.



Fr Nicolas, Revd Sara, Bishop David, Fr Mark, Fr Matthew and Fr Jeffrey

Bishop David writes:

“For over twenty years I have been blessed to have one of the most fulfilling and enriching jobs in the Church. At times the Diocese in Europe is difficult to explain to outsiders and to many in other parts of the Church of England, but I can sum up from my experience that it is a family, a family of committed and loving people, a truly rich and diverse, if scattered community, which seeks to live the Christian life in the Anglican Way. The diocese embodies a profound vision of ecumenical outreach and collaboration, and is a beautiful multicultural and multiethnic mosaic. These particular aspects of her life are very close to my own heart, and have added to my joy in serving the diocese as one of its bishops.

I am grateful beyond words for the kindness and generosity that is shown to me in my pastoral visits, and I give thanks to God for all the many signs of growth in faith and Christian witness and service that I see from the shores of the Baltic to the Mediterranean, and beyond. Throughout these years, I have been dependent on the encouragement and support of both the late Bishop Geoffrey Rowell and Bishop Robert Innes, as well as from a wonderful group of colleagues in the Senior Staff, and the wisdom, patience and commitment of my Chaplain, Deacon Frances Hiller, who has served me throughout my episcopal ministry.

I am 68 right now, and while I can continue until I turn 70, the time seems right for Colleen and me to look towards the next

phase of our life. However, there is still much on my agenda before the end of February! But when the day comes, I know that I will take into retirement a heart filled with thanksgiving for these past couple of decades and a heart which will always hold the people of this wonderful diocese in my prayers”.

ECUMENICAL NEWS

Time to move closer

St George's has, for many years, given an important place to the goal of fulfilling Christ's prayer, "that they may be one". This comment, from Church Times, is particularly relevant...

JOINT enterprises take a bit of work — and an act of will. This leader comment, intended to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, has been back and forth a couple of times between *The Tablet* and the *Church Times*. It is being published simultaneously in both papers. One important message behind the Week of Prayer is that such work is necessary if the scandal of disunity in the Body of Christ is to be overcome. Many of the barriers between Anglicans and Roman Catholics have started to fall away, some of them through diligent debate between international theologians, some through personal friendships, many through the coming of a new generation that refuses to adopt the antagonisms of the past.

A major problem now is a reluctance in these two portions of the Body of Christ to grasp the opportunities presented to them by progress so far. It is as if the stirring ecumenical mantra — doing everything together except those things that must still be done separately — has been buried under a mountain of institutional inertia. Why does each body still act as if the other did not exist? Why are statements about political and social matters not made together as a matter of routine? Why are investigations and commissions not jointly resourced? Why is an initiative such as the visit of Pope Francis, Archbishop Welby, and the Kirk Moderator to South Sudan so rare?

What is lost in this disunity is an opportunity to learn from each other, and the lesson most needed is how to exercise authority in the light of the Gospel. Joint initiatives have stumbled over the question how each body decides what to do. Anglicans are organised through a sophisticated network of dispersed authority, meting out to individual dioceses and provinces what to Roman Catholics is a surprising degree of autonomy. In their turn, Anglicans are surprised by the unity that attaches to the personal authority of the Pope. As Roman Catholics begin to explore, belatedly, the concept of synodality, they may be puzzled to see that a system designed to guard against autocracy seems to encourage open dissent in a way that the utterances of a single leader do not. In the light of negative reactions to the Anglican introduction of same-sex blessings and the Vatican's publication of *Fiducia Supplicans*, lifting the prohibition of the same, a cynic might observe that many in the Church do not wish to exercise the freedoms that they are offered — or more precisely, do not wish others to exercise those freedoms.

Yet ordinary men, women and children in the pews read the same Scriptures as each other, say the same prayers. They see: the need to welcome strangers, and together they welcome; the need for pastoral care of the wounded and excluded, and they care; the need for social action, and

they act. It is here that Christian unity has stopped being a hope for the future and has become the present reality. It is leadership from below, impelled by the Holy Spirit.

BUT I AM STILL A MONARCHIST...QUAND MÊME
In this Bicentenary year, when we think of the opening of our original building, and subsequent visits to it by British Royalty, Robin Baker reflects on the pros and cons of supporting a royal head of state, and comes down decisively on one side...

How should we choose our head of state? Well, let me make a suggestion. First of all, we could go back some nine-and-a-half centuries to an invasion of England. That invasion was led by a man known as William the Bastard. This appellation was assigned to him not, as one might have thought, as a slur on his character but because his parents had not got round to getting married; no, not even in the local registry office. But William the Bastard is now more commonly known as William the Conqueror or William I.

So, you may think, all well and good, but it gets worse! William had three sons. As both Duke of Normandy and King of England, on his death he left the Duchy to his eldest son Robert, and England to the second, another William, nicknamed Rufus on account of his red hair (as you will see shortly, that is not the source from which the Duke of Sussex inherits his)...

Writing as an Englishman, I am not sure that I am permitted to consider the possibility that William I had any good points in his character, so please forgive me for saying that, were he to have had any, then William Rufus entirely escaped their inheritance. He was debauched; indeed the Archbishop of Canterbury was reluctant to perform his coronation. William made a habit of failing to appoint bishops and abbots so he could take the funds that would have been due to them for himself. After the death of his father's Archbishop of Canterbury Anselm (of course former Abbot of Bec*), the see was left vacant for four years.

William was killed while out hunting by an arrow to his heart. How that happened remains a mystery. His remains were buried in Winchester where, a year after his death, the tower of the building housing his relics fell down.

William should have been succeeded by his elder brother Robert under their agreement following their father's death but, in fact, the youngest of the three brothers, Henry, claimed the English throne on the grounds that, unlike the others, he had been born in England. He was a wise and just king. However, I think that I have achieved my objective, which was to show that, should anyone wish to argue that King Charles III has the right to be our King because of his descent from William the Bastard, then he should improve his knowledge and understanding of our history! I would argue that those who support the institution of monarchy should do so by showing that the next best alternative is either not as good or is worse.

The alternative to a monarchy is clearly a republic. Republics are of two types. In one, the president is an active politician who is an executive head of state. In the other the president is a non-executive and largely a figure-head, although possibly with residual powers only used in case of an emergency. Examples of this latter type are Germany and Italy. What I do not know is how many

citizens of these countries could actually name their president, but I suspect that the symbolism of a widely respected national figure appealing as head of state to the vast majority of the population is generally lacking in countries using such a system.

France is, of course, is an example of the former arrangement. I am against that system too. A head of state must merit respect because of his position, and such respect provides a bonus for the political president when he seeks re-election. I have lived in two such countries, France and the USA. I lived in the latter during the Vietnam war: the president was Lyndon Johnson (LBJ) who had come to power after the assassination of John F Kennedy. Of course the fact that he was the principal beneficiary of that assassination does not mean that he was responsible for it, although there was an off-Broadway play, 'McBird', based on the 'Scottish play', written to illustrate the theory that he was. In fact LBJ set himself the task of achieving the legislation against racial discrimination that Kennedy had sought. That he largely achieved, greatly to his credit and to the benefit of his country. Many think that Kennedy would not have had the skills in dealing with Congress that this required.

But, apart from the 'McBird' theory, many believe that there were two dark sides to LBJ's career. The one that I experienced was his continued, albeit valueless, prosecution of the Vietnam war at an enormous cost in both American and Vietnamese lives. The earlier one was based on his cheating in 1944 when he obtained the Democratic Party's nomination for his first election to the Senate. I have not gone into the detail of what happened that long ago as I can cite another example of presidential malpractice nearer to home, i.e. François Mitterrand, President of France 1981 to 1995.

There are many questions about Mitterrand's career. Was he a collaborator with the Vichy regime, changing to support the Resistance only when the end result of WW2 became clear? That is a possibility, although I hesitate to assert it, as the complexity of the way in which people needed to act under France's Occupation was considerable, and certainly Mitterrand achieved much that benefited escaped French prisoners of war. His activities were such that he needed to flee to the UK in 1943, although he later returned to France.

However the particular element in Mitterrand's political history that I believe raises a major question is the death of his former Prime Minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, in 1993 (when I was living in France).

Bérégovoy had been due to give testimony to a political enquiry that, as I recall, was thought likely to show that Mitterrand had used information available to him as President to purchase shares in a company that would shortly increase in value because of an impending government action. He (Bérégovoy) was visiting his constituency and, according to the published report, he asked his driver and his bodyguard to leave him alone in the car as he wished to make a private telephone call. They did so, leaving the bodyguard's handgun in the glove compartment of the car. Bérégovoy then shot himself in the head with the hand gun.

Apart from the unlikely scenario of a bodyguard separating himself from his weapon, there are other problems with this story. A witness claimed to have heard two shots. It is also claimed that Bérégovoy had two separate gunshot wounds in his head, meaning that, had he inflicted both of them himself, then he was capable of a level of persistence superior to that of most people. On the other hand, it is true that Bérégovoy had many reasons to be depressed. In the recent election his parliamentary group had been reduced from 276 *députés* to 57. At his age of 67, he could well have seen his position as being the end of his political career. There is no doubt that he was suffering from depression.

Nevertheless my personal view, and that of French friends of mine, is the stronger probability : that he was assassinated. Were that to have been the case, there is only one man who had both the motive and the ability to have arranged it.

My conclusion is that if one wishes to decide whether monarchies or republics are the more blameworthy form of government by examining history, the only possible conclusion is a strengthening of one's belief in original sin...

So where does that leave my argument in favour of monarchy? I believe that one must simply look at its recent history in one's own country to see how well or badly it has done.

I do not think that it will surprise readers when I say that I am a fan of King Charles III. For much of his earlier life he was not appreciated. He embraced ecology long before that was fashionable. He talked to his trees, so he must have been a nutcase. But, since then, the fashion has caught up with him. I personally do not talk to my trees but that is because, living in a Parisian flat, I do not possess any. The King's involvement in environmental issues has been evident since he first spoke in public about it at the beginning of the 70s. He promotes sustainability. He comes to France and makes a speech in French, he goes to Germany and speaks in what a German friend of mine told me was excellent German.

His televised speech the evening of the day when his mother had died was masterly.

His mother symbolised and embodied the British nation for her reign of over 70 years.

Coming to the throne unexpectedly, her bravery at a time of personal tragedy was inspiring; I still remember her bearing when she landed to meet the members of her government, headed by Churchill, at the airport on her return from Kenya. Her coronation enthralled the nation; my parents had bought our first television set especially to watch it, and I and all my family were totally captivated.

Queen Elizabeth's father, George VI, reigned throughout the Second World War. As the then King's second son he had seen action during the First World War, his participation in the Battle of Jutland earning him a mention in dispatches. He had never expected, nor ever wished, to succeed to the throne. Nevertheless, he played an important role in strengthening British relations with the USA in his visit to Canada and the USA in 1939 - the first by a reigning British monarch to North America.

During the war the King paid six visits to military forces overseas, and he and the Queen increased morale throughout the country by their visits to bomb sites, munitions factories and troops. When pressed to send her children away for their safety the Queen replied, "The children will not leave unless I do. I shall not leave unless their father does, and the King will not leave the country under any circumstances whatever."

George VI's father, George V, has been described as having just two achievements, his stamp collection and the number of pheasants he shot. Certainly he could claim these, but in my view he could claim much more. Even apart from the First World War, during which he changed the royal family's name to the House of Windsor, his reign covered one of the most difficult periods in recent British history. The constitutional crisis over the powers of the House of Lords, the rise of socialism and trade unionism, the formation of the first socialist British government: all were successfully surmounted, and the British monarchy not only survived but saw its popularity increase.

His father, Edward VII, was responsible for the *Entente Cordiale* between Britain and France, so what greater tribute could be paid by us British living here in France?

Particularly observant readers will have notice that I have omitted one King: Edward VIII. He was probably the most popular Prince of Wales ever; ladies used to sing of having danced with a man who'd danced with a girl who'd danced with the Prince of Wales. But it turned out that he was quite unsuitable to be King, lacking both the essential political judgement and the necessary sense of duty. Fortunately, the British system found a way of solving this problem, and the King abdicated.

So I remain in favour of the UK being a monarchy. Not because I see it as being a divinely created institution, nor that I believe in the divine right of kings. But because our monarchy in the UK works, it works better than any alternative would; in fact, it works splendidly.

[*The Abbey of Le Bec Hellouin in Normandy, in whose 20th-century reestablishment St George's was instrumental. – Ed.]

TODAY'S WORSHIP: RULES OR TOOLS?

Affording us more insights into worship, Mary Jane Wilkie asks some fundamental questions about our understanding of, and approach to, what we do in church...

People who don't attend church often cite the existence of "rules" as their reason: dress or behaviour expected in worship, outmoded liturgical elements, how to address God, ways to interact with clergy. To attract the unchurched and lapsed church-goers, churches often discard valuable practices and symbols. There are, however, benefits to viewing some of the rules as "tools" for an effective, vital religious discipline.

The potential of a religious discipline

Although laden with negative connotations, "religious discipline" consists of practices, habits and traditions creating circumstances for the believer to experience a shift in spirit. The shift may have the magnitude of an epiphany, or it may be minute. Maximum potential occurs when the discipline is consistent, allowing the believer optimum

mindfulness. It must use practices and symbols capable of evoking an emotion or touching a layer of the unconscious that resists words. Believers must be comfortable with the traditions. Constancy is essential.

Alterations to practices

What happens to a tradition or a symbol when we alter it? One consequence is that unless believers are prepared for the change, worship will be disrupted. The liturgy does its work when worshippers are guided, that is, they aren't figuring out what comes next in the order of worship. A more serious consequence is weakening the tradition's ability to provide continuity across the congregation and across generations.

Some practices are the target of alterations more frequently than others. Consider posture when praying: standing with extended arms versus kneeling with hands folded. Some view the latter as a diminishment of self, saying that kneeling makes us feel subservient. In times when people knelt to royalty, the act did indeed indicate subservience. The intention in moving to standing prayer is that the believer is freed from a negative emotion.

I contend that kneeling does not in itself create the sense of diminishment, but rather the emotion arises out of the associations the believer has learned about the gesture. We do not kneel to royalty today, and for many believers, the kneeling habit has positive associations, specifically, that subservience to God is positive. It engenders a stillness for hearing God, a tool for concentrating. In other words, the gesture of kneeling can be a rule or a tool, depending on one's perspective.

Alterations to symbols

In their quest for newness, churches often alter the symbols used to present Scripture. Christmas pageants sometimes feature wise women, for example, to make the point that men are not the only wise persons on earth. While well intended, this practice deprives believers of the powerful symbolism of seeing the highest and most revered (male scientists and royalty) bow to the lowest and least powerful (woman of low estate, with child). Alteration dilutes the symbol's ability to point to something that evokes a response in the believer. Indeed, inserting a wise woman suggests that women should emulate the powerful, that this has value, when what the traditional symbolism offers is valuation of the least powerful.

Liturgical elements

Churches sometimes discontinue phrases or prayers used historically to express the faith, with the intent of freeing the believer from mechanical repetition of meaningless words. This is akin to blaming poor work on the tool rather than on its user. Just as a good poem or painting evokes a different response with each visit, the richness of a psalm or well-crafted prayer touches us when we repeat it mindfully. If the believer repeats mechanically or is not attentive to the words, the fault does not lie with the material. It may be rather that the believer is unable to concentrate, or more likely, that the church has not created circumstances to help the believer grasp the spiritual concepts embedded in the prayer or psalm.

Believers accustomed to mindfulness and curious about concepts find that repetition of good material is a tool for

engendering a state in which the spirit can be affected. This happens because symbols work their 'magic' on us whether we know it or not. Haven't most of us had the experience of singing a specific hymn for years, only to find new insights when our spirit is predisposed, because our lives have taken an unexpected turn? Would we view a favourite

painting only once? It's our favourite because it continues to nourish us through repeated visits.

Addiction to newness

Prevailing in America today is a "been there, done that" attitude, usually stated as a preference for constant newness. This is unfortunate for religious discipline, for any discipline requires repetition and constancy. Practices, rituals and symbols stay with us because they serve functions. To discard or revise them, depriving symbols of their initiative, without considering the ongoing need for the function, is to abandon the believer who relied on them for spiritual nourishment.

In a world where job security, neighbourhoods and long-term marriages are no longer the norm, the constant can be a port in a storm. The tools to reach port have to be present, however, lest the seeker become stranded amid the distractions of shifting preferences. Endowed with ancient connections to symbols that have spoken to cultures across the ages, worship can be a time to focus and find stability through our interface with the divine. Let us therefore use these tools in a consistent, craftsmanlike manner, confident in their ability to serve us.

CHAPLAINCY NEWS

Holy Baptism

8 th February 2024	Adult	Aya – requests anonymity
31 st March 2024	Adult	Tiba Aicha M'ze Mogne Charif
31 st March 2024	Child	Yovinn Eonis Rafamantanantsoa
31 st March 2024	Child	Leyranne Meva Eonika Yrielle Rafamantanantsoa

Funerals

16 th March 2024	Nina Haltermann (stillborn) Church
27 th March 2024	Susan Bouloux (76) Clamart Crematorium
11 th April 2024	Marcette Din Ebombou (75) Mont Valérien Crematorium

Marriages

6 th April 2024	St Martin's, Palaiseau Lingzhe Huang & Lichen Li
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BREAKING NEWS



Confirmation class : November 26th 2023



Bishop Robert delivers his Sermon



Janet retires after many years of faithful service



Fr Mark visits Anne Cozic



Sunday lunch at St George's



Easter Vigil 2024 begins



Clergy along with Bishop Robert, Chrism Mass, March 2024



Our New Church Wardens, Andrew and Patrick