

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



APRIL 2021

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

The good news is that we will recommence public worship on Good Friday 2nd April at 2.00pm with an hour long Liturgy of the Passion, with hymns and sermon. Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament will be administered at the end of the service. Then on Easter Eve, Saturday 3rd April, we will celebrate the Easter Liturgy with Confirmation by the Bishop. This will be the first visit by our new Bishop to St George's and we look forward to welcoming him and those who will come for Confirmation, delayed from 2020 due to Covid-19. On Easter Day, Sunday 4th April, our celebration of the Resurrection of Christ will be at 11.00am, a Choral Eucharist with music and choir.

We will still maintain the rules which were in force last autumn, ie social distancing, face masks, hand sanitising etc; the safe number who can be accommodated in the nave remains at 75. So, if you wish to attend the Easter Eve and Easter Day services, please let the Rector's Churchwarden, Mr Michael Clendinning know in advance. He can be contacted at clendinning44@gmail.com. **Please follow the instructions on page 3** which require your name, e-mail address and telephone number. We do not require advance notice of attendance at the Good Friday Liturgy.

Services for the remainder of the Easter Season will continue on Sundays at 11.00am with choir. These will obviously be dependent on any possible future restrictions brought about by a resurgence of Coronavirus. I will review the situation regarding a resumption of Choral Evensong with the Director of Music at the end of April in the light of any further directions from the Bishop and the Government.

Please don't forget that the Annual General Vestry Meeting will take place on Sunday 18th April immediately after the 11.00am Eucharist. There will be no Rector's or Warden's reports and no 'any other business'. The meeting will confine itself to the Treasurer's Report and elections and should be over in about 30-40 minutes. The meeting will be held in the church, so simply remain in your pew if you are attending.

It will be good to return to public worship, especially at Easter with its promise of new life and resurrection. Please pray for those who will be confirmed on Easter Eve that they may continue to grow in the faith in which they were baptised.

If you have offered to sponsor an altar cloth for repair, please now send in your cheque to the Treasurer. There are still a couple of items available for sponsorship. Please speak to me if you are interested in contributing. Many thanks to all those who have already generously funded this work.

I hope that by now most of you will have received your first vaccination or have a date for it in the near future. The last year has taught us all the importance of our National Health Service and the need for proper resources and funding for it. God willing we and the Government will learn that lesson and any other necessary from this pandemic. I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Yours in the Risen Christ

Brian Stewart

PARISH NEWS

Easter Services

2nd April - Good Friday: 2.00pm - 3.00pm - Good Friday Liturgy

3rd April - Easter Even: 8.00pm - Confirmation

4th April - Easter Day: 11.00am - Eucharist

Booking Easter Services at St George's

If you would like to attend either the **Easter Eve and Confirmation** service on Saturday 3rd April at 8 pm or the **Easter Day** service on Sunday 4th April at 11am, please contact us at clendinning44@gmail.com to **pre-book** your place. It is unlikely that we will be able to accommodate you at both services. To pre-book, please provide the following information, before Thursday April 1st:

- a) The names of those wishing to attend. **Please keep your group to a maximum of two people in the same 'bubble'.**
- b) The e-mail address of one of the applicants.
- c) The telephone number of one of the applicants.
- d) Please also list the services in order of preference.

We will make every effort to offer you a place at your preferred service.

We will contact you if we can offer you a place.

News of the Lenten Appeal

In our current uncertain times, it is a pleasure to give you some really good news. St George's chose two organisations, *Embrace the Middle East* and *USPG*, for its Lenten Appeal this year. Five weeks ago, on the First Sunday in Lent many of you held a fundraising Soup and Cheese lunch in your own homes to publicise the work of these two charities and their Lenten projects and, with others, made very generous donations despite the fact that we could not all meet together for what, pre COVID, would have been a very sociable parish event.

We now know that the Appeal has currently raised a tremendous £1,400, including Gift Aid, to support the vital work that these organisations are undertaking. Your support will be greatly appreciated by all those involved in the two valuable Lenten projects. **Thank You!**

The Lenten Appeal will continue until Easter so if you haven't made a donation but would like to do so, you can donate in the usual way by electronic transfer to the St George's bank account using, if possible, the reference Lent 2021 for clear identification. (Sort-code: 98-00-10. Account: 09028029).

Or you can write a cheque to St George's Parish Church and send it to: The Hon Treasurer, St George's Parish Church, 105 High Street, Belfast BT1 2AG. Please include a note to confirm that the donation is for the Lent Appeal.

PARISH NEWS



DON'T FORGET, CLOCKS GO FORWARD 1 HOUR THIS WEEKEND

EASTER (GENERAL) VESTRY 2021

Until further notice, it is proposed that the **Easter General Vestry** will be held on **Sunday, 18th April at 12.30pm.**

The Easter Vestry gives all registered vestry members the opportunity to participate in the running of parish business by voicing concerns, asking questions, standing for office, electing church and glebe wardens and members of the Select Vestry. Please consider allowing yourself to be nominated to the Select Vestry in order to make a contribution to the smooth running of the parish – a challenging but rewarding experience!

At the General Vestry meeting, two Churchwardens are selected, one of whom is nominated by the Rector and one is elected by the General Vestry members. It has become customary for our churchwardens to take up post for a period of two years. The appointment of a Rector's Churchwarden normally alternates with that of People's Churchwarden. The posts of Rector's and People's Glebewarden are made similarly but these office bearers normally serve a longer term. In addition, up to 12 other registered members of the General Vestry may be elected to the Select Vestry. It is important that we endeavour to achieve this quota since the number of ordinary Select Vestry members elected at the General Vestry meeting cannot be exceeded during the Select Vestry's term of office. Select Vestry members may be replaced if they stand down for any reason.

PARISH NEWS

Cashflow for 2020 in the time of Covid

Covid wreaked havoc with the finances and even the viability of many businesses including charities across many countries. How did we fare? The answer – to my surprise – is better than I had feared.

Parish income certainly and not surprisingly dropped by about £30,000 below the figure we might have expected in what was going to be a busy year with a rejuvenated Rector and an ambitious choir trip planned. But then, our expenditure also fell when we were closed or curtailed in our activities for much of the year. As you may remember, communion in two kinds was banned for the laity even before the first lockdown and has never been restored – so not a bottle has been bought for over a year. Expenditure on gas and electricity, wafers, coffee, candles, music and hospitality also all declined dramatically.

To cut to the chase, total income fell to £208,451.57 but total expenditure also fell to £182,741.26, producing a modest surplus of £25,710.31.

A detailed look at the figures produces a few more surprises – most of them pleasing. We certainly paid our dues to the Church of Ireland and its missions and charities as in previous years despite our fall in income. We had to refund over £9,000 to choir parents who had contributed to the fund set up for the cancelled choir trip to Cambridge, but the deposit we had paid in 2019 towards the cost of the planned Cambridge trip was returned to us, so there is over £6,000 already available towards the cost of future choir trips.

Parishioners generously rallied around the appeal to support the Storehouse Foodbank and we were able to give over £14,000 to Storehouse to help alleviate real need in our city. Overall – including Storehouse donations - the contribution to missions, church charities and secular charities was in excess of £40,000, which is more than in previous years.

We did not seek to avail of any of the Government support mechanisms theoretically available and we did not receive any bequests. Income from renting out rooms, car parking, collections of every sort at church services and investment income all fell. However, there was one noteworthy exception. Contributions by electronic bank transfer, which in recent years had become our largest single income stream, increased by 13.7%. It is no exaggeration to say that the bedrock of the current relatively sound state of the parish's finances is based on this flow - month on month - of Standing Order contributions from parishioners to the parish and your willingness to keep on doing this when, for reasons beyond our control, the normal worshipping life of the parish is suspended.

So it just remains for me to say “thank you” to all our parishioners for enabling us to get through last year in reasonable shape. This year too will present its challenges but hopefully we will again begin to resume our chosen role as “an open door in the heart of the City – a place of prayer and peace”.

Douglas McIlDoon, Parish Treasurer

A FRANCISCAN BENEDICTION

May God bless you with discomfort

At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
So that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger

At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears

To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war,
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them
And to turn their pain into joy.

*And may God bless you with
enough foolishness*

To believe that you can make a difference in the world,
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.



CONGRATULATIONS

We are very pleased to offer our congratulations to Fr Tom Layden on his appointment as an **Ecumenical Canon of Christ Church Cathedral** in Dublin.



The Archbishop invited Fr Tom to become an Ecumenical Canon last summer and he was installed as one of two Ecumenical Canons in Christ Church Cathedral on the Feast of the Epiphany this year. He succeeds the late Fr David Tuohy.

Getting to know other traditions in the Christian family is a practice that has been to the forefront of Fr Tom Layden's ministry as a Jesuit priest. He is the Province Coordinator for Ecumenism for the Jesuits in Ireland. From the time of his training in the 1990s right up until today, Fr Tom has made it a priority to worship with different traditions, a practice that has seen him become a regular attendee at Church of Ireland services wherever he is based.

Over many years Fr Tom has developed strong links with St George's. He explained that he first got to know the Church of Ireland through St George's in 1994 during his last year of training, when he attended Evensong there and met the rector, the Rev Brian Stewart. "I wanted to get to know the other traditions of our Christian family. I wanted to get a sense of what normal Sunday worship was like from sustained contact".

With his curiosity and experience of getting to know other traditions, the role of Ecumenical Canon of Christ Church Cathedral is a good fit for Fr Tom. He is looking forward to playing his part in the Cathedral's Chapter and preaching there twice a year. He also feels it is part of his remit to support the Dean and Dean's Vicar in their outreach in Dublin. He is due to deliver his first sermon in the cathedral on July 18, a few weeks after the 30th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood in the Church of St Francis Xavier, Gardiner Street in 1991.

Extracted from an article in the March edition of The Church of Ireland Gazette

SYMONDS KITCHENS (KISS) by Terence Mayne

There I am in a strange house, with food, wine and fantastic German cookware, to demonstrate and sell to an assembled company. The host shows me round the kitchen, I admire the expensive car in the driveway, pour the wine, cook the grub and expect to profit from the Rolls Royce prices. In my travels with this job through Israel, Morocco, Thailand and New Orleans, my observations of decor have not gone amiss, so I gave up saucepan selling and became what I am today, a kitchen designer.



I work for a second generation company, "Symonds". The founder used the motto "Id simplex mando", which translates by us workers in the true spirit of the thinking to, "keep it simple Symonds (KISS)". It is quite a job for although not rocket science, these rooms are more complicated than others. Importantly there is one inflexible law in kitchen design, the floor covering, and worktop must be glass smooth under a microscope, thus unable to absorb stains. Customers say they like a tidy kitchen; most have not got one. On opening the twelve cupboards there is unsystematic, muddled, shambolic chaos, plus a fair selection of the unneeded, unused, use by five years ago. Confronted with such total disorganisation under your nose, it is difficult to bluff yourself how neat you are. On the other hand, maybe you just can.

Symonds philosophy is easier to understand; pots, pans and utensils hang from hooks, some knives on a wall magnet. The mind thus sees this workplace as an art form with everything else of beautiful shapes and colours, i.e. all necessities of kitchen life, (why do we like flowers so much?), shelved on open display. This gives a bonus advantage of avoiding clutter, (one bottle of tomato sauce is enough, and who needs two teapots?). In our designs, only two cupboards are provided, one for cleaning materials and one for waste. Similarly, two drawers will do perfectly well for lids and cutlery.

In our competitors catalogues whiteness is much promoted, not realising we have come a long way since all cars were black. We like you to tile and paint the walls to your own choice of colour and taste and to have pictures, say, of cattle, pigs and poultry, or for vegans, brassica, carrots and onions. We make no room for TV the thinking being, one cannot cook or eat properly with distractions. Also, on the downside to many, we suggest the lovely inherited dresser goes to auction, as it attracts clutter like no other.

Our much revered founder, Abraham Symonds, (1925- 2004) used to say "You don't have to talk fancy grammar, or eat anchovy toast, to have a top class kitchen". He thought of his work as beauty, like a sculpture by Barbara Hepworth, to be looked at from all angles, with appreciation and love. KISS.

FAITH AND SUPERSTITION

by Paul McLaughlin



My late mother was a superstitious woman. I say that not in criticism for she also had a deep religious faith that fed that nature more than I could know. The dictionary defines superstition as ‘excessively credulous belief in and reverence for the supernatural’. Surely that sums up what faith is all about.

My Mother’s faith was old school and we children learned at her knee, usually on our knees. Mass on Sunday was obligatory of course. No cold, stomach upset or other ailment short of measles or mumps was allowed to interfere with that. Confession every three weeks – about the same time span as the visits of my brother and me to Maguire’s the barber for short, back and sides – while nightly prayers were supervised by her good self until I became a teenager. Amazingly or perhaps not so, I still say the same prayers that she taught us sixty years ago.

But certain things were taboo in our house as a result of her superstitious ways. No passing another person on the stairs, no looking in mirrors in the dark of night. “Why would anybody want to look in a mirror with the light off?” I challenged her once as a twelve-year-old. “You’ll know why smart Alec when the devil looks back at you over your left shoulder.

There really was no answer to that and I wanted to laugh. Thank God I had the good sense to leave the room first. My Mother’s word was final and not to be disputed. Laugh I did in the safety of our front bedroom, but I still don’t look in mirrors after dark.

I do think of my Mother every day though and often of the little superstitions that peppered her days. Great baker that she was, every apple cake would bear a little cross to keep out the devil. I heard this many times as I nibbled at small off cuts of dough that lay on our kitchen table.

If she dropped a knife, we would have a gentleman caller. A fork, and a lady would soon be at our door. Never put new shoes on the table. Never open an umbrella inside the house. Stuff so silly that I can laugh out loud at it now.

Arachnophobia is defined as an extreme or irrational fear of spiders. I am terrified of spiders and, while extreme, it is certainly not irrational. They are scary and where we lived in the foothills of Belfast’s Black Mountain there seemed to me to be a heck of a lot of them, indoors and out.

My Mother actually laughed when I screamed after finding one of our eight legged friends in the bath. I stood on the landing dripping wet with only a flannel between me and indecency.

“Don’t kill it, Paul”, she shouted from the foot of the stairs. Kill it? I had just

made an Olympic leap from the water leaving it basking on the porcelain beside the hot tap. My bath could wait for another Saturday.

Armed with a glass tumbler and a copy of the Sacred Heart Messenger, a religious magazine that was a monthly visitor to our home, she gently dislodged and carried off 'Mister Spider', as she called him, and released him into the back garden.

I wanted blood spilt, spider's blood and squashed legs, as many as possible, but drying me off with the big towel she said, "You must never kill a spider. It's very bad luck. Don't you know that when the Holy Family were fleeing from King Herod, it was a spider that saved them from the Roman soldiers"?

Even aged twelve and with my own desperate fear of these horrible creatures, I found it hard to believe that the legionnaires had taken flight.

She explained that Jesus, Mary and Joseph had hidden in a cave to avoid detection and that a little spider had weaved a web across its open doorway to make it look as if no-one had entered it for a long time. The searching soldiers had looked and then simply gone away. Neither my fear nor loathing of spiders has done the same.

For an intelligent woman and that she was, my Mother had retained a mass of old superstitions, sayings, myths and wives tales handed down from her own mother that were part and parcel of a faith that generated kindness and compassion. I hope I still cherish some of that today.

Spring

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring –
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden. – Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

G M Hopkins 1844-99

Submitted by Geoffrey May



For Sound Expertise and Advice

formula HEALTH

Disability Aids including
Wheelchairs Walking Sticks
Scooters
Easier Living Rehabilitation Products
Incontinence Bed Pressure Care
Bathing Surgical Appliances
Toileting Cosyteet Footwear

Household Mobility Comfort & Dressing

• Easy Parking • Mail Order Available

Tel 028 9023 1002 City Centre Location

Open: Mon-Sat 8.45 - 5.30
59 High Street, Belfast BT1 2AB

www.formula-health.co.uk
email: formulahealth@aol.com

VICTORIA SHOE AND KEY SERVICES

THE NO.1 IN SHOE REPAIRS
WHILE YOU WAIT SERVICE

EVERY SHOE CAN BE REPAIRED

COMPREHENSIVE KEY SERVICE, LEATHER SOLES STITCHED ON, COMANDOS ETC.

QUALITY SHOE REPAIRS SINCE 1955

GOOD WORKMANSHIP ISN'T EXPENSIVE
IT'S PRICELESS.

CHURCH LANE
HIGH STREET
Belfast BT1 4QN Tel: 079-3476-0467

THE DAY THOU GAVEST, LORD, IS ENDED

by Billy Adair

Is there anyone, in any denomination of the Christian Church, who doesn't know or love "The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended"? For me it recalls my early days as organist in a tiny but exquisite church, about 6 or 7 miles out of the city, and a small, elderly congregation singing these familiar words, while the setting sun shone through a particular stained glass rose window, throwing multifarious colours across the choir stalls and on to the opposite wall. Evensong in a quiet country church is the perfect atmosphere for this hymn.

It also evokes in one a certain sense of pride in the worldwide church and makes one thankful for our membership of it, but as we shall see later, herein lies a danger.

John Ellerton who wrote the hymn for a Missionary Rally, was one of the 19th century's authorities on hymnology. He was a Londoner, was educated on the Isle of Man and at Cambridge, became Vicar of Crewe Green, Barnes (Surrey) and White Roding (Essex), was elected Prebendary of St Albans, took paralysis and died at Torquay on June 15th, 1893. He wrote some 80 hymns, but by far the best known and loved is "The day Thou gavest."

The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,
The darkness falls at Thy behest;
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall hallow now our rest.

It is easy to gloss over the first line, but it merits more than a little consideration. "The day Thou gavest, Lord" - a God-given day, crammed with God-given opportunities is drawing to its end: what have we done for God to-day?: have we spoken to Him?: have we listened for Him?: have we gone one step in His service? One need not go on, for here at the very beginning we are challenged and reminded of "the things we have left undone" as well as "the things we ought not to have done."

The next three verses beginning "We thank Thee that Thy Church unsleeping," "As o'er each continent and island" and "The sun that bids us rest" surely could only have been written in Victorian England. There is a parallel between the Church which never sleeps, the prayer which never ceases, the praise which never dies away and the expanding British Empire on which the sun never sets.

It seems the great popularity of "The day Thou gavest" dates from 1897 when Queen Victoria chose it to be sung at her Diamond Jubilee, a Festival of Thanksgiving for all that Victorian England stood

for. Here is the danger, for if we sing this essentially missionary hymn as though the universal church were a territorial empire which belongs to **us**, we are far off the mark. Penitence, humility and reverence must be essential ingredients. If one were to sit down and record the struggle, the devotion, the sacrifice of Christian missions and missionaries down the ages, one would come nearer to the true spirit of the hymn.

Kipling came closer to the heart of the matter in his "Recessional," written for the Victorian Diamond Jubilee:

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line,
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine-
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget - lest we forget.

The tumult and the shouting dies,
The captains and the Kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord 'God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget - lest we forget.

In the centre- of the Church and all her endeavours stands the Cross - the ancient sacrifice of Calvary - and on the forehead of each one of us is emblazoned that selfsame cross, marking us "the child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Since this hymn was written around the mid-1800's we have seen a crumbling of the great Empire, as 'country after country rejected the unpopular British rule and claimed independence and got it. Similarly ages before, Kingdoms rose and fell - the great empires of China, Egypt, Greece, Rome - and the captains and the Kings departed. Thy Kingdom of God on the other hand is an Everlasting Kingdom: it was His divine command to the Church "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel" - the Universal Church is and always was part of God's Eternal Plan.

So be it, Lord, Thy throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away.
Thy Kingdom stands and grows for ever,
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.

Yes, by all means sing "The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended" but as Dr Erik Routley suggests, sing it at the foot of the Cross.

Endpiece by Jo Calder

Dilemmas And Decisions

As I write this, the Coronavirus pandemic is still very much the main topic in news items around the world. It is quite disturbing listening to the “blame game” taking place – one country stating another is withholding vaccines; one country’s vaccine is better/safer than another; one country is overcharging, or not ensuring poorer countries have enough supplies etc. So it goes on, and it reminds me a little of the selfish, uncaring attitude taken by some people at the start of this catastrophe when supermarket shelves were stripped bare.

However, there is another aspect of this I have found distressing which is reports that some critically ill Covid patients were having a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) instruction entered into their charts during the first wave of the pandemic, apparently without either they or their family’s knowledge or consent. Apparently this was more applicable in Care Homes and, it was alleged, in some cases these were “blanket” decisions taken by doctors. These claims were made in a report published by the Care Quality Commission.

The whole DNR situation can be both a controversial and ethical nightmare, and there are people vastly against this, no matter whether the person concerned is terminally ill, or is existing in a “vegetative” state with no quality of life. I have written instructions making clear to my son and brothers that if something happened to me which left me incapable of basic functions or in a persistent vegetative state then I would not want to be resuscitated.

Doctors can be placed in some very difficult, almost impossible positions during the course of their work, and it must be very hard for them at times; on one hand they have to be professional in dealing with medical dilemmas and situations, while on the other they have to also be kind, caring and gentle towards a patient and their family when giving bad news. I recall Fr William writing in the January magazine of an instance when he gave a patient the worst possible news, that she had breast cancer. He wrote he had not been “*prepared for the outburst of anger and misery that erupted*”. This must have been heart wrenching, both for the patient and Fr William – there are no set rules or guidelines for this worst of all situations. Not of the same seriousness, but several years ago I still recall the look on the face of my Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, Mr Niall Eames when he had to tell me there was nothing more he could offer me by way of treatment or surgery for my deteriorating spine, as he gently explained he couldn’t even give me an estimate of how long it would be before my spine finally gave up. His face was kindness itself, and he let me sit for as long as I needed; there was no attempt to rush me out of the Consulting Room, even though he had other patients waiting to see him.

Then there is the other much more controversial medical dilemma – Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide; it seems there is a difference between the two procedures. Euthanasia is described as “*the act of intentionally ending a*

life to relieve suffering". Assisted Suicide is described as "*intentionally helping another person to kill themselves*". Here in the UK both remain illegal and anyone assisting another person can be charged with either manslaughter or murder. Countries that have made these practices legal are Spain, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Canada and New Zealand with several states in America also now permitting the practices.

There is of course the real concerns that both of these practices can be used as a "convenience" where a terminally ill person is needing daily, long term assistance from their family, or in more sinister cases, where the family stand to gain property, money or some other material asset. There will always be vile and devious acts carried out by those who have no qualms at all, regrettably these are very evil people who will never care about what they have done. Another view about these practices is that when animals, who are suffering terribly, are allowed to be put to sleep, then the train of thought is surely human beings should be entitled to the same. Unfortunately, I don't think it is as simple as that; the Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide issues are an ethical and religious minefield which just seems to get more contentious as the debates increase.

As the Commandment states, very clearly "*Thou shalt not kill*", then surely there is no way this can be mis-interpreted. All religions have different thoughts and views on the subject, and even among Christians there is division. There are Christians who feel if someone is terminally ill and in extreme pain then euthanasia may be an act of compassion, as long as the dying person is fully agreeing to it and completely understands what they are asking to have done. It would seem Christians who support euthanasia only do so if it is a totally voluntary decision on the part of the person who is terminally ill. As Christians we are taught that we are God's creation, our lives are sacred and given by God, and as such there is the very valid argument that it is His decision when and how we die.

The Anglican Church in the UK continues occasionally to debate this very contentious issue with the "conservative" line of course in disagreement with the more liberal aspect of the Church and has been an item for the General Synod in the past. At that debate Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Archbishop George Carey were more inclined to vote to legalise assisted dying, with the current Archbishop, Justin Welby opposed to the idea.

Perhaps these issues are now more valid for debate due to the immense progress made in many areas of medical care and treatments. If there comes a time when these procedures are legalised then the medical staff who may be asked to participate in such a procedure must have and their views and beliefs taken very much into account. Any clinician must be respected for their decision to either be involved or not and should not be penalised in any way. I cannot imagine how difficult it would be for any medical person faced with such a request, though maybe their religious beliefs will help them decide. No doubt this debate will be with us for a long time, and each individual has their own thoughts and views on what is a very intense subject.

