

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

*An open door in the heart of the City
A place of prayer and peace*



OCTOBER 2022

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Frontispiece: St Luke by an unknown mediaeval artist

St George's Parish Magazine is published on the Sunday nearest the first day of the month, except August and January. Please send contributions to the Parish Office - stgeorgesoffice@btconnect.com. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of the parish.

Editorial Team: William Odling-Smee, Selby Nesbitt, Tony Merrick.

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

The news of Queen Elizabeth's death came as a shock, despite the fact that she was 96 years of age. Only two days before, she had received the new Prime Minister and invited her to form a government. It is undoubtedly the end of an era - the second Elizabethan era. The tributes have been heartfelt and thoroughly deserved and the reaction throughout the world has been incredible. The Queen was the best-known woman on earth and her influence for good was incalculable.

I was glad to see the central role that the Church of England played in the Queen's funeral arrangements, which was superbly done and the music was of the highest quality and very uplifting. Of course, it was all personally chosen and arranged by the Queen herself many years ago and reflected her deep and very real faith. Some people naturally began to ask questions about change in the monarchy and upheaval in the nation but constitutionally everything carries on with the accessions of King Charles and the work of the State. We will celebrate a Requiem Eucharist for our late Queen on Wednesday, 5th October at 7:30 PM in the presence of His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant and other dignitaries of Church and Civic life. The musical setting will be Fauré's Requiem. This is a public service at which all are welcome.

Our annual Harvest Thanksgiving will take place on Sunday, 9th September and the preacher at the 11:00 AM Choral Eucharist will be the Rev'd Paul Jeffrey. He is the older brother of one of our choirmen, Matthew Jeffrey; his father is the Rev'd William Jeffrey, a former parishioner, who is now the Rector of Lisbellaw, Co Fermanagh.

There has been a good improvement with regard to unacceptable behaviour in the churchyard. The PSNI and the Welcome Organisation have been particularly helpful in ensuring that the grounds are not abused or used for illegal activities. There is still some way to go to completely eradicate dangerous behaviour but the change for the better is noticeable. The Select Vestry is currently investigating the installation of closed-circuit cameras and other improvements to enhance everyone's security and safety. The PSNI have said that anyone who feels in any way threatened or worried about bad behaviour in St George's, should dial 999 without hesitation and ask for police assistance.

The All Souls' Requiem will be on Wednesday, 2nd November at 7:30 PM. The preacher will be the Rev'd Nigel Kirkpatrick, Rector of Kilroot.

Once again I would reiterate that anyone who would like a parochial visit or who knows of anyone who is ill, should call me on 079 0279 2080 and I will arrange a call.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Brian Stewart

PARISH NOTICES

Sanctuary Flowers 2022

2 October	Holly Ferres	In memory of her son Ben
9 October	Louise & Ian Stoupe	In memory of Louise's parents
16 October	Anne & William Odling-Smee	In memory of their daughter Elizabeth
23 October	George Woodman	In memory of Donald, Flora and Kathleen Maude Woodman
30 October	Valerie Roberts	In memory of her husband Dai

Memorial Service for David McElderry

There will be a Choral Evensong on 2nd October 2022, at 5:00pm, to commemorate David McElderry's life, and to celebrate the significant contribution he made both to St George's and to the world of organ building. David died in February 2021. A reception in the Parish Hall will follow the service. For those unable to attend in person, this service will be relayed on Facebook. Details will be on the St George's website nearer to the time.

Jonathan Gregory, a previous Director of Music at St George's, will play the organ at 4:40pm before the service begins. Mark McGrath will accompany the service, and Dónal McCann will play at the end.

We will send out invitations to this service to all those parishioners who are on our email list. If you know of anyone who might wish to come to this Evensong, but whose name might not be on our email list, please bring this service to their attention.

Solemn Requiem Eucharist









There will be a Solemn Requiem Eucharist for her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on **Wednesday, 5th October 2022, at 7.30pm.**

Church Decoration for Harvest - Help!

We require help to decorate the church for the Harvest Festival on 9th October. Decoration will take place on **Saturday 8th October** at 10:00am and we would be grateful for your help and any gifts of greenery and fruit, which may be brought on Saturday 8th morning. If you can help, please speak to Brenda or Helen. Thank you.

Your journey to buying and consuming food more sustainably begins today!

SOURCE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCE

-  Go local, go seasonal! Buying fresh local and seasonal produce reduces the distance a product needs to travel from the source to your plate, minimizing carbon emissions and its planetary impact. You'll also be supporting local farmers and communities!
-  Visit your local organic farmer's market when you get the chance!
-  When grocery shopping, seek out products with Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, UTZ, or similar certifications. Labels and sustainability certifications such as these demonstrate that the product has had a reduced impact on natural habitats.
-  When it comes to meat and fish, look for trusted third party accreditations (such as the MSC label for fish - Marine Stewardship Council) or traceability information.
-  Food for thought - we throw away 1/3 of all the food we buy. A simple rule to keep in mind is: don't buy more food than you need, and don't make more than you can finish.
-  Meal-planning a week in advance can also go a long way, especially if you have many mouths to feed!
-  Still have leftovers? Don't throw them away! Check out some delicious leftover meal recipes.
-  If you have excess food items you know you won't be eating right away, instead of throwing them out, consider refrigerating or freezing them to increase their "shelf life."

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL James Hardy

Making a diagnosis, formulating and agreeing a treatment plan, then wielding a prescription pad or scalpel, is a well worn sequence of steps known to generations of doctors and their clients. Irish Catholicism was shaken to the quick in past decades, when a massive historical cover up of child sexual abuse by priests was recognised, then widely spoken about. Anglicans are now being forced to look in the mirror, too, and to question if a gigantic safeguarding problem has quietly driven countless traumatised people from our denomination. A Church Times report ('So many people scarred', Aug 19) noted the comments of Archbishop Justin Welby at a 2022 Lambeth Conference meeting. The Archbishop of Canterbury feels obsessing on 'sexuality' is wrong, when most abuse in the Church is really about the powerful imagining they have 'the ability to do what they like with someone who is weaker'.

Two books have had a huge impact in terms of publicising the massive scale of concealed Anglican abuse. 'Bleeding for Jesus' is a 2021 paperback, by a distinguished Anglican journalist and writer called Andrew Graystone. 'Bleeding for Jesus' is a long and challenging book, charting the damage done by John Smyth QC, a prolific abuser of young men in a range of settings. 'Letters to a Broken Church' is a shorter crowd funded 2019 book, with each chapter from an abuse victim or safeguarding expert. The victim testimonies are short, pithy and penetrating, even the ones condensed into just a handful of pages. Chapter 5 ('Recognising Dangerous Safeguarding Practices') is an incisive four page chapter by a Northern Ireland Safeguarding expert called Ian Elliott. It covers only two A4 sides, but it should be mandatory reading for every Anglican Bishop in Britain and Ireland, plus clergy and select vestry members.

Topical LGBTQ+ issues sometimes have dominated the agenda, or attracted excessive attention from both liberal and fundamentalist extremists, when bullying or harassment in Anglicanism is discussed. A great many victims, though, simply appear to have been women, and ordination students are very clearly another highly vulnerable ('at risk') group. Bullying and harassment has been a niggling abscess in the Anglican Church for decades, with the Archbishop of Canterbury fully honest about a 40-50 year history of scandalous abuse cover ups. Victims have often been silenced, railroaded out of view, re-traumatised by shoddy episcopal cover ups or just quietly brushed away. When victims go quietly, in silent and private despair, a dire and chronic problem is perpetuated. Reading 'Letter to a Broken Church' has encouraged me to see light at the end of the tunnel, but also an urgent need for laity and parish clergy to stand up for truth and justice.

During the darkest days of-'The Troubles'-Northern Ireland citizens faced a perpetual temptation to retreat into the mind forged manacles of polarised community fortresses. It has taken Northern Ireland decades to break out of this mindset but the results are now positive beyond anyone's wildest dreams. Shame or fear of discovery can allow trans-

generational trauma (or abuse) to remain undiscovered, with perpetrators keen to keep an institution (or family) in denial mode. Critics are often silenced and noisier victims spoken of in disparaging terms ("troublemakers") . It would encourage spiritual revival if more bishops followed the wise example of Justin Welby, who has freely admitted to a dire problem in our denomination. It is possible, applying sophistry or the slyest skills of logic, to say there is "no Anglican safeguarding problem". This may, indeed, at one level anyway, be a reflection of the very painful truth in some dioceses, where no effective safeguarding has been present at all: let alone been defective. Worse still, some systems have trivialised or dismissed horrific sadism, while protecting perpetrators and episcopal tyrants who nonchalantly concealed abuse. Working out a treatment plan or scalpel incision line, for the Anglican Safeguarding crisis or abscess, will demand patience and time. Step one, diagnosing and naming the disease, must be our immediate focus.

The Glance

By George Herbert

When first thy sweet and gracious eye
Vouchsafed ev'n in the midst of youth and night
To look upon me, who before did lie
Welt'ring in sin;
I felt a sug'red strange delight,
Passing all cordials made by any art,
Bedew, embalm, and overrun my heart,
And take it in.

Since that time many a bitter storm
My soul hath felt, ev'n able to destroy,
Had the malicious and ill-meaning harm
His swing and sway:
But still thy sweet original joy
Sprung from thine eye, did work within my soul,
And surging griefs, when they grew bold, control,
And got the day.

If thy first glance so powerful be,
A mirth but opened and sealed up again;
What wonders shall we feel, when we shall see
Thy full-eyed love!
When thou shalt look us out of pain,
And one aspect of thine spend in delight
More than a thousand suns disburse in light,
In heav'n above.

Submitted by Geoffrey May

GOD LOVES US WHEN WE SING

by Paul McLaughlin



The rain is pouring down like stair rods as we say in Belfast. It is only four o'clock, but already the afternoon sky is leaden and a cold wind is sloping in off the Cave Hill. A day for the fire, as we also are inclined to say. Not one for the ear-piercing sound of an ice cream van that shrills the air.

The ice cream man cometh and he is an eejit. Even Eskimos don't eat the stuff in this kind of weather. I laugh at the thought of a chilly September sundae, but the music of the van, it sounds like a smoke detector trying to sing, has caught my imagination and I am trying hard to identify the theme song despite myself.

As I sing along, searching for words that come in bits and pieces like a musical confetti, a memory long forgotten announces itself. It is 'The Spinning Wheel' and soon Eileen is spinning and the wheel is merrily, cheerily, nosily whirring just as it did on many Monday mornings in 1962.

For decades the BBC Schools Broadcasting series 'Singing Together' was part of school life. From the earliest days of broadcasting, children had a central place in the BBC's own definition of its role - to educate, inform and entertain.

Songs, like 'The Spinning Wheel', were chosen for their simplicity and each programme contained a song with a rousing chorus, a song with a beautiful melody and even a nonsense song like the much lamented 'Michael Finnegan'.

Concentrating on folk songs from around the British Isles and Ireland, it was hugely popular in schools, including at our CBS at St Aidan's in West Belfast.

The presenter was a Yorkshireman called William Appleby and, although he had a really clear speaking voice, it was not posh like all those we heard on the BBC at that time. For wee boys from Belfast, he sounded different, unusual even, and I certainly felt that he was 'on our side'.

Mondays are the least favourite day for schoolboys, even in these hi-tech days, but ten minutes before eleven o'clock, we all waited in eager anticipation when our teacher, Mister Carolan, snow white shirt, navy serge suit and gold rimmed glasses, immaculate as always, brought out the pine-cased wireless from the storeroom.

A little tuning and the voice of Appleby rang out loud and clear with a warm welcome and an enthusiasm born of a love of what he was doing. We were delighted to have sums and sentences put to the side

and roared out each song with a fervour found rarely in the classroom.

Monday became a day to cherish and a morning hour when school became fun was unique in days that promised the cane more often than not.

I think back now to the greatest hits of those times; Blow the wind Southerly, Do you ken John Peel, What shall we do with the drunken sailor? And the never-ending saga, or so it seemed, of the hapless Mister Finnegan. We were, like most nine-year-olds, more than happy to 'begin again'.

We belted out the words of Hearts of Oak, the Royal Navy anthem, like little jolly Jack Tars, the irony lost on us. And it doesn't bear to think of what most of the Christian Brothers would have said of our treachery.

We were 'steady boys steady', as we chorused out about 'our soldiers, our sailors, our statesmen, our king'.

Life was so simple then it seems. We stepped out gaily to 'Marie's Wedding' not noticing that the poor girl was being toasted for having many bairns before the ink was dry on the church register and the haunting melody of 'The Spinning Wheel' caressed lyrics that told of a flighty Eileen beyond our understanding.

Mister Carolan told us that God respects us when we work hard, but he loves us when we sing, so sing we did safe in the knowledge that the man above, like the pleasant Mister Appleby, was also on our side.

The 'Singing Together' programme boasted thousands of young voices in chorus across these islands each Monday morning for nearly six decades. It disappeared from the airwaves thirty years ago, but the tinny chimes of an ice cream van have kept its magic and memories alive.



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"COME YE THANKFUL PEOPLE COME"
The Very Rev Henry Alford, D.D. (1810-1871)

Canterbury has been called "the cradle of Christianity" and being the Seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, it occupies a unique place in the life and affections of Anglicans the world over. In recent years Canterbury was as infamous for its Red Dean as it was famous for its Archbishop or magnificent Cathedral. This month's hymn is by one of the Red Dean's predecessors, Dr Henry Alford, who was Dean of Canterbury from 1857 until his death in 1871.

Henry Alford was born in London on October 7th 1810, the son of an English Rector, and was educated at Ilminster Grammar School and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated with Honours in 1832. A year later he was ordained to the Curacy of Ampton. From 1835 until 1853 he was Vicar of Wymeswold, Rector of Quebec Chapel, London, from 1853 until 1857 and Dean of Canterbury from 1857 until 1871. In addition, he was a Fellow of Trinity, and held the Hulsean Lectureship 1841-2.

Dr Alford was a scholar and a prolific writer in almost every department of literature, his major work being his editing of the Greek Testament, which took him 20 years to complete. To-day he is remembered by a mere three hymns—"Forever be our Watchword," "Ten thousand times ten thousand", and the most popular of the three, the harvest hymn "Come ye thankful people, come."

Thanksgiving is a healthy and a hearty ingredient in Christian living. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord," said the Psalmist and this is still true to-day. At least once a year Christians of all denominations give thanks to God for the blessings of Harvest, and a Harvest Thanksgiving Service would be the poorer without "Come ye thankful people, come," which is a fine processional hymn and sets the mood.

Come ye thankful people, come.
Raise the song of Harvest Home.
All is safely gathered in
'Ere the winter storm begins.
God our Maker doth provide,
For our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the Song of Harvest Home.

Shakespeare put these words into the mouth of one of his characters, "How sharper than the fiery serpent's tooth it is to

have a thankless child." We hear parents constantly reminding children who have just pocketed something "And what do you say?" On recollecting the goodness, the bounty of God towards ourselves the same question might be posed, "And what do you say?" "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?" Some folk dislike this hymn and object to its use because of the third line "All is safely gathered in", which they say is not quite the whole truth. Look again. What the writer says is "All is safely gathered in 'eer the winter storms begin" and that is very different from presuming all to be safely in the barn, the larder, or the fridge whilst we are singing the words around the beginning of October. In the proper context there is nothing suspect about the truth of this first verse.

All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto His Praise to yield,
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown:
First the blade and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear:
Lord of harvest, grant that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come,
And shall take His Harvest home;
From His field shall in that day
All offences purge away,
Give His angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast
But the fruitful ears to store
In His garner evermore."

These two verses are based on our Lord's parable of the wheat and the tares found in Matthew 13, verses 24-30. The man sowed nothing but good seed in his field, but behind his back another sowed weeds, a fact which only became obvious when both crops began to grow side by side. The farm labourers were all for getting rid of the weeds, but the farmer rightly pointed out that by doing so just then, as much of the good crop was certain to be destroyed also. The decision was "Wait till the Harvest," then we can easily sort the wheat from the tares and harvest the good and burn up the weeds. The hymn says "All the world is God's own field" - your life and mine are the fields in which the seed grows and when the Holy Spirit of God descends on a person. He comes as fire to burn up the dross.

Even so Lord, quickly come
To Thy final Harvest Home!
Gather thou Thy people in,
Free from sorrow free from sin;
There for ever purified,
In Thy presence to abide;
Come, with all Thine angels, come,
Raise the glorious Harvest Home.

Here in this last verse, we touch upon the Second Coming of our Lord, in power and great glory, with all His Holy Angels to judge the world. To many, this is a doctrine we could very well do without - a rather unwholesome, unsettling prospect, best forgotten. However, we may think of this as individuals, the Church has included it as one of the tenets of our Faith, one of the important clauses in the Catholic Creed. In the Te Deum we sing (or used to sing before the craze of using only one part) "We believe that Thou shall come to be our Judge" and the Nicene Creed puts it "And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead." So, like it or not, the doctrine of the Second Coming is an essential clause in the Creed and part of the Faith.

Judgement conjures up a particular picture in the human mind - a court, a dock, a prisoner, a judge. No one is happy with any of these things (especially as we are in the dock) and the thought of the judge gives one the creeps.

The General Judgement is something we all must face, and it is a sobering thought. We say in the Creed "I believe in God" and this is what makes the difference, for in the end, God is the Judge. But God is our Father, and God is Love, and God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life. So, with perfect trust in the mercy and love of our Heavenly Father we can approach the Judgement Seat, knowing full well that "with God there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption." Pardon, restoration, redemption, everlasting life, are the fruits the Christian will reap in the Harvest of the world. It is in this spirit we can sing the final verse.

"Even so Lord, quickly come,
To Thy final Harvest Home."

And it is only with the deepest humility we can utter the great prayer in song, "Make me to be numbered with Thy Saints in glory everlasting."

William Adair

MUSIC LIST October 2022

Sunday 2nd October

Trinity 16

11am Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	Christ triumphant, ever reigning. (See sheet)
Setting	Sumsion in F
Psalm	137: 1-6
Gradual Hymn	Blest are the pure in heart 341
Offertory Hymn	Lord of all hopefulness 239
Communion Hymn	Sweet sacrament 307
Motet	Agnus Dei - Fauré
Recessional Hymn	Love divine all loves excelling 408

5pm Choral Evensong

Parish Choir

Service in Commemoration of the life of David McElderry

Hymn	Angel Voices 336
Responses	Rose
Psalm	121
Canticles	Sumsion in G
Anthem	Festival Te Deum - <i>Britten</i>
Hymn	The day thou gavest 252
Voluntary	Howells Rhapsody No 3

Wednesday 5th October

Parish Choir

Requiem Mass - *Fauré*

Sunday 9th October

Trinity 17

11am Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	We plough the fields 262
Setting	Ireland in C
Psalm	66: 1-11
Gradual Hymn	Be thou my guardian 64
Offertory Hymn	Rejoice the Lord is King 443
Communion Hymn	Blessed Jesu 275
Anthem	For the beauty of the earth - <i>Rutter</i>
Recessional Hymn	All creatures of our God 263

5pm Choral Evensong

SSA Choir

Hymn	Lead us heavenly father 393
Responses	Tallis
Psalm	144
Canticles	Dyson in C minor
Anthem	Lead me, Lord - <i>Wesley</i>
Hymn	As now the sun's 242

MUSIC LIST October 2022

Sunday 16th October

11am Choral Eucharist

Trinity 18

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	All my hope on God	333
Setting	Mass of the Quiet hour - <i>Allroyd</i>	
Psalm	119: 97-104	
Gradual Hymn	Christ whose glory	234
Offertory Hymn	I heard the voice	376
Communion Hymn	295	
Motet	Cantate Domino - <i>Pitoni</i>	
Recessional Hymn	Praise to the Lord	444

5pm Choral Evensong

Chamber Choir

Responses	Ayleward	
Psalm	149	
Canticles	Noble in B minor	
Anthem	Let thy merciful ears - <i>Mudd</i>	
Hymn	471, 244	

Sunday 23rd October

11am Choral Eucharist

Trinity 19

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	O worship the King	433
Setting	Darke in E	
Psalm	65	
Gradual Hymn	Breathe on me	342
Offertory Hymn	Thou whose almighty word	466
Communion Hymn	Thee we adore (plainchant)	308
Motet	Sicut cervus - <i>Palestrina</i>	
Recessional Hymn	Ye holy angels	475

5pm Choral Eucharist

Choral Scholars

Processional Hymn	259	
Setting	Merbecke	
Hymns	294, 308, 391	
Motet	In Pace - <i>Lassus</i>	

Sunday 30 October

11am Choral Eucharist

Trinity 20

Parish Men

Processional Hymn	Come ye thankful people come	259
Setting	Byrd Mass for 3 voices	
Psalm	119: 137-144	
Gradual Hymn	Jesu lover of my soul	383
Offertory Hymn	Guide me O thou great	368
Communion Hymn	Once only once	304
Motet		

5pm Choral Compline

Parish Men

CALENDAR October 2022

October 2

16th Sunday after Trinity

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11:00 am

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Lamentations 1: 1-6; 2 Timothy 1: 1-14;
Luke 17: 5-10

Sanctuary Flowers: Holly Ferres in memory of her son Ben

Reader: *Janet Sandikli*

Tea and Coffee: *Betty Flynn, Dot Lutton*

5.00 pm

Choral Evensong: The Rector

Lessons: Lamentations 3: 22-26; John 6: 35-40

October 5

7.30 pm

Solemn Requiem Eucharist

For her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

October 9

17th Sunday after Trinity

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11:00 am

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The rector

Readings: Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7; 2 Timothy 2: 8-15;
Luke 17: 11-19

Sanctuary Flowers: Louise & Ian Stoupe in memory of Louise's parents

Reader: *Pam Tilson*

Tea and Coffee: *Eleanor Maynard, Mary Harland, Catherine Hunter*

5.00 pm

Choral Evensong: The Rector

Lessons: Nehemiah 6: 1-16; John 15: 12-27

October 16

18th Sunday after Trinity

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11:00 am

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Jeremiah 31: 27-34; 2 Timothy 3: 14 – 4: 5;
Luke 18: 1-8

Sanctuary Flowers: Anne & William Odling-Smee in memory of their daughter Elizabeth

Reader: *Tom Layden*

Tea and Coffee: *Keith Suckling, Steven McQuitty*

5.00 pm

Choral Evensong: The Rector

Lessons: Nehemiah 8: 9-18; John 16: 1-11

CALENDAR October 2022

October 23

19th Sunday after Trinity

9:30 am Eucharist: The Rector

11:00 am Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Joel 2: 23-32; 2 Timothy 4: 6-8, 16-18;
Luke 18: 9-14

Sanctuary Flowers: George Woodman in memory of
Donald, Flora and Kathleen Maude Woodman

Reader: *Graeme Pollock*

Tea and Coffee: *Linda McConnell, Yvonne Doherty*

5.00 pm Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Epistle: Ephesians 4: 17-32; Matthew 9: 1-8

October 30

20th Sunday after Trinity

9:30 am Eucharist: The Rector

11:00 am Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Habakkuk 1: 1-4, 2: 1-4; 2 Thessalonians
1: 1-4, 11-12; Luke 19:1-10

Sanctuary Flowers: Valerie Roberts in memory of her
husband Dai

Reader: *Meisam Khalili*

Tea and Coffee: *Brenda Claney, Judith Fawcett/Helen
Crowe*

5.00 pm Choral Compline: The Rector

KINDNESS AND CRUELTY by Jo Calder

I hope everyone will forgive me by starting this piece in talking about myself! In September I returned to St George's after almost 15 very long months confined indoors because of my lack of mobility following my fall in June 2021. I found the absence really upsetting; I had become very used to getting into my robes every Sunday morning. I would now express again my deep thanks to Pam and her recordings; because of being able to at least take part remotely, it helped ease my "isolation". The kindness and warmth I received that morning was almost over-whelming; hugs, welcomes, enquiries regarding my health and more. I know he may be "annoyed" at my including this, but I was met with the most beautiful bunch of white roses, given to me by Billy McArthur. I was close to tears.

Throughout my time away my son, Jonny has conveyed the messages enquiring about me, and the best wishes extended. I also was touched by those who texted me, or phoned to see how I was. It was so wonderful being prayed for by name every Sunday during the Eucharist, and again I felt I was still there. Thank you all, in St George's and to Fr Brian who would visit to give me Communion. I am also very blest with a fantastic son, who visits every day, a wonderful family, great friends and good neighbours. I will now take attention away from myself before I get any more boring!

Kindness is a wonderful commodity, and, even in this day and age, still is practised, despite some who remain self-centred. Many examples have been told of recently, following the very sad death of our late Queen, Elizabeth. Not yet still able to go out, it was for me wall-to-wall coverage of the days after her death, listening to many stories of people queuing for hours to view HM lying-in-state, how they shared food and liquids, and how some also struck up new friendships. Again, in situations like this, instead of just ensuring that individual person had what they needed, many were very happy to include others. I'm sure there were a few with the "I'm all right Jack" attitude, there always will be, but from all the TV reports, people cared about each other. To me it was a modern version of what Jesus taught us - *"love one another as I have loved you"*. For me, kindness is not something that can be bought, and, although as children our parents may try to guide us in the ways of being kind, sometimes it is a lesson not learned. I am sure we all have had an experience with someone who lacks the ability to be kind, but hopefully they are not frequent interactions, and does not deter us from practising kindness to others. Again, I would extend my sincerest thanks for all the kindnesses shown since my accident.

Sadly, at times there seems to be more cruelty than kindness – both on a large and small scale. Once again, Ukraine is in the headlines. I have watched and listened with great sadness and at times incredibility at some of the stories now being uncovered. The horrors of mass graves now being discovered as the Ukrainian soldiers have managed to drive the Russian soldiers further away. Again, from what I have read and watched, there is evidence of torture having been carried out. I wonder what crossed the minds of both those being tortured, and the Russian soldiers inflicting these awful deeds. That is not just cruelty, for me it is evil. I regard the President of Russia, the President of China and the President of North Korea as “the Unholy Trinity”; for me they are the definition of evil.

We have heard very disturbing reports at what is being done to the Uighur Muslims in China, being forced to have “re-training” so they give up their religious beliefs, Christians still continue to be targeted in several ways, including being arrested and their Churches burned down. We know less about North Korea, although it is generally regarded as now being virtually atheist, and of course there would be very few, if any, ordinary Koreans who would be willing to discuss religion or beliefs. Buddhism was at one time the biggest religion, although it is not known if it is still practised. As with China, Christians are also badly persecuted or executed. In Burma it is the Rohingya Muslims who are heavily persecuted by the current Military regime.

For me there is also what I would term “domestic” cruelty, especially the recent cases of child abuse, done by the parents. Very recently the mother of a ten-week-old child was found guilty of the infanticide after shaking the little one to death, but was released after the Judge believed she had been suffering from Post Natal Depression. The baby’s father was not charged with any crime. I certainly fully understand what PND can have a serious effect on a female’s mental health, and that it is indeed a mental illness. There are doubts, though because the doctors, nurses and midwives who dealt with the baby where she was born in hospital all opposed the child being discharged into the care of her parents. Over and over again there are dreadful cases of young children being very badly abused, or have died, all when they should have the love and care of parents, not treated so very cruelly.

These little ones should have known only an abundance of kindness, as any decent person would give them.