

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



NOVEMBER 2023

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

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

The repairs to the chancel have taken longer than we expected because a number of further issues were discovered after the scaffolding was in place and the work underway. Rather than dismantle the scaffolding and re-erect it in the spring of next year at considerable expense, it was decided to carry out the extra work now, while it was still in place. This has caused more disruption and inconvenience to parishioners, for which we apologise, but I am sure people will realise that completing the additional work now was the sensible and correct decision. The scaffolding should be completely gone and the hall entrance area cleaned by the end of the first week in November.

The work of refurbishing the choir room is well underway with the bulk of the job now completed. There are still a couple of outstanding tasks to be finished, but following a site meeting with the contractor and the architect on Friday 20th October, I am very hopeful it will be fully completed by mid November at the latest and the choir will be able to use it again. It is certainly looking very well and I would encourage any of you who are in the hall for coffee after a service to have a look at what has been done. I would like to put on record my appreciation of the work of our Glebe Warden, Mr Tony Merrick, who has put a huge effort into supervising and facilitating these two important refurbishment projects on behalf of the parish. Tony's architectural expertise, diligence and patient commitment has been essential in bringing these undertakings to completion. St George's really does owe Tony a great debt of gratitude for all his hard work.

I am in the midst of my Michaelmas round of home Communion for the housebound and sick. If you, or anyone you know, would like to have a visit and Holy Communion, then please ring me on 07902792080 to make arrangements. My diary is pretty full until 22nd November, but I am always available to answer any emergency pastoral calls before then or make an arrangement for a home Communion after Tuesday 21st from November. Do not hesitate to get in touch if you need a pastoral visit.

The Advent Carol service will take place on Sunday, 3rd December at 5:00PM. We will launch our Organ Restoration Appeal Fund at that service. I am hoping for a very large turn out of parishioners and friends of St George's to what is always one of the most beautiful services of the year and which this year will mark the launch of this very important project to restore our historic organ.

Every blessing in Christ

Brian Stewart

PARISH NOTICES

A DONATION TO CHARITY!

Hello all coffee and tea drinkers!

There will be a collection box on the table with the milk and sugar on Sunday and Wednesday mornings if anyone would like to make a donation to Charity in lieu of payment for your tea and coffee. The Rector has agreed choose a charity to receive your donations.

Thank you.

Eleanor Maynard

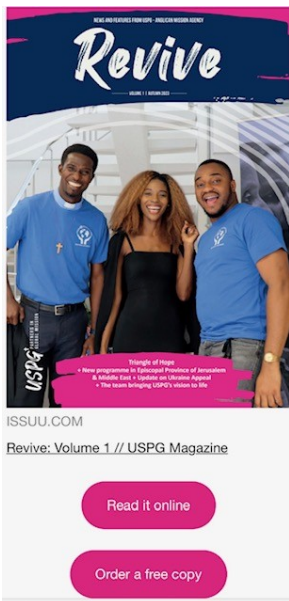
DEFIBRILLATOR REFRESHER TRAINING

Please note, Safe Hands will once again offer training in the use of the Defibrillator in St Georges, on **Tuesday, 21st November**, in the Parish Hall, between 7:00PM and 9:00PM. If you would be interested in attending, please give your name to one of the Church Wardens.

Thank you.

Lyn McGlade

USPG NEWS



If you would like to receive a copy or copies of Revive for you or your church in the post you can [order online](http://www.uspg.org.uk) (www.uspg.org.uk) or [email USPG](mailto:uspg@uspg.org.uk). While this publication is free, we greatly appreciate any donations you can make.

DID YOU KNOW? - FROM THE LEPROSY MISSION

How would you feel if you found out you had leprosy?



The
Leprosy
Mission

I would be worried at first, but grateful for the love and support I know my friends and family would show me. Sadly, too many people who are affected by leprosy don't get shown the compassion they deserve. Instead, their neighbours ask them not to come near their homes, they are fired from their jobs, some even have their partner file for divorce.

It doesn't have to be this way. So much of the stigma surrounding leprosy is simply because people don't know enough about it. They believe the myths, not the facts. Together, we can change that. Here are three things you might not know about leprosy. Can you share them with your family and friends when you next see them?

1. Leprosy is not highly contagious

Leprosy is only a mildly infectious disease – the majority of people exposed to it will never develop it. In fact, around 95% of people in the world have an immune system that can fight off leprosy. It was a Norwegian scientist, Gerhard-Henrik Armauer Hansen, who discovered in 1873 that leprosy is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae*. Until then, it had often been assumed that leprosy was a genetic disease, or even a curse.

2. Leprosy is classified as a 'Neglected Tropical Disease' – one that should not exist in the 21st century.

Leprosy is easily curable, so why are millions of people still living with untreated leprosy today? Poverty and inequality has a lot to do with it. Leprosy largely still affects the remotest communities in some of the world's poorest countries.

Since the 1990s when there was a big focus on eradicating leprosy, it has fallen off the global healthcare agenda. A lack of training means staff at clinics often fail to spot signs of the disease. Stigma also means people are afraid to try and seek treatment. The biggest barrier to ending leprosy isn't the availability or affordability of the cure, it's diagnosing people in the first place - and quickly.

3. There are 123 laws in place that discriminate against people affected by leprosy

In many countries around the world, people affected by leprosy face laws that discriminate against them. In some, they may be refused access to public transport, to schools or universities. In others, it means you can be removed from your community and placed in a 'leprosy asylum'. In Nepal and India, it can be grounds for divorce.

Some nations are working to repeal these laws. Others still enforce them, despite the medical evidence showing how unnecessary they are. Some states have forgotten they still exist and allow them to persist without recognising the impact they have on people affected by leprosy.

Thanks for taking the time to read this. Did our facts surprise you?

If they did, please share them with someone you know. The more awareness we can raise, the better chance we have of ending leprosy for good.

Communications Team, The Leprosy Mission

ORGAN RESTORATION APPEAL



Following Evensong on December 3rd 2023, St George's Clergy, Select Vestry and Organ Committee will launch an appeal for funds to pay for essential renovations to our historic organ.

Messrs J W Walker built the St George's organ in 1863. The instrument was enhanced and moved from the west gallery, to its present position, above the choir stalls, in 1882. Further improvements were added in the following years to give us the wonderful organ we have today; but apart from routine maintenance and tuning, the

organ has undergone no large-scale renovations in almost 50 years.

Recently, our organists, David Falconer, Daniel Clements and Mark McGrath, have reported occasional but worrying failings with the organ's mechanisms. At the behest David Falconer, Matthew Hynes, a respected authority on historic organs, has carried out a full inspection of the instrument. In his report of 27th April 2023, Matthew's advice is that the organ's tracker action and wind system need urgent attention.

Eager to ensure that the organ should continue to be fit for purpose, our Select Vestry accepted Matthew's recommendations and has appointed an Organ Committee to plan and oversee the launch of the restoration project. These committee members are: The Rector, Douglas McIlldoon, David Falconer, Daniel Clements, Howard Fee, Philip Black, Karen Brett and Michael Clendinning.

The estimated cost of renovating the organ is £100,000. We are very fortunate because we will launch our appeal with the advantage of one bequest, from the late David McElderry, for £25,000, another from the late Hilary Headley for £8,000, and a third from the late Billy Adair for £10,000. In addition, three parishioners have announced their intention to contribute to the Organ Fund. This means that when we officially launch our appeal on December 3rd, we will already have collected about £60,000 towards the cost of restoring the organ and enhancing the musical tradition we enjoy at St George's.

To help with raising the remaining £40,00, we are applying to

charities that support parish music and the restoration of historic organs. We will also ask the community of parishioners and friends of St George's to consider making gift-aided donations to the organ fund, and to join us at fund-raising events such as recitals and lunches.

A crowd funding appeal will help spread news of the restoration work to the wider community of St George's, beyond our walls, including the many friends and visitors who have been inspired by our worship and music over the years.

To commemorate and celebrate the important contribution David McElderry made to St George's over at least 40 years as a Vestry member, an accomplished singer, and as an attentive and benevolent organ builder, we will add two new stops to the organ. These stops will fulfil David's wish to increase the range and contrasts of sounds available to our musicians, and will be a vibrant, musical memorial to David.

Over the years, many amateur and professional musical careers have begun in St George's choir stalls and organ loft. St George's clergy, Select Vestry and Organ Committee are determined to ensure that this tradition of training both accomplished amateur and professional musicians can continue and thrive in our church, and that the Walker organ will continue to play an important role not only in our worship, but also in city life and in developing the musical talents of our young parishioners.

ECO-CONGREGATION IRELAND GROUP

To our own health and to our planet's health, what we eat really matters. Thankfully, there are ways to feed the world without eating away at our planet in the process. By making small changes in our diets and food choices, we can make a big difference:



EAT MORE PLANT-BASED FOODS
TRY TURNING VEGETARIAN OR FLEXITARIAN FOR A WEEK

EAT SUSTAINABLY SOURCED
CHECK THE INGREDIENT LABELS FOR SUSTAINABLE CERTIFICATIONS



EAT LOCALLY PRODUCED AND MINIMALLY PROCESSED WHERE POSSIBLE
THE MORE PROCESSED A FOOD IS THE GREATER ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT - BECAUSE OF THE EMISSIONS THEY CREATE



ELIMINATE FOOD WASTE
SHOP, COOK AND EAT SMART

FRESH AND LOCAL





Hedgehogs?

Rake leaves into piles, or add a hedgehog house in a quiet part of your garden where hedgehogs can hibernate without being disturbed. Feel free to leave out supplementary food, but taper this off later in the season so as not to delay hibernation. Hedgehogs may have a second brood of hoglets in the autumn so be careful when clearing your garden. And remember to keep pumpkins out of reach of hedgehogs, as it can be harmful to them if eaten.

ELEANOR MAYNARD

Check your bonfire for hedgehogs

If you're planning to have a bonfire this autumn, make sure you check thoroughly for hedgehogs before lighting it. Follow our top tips below to make sure your celebration is hedgehog-safe.



How to check your bonfire for hedgehogs

Build your bonfire on the same day you plan to light it.

Always place a bonfire on open ground.



Use a pole or broom to check your bonfire before lighting it.



Use a torch to look inside the bonfire and listen for a hissing sound, this could be a distressed hedgehog.



Light your bonfire from one corner to give hedgehogs time to escape.



ELEANOR MAYNARD

NEVER ON A SUNDAY

by Paul McLaughlin



In ancient times Samhain was a special day in Irish society. The first of November ushered in the dark half of the year and it was believed that on that day the dead were allowed to visit the living.

So strong was that conviction among the ordinary people that even the advent of Christianity failed to stop it and, rather, was forced to adapt and adopt the feast as All Saints Day.

The Celts believed that there was a thin veil between the spirit world and the one in which we lived and that Samhain allowed us to look into the world of the gods.

I'm sure that my mother, a devout woman who didn't need to eat the altar rails, as we say here, to show her Christian spirit, held very similar beliefs when, each Halloween night, just before bedtime, she would leave out a slice of freshly baked apple tart on a little china piece plate and a glass of water for the 'holy souls' of our deceased grandparents should they decide to visit us in the wee small hours.

Had the gods had the inclination to look back at us on that Sunday morning in 1964, they would have seen a cold and sunny Belfast, hundreds of children streaming from ten o'clock Mass at St John's church on the Falls Road and two brothers bent on adventure.

Difficult to achieve in those most puritan of sabbaths when right across most of the province religious fervour forced the closure of shops and cinemas, but, ironically, permitted the tantalising opening of public parks where swings, roundabouts and even the topical witch's hat were tied up in chains.

A Belfast Sunday was not a fun day in a decade when any kind of swinging was limited to six days a week, but we had decided to make the best of it.

The open-topped bus passes me slowly on the Crumlin Road, while tourists on board, cameras aimed like rifles, crane their necks to shoot pictures of the old Belfast jail building and the once grand courthouse that has become a derelict pigeon roost.

They are as enthusiastic as only 'foreign' sightseers can be and they have been told that there are much more exciting sights to come like with the great Titanic experience, but it is still a world away from our bus tour of the city in the 1960s.

My brother Jimmy and I boarded the red and cream Corporation vehicle at the City Hall, two half-crowns paid for the trip that would take us round our native city for the first time. We rushed to commandeer two upstairs seats right up at the front.

We need not have hurried. Heavy afternoon showers had deterred all but the brave or foolish and a dozen or so pensioners, ladies in plastic Pacamac raincoats, gents in flat caps and Dexter trench coats, were our only companions for the ninety-minute urban excursion.

The roads were deserted of traffic – probably the only advantage of a Belfast evangelical afternoon – and with what visibility was possible through driving rain and soot-washed windows we caught our first sight of some of the most iconic buildings in the city.

Parliament buildings at Stormont looked palatial to young eyes, Belfast's Harland Wolfe shipyard the last word in industrial expansion, but it was the sandstone magnificence of Belfast Castle high on the slopes of the Cave Hill, with a history dating back nearly a thousand years, that fired my imagination. Our little information booklet said that the Normans had built the original back in the 12th century. My brother asked why they were all called Norman.

An hour and half after our departure, we alighted from the bus, said our goodbyes to the older folk who had been so kind and protective of us during our adventure and stood in a city centre that reminds me now of an apocalyptic scene in the film 'On the Beach'.

The streets were silent, holding their breath. The shops sombre and shuttered, the people conspicuous by their absence. My ever-quizzical brother asked why.....because it's Sunday I said. And, young as he was, he understood.

Death Be Not Proud

by John Donne
(1572-1631)

DEATH be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadfull, for, thou art not so,
For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,
Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie.
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell,
And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,
And better then thy stroake; why swell'st thou then;
One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

Submitted by Geoffrey May



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SOCIETY OF ORDAINED SCIENTISTS

ZOOM MEETINGS WITH KYIV.

At the time, in the summer of 2012, we knew that it was a special occasion, but neither I nor the other members present at the gathering of the Society of Ordained Scientists could have had any idea of what lay ahead. Two of the members we admitted at that meeting extended the geographical reach of the society. One was from Sweden and the other from Ukraine. Anne-Marie is a Lutheran pastor and biological scientist and Ivan a Presbyterian pastor from Kyiv (the Ukrainian spelling). Ivan has a master's degree in microelectronics and now is Senior Pastor at Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church in Kyiv. He had studied theology in Birmingham, Alabama (USA) and before the collapse of the Soviet Union he had served in the Soviet Air Force in his two years of military service. There, he told us in later conversations, he had been taught about the evil of the West, a view which he and his contemporaries never really bought into. Ivan's wife Lucia is a psychologist, and they have two grown up sons.

We were delighted that Ivan had become an active member of the Society and that we saw him every summer at our annual gathering. We got to know him and learned more about Ukraine. But with two momentous events things changed completely. The first event was Covid. For two years SOSc members were not able to meet face to face as we had done for nearly 30 years. Technology came to the partial rescue in the form of Zoom. We began to hold meetings of small groups, and then in the summer of 2020 our annual gathering was a world-wide Zoom meeting, linking together members from North America, Britain and Ireland, and of course, Ukraine. In fact, we had never had so many members gathered at the same time (if not the same place). It raised some interesting thoughts, partly theological, about the nature of time and space. Ivan played a leading part as speaker for the membership in our worship.

We were all happy and invigorated that we had established Zoom as an efficient way of getting together, when the next major event exploded into the news, the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Our first news from Ivan was by email. What Ivan told us was consistent with what we had heard from our own news media. The Russians were bringing troops forward to the Ukrainian border. At first they moved back, and the Ukrainians hoped that they would not return, but, as we now know, that was not the case, and the invasion began. At the end of his first email, Ivan offered a prayer for us to share: 'So I would

like to ask the Society of Ordained Scientists to pray for the people of Ukraine!

That the Lord would move mightily on our behalf and provide us with protection and peace.

For our Heavenly Father to bring this aggression to an end and spare the lives of our soldiers and to return Russian troops back home.

For our Lord to give Ukraine strength and wisdom to be able to escape to safety.

We also ask for God's protection to be upon our church of the Holy Trinity and the Christian community that represent God's Kingdom in Ukraine.'

Events moved quickly over those first weeks. Very soon, power supply and internet permitting, we had our first Zoom meeting with Ivan. About 20 members from GB and Ireland and from North America were able to hear from Ivan in person as he told us what the current situation was. Kyiv was essentially under siege. There was one road open from the south. Limited supplies were getting through and there were regular power outages. Many people had left. Ivan was holding daily prayer meetings for anyone who wished to attend. He and his church members were checking on those, particularly older people, who could not leave, and taking round food. It was a moving meeting but with a sombre feeling. None of us had experienced anything of this kind. We felt privileged to be able to come so close to the dramatic events and offered all the support we could from a distance. Ivan has told us how much our meetings on Zoom have encouraged him and encouraged his church community.

We have held several more Zoom meetings over the months since that first one. All have followed the same pattern. We have seen the conflict develop and heard at first-hand what people are doing. We had a basic idea of the situation through the media reports, but knowing people directly involved and speaking to them made everything much more immediate.

Our most recent meeting was a few weeks ago and following that I thought I should write a note about it for St George's. Ivan, we thought, is looking more tired. Kyiv, he told us, now has excellent protection against drones. Almost all are shot down. It is less easy with missiles, but if it were not for the war, life in Kyiv would seem nearly normal. And that, of course, is the thing. Things are not normal, and no-one knows when normality, or a new normality, will return. By now everyone knows someone who has been killed. We

wondered how they felt about the future. One clear and defiant answer came from a soldier who had come from the front for the funeral of a comrade who they all knew. He told Ivan that despite all the difficulties, for example the slower than expected progress of the Ukrainian counter-offensive, no-one wants to hold back. The excesses of the Russian campaign have not deterred the Ukrainian forces. They have become even more determined.

The recent events in Gaza and Israel make the world seem even more insecure and trapped by hatred. I have met two people who this week have returned from visits to Israel. They had to change plans but were able to get home safely. Visits to the Holy Land are now suspended. Our regular Zoom meetings with Ivan and meeting people recently returned from Israel emphasise to us how near these major conflicts can be. We turn to pray for peace:

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Fr Keith Suckling

MUSIC LIST November 2023

Thursday 2nd November
7:30pm All Souls Eucharist
 Requiem - *Fauré*

Feast of All souls
Chamber Choir

Sunday 5th November

4th Sunday before Advent

11am Eucharist

Parish Choir Holiday

Processional Hymn	My God how wonderful	410
Psalm	107: 1-7, 33-37	
Setting	Plainsong	
Gradual Hymn	Jesus calls us	200
Offertory Hymn	Eternal father	354
Hymn	Lord enthroned	296

5pm Evening Prayer

Choir Holiday

Sunday 12th November

3rd Sunday before Advent

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

11am Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

National Anthem	489
Processional Hymn	O God our help 417
Setting	Mass of the Quiet Hour - <i>Oldroyd</i>
Psalm	78: 1-8
Gradual Hymn	Lord while for all mankind 491
Offertory Hymn	And did these feet 488
Communion Hymn	Let all mortal flesh 295
Anthem	Greater love - <i>Ireland</i>
Hymn	Eternal Father 354

5pm Choral Evensong

Choral Scholars

Hymn	Glory to thee 244
Responses	Tallis
Psalm	82
Canticles	Arnold Faux bourdons
Anthem	Out of the deep - <i>Tomkins</i>
Hymn	O strength and stay 248

MUSIC LIST November 2023

Sunday 19th November

11am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	Immortal invisible	377
Setting	Stanford in C and F	
Psalm	123	
Gradual Hymn	Holy Spirit come confirm us	140
Offertory Hymn	Let saints on earth	396
Communion Hymn	Just as I am	294
Anthem	Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake - <i>Farrant</i>	
Hymn	Thine for ever	463

2nd Sunday before Advent

Parish Choir

5pm Choral Evensong

Chamber Choir

Hymn	241
Responses	TP Saunders
Psalm	89: 20-30
Canticles	Long in F
Anthem	Mid Winter - <i>Chilcott</i>
Hymn	239

November 26th

Christ the King

Sunday before Advent

11am Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	All people that on earth	334 RVW
Psalm	100	
Setting	Missa Princeps Pacis - <i>Lloyd Webber</i>	
Gradual Hymn	Let all the world	294
Offertory Hymn	Christ triumphant (print words on sheet)	
Communion Hymn	282	
Motet	Ubi Caritas	
Hymn	At the name of Jesus	338

5pm Choral Eucharist

Men's Voices

Hymn	Rejoice the Lord is King	443
Anthem	Hear the voice and prayer - <i>Tallis</i>	
Hymn	Sun of my soul	251

CALENDAR November 2023

November 1	All Saints
10:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
November 2	All Souls
7:30pm	Choral Eucharist: The Rector
November 5	4th Sunday before Advent
9:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
11:00am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector
	Preacher: The Rector
	Readings: Joshua 3: 7-17; 1 Thessalonians 2: 9-13; Matthew 23: 1-12
	Reader: <i>Wardens</i>
	Intercessor: <i>George Woodman</i>
	Servers: <i>Laura Brannigan, Agape Laoye, Tony Merrick</i>
	Tea and Coffee: <i>Keith Suckling, Steven McQuitty</i>
5:00pm	Evening Prayer: The Rector
	Lessons: Daniel 7: 1-18; Luke 6: 17-31 (<i>Eleanor Maynard</i>)
November 8	
10:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
November 11	
	Russian Orthodox Liturgy: 9:30 am – 1:15 pm
November 12	REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 3rd Sunday before Advent
9:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
10:50am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector
	Preacher: The Rector
	Readings: Joshua 24: 1-3a, 14-25; 1 Thess. 4: 13-18; Matthew 25: 1-13
	Reader: <i>Mark Claney</i>
	Intercessor: <i>Janice Carruthers</i>
	Servers: <i>Omolewa Akinyele, Steven McQuitty, Mark Claney</i>
	Tea and Coffee: <i>Brenda Claney, Judith Fawcett</i>
5:00pm	Choral Evensong: The Rector
	Lessons: Judges 7: 2-22; John 15: 9-17 (<i>Fr Graeme Pollock</i>)
November 15	
10:30am	Eucharist: Fr Keith Suckling

CALENDAR November 2023

November 19	2nd Sunday before Advent
9:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
11:00am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector Preacher: The Rector Readings: Judges 4: 1-7; 1 Thess. 5: 1-11; Matthew 25: 14-30 Reader: <i>Karen Brett</i> Intercessor: <i>Anne McBride</i> Servers: <i>Banji Akinyele, Geoff Newell, Mark Claney</i> Tea and Coffee: <i>Linda McConnell, Karen Brett</i>
5:00pm	Choral Evensong: The Rector Lessons: 1 Kings 1: 15-40; Revelation 1: 4-18 (<i>Fr Tom Layden</i>)
November 22	
10:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
November 26	THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST The Sunday before Advent
9:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
11:00am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector Preacher: The Rector Readings: Ezek. 34: 11-16, 20-24; Ephesians 1: 15-23; Matthew 25: 31-46 Reader: <i>Fr Tom Layden</i> Intercessor: <i>Fr William Odling-Smee</i> Servers: <i>Banji Akinyele, Jonny Calder, Tony Merrick</i> Tea and Coffee: <i>Betty Flynn, Dot Lutton</i>
5:00pm	Eucharist – Order 1: The Rector Readings: Jeremiah 23: 5-8; John 6: 5-14 (<i>Paddy Sloan</i>)
November 29	
10:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
November 30	
1:00pm	Eucharist: The Rector & Fr Graeme Pollock The Walsingham Group meets at this Eucharist – all welcome

ENDPIECE by Colin Young

GEORGE HERBERT – 1593-1633



Last month's magazine included a very beautiful poem 'The Sonne' written by George Herbert; the author is very well known as one of the metaphysical poets, and is familiar to many churchgoers for his hymns 'Teach me my God and King' and 'Let all the world in every corner sing', which are widely sung today.

Herbert was born in Montgomery Castle in Wales, a member of a distinguished family related to the Earls of Pembroke. There is a connection to Ireland; some of the family settled in Co. Kerry where their house at Muckross still stands outside Killarney, and some of their lands are part of Killarney National Park. In Dublin the Earls of Pembroke also owned land in Dublin, in the area including Ballsbridge, Sandymount, Ringsend, and Irishtown. There is still a pew in St John's Sandymount for the Earl of Pembroke, though I don't know if he ever attends!

George Herbert's mother, Magdalena Newport was a patron of the poet and priest John Donne, who had a great influence on George Herbert; Donne is generally regarded as the first of the metaphysical poets, and he dedicated his 'Holy Sonnets' to her.

The young Herbert was educated at home, then at Westminster School, and then at Trinity College Cambridge, becoming a Fellow of the College and Public Orator of Cambridge University, responsible for making speeches in Latin on certain occasions. He resigned that position in 1627, was ordained and was appointed Rector of Fugglestone, just outside Salisbury; some of us, myself included, have seen the little Chapel at Bemerton St Andrew, when visiting Salisbury.



St Andrew's Church, Bemerton,
near Salisbury

Herbert was also very musical and took part in the choral services in Salisbury Cathedral. His mother was musical too, and knew the composers William Byrd and John Bull. In the 17th century Henry Purcell and John Blow set a poem by George Herbert to music, and in modern times some of his poems have been set to music by a number of composers: Edmund Rubbra, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Robin Milford, Benjamin Britten, William Walton, and Judith Weir.



George Herbert
Salisbury Cathedral

Herbert's poems are generally viewed as being deeply spiritual and devotional, expressed in very beautiful language, and he is regarded with John Donne as being one of the greatest of the metaphysical poets. However, he was also a very distinguished author in prose, and probably his best known work in this medium is 'A Priest to the Temple - The Country Parson, his Character and Rule of Holy Life'. In this work he gives practical advice to his fellow clergy, and sets high standards.

"The country parson is exceeding exact in his life, being holy, just, prudent, temperate, bold, grave in all his ways". He must be a man of knowledge, learned in the Bible and the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. He must conduct worship well and see that his parishioners are reverent in the church. The church building itself must be well cared for.

With regards to preaching, he says that the pulpit is the Parson's "joy and his throne" and he reminds preachers that "the character of their sermons is Holiness; he is not witty or learned, or eloquent, but Holy". Sound advice indeed for clergy! And so he continues, giving all sorts of advice to his fellow priests about their lifestyles, their parochial duties and their interactions with their flock - they are to be proactive pastors, bringing Holy Communion to those who are ill.

One could continue to quote Herbert at length, but it would make for a very long article. However, I hope I have given some indication of his thought and teaching. Even today much of what he says is very relevant, and the picture of the Parish Priest, leading the worship of Almighty God, teaching his flock, and caring for them physically and spiritually, is an ideal and a pattern for today's clergy. However times have changed of course, and a country parson nowadays may have to look after five or six parishes, and often more, spread over considerable areas, and find it difficult to be in contact with all their parishioners.

But Herbert's beautiful poems and his advice to clergy still resonate today. He died of consumption in March 1633 at the age of only 39. Nearly 400 years after his death we still have much to learn from him, and we thank God for this man, one of the great luminaries of 17th century Anglicanism who still influences us in these days.

