

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



APRIL 2025

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CONTENTS



From The Rector's Desk	4
My vocation to the priesthood of the Church of Ireland by Rev'd Brian Stewart	5
Parish Notices	7
A Soldier of God by Paul McLaughlin	9
Compline by The Late Billy Adair	11
That was then - is it not also now by Douglas McIlldoon	13
Poets Corner	15
Music List	17
Calendar	20
End Piece - Jeffrey Johnston	22

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

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ

Our Easter General Vestry Meeting which is, in effect, the AGM of St George's will be held on Passion Sunday, 6th April at 12:30 PM immediately after the Choral Eucharist. This is the annual meeting of the parish at which those who are registered on our General Vestry membership list will hear reports about the last year in St George's, can stand for election to the Select Vestry, and are able to vote in our yearly elections. All parishioners are eligible to attend this meeting, but only those who are previously registered as General Vestry members can stand for office or vote in the elections. This is your chance, as parishioners, to attend and to participate in this annual exercise in church democracy. It is important that we have a good turnout of members from across the parish to hear reports, stand for office, and vote in the elections.

The details of services during Holy Week and Easter are published elsewhere in this month's magazine. I would particularly draw your attention to the Easter Liturgy on Easter Eve. This year on Saturday 19th April at 7:30 PM the Bishop of Connor will preside and preach. At this Liturgy he will baptise new converts to the faith, confirm those baptised together with other adult candidates already baptised and celebrate the Eucharist. In some ways, this is the most significantly important service of the year in St George's, as it reflects the very ancient pattern of the church where the Bishop baptised, confirmed and celebrated Holy Communion and the congregation renewed their baptismal promises along with the recent converts and all this was done as the first Liturgy of Easter when we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ. Please do try and be present on Easter Eve at 7:30 PM to celebrate with our Bishop and welcome the newly baptised and confirmed to St George's.

Fr William Odling-Smee will celebrate his 90th birthday on Easter Monday, 21st April. To mark this event, we will have a short reception after the 11:00 AM Choral Eucharist on Easter Day, 20th April. Father William has been the honorary curate in St George's since 1988, 37 years now. He has been a wonderful colleague and a faithful priest over all of those years freely giving his time, wisdom and boundless energy to the people of the parish. We have all benefited enormously from Fr William's commitment and devotion and this will be an opportunity for us all to express something of our gratitude and regard for him. Please make every effort to attend this short reception on Easter Day.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who offered congratulations or sent messages and cards after the recent announcement of my engagement. Ruth and I plan to marry on Saturday 4th October here in Belfast. That will involve a service in St George's to which you are all warmly invited. More details, including the time, will follow in due course. In the meantime, thank you once again for all your good wishes.

I wish you all a very blessed Holy Week and a joyful Easter.

Yours sincerely in Christ

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

MY VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND BELFAST

BY REV'D BRIAN STEWART

In 1985 I joined the parish of Christchurch in Londonderry. I had been brought up as a Presbyterian in Clarmont Church and still retain many fond and happy memories of my childhood there under the Reverend James Kilgore, who baptised me, and then under the Reverend Dr Bert Tosh who was a big influence and is still a good friend to this day. My maternal grandmother's family, the Faulkeners, were Church of Ireland and indeed my great uncle Bertie was a Church of Ireland clergyman. I was drawn to the liturgy and prayers of the Book of Common Prayer and the then Rector of Christ Church, the Reverend Alan Harper, was an inspiration and great help to me. I was confirmed as an adult by Bishop James Mahaffey in St Augustine's Church on 7th March 1986. His sermon was truly memorable and during it, I heard a distinct, clear, call in my mind and the words 'Brian, I want you to be a priest.'

After many conversations with Alan Harper and his successor, Don McLean, and a subsequent interview with Bishop Mahaffey, I was sent to the selection conference at the Church of Ireland Theological College in Dublin in April 1988. The Bishop phoned me a week later to tell me I had been accepted for ordination training. So I closed down my motorcycle repair business that summer and in early September headed off to the Theological College on my motorbike with luggage strapped everywhere.

The course lasted three years and was quite challenging for me as I had no previous experience of university life or studying for a degree. We had excellent teachers and I made many lifelong friends there. There were also many challenges as ordinands came from all four corners of Ireland with a wide variety of theological and political views. Decompression sessions in the nearby Glenside Bar, what we called 'Vestry Meetings', were an essential part of the whole experience. I loved Dublin and the experience of studying in Trinity College and thoroughly enjoyed visiting many of the famous buildings and locations in and around the city.

I was appointed as Curate-Assistant of Ballywillan Parish (Portrush) in 1991 and ordained as a Deacon in June of that year. A year later I was ordained as a priest in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast whilst continuing to serve as Curate in Ballywillan. In 1994 I was nominated by Bishop Samuel Poyntz as Rector of St George's Parish in Belfast, where I have served now for almost 31 years.

Finding my vocation as a priest and serving God in the ministry of

the Church of Ireland has been the greatest privilege and honour of my life. It is a joy and a great responsibility to serve God's church and be with His people in good times and in bad times, in joys and in sorrows. It is not an easy or stress free vocation, but I would not have missed one second of it for the world. When I retire from full-time ministry in 2026, I intend to keep serving as a priest in some part-time capacity in Ireland or perhaps in a chaplaincy role in the Diocese of Europe.

I would thoroughly recommend a vocation as a priest to anyone who wants to explore this Christian ministry and encourage them to pray about it and discuss it with their clergy.

Brian Stewart

Feast of St Joseph of Nazareth 2025

PARISH NOTICES

Easter Vestry - 2025

Please note, the **Easter Vestry will be held on Sunday, 6th April at 1:00pm** after the morning service. There will be a sandwich lunch before the meeting.

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER 2025 ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, HIGH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 2AG



Palm Sunday, 13th April

9:30am Eucharist
10:50am Blessing of Palms,
Procession & Sung Eucharist
5:00pm Choral Eucharist

Tuesday, 15th April

1:00pm Eucharist

Wednesday, 16th April

10:30am Eucharist

Maundy Thursday, 17th April

1:00pm Eucharist
7:30pm Choral Eucharist, Stripping
of the Altar & Vigil

Good Friday, 18th April

10:30am Stations of the Cross
12:00 - 3:00pm The Three Hours
and Liturgy of the Cross
Conductor: The Rector
7:30pm Compline and Reproaches

Easter Eve, 19th April

7:30pm Easter Liturgy, Holy Baptism
Confirmation & First Eucharist of Easter
Preacher: The Bishop

Easter Day, 20th April

9:30am Eucharist
11:00am Festival Choral Eucharist
5:00pm Festival Choral Evensong

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PARISH NOTICES



I am writing to invite you to join us at a special service of thanksgiving to mark the 80th Anniversary of the founding of Christian Aid by the British and Irish churches at the end of the second world war in 1945.

The service will be held at **Belfast Cathedral** on **Friday 20th June 2025 at 7pm.**

With music from Renaissance Choir, Intercultural Worship and reflections from 80 years of the global impact of Christian Aid's work.

You are welcome to bring guests and please let your congregation know that they would be most welcome at this special event.

We will mark this 80th year by thanking God for the many individuals and congregations across Ireland who have made a significant contribution to tackling global poverty through their support for Christian Aid. As we look forward, we will recommit ourselves to striving for a future where everyone can enjoy a full life free from poverty.

I hope that you will be able to join us.

A SOLDIER OF GOD

by Paul McLaughlin



“It’s not really a punch”, says Michael, “More like a wee, friendly slap”.

Slap and friendly were two words that didn’t sit together well, even for a seven-year-old

like me, so I quizzed him some more.

“Why does the Bishop have to hit us at all? I asked, certain that Michael, who led our gang and had two years on me, would know.

“To make you a soldier, you eejit. You have to get slapped to be a soldier for God”.

There you had it. Not the greatest recruiting advert I’ve ever heard for an army, far less for a church, but a soldier I would be. Slapped and with a new name.

I rushed home from school that January day to tell my mother that I was about to make my Confirmation.

“Ah that’s wonderful, Paul. What’s that piece of paper for?”

“I have to put my new name on it, Mammy. My soldier’s name”.

She read it slowly, signing her name at the bottom and turning those intense blue eyes on me. There would be times in the future when that maternal beam would be far less friendly and much more that of the interrogator, but today I bathed in a warm glow of affection.

“Lovely. Now we can get you a strong name to go with your Granda’s”.

I had been born the day after her father Paul’s funeral and became the new man of that name in the family as he had requested during those few weeks of his last illness.

“My daddy’s brothers and uncles were all called after Popes”, she said, “ Names like Paul and Leo. We’ll have to get you one like those”.

I already had **Paul**, I didn’t much fancy **Leo**, but I bit my tongue before my mother did. I had hoped for **Joseph**, but I had hoped in vain.

“Popes it is, Paul. You can be either **Pius** or **Gregory**”.

I hadn’t heard of Hobson’s choice in that winter of 1960, but I would understand it pretty well when I came across it much later - from experience.

Other boys in my class had already said they would be **Patricks**, **Peters** and **Thomas**, I quickly realised, intuition I suppose in one so young, that **Pius** was never going to fit the bill in the years ahead and settled, reluctantly, for **Gregory**.

Schooldays were filled with hard sums, big words and memorising the catechism and a selection of prayers. Our teacher, a fierce man

called Agnew, with hair like Hitler and an approach to corporal punishment not dissimilar to that monster, had said that there would be an examination by the 'Moonsignor', as he called him, on the Friday before the ceremony.

Forty of us lined the walls of the main room in St Paul's primary school. It normally held three classes, was heated by two large open fires the size of furnaces, and we waited nervously while Monsignor Hendley walked along our rank smiling benignly.

He was white haired and old as I remember, but he smiled as he asked questions and I had begun to like him.....until. The boy beside me had recited the Hail Mary as if he had just written it himself and the Monsignor had congratulated him just as appropriately when, abruptly, I was asked to say the Apostles' Creed.

Somehow I stumbled slowly through the fierce length of it, from the 'I believe in God to 'the life everlasting Amen', I had also learned to pronounce 'omnipotent' for my catechism question and had a fair idea what it meant, but, by then, time and the little man in the biretta had moved on.

Nearly six inches of snow fell that Monday 15th February. My uncle Terry, who would be my sponsor, called for me promptly at 6.30 that evening and we trudged together to the bus stop, the old street lamps making yellow circular stains on the pure whiteness. Uncle Terry wore a huge tweed overcoat and galoshes that made his feet look like rubber canoes. I wore a navy blue duffle coat that covered my similarly blue serge suit, its short trousers followed by pink knees.

I looked up at the moon as we left the chapel after the Confirmation service. The episcopal 'slap' had turned out to be a gentle touch on the cheek from Bishop Daniel Mageean, Uncle Terry had sung out my papal name proudly among a chorus of **Johns, Gerards** and **Martins** and 'Moonsignor' Hendley's face had shone back at me approvingly.

I was a soldier of God with a new name, albeit one that I would choose never to publicise, but my younger brother would be a **Joseph** when his time came to serve.

COMPLINE

BY THE LATE BILLY ADAIR

During the summer period I had the pleasure of playing the organ for the Evening Services (ably assisted by my grandson Aaron, who was rather good at putting on the 32' Bombard!)

Apart from the first Sunday, the Office was Compline, which has everything pertaining to Liturgical worship - Psalm, Canticle, Versicles and responses, Scripture reading, Sermon, Office hymn and Prayers, three of which are incomparable gems, "Lighten our darkness," "Be present O merciful Lord" and "Look down O Lord from Thy heavenly throne", and I feel cheated when any one of these three is omitted. Compline also has the singular appeal of brevity.

This service takes us back to the 6th century when Benedict of Nursia (480-543) set up the Monastic Order called the Benedictines. He intended that each Monastery should be entirely separate, and the community should become the monks' family. The Order was noted for its piety and learning: they promoted art and literature and were responsible for many precious books long before printing was ever thought of. The Benedictine Order helped to preserve the traditions of Christianity throughout the Middle Ages.

The Chapel was the powerhouse of every Monastery, and worship was central to the life of a monk, so a strict routine of services was drawn up called the "Canonical Hours." The actual times and services varied, Ambrose in Milan had his set of hours, John Cassian in Gaul had another, and in the West, Benedict had his. In the Benedictine Order there were eight services each day - Nocturns, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and the last service of the day, Compline. And so, to bed.

In winter they went to bed at 5:15pm, and in summer at 8:00pm, but that made sense when they were up again at 2:00AM for Nocturns (our modern Matins). Also, when they prayed the Collect for Grace, thanking God "who had safely brought them to the *beginning of this day*", it made more sense at 2:00AM than when we say it at Matins at 11:00AM when the day is half over!

The Jews observed the 3rd, 6th and 9th hours for prayer, and in his Tract No 75 "On the Roman Breviary", Cardinal J.H. Newman cited Daniel who prayed three times a day (Daniel 6: 10): at the third hour the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost (Acts 2: 15): at the sixth hour "Peter went up to the housetop to pray" (Acts 10: 9): at the ninth hour "Peter and John went up together into the Temple, being the hour of

prayer" (Acts 3: 1). It was around these three special times that the Canonical Hours were arranged.

But I must stop as we are getting into deep liturgical waters and forgetting about Compline, which contains such memorable phrases as "Keep me as the apple of an eye", "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings", "Save us O Lord when waking and guard us when sleeping, that while we are awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace".

As a Sacramental Church are not we lucky to have a Liturgy which Includes Compline, and at the end of the day as we turn in, we can pray with those faithful monks of yesteryear,

"I will lay me down and take my rest,
For it is Thou Lord only, that
makest me dwell in safety".

THAT WAS THEN : IS IT NOT ALSO NOW?

DOUGLAS MCILDOON

Belfast – but without Saint George’s? A city centre without a parish reflecting in their fullness the worship, the values, the all-encompassing warmth and musical and liturgical culture open and welcoming to all. In short: Anglicanism at its best?

But it nearly happened. And that threat when it materialised had a seeming inexorability about it because it came from no external source. It came from the Church of Ireland itself.

Three quarters of a century ago in May 1952 your Select Vestry was obliged to publish an appeal to the wider Church of Ireland. It was in effect an appeal for a stay of execution. Below are the final paragraphs. A victory was won. The threat we faced then from within the Church of Ireland never again re-surfaced but that does not mean that we do not still face existential risks and challenges. Read on and decide what your opinion is.

“The Future: An Appeal

We trust that all we have said shows that St George’s fulfils, to say the very least, a useful purpose. WE are a united and happy congregation, striving as best we can to offer up a worthy service to Almighty God and to maintain a lively sense of Christian fellowship – a fellowship whose destruction we believe would be a disaster. We earnestly and seriously believe that in the future St George’s can be used not only as a place of worship but as a spearhead for the evangelisation of the multitudes in this city to whom the Christian faith is either unknown or a matter of indifference.

We are all of one mind on this: that the closing of St. George’s Church would be an irreparable loss not only to the Church of Ireland but to the City of Belfast. St. George’s stands for something more than a mere parish church. St George’s is an institution in the affections not only of the church-people, but of the citizens generally of Belfast – and all the dearer to Belfast where there few institutions with so long and honourable a history.

We confidently appeal to you to support the congregation’s endeavour to ensure the continuance of St. George’s as a separate parish.

Signed by Order of the Select Vestry,

W.A. Irvine Church Warden

Richard Garratt Church Warden

May 1952

The reasons behind this serious attempt to close the parish down are not clear. I heard from Canon Turner’s own lips that he was told by the Bishop on being appointed, that his commission was to close the

parish down. As the “appeal” amply demonstrates St George’s seemed to be a healthy parish. At the time average Sunday attendance was “substantially over” 350.

The Bank of England inflation calculator for the period between 1951 and the beginning of this year would indicate that the parish costs of £1791-12-3 (remember those pounds shillings and pence? I’d almost forgotten how to add and subtract them) would have been slightly under £52,000 in 2024 money. The parish income included its endowment income of £244-11-6 or £6,547 in today’s money. The rector’s stipend of £663 – worth just under £18,000 in today’s money – is about half the value of a current stipend though the expenditure on communion wine of five pounds and ten shillings is more than the amount for which Tony manages to provide us with all the wine needed for the sacraments! But clearly much less effort was either needed or required for the upkeep of a building which had miraculously survived the worst that the Luftwaffe had so recently inflicted on our city – though it had destroyed the school which stood where the parish hall now stands.

So overall it seems that running and maintaining Saint George’s now costs a great deal more than it did seventy five years ago. We have half the number of parishioners but our annual expenditure is, in real terms, four or five times greater. What we offer to our city is also arguably more “niche” or distinctive compared to the parish of nearly a century ago transiting as it then was from being a fairly normal type of an at least partly residential C of I parish to being an unapologetic beacon of Anglicanism for a sympathetic city wide community.

One paragraph tucked in at the end of appendix B of the Appeal did however catch my envious eye. I quote “It should be noted that monies received by the Parish from time to time by way of bequests have been invested in Trustees’ Securities, Representative Church Body or Church of Ireland Trustees, no part of the **capital** (my emphasis) being applied to parochial expenses”. Alas, this excellent farsighted principle fell into desuetude very early on. If it had not done so not only would the financial culture of the parish have been immensely more prudent, our endowment strengthened and our annual income would every year be many thousands of pounds a year greater.

The gift of the past is not to be a source of past glory, regret, nostalgia or repentance though some element of all those might be appropriate. Rather the gift should embolden us to see our past, our present and our future; the risks and challenges of our city centre presence and witness as a God given vocation which our predecessors assumed and bore witness to in their day. May we in ours.

POETS CORNER

WHEN I CONSIDER HOW MY LIGHT IS SPENT John Milton 1608 – 1674

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide;
“Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?”
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need
Either man’s work or His own gifts. Who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o’er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

Submitted by Geoffrey May



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MUSIC LIST April 2025

Sunday 6th April

Lent 5 Passion Sunday

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	84	
Setting		Mass for 5 voices - <i>Byrd</i>
Psalm		126
Gradual Hymn	63	
Offertory Hymn	294	
Communion Hymn		60
Motet		Civitas Sancti Tui - <i>Byrd</i>
Recessional Hymn	90	

5:00PM Choral Evensong

Parish Choir

Responses		Rose
Setting		Second Service - <i>Byrd</i>
Psalm		35: 1-9
Anthem		If ye love me - <i>Tallis</i>
Hymns	216, 74	

Sunday 13th April

Palm Sunday

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	509	
Setting		Missa Secunda - <i>Hassler</i>
Psalm		31: 9-16
Gradual Hymn	83	
Offertory Hymn	511	
Communion Hymn.		305
Anthem		Hosanna to the Son of David - <i>Weelkes</i>
Hymn	94	

5:00PM Choral Evensong

Choral Scholars

Responses		Hunter
Psalm		69: 1-20
Canticles		Fauxbourdons - <i>Arnold</i>
Anthem		Out of the Deep - <i>Tallis</i>
Hymn	200, 368	

MUSIC LIST April 2025

Thursday 17th April

8:00PM Choral Eucharist

Psalm 116: 1, 10-17
Setting Byrd Mass for 3 voices
Motet Ubi Caritas - *Durufle*

Maundy Thursday

Parish Men

Friday 18th April

12:00MD-3:00PM

Ex Ore Innocentium - *Ireland*
Stabat Mater - *Pergolesi*
Crucifixus - *Lotti* (with men at 1:00pm)
The Lamentations of Jeremiah - *Tallis*

Good Friday

Trebles

8:00PM Compline

Saturday April

7:30PM Easter Vigil Mass

Setting Mass in G - *Schubert*
Motet Dum transisset sabbatum - *Taverner*

Easter Eve

Chamber Choir

Sunday 20th April

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn **110**
Setting Missa Princeps Pacis - *Lloyd Webber*
Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24
Gradual Hymn **121**
Offertory Hymn **107**
Communion Hymn 305
Motet Amor vincit omnia - *arr Howe*
Recessional Hymn **104**

Easter Day

Parish choir

MUSIC LIST April 2025

Sunday 20th April

Easter Day

5:00PM Choral Evensong

Chamber Choir

Responses	Morley
Psalm	66: 1-11
Canticles	Brewer in D
Motet	Ubi caritas - <i>Gjeilo</i>
Hymn	105, 115

Sunday 27th April

Easter 2

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Visiting Choir

Processional Hymn	332
Introit	To thee O Lord - <i>Rachmaninov</i>
Setting	Sumsion in F
Psalm	118: 14-29
Gradual Hymn	369
Offertory Hymn	114
Communion Hymn	300
Anthem	Set me as a seal - <i>Clausen</i>
Recessional Hymn	113

5:00PM Choral Evensong

Visiting Choir

Responses	Spicer
Canticles	Stanford in Bb
Introit	Do not be afraid - <i>Stopford</i>
Psalm	150
Anthem	How beautiful upon the mountains - <i>Stainer</i>
Hymn	468, 498

CALENDAR April 2025

April 6	THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
9:30 am	Eucharist: The Rector
11:00 am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector Preacher: The Rector Readings: Isaiah 43: 16-21; Philippians 3: 4b-14; John 12: 1-8 Reader: <i>Warden</i> Intercessor: <i>Archdeacon Harte</i> Servers: <i>Agape Laoye, Mark Claney, Tony Merrick</i> Tea and Coffee: <i>Betty Flynn, Dot Lutton</i>
5:00 pm	Choral Evensong: The Rector Lessons: 2 Chronicles 35: 1-6, 10-16; Luke 22: 1-13 (<i>Fr Tom Layden</i>)
April 13	PALM SUNDAY
9:30 am	Eucharist: Rev'd Terence Dunlop
10:50 am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector Solemn Reading of Passion Gospel Readings: Isaiah 50: 4-9a; Philippians 2: 5-11 Readers: <i>Fr Tom Layden</i> Intercessor: <i>Anne McBride</i> Servers: <i>Omolewa Akinyele, Steven McQuitty, Jonny Calder</i> Tea and Coffee: <i>Mina Kelly, Richard Oldfield</i>
5:00 pm	Choral Evensong: The Rector Lessons: Isaiah 5: 1-7; Luke 20: 9-19 (<i>Janet Sandikli</i>)
April 15	
1:00pm	Eucharist: The Rector
April 16	
10:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
April 17	MAUNDY THURSDAY
1:00pm	Eucharist: The Rector
7:30pm	Choral Eucharist, Stripping of the Altar & Vigil: Preacher – The Rector
April 18	GOOD FRIDAY
10:30 am	Stations of the Cross: The Rector
12:00 – 3:00 pm	The Three Hours and Liturgy of the Cross: Conductor – The Rector
7:30 pm	Compline and Reproaches: The Rector

CALENDAR April 2025

April 19	EASTER EVE
7:30 pm	Easter Liturgy, Holy Baptism Confirmation & First Eucharist of Easter: The Bishop
April 20	EASTER DAY
9:30 am	Eucharist: The Rector
11:00 am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector Preacher: The Rector Readings: Acts 10: 34-43; 1 Corinthians 15: 19-26; John 20: 1-18 Reader: <i>Pam Tilson</i> Intercessor: <i>George Woodman</i> Servers: <i>Banji Akinyele, Jonny Calder, Mark Claney</i> Tea and Coffee: <i>Eleanor Maynard, Catherine Hunter</i>
5:00 pm	Choral Evensong: The Rector Lessons: Isaiah 43: 1-21; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11 (<i>Geoffrey May</i>)
April 27	2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER
9:30 am	Eucharist: The Rector
11:00 am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector Preacher: The Rector Readings: Acts 5: 27-32; Revelation 1: 4-8; John 20: 19-31 Reader: <i>Janice Carruthers</i> Intercessor: <i>Pam Tilson</i> Servers: <i>Steven McQuitty, Janet Sandikli, Tony Merrick</i> Tea and Coffee: <i>Valerie Roberts, Holly Ferres, Shanin Bahreini</i>
5:00 pm	Choral Evensong: The Rector Readings: Isaiah 52: 13 – 53: 12; Luke 24: 13-35 (<i>Eleanor Maynard</i>)

ENDPIECE by Jeffrey Johnston

GLADYS AYLWARD, PARLOUR MAID, MISSIONARY IN CHINA, WAR HERO.

When Gladys was 2 years in Yangcheng, she received an urgent message from the governor of the town prison. Come at once, it said, this is an order. When Gladys reached the prison, she found the governor in a total panic. He told her there was a riot in the prison, prisoners had got hold of a chopper, used in the kitchen and were likely to kill each other. He brought Gladys to the high entrance gates of the prison and already you could hear sounds of a riot going on inside.

Gladys asked him "What am I to do?"

He said, "You have a God inside you who will keep you safe from all harm."

At that moment Gladys realized that either she met this test of her Christian faith or her credibility in Yangcheng would be gone. So the governor opened the tall gate and let her through. Once inside, Gladys found herself in a long archway leading to the courtyard where the prisoners were. She could hear screams and shouts and soon could see a melee of prisoners fighting and chasing each other. Already a bloodied body lay motionless on the ground.

The man with the chopper was chasing another prisoner who dodged away from him leaving him just opposite to Gladys and a few feet away. At once she shouted, "Give that to me." He paused for several seconds, looking at her, then he meekly gave her the chopper.

At that there was a silence, so Gladys seized the initiative by shouting, "Come here and form a line."

This the prisoners did, so she followed up with, "This mess has been disgraceful. Who can tell me the reason for this riot?" When no one spoke, she said, "Choose for yourselves a spokesman who can tell me what your troubles are."

They formed a huddle and soon a tall prisoner emerged and came to Gladys. "My name is Feng," he said. "I will speak." He told her that the prisoners had been there for many years. They were only fed if friends sent in food to them, so some ate while others, starving, watched them. They never saw women, the mountains or flowers blooming. Each day they were allowed the chopper for an hour to cut up food but a dispute had arisen over its possession and many others had joined in so a general battle had ensued.

"What do you do all day?", Gladys asked. "Nothing" said Feng, "There

is no work here.”

At this point Gladys became aware that standing behind her was the governor and his staff. They had heard the quiet in the prison and felt it was safe enough to come in.

Gladys asked the governor “Why can you not find work for the prisoners? A loom for them to do weaving would be a start?” The governor, very relieved at the peace achieved, readily agreed to look into this. He also promised there would be no reprisals and the disturbance would be forgotten.

Gladys then told Feng that she would return to follow up that agreements would be kept. Feng thanked her.

Following this episode Gladys made regular visits to the prison during the rest of her time in Yangcheng, giving talks on e.g. hygiene as well as telling stories from the Bible.

Soon Gladys noticed that the traders on the main street that she passed each day, who before had ignored her, now showed her great respect. Later that week a colleague said to her. “The townspeople are calling you by a new name.” “What is that“, she asked. “Ai-weh-deh,” he said. It means, ‘the Virtuous One.’ That name stayed with Gladys during her time in China.

(To be continued.)

