

Christ Church Link

Autumn 2012 - Issue 10

We're an open-minded Christian community exploring our faith together

50p Where sold

Love, relationships, humanity and grace

Canon Angela Townshend

In the First Epistle of John we read, "God is Love and those who live in love live in God and God lives in them."

Before Rowan Williams became the Archbishop of Canterbury he had a very sympathetic attitude towards gay issues. In 1983 Williams wrote that orthodoxy should be seen "as a tool rather than an end in itself..." It is not something which stands still. Thus "old styles come under increasing strain, new speech needs to be generated".

The work he did at this time led him to be seen, amongst liberal Anglicans, as a significant figure in the effort to make the Anglican Church's moral stance on homosexuality more accepting.

Rowan Williams wrote *The Body's Grace*, a lecture and essay on the topic of Christian theology and sexuality in 1989. In the conclusion of this address, he wrote:

"In a church that accepts the legitimacy of contraception, the absolute condemnation of same-sex relations of intimacy must rely either on an abstract fundamentalist deployment of a number of very ambiguous biblical texts, or on a problematic and nonscriptural theory about natural complementarity, applied narrowly and crudely to physical differentiation without regard to psychological structures."

Since he became Archbishop of Canterbury he has changed his public position and become much more conservative in what he has said and written about gay issues.

The Very Reverend Dr Jeffrey John (Dean of St Albans) wrote in the new preface to his book, *Permanent, Faithful, Stable*: "Since then the Church's line on homosexuality has continued to harden" he predicted "when civil gay marriage becomes possible the Church will initially continue to refuse to accept it, but will call for the continued availability of Civil Partnerships so that it can offer a

second best while reserving the term marriage for heterosexuals."

The Archbishop of Canterbury has had to take a harder line because of the parts of the Anglican Communion which take the Bible literally. On the issue of gay relationships the story of Sodom and Gomorrah has been understood as a punishment for homosexuality, so much so that our word 'sodomy' comes from that story. But the story contains no reference to homosexuality whatsoever.

Texts from Leviticus also cause controversy:

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination."

"If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them,"

Some read these verses literally.

For example in Uganda a private member's bill was submitted by MP David Bahati in October 2009. The bill proposes that the punishment for homosexual acts should be increased from up to 14 years (in present law) to the death penalty for 'aggravated' homosexual acts and life imprisonment for straightforward homosexual acts. It has been discussed and adjourned but Bahati re-introduced the bill in February this year.

If we take everything in the Old Testament literally then we will find ourselves in trouble over all sorts of issues. (Just read Leviticus for yourself if you want to know some of the detail of what you may and may not do. For example, when did you last eat pork or sit in a chair that has been sat in by a menstruating woman? When did you wear clothes made of more than one type of fibre or cut your hair or beard?) [*Have a look online for the excellent clip from the West Wing on this subject "West Wing" and Leviticus should find it - Eds*]

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In the New Testament many people quote what Paul says in Romans 1:

“Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”

and think that if individuals behave in this way they are damned. Paul didn't write only about homosexual acts, he wrote a great deal more about women. He wrote that women should cover their heads and be silent in church, they should not be allowed to have authority and that women will be saved through childbirth. Do we believe all of this? And what about the gospels? Jesus condemned divorce and said that any one marrying after divorce was committing adultery! It is unambiguous. We now marry those 'adulterers' in church! Nowhere in scripture is homosexuality so authoritatively denounced as divorce and remarriage.

The church is so hung up on matters of sexuality, and of insisting on celibacy between gay couples (which is in itself both an insult and an unwarranted interference), that it is missing its much greater mission in the world and is often seen as out of touch and a laughing stock.

So what should our position be over homosexual relationships and marriage?

People have often asked me what I think about gay relationships. My reply has been:

“I am in a stable and loving relationship in my marriage, a relationship in which I can express my love sexually. Who am I to tell someone else who is in a stable and loving relationship that they cannot express that love in a sexual way?”

In a similar way, how can we deny a couple, who wish to spend the rest of their lives, caring for and loving each other, the sacrament of marriage?

“God is Love and those who live in love live in God and God lives in them.”

The Local Ministry Group away-weekend: Hebron Hall

Margaret Heath and Emma, Isaac and Ben Elliott

Emma sets the scene: We were heading to an austere brick building in the suburbs of Cardiff. The weather forecast was dreadful and with no option for alcoholic refreshment throughout the weekend, expectations were at rock bottom. I was wrong. (There, I said it, I was wrong.) The excellent company more than made up for anything else lacking. Margaret Heath continues:

Philip Hawthorn and Martin Poole devised stimulating and exciting sessions on the theme "Belong". There was plenty of symbolism and movement; you should have heard us shouting, "YOU CAN'T COME IN", to illustrate exclusiveness or seen us anointing ourselves with delicious smelling chrisom oil. A team of three from Pulse Children's and Youth Ministries laid on a lively programme for the very many younger ones. Isaac tells us more:

We went to Hebron Hall for a big party with Revd Phillip and people from St Stephen's & St Mary's. I spent most of my time in the sports room which was really good because I liked playing on the table tennis table. There was also snooker and a sports hall, hard tennis court and a swimming pool. We went to all the sports facilities. During the day, there was a group for children which was really fun. We painted plates and learned a song and dance called "I can do anything". The song is about how God helps us to do everything.

Emma adds: the excellent children's sessions were appreciated by children and their parents alike. There were some interesting and thought provoking moments in the Sunday service and it was great to spend time with people from our LMG churches as well as to get to know those of us from Christ Church a little better. The extra tennis practice sessions worked wonders too!

Finally, Ben explains the highlight of the weekend for him: When we went to Hebron Hall there were bunk beds. I slept on the top bunk for the first night and the bottom bunk on the second night.

The Christ Church contingent was small but enthusiastic and their contribution was highly valued, in particular Mark kept the music flowing. We look forward to more joint events with our LMG partners in the coming year.



A day trip with a difference

Rev. Preb. Angela Berners-Wilson

Andrew and I love Greece – we had our honeymoon on Crete, and have been back many times. We even belong to the North Wilts Grecophile club. So, despite the uncertain political situation, austerity measures, and dire warnings in the press about impending Greek bankruptcy, we deliberately booked this summer's holiday in Corfu, reasoning that the Greeks needed our euros more than most this year.

I had never been to Corfu, Andrew had done a day trip there in the early 1970's. We stayed in a perfectly delightful little fishing village, Kalami, on the north east coast. There were only 3 tavernas, and 3 more round the next bay, accessed via a free water taxi to take you round the headland, which was quite walkable, if steep, in the day, but not to be contemplated in the dark after a bottle of retsina. The only real sign of the 'austerity measures' was that the grass verges along the main road had not been cut – no-one could afford to pay for this to be done. But as that was an added fire hazard in the blissful heat, helicopters regularly flew over the island to check for fires. (Wouldn't that cost more than paying grass cutters?!) And there were not too many tourists. On our second night there was a power cut – not an unusual phenomena in Greece, but here it meant that the water pump stopped, so *no* water to clean our teeth that night, nor to flush the loo - yikes! Was this going to continue all our holiday? Fortunately not, the next morning we had running water in the taps, and from then on I always kept a large jug of tap water in the fridge.



When we had the next power cut, Panos our apartment owner put a large 5 litre bottle outside everyone's front door, with a scrap of paper saying "not for drink, for bathroom". It really made one appreciate the drinkable running water that we take for granted in our taps in the UK.

Our apartment looked across the straight to Albania, less than 2 kilometres away, so we decided to visit it! We did an amazing day trip, taking the ferry from Corfu town to Saranda, from whence we mounted a midi coach and drove on some truly terrible roads, to the UNESCO world heritage medieval city of

GIrokastro. En route we saw plenty of the 700 nuclear bunkers that are a very visible reminder of the communist past of that country. After looking round the armaments museum Castle, and then going to Enja Hova's (former communist dictator) parents house which is now a fascinating cultural museum of local life, we repaired to a hotel for lunch – donkey steak, or if it was beef the cow was well past its sell by date! We then visited a national park for a welcome paddle in Blue Eye springs – 700,000 litres of water come up from the ground every hour. Our guide for the day was a delightful retired teacher who was very open about how the communist experiment had failed. He was desperate to encourage us to come to Albania on our next holiday.

It was a bit like going back to the 1950's, the whole country has very little infrastructure, but the complete lack of any neon lights or advertising once we had left the Port was a welcome change. It was a fascinating day, and we were very glad to have been.

News from the Trustees

As readers will know, Christ Church's unusual status means that it is our body of trustees who have much of the responsibility for keeping the church on an even keel. They have been very busy over the last two years both finding a new vicar and dealing with the end of the school building lease, which proved rather more complicated than would have been wished. But now there is a real opportunity to look forward. We have a new tenant for the top floor of the school building (now renamed Christ Church Mews). At the last meeting on 9th September, there were initial discussions about handing more financial responsibility to church council (more details will follow soon). Canon Angela is also beginning a process of leading us in discussions about both the way we use our building and our pattern of worship.

Please pray for the trustees (you can check who they are on the website if you want to remember them by name) as they discern the best way to utilise our assets and maintain the church as a worshipping community.

TRAIDCRAFT - fighting poverty through trade

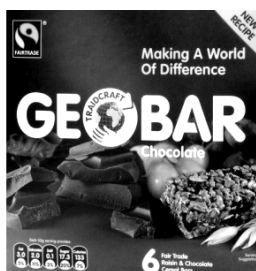
Rebekah Cunningham

I'm a newcomer to Christ Church, having moved to Bath six months ago but have been made very welcome. I've been selling Traidcraft at previous churches for many years, so was very pleased to be asked to run one at Christ Church. Thank you for supporting the new stall so enthusiastically: it has got off to a good start! Many of you will be aware of the work Traidcraft do – I know you have had a Traidcraft stall at Christ Church in the past. For those of you who don't know, let me tell you a little about the organization.



TRAIDCRAFT
Fighting poverty through trade

Traidcraft was established in 1979 as a Christian response to poverty, and combines a trading company and a development charity. Its mission is to fight poverty through trade, by practising and promoting approaches to trade that help poor people in developing countries transform their lives. It builds lasting relationships with producers, supports people to trade out of poverty and works to bring about trade justice. You can find out more on www.traidcraft.co.uk



You may feel it's preferable to buy your fair trade groceries from supermarkets to encourage them to stock more fair trade products, and indeed supermarket sales and variety of products stocked have steadily risen over the years in response to customer demand. But it's vitally important to support organizations like Traidcraft, very small in comparison to Tesco and Sainsbury's, as its main aim is not its own profit but to help people out of poverty.

The stall is at church on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. Please feel free to take a catalogue: there are new autumn ones available now, looking ahead to Christmas with cards and gift ideas, Christmas cakes and puddings. You can also search online on www.traidcraftshop.co.uk If you would like to order anything I can get it for you without postage and packing costs. Please let me know if there's anything you would like to have regularly available. If anyone would be willing to help out occasionally I would really appreciate it – it's very straightforward. My contact details are: tel: 01225 317329 email: rebekah.spanner@care4free.net

Father Brian Retires

Laurie Coombs

With sadness we at St. Mary's Roman Catholic church have learnt that our much-loved parish priest, Father Brian, is at last retiring. He will not be moving far and will live at St. John's Hospital in the centre of town.

His successor, Monsignor Canon Jeremy Rigden joined us in early September and we are sure he will be a worthy successor. He was formerly parish priest of the Church of the Holy Family, Swindon, and is also a Vicar General of the Clifton Diocese.

Father Brian has soldiered on for years despite his severe health problems and we are deeply grateful to him for all he has done for us in the parish. Over the years he has become well known to many of our friends at Christ Church and I was sure you would wish to know of his retirement.

[Fr Brian was parish priest of St. Mary's for 21 years and a parishioner for an even more impressive 62 years! We're sure everyone at Christ Church wishes him well in his retirement. - Eds]

Flapjack for Freshers!

We just have space to squeeze in the annual

appeal for 1 inch squares of flapjack for the new students of Bath Spa University and the University of Bath. The Bath Deanery Mothers' Union will be at the Freshers' Fairs for both universities (26th and 28th September) giving out copies of their cookbook and offering a warm welcome to students arriving in Bath for their first year of study. Please let Margaret Burrows know if you can contribute to the required flapjack mountain and bring it to church on Sunday 23rd September.

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Churches Together in Bath

Sylvia Ayers

The Churches Together in Bath committee met as we were going to press with the Summer edition of *Christ Church Link*, so here is the full report of the meeting which occurred on 19th June 2012.

The “service listing” leaflet has now been completed, and when the finance is settled, it will be printed and circulated. Rev. Kieran Bourne has worked very hard on this project, and it is keenly anticipated.

The Executive have decided that because attendances are falling, there will be no 2013 Women’s World Day of Prayer service in central Bath, as many churches now organise one in their own area.

The original glass in the window at Haycombe Cemetery has now gone, and has been replaced (we hope on a temporary basis) with masking tape. It has been suggested that a “Bethlehem wood” cross be hung on wires in front of the plain glass window, although if mourners desired its removal, it would require a long ladder to get it down!



Rev. David Prothero has taken up a new post as Chaplain of St. Mary Magdalene, in Holloway. A bible was presented to him at his retirement service, and as the chapel is still in the central zone, he may well feel he can continue to attend our meetings.

A merger of Age Concern and Help the Aged was launched at St. Michael’s Without on April 25th. The new organisation is proving a most dynamic force with many events planned.

The night shelter in Manvers Street is to be renovated, giving separate male and female accommodation. While this is being carried out, visitors will be housed in the church basement for about a year.

The Salvation Army citadel will open again in September, when all their renovations will be complete. Owing to safety concerns, their distinctive “Blood and Thunder” sign has had to be moved inside the building.

It was with sadness that the meeting said “goodbye” to Fred and Caroline Bovett, from the now closed Holy Trinity, Queen Square. They have recently moved to worship at Corston village church and will therefore no longer attend the central zone meetings. They are getting very involved in their new area and still giving generously of their time as before.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 11th October at St Mary’s Bathwick and will take the form of a Chairman’s Evening. The “business” part of the meeting will be carried out as briefly as possible, and the meeting will then be addressed by Gabrielle Grace, the Somerset Churches Together Ecumenical Officer. Gabrielle took up this post in September 2011 and has a wealth of experience in working with people from across the Christian traditions. The idea behind this departure from the normal programme, is to highlight and address the issue of generally low levels of attendance at the meetings from the central area churches, including limited clergy attendance at most meetings.

Persecution to the Papacy

Home Group Autumn programme

This term the Home Group will be taking a whistle-stop tour through church history, taking a look at some of the situations faced by Christians over the last 2000 years and thinking about what they can teach us today. As Winston Churchill said (according to Google!), those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it!

Meetings will be held on alternate Thursday evenings, beginning on 20th September. They run from approximately 7:30pm to 9pm and will be held at the home of Matthew and Sarah Jones: 77 Brookfield Park, Weston, Bath, BA1 4JJ. There are more details of meeting dates and topics on the church website or in leaflets at the back of church.

Say it with flowers

Angela Soboslay

If you would like to have flowers arranged for an anniversary such as a wedding, birthday, baptism or to remember a loved one who is no longer with us at their years mind, please have a chat with me after a service.

Or perhaps you have untapped talents as a flower arranger (or you would like to learn)? If you would be interested in joining the team who arrange the flowers for the alter and the Lady Chapel, just let me know: new arrangers always welcome!



Warm thanks

Margaret and Cliff Burrows.



August is traditionally a time for rest and relaxation. A time to visit new places and renew acquaintances. This year we found a new way when we spent the month as nomads while our home was rescued from subsidence and the effects of asbestos.

When we finally recovered our home from the builders, we were faced with the chaos of books and furniture that needed to be re-ordered.

Thanks to generous support from many in the congregation the process was less daunting than anticipated. Christ Church has a tradition of service to the community; we were grateful recipients of that caring.

From the editors' laptop

Matthew and Sarah Jones



As we have mentioned before, September often feels like a time of new beginnings. This autumn, we are going to be challenged to review our contributions to the life of Christ Church. There are many different

ways people give to the church community: both the time and money that people donate are vital in keeping Christ Church alive. It is difficult for a church to ask for more from its congregation, we all understand that there are increasing pressures on the time and financial resources of every household.

We are not called to assess anyone else's contribution but our own and we must do this with careful thought and sincere prayer.

In assessing our own contributions to church life, we have decided that next year we will be

standing down from the editorship of *Christ Church Link*. Our final edition will be Summer 2013, marking three years at the helm of the publication.

If you would be interested in picking up the metaphorical blue-pencil and becoming editor, then please have a chat to with us (without obligation). You don't have to maintain the publication as it is. If you want to change things, you are free to do so! We know that there are lots of people in the congregation who have the

skills to take on this role, so please don't be shy in stepping forward.

Many thanks for your continued support and submission of articles, it is great to hear from you all and we think you'll agree this

edition is enhanced by the contributions from a wide variety of writers. We wish you all a fruitful and abundant autumn.

"Examine your heart and bless others as God has so richly blessed you by acts of generosity, in thankfulness."

The deadline for articles for the Winter edition is

Sunday 11th November 2012

This gives us time to have an edition ready for Advent Sunday

Coming up at Christ Church

Sunday 30th September 10am	Harvest Festival followed by Harvest Lunch
Sunday 7th October 4:30pm	Choral Evensong
Sunday 4th November 4:30pm	Choral Evensong for All Souls
Sunday 25th November 10am	Sung Eucharist for Christ the King This is the Sunday we treat as our patronal festival, so they'll be lots of exciting music and a visiting preacher
Sunday 2nd December 6:30pm	Advent Carol Service

Who's who at Christ Church

Priest-in-charge	Canon Angela Townshend 01225 464194 angela.townshend@christchurchbath.org	Junior Church Laity rotas	Sarah Cade
Supporting clergy	Rev'd Cliff Burrows Preb Angela Berners-Wilson	Organist	David Wrigley 01761 439355
Reader Chair of Trustees Director of Music	Mark Elliott 01225 445360 mark.elliott@christchurchbath.org	Pastoral care coordinator	Keri Chivers 01225 421265 keri.chivers@christchurchbath.org
Churchwarden	Malcolm Wall 01225 864933 malcolm.wall@christchurchbath.org	Magazine editors and publicity coordination	Matthew & Sarah Jones 01225 443284 sarah.jones@christchurchbath.org
Churchwarden Chair of Church Council Home group leader	Lewis Boyd 01225 329190 lewis.boyd@christchurchbath.org	Concert bookings Weekly notice sheet	Judith Bishop 01225 869409 concerts@christchurchbath.org notices@christchurchbath.org
Verger	Angela Soboslay 01225 333297	USPG	Adrian Pegg 01225 858809
Treasurer	David Bishop 01225 869409 david.bishop@christchurchbath.org	Mothers' Union	Margaret Burrows 01225 334743
Secretary to Church Council	Brenda Wall 01225 864933	CTB	Sylvia Ayers 01225 463976 Margaret Heath 01225 428272
Deanery Synod	Morny Davison Andrew Sillett Brenda Wall	Mothers' Union Mission to Seafarers	Sylvia Ayers 01225 463976

Regular Sunday Services

- 8am Holy Communion using the text from the Book of Common Prayer.
On the second and fourth Sunday of every month
- 10am Sung Eucharist
With Junior Church activities for children and young people
- 4:30pm Choral Evensong
Usually the first Sunday of every month but see website or notice board for details

The church also aims to be a place of spiritual welcome when marking particular points in life's journey. If you would like to discuss holding a service of marriage, baptism or a funeral here, please use the details below to contact us.

About Christ Church

Christ Church has an unusual history out of which has developed a distinctive ministry. It was built at the end of the 18th century, founded by socially concerned clergy & lay people for those excluded from worship through the system of pew rents. It was probably the first church at that time to provide seating free of charge. Early supporters included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the great evangelical and campaigner against slavery, William Wilberforce and Martin Stafford Smith, godfather of John Keble, a founder of the Oxford Movement.

It is not a parish church and does not have a paid vicar. This has led to the development of a shared ministry where clergy and laity both make important contributions to worship and church life.

Christ Church today is part of the Anglican diocese of Bath and Wells, although it still sits outside the normal parish system. We see ourselves as a traditional and liberal Anglican church. Worship is led by our clergy, and music is provided by our robed choir and organist. There are separate activities for children in Junior Church groups.

As well as worship on a Sunday morning, there are many other activities going on in our community. We support the Genesis Sunday Centre and have our own community café. The musical tradition of the church continues to thrive and we have an active choir. Our ecumenical home group provides a space for exploration and discussion of faith in an open and non-judgmental setting.

If you are considering whether Christ Church is a place where you would feel comfortable in exploring the Christian faith, we would be delighted to welcome you, please come along to a service or get in touch with us (see below). If you feel you are looking for a different Christian community we wish you well with God's blessing and we would be happy to tell you of other churches in the area.

How to find or contact us



Christ Church
Julian Road
Bath
BA1 2RH

Telephone: 01225 338869 (answer phone)

Email: admin@christchurchbath.org

Website: www.christchurchbath.org

