

Christ Church Link

Summer 2012 – Issue 9

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

50p Where sold

Women Bishops

Canon Angela Townshend



As a group of teenagers at church we used to sing:

“Like a mighty tortoise moves the church of God, brothers (or should it be ‘sisters’) we are treading where we’ve always trod.”

About five years ago, I was invited along with about 20 other women, the majority being clergy in senior positions, to a meeting of all the Bishops of the Church of England. We stayed for 24 hours, attended a lecture from a Roman Catholic Cardinal and took part in group meetings with the Bishops where the subject was ‘Women Bishops’.

As we sat and shared our meals, and over drinks in the evening, several of the bishops said how refreshing it was to have women present in their debates. After that meeting I hoped that by now we might have seen the first woman bishop appointed in the Church of England.

“Like a mighty tortoise!” I was on General Synod when the first votes on women bishops was made in 2005 and 2006 but since then it seems we have been moving like a very elderly tortoise!

The Measure

The women and most men who support female bishops would like to see a single clause measure – that is the simplest of all possibilities, where women would be equal with their male bishop colleagues. This was not to be so. It was put forward that a ‘Code of Practice’ should be in place. This would allow churches, who could not accept the authority of a female bishop, to be able to ask their female bishop to offer a male bishop in her stead.

Forty two out of forty four dioceses voted in favour of the measure with a code of practice.

This seems to me, and others who wish to see the ordination of women as bishops to be an overwhelming, democratic, ‘YES’.

From a local perspective, Bath and Wells Diocesan Synod on Saturday 29th October 2011 approved Women Bishop’s legislation. Laity 55 :10; Clergy 52:9 ; Bishops 2:0.

Bishops’ Amendments

The Bishops at another of their meetings recently amended the draft measure adding two clauses. A report from WATCH (Women and the Church) stated, “We fully understand that the intention of the House of Bishops was only to make changes to the Measure that would mean that it would command a wider degree of support and welcome. However, it is clear to us that their decisions have had the opposite effect, and that the Measure is at present much less welcome to many who had previously supported it.”

The bishops have made changes that seem to have undone the mandate from the dioceses and undermined confidence in the Measure. The House of Bishops has unwittingly destabilised the process and made the eventual outcome very uncertain indeed.

WATCH’s principle concerns over the Bishops’ amendment are as follows:

“i) It legitimates negative theologies about women and expects women to live with permanent institutional uncertainty about their orders. This is bad for women and bad for the Church.

ii) It opens the way for parishes to require a bishop and priest in accordance with their theological convictions. This is a new and unwelcome departure for our Church that will lead to conflict and increasing fragmentation.”

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I believe this means that a parish can require that the male bishop who works with them has had no sacramental relationship with a woman priest or bishop. This smacks of a doctrine of taint. It changes from the pastoral power of the diocesan bishop to the exercise of legal duty. Living by the law rather than by grace?

Women Bishops amendments: the actual texts

"The selection of male bishops or male priests the exercise of ministry by whom is consistent with the theological convictions as to the consecration or ordination of women on grounds of which parochial church councils have issued Letters of Request under section 3."

"Where a male bishop exercises episcopal ministry in a diocese by way of delegation in accordance with arrangements contained in a scheme made under section 2—

- (a) the legal authority which he has by virtue of such delegation does not affect, and is distinct from, the authority to exercise the functions of the office of bishop which that bishop has by virtue of his holy orders; and
- (b) any such delegation shall not be taken as divesting the bishop of the diocese of any of his or her authority or functions."

Church and Society

At the moment the Church is the losing more and more respect from the general population. Most people accept the equality of all people, whether it is race, creed, sexuality or gender and they cannot understand why the Church spends so much time arguing about it when it could direct time, energy and money to some of the real problems of our country and our world.

If I were still on the General Synod I would vote against the proposal as it stands with the Bishops' amendment as it legalises inequality.

We should not vote for women bishops at any price. We need a church that has equality at its centre.

St Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Galatians:

"...for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Amen

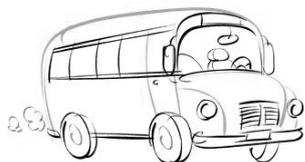
And so we pray:

God of love, truth and impartiality,
give to all who are involved in the July
meeting of the General Synod
wisdom, patience, clarity and hope for a
Church which views all people,
no matter what their race, gender or
sexuality with equality and love.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Wheels Appeal 2012

Margaret Burrows

Over the last few weeks, the Christ Church branch of the Mothers' Union have been collecting money for the Wheels Appeal. The money raised will go towards 'travel grants' for Mothers' Union Community Development Co-ordinators, who often have to travel great distances to access isolated families and communities to offer training and advice on income-generating projects and basic health and nutrition programmes.



Putting fuel in the tank or paying bus fares may not seem as rewarding as funding a village education programme, but without it the Mothers' Union simply couldn't be there to help! Thanks to the money raised by the appeal, hundreds of Community Development Co-ordinators all over the world can enable communities to help themselves.

Read more about the appeal online: <http://www.themothersunion.org/wheelsappeal.aspx>

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

www.themothersunion.org

Simply Theology?

Jayne Trickett

The term 'simple theology' was coined during one of our discussions at a Lent Group meeting. We discussed many 'big topics' such as freedom, action, suffering and death, inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's poem; 'Stations on the way to freedom'. I've been pondering over whether there can be such a thing as 'simple theology', so this short piece is a few of my thoughts about this.

As you can imagine, discussing topics such as these in an hour and a half was tricky, with lots to be said and shared as different angles of each topic were considered. I personally find it very encouraging to consider topics like these in a group and to share different opinions, and I certainly got a lot out of the Lent course.



An interesting point that came out of the course was: can topics like these be talked about in simple terms? Does understanding about fundamental issues concerning what it means to be a human person have to be philosophical, theological and intellectual in nature?

I certainly don't wish to undermine the intellectual study of scripture and philosophy. Theologians and philosophers over the centuries have shaped our thinking as Christians and in conjunction with the Holy Spirit have led us to the faith which we share as a Church and that we proclaim in the creed Sunday by Sunday. We need to understand intellectual reasoning as a gift from God, a pillar of the three on which the faith of the Church of England is based, alongside scripture and tradition.

Indeed, as a side note, or to simply complicate matters; our understanding of scripture and tradition is bound up in how we understand people. I was very privileged to attend a conference as a student member of the British Association of Christians in Psychology at a theological college in Oxford. Our keynote speaker Rev Dr Joanna Collicutt discussed how psychology is important in understanding the history and intention of the author of a biblical text and the later reception and interpretation of the text with regard to the readers' own history and experience.

Having amalgamated three potential intellectual disciplines into the discussion of 'big topics', I'll stop and take a more reductionist approach:

"To be free is to be in love, is to be in the truth of God. The one who loves because made free by the truth of God, is the most revolutionary person on earth."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1932

The key word is 'love'. Love is universal and understood by all, understood in non-intellectual terms, in particular by children and in individuals with learning disabilities. Our freedom and the truth of God which Bonhoeffer talks of is bound up in love; God's love for us that he showed in his son Jesus Christ. Maybe if we can grasp onto this reality; that God loves us, then the complexity of intellectual questioning becomes redundant, that the understanding of God loving us is sufficient for us in the face of topics such as death and suffering. After all, love is unchanging, unfettering and universal, as characterised by an extract from Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

"Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

I Corinthians 13: 8-13, ESVUK

So in answer to whether such a thing as 'simple theology' can exist, then the answer is yes it can, if our simple theology is to be that of God's love.

Pier Paolo Pasolini: The Gospel According to Saint Matthew **What happened when an atheist, Marxist Italian poet filmed one of the Gospels?** **Virginia Knight**

A few years ago Mel Gibson's film of the Passion stirred up a great deal of controversy while also attracting huge audiences. Recently I watched an earlier film of the life of Jesus, made by Pasolini in 1964 in response to an appeal by the Pope for creative artists to engage with religious subjects.

The film follows St. Matthew's Gospel faithfully, rather than combining incidents recorded in different Gospels. The dialogue is in Italian, but that should not put anyone off because the words are all taken from the Bible. The soundtrack is often expressively used to fill some of the gaps

which this leaves; as well as Bach and Mozart, it includes spirituals and Russian and Greek folk music.



Pasolini reacted against the popular lavishly-styled 'sword and sandal' films set in the ancient world. He filmed in black and white, sometimes with a hand-held camera. Like a director of a community Passion play, he used many amateur actors, including casting his mother as Mary the mother of the adult Jesus. Southern Italy supplied the bleak, rocky locations, and the costumes and settings evoke the world of the Gospels without being slavishly faithful.

Pasolini's Jesus is a firebrand orator who is especially dear to children and the poor and outcast. We see more of Jesus the teacher than the worker of miracles, but he is not reduced to a would-be political revolutionary. Rather, he is, like Pasolini himself, someone who uses language to reveal deeper truths, and the miraculous elements of the story are simply included in a matter-of-fact way.

So this film is very far from being a devotional tract on celluloid. Like many Italian films it moves at a reflective pace but repays attentive viewing with its beautifully composed settings and moving performances.

This film is a little tricky to find on sale online in its original form (many copies are of an abridged, coloured version) but 'On the Video Front' (7 Terrace Walk, BAI 1LN) has a copy which can be rented.

Flower Festival at Langridge Church

21 and 22 July, 10:30am to 5pm



The congregation of Langridge Church have invited us to join them in celebrating their Patronal Festival. This isolated and ancient little church, nestling in the beautiful Swainswick Valley north of Bath, will be celebrating the Festival of St. Mary Magdalene with a Festival of Flowers inspired by poems by local farmer, John Osborne, who has farmed in Weston, Bath all his life. Refreshments and parking will be available.



Directions: via Swainswick village and 1.5 miles towards Tadwick *or* opposite the entrance to Bath Racecourse, Lansdown 1 mile down Langridge Lane, BAI 8AJ.

For the whole world we are born...

Peter Maurice, Bishop of Taunton



My father used to buy the Daily Telegraph primarily for the crossword and the obituaries – I suspect he was not alone! I continue to buy the Church Times for similar reasons, although it is not the crosswords that attract me, but the monthly diary column of a former Rector of Hackney, John Pridmore, who has a wonderful gift of connecting the things of heaven with the things of the earth!

However, at the beginning of May it was not the diary column that grabbed my attention but the obituary written for Canon Eric James, a priest who I came to admire deeply while I was a vicar in South London. I suspect that throughout our lives we come across people who walk a little way with us on our journey of faith and provide the necessary support and encouragement for us during that time so that we can continue our adventure with God.

Eric was one such person. I had gone from leafy suburbia to be a Vicar in South London, in the heart of the Surrey Docks, with precious little experience of what it meant to live in the Inner City, let alone to be a priest in the 'Inner City.' Eric was born and brought up in Dagenham, and although he had spent time as a college chaplain in Cambridge his heart was with and for those who lived in the urban communities, most of whom had long been out of touch with the church. In this context he sought to live the Christian Gospel, experimenting with new forms of worship and group meetings in flats, and exercising his pastoral skills in ways long remembered by the local population

He was, as some of you may remember, one of the architects of 'Faith in the City', a report that had a profound impact on church and society in recession hit Britain in the 1980's. It gave huge encouragement to church communities, small and large, to engage with the issues affecting their communities and so make a difference to the lives of some of the poorest and most disadvantaged people.

Eric was someone who believed deeply in a gospel that could and should change lives, change churches and change communities and I continue to be deeply grateful for his wisdom and his inspiration. Amongst his writings was the biography of another radical Christian thinker, Bishop John Robinson. Bishop John had come from a long line of clerics, and it was the family motto which had been instilled in him from his earliest years that connect both Eric and John and remain an inspiration to my own Christian witness – 'not for ourselves alone but for the whole world are we born.' Only by this maxim can we hope to transform the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our God.'

The Praying Hand

Margaret Silver

It can be difficult to know how to pray. Here's an approach which uses your hand and fingers as a reminder:

The whole hand: praise and thank God for all he has made and done

Thumb: closest to you when hands are put together for prayer. Pray for those nearest to you, your family and friends.

Index finger: pray for those who try to point people to God: church leaders, clergy, evangelists, youth workers, teachers, missionaries.

Middle finger: your biggest finger. Pray for those in authority in this country and throughout the world.

Fourth finger: your weakest finger. Pray for the disabled, bereaved, ill, hungry, ill-treated, needy, persecuted, prisoners.

Little finger: pray for yourself.



This is a lovely prayer to pray with children and you may have heard Sarah Cade (our Junior Church leader) use it in previous family services - Ed.

Our public profile

Matthew and Sarah Jones

Once again may we extend our warm thanks to all those who helped distribute postcards giving details of our Easter services. This simple way of keeping in touch with our local community is so important and now the task is shared between many, it is very much easier.

We also hope you enjoyed our contribution to the BBC's 'People's Passion' project. As well as the music itself, it was wonderful to see our church featured twice on BBC Radio Bristol and on the Points West television news bulletin!

Our efforts to make ourselves known in our community continue with plans for new external noticeboards in the coming months, as some of those who walk past our building don't even realise it is a church, let alone an active Christian community! If you have any ideas about other ways we can publicise Christ Church, we'd be delighted to hear from you.



Finding companionship over tea and cake

Helen Ker

Are you (or someone you know) at a loose end and feeling a bit isolated on a Sunday afternoon? Fancy tea, cake and a chat? We are launching a second 'Contact the Elderly' group in the Bath area covering the city / surrounding villages.

Contact the Elderly is a national charity which monthly organises free Sunday afternoon tea parties for small groups of older people (aged 75+) who live alone, and volunteers within their local community, offering a regular and vital friendship link every month. The first Bath group has been running successfully for over 20 years.

Each older person is collected from their home by a volunteer driver and taken to a volunteer host's home or local community space for the afternoon. The group is warmly welcomed by a different host each month, but the drivers remain the same which means that over the months and years, acquaintances turn into friends and loneliness is replaced by companionship.

Our tea parties are a real lifeline of friendship, and give both guests and volunteers something to look forward to each month. If you would like to find out more about joining as a welcome guest please do get in touch with me on 0117 960 9606 or helen.ker@contact-the-elderly.org.uk

We are also looking for a few more hosts: families, couples or individuals who can hold a tea party just once or twice a year – you just need a downstairs toilet and no more than 3 steps to your home. It's a great excuse to get cake baking, although bought cakes are just as welcome.



From the editors' laptop

Matthew and Sarah Jones

How wonderful that there isn't much space for our column in this edition! Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles. But don't hold back! We look forward to a continuing stream of pieces. We're aware of at least two accounts that didn't quite make it to us in time for the print deadline this time.

Looking through the articles we have received, there seems to be a theme of outreach in much

The deadline for articles for the Autumn edition is Sunday 9th September 2012

of this edition. As Angela points out in her article, there are particular challenges in reaching out to those who know little of the church when we can appear in the media as a petty group of people obsessed with sexual politics. How can we counteract this? There is little that is more powerful than a personal encounter with kindness or love. One member of our congregation has described a kind of vocation in sharing compliments and kind words with friends and strangers (even in Sainsbury's!). Whether it is through discussion, service, tea and cake, friendship or financial giving - these things, however small, show the work of the Holy Spirit in us as individuals and a church.

Remember Arwen?

Many members of the congregation will remember Arwen Pearson who was an active and lively member of Christ Church during her years as a student in Bath.

Arwen currently holds an academic post at Leeds University and she now sings with the institution's "Liturgical Choir". The choir (described as one of the finest in the region) will be performing a concert entitled *Reincarnations* at Christ Church on Friday 20th July at 7:30pm. The event takes its name from a song cycle by Samuel Barber which they will be singing, along with pieces by Byrd and Purcell.

The programme looks varied and entertaining and it would be great to support an old friend. Tickets will be available on the door or beforehand from Mark.



Churches Together in Bath

The Churches Together in Bath committee met as we were going to press with this edition of *Christ Church Link* and there will be a full report in the autumn. Following Judith Anderson's piece in our previous issue, readers may be interested to know that the glass cross in the window of Hyacombe cemetery has now gone, with discussions in progress about possible replacements.

The committee are also seeking ways to improve attendance at meetings, the next of which is on October 11th 2012.



Who's who at Christ Church

Priest-in-charge	Canon Angela Townshend angela.townshend@christchurchbath.org 01225 464194	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
Reader	Cyril Selmes 01225 420039	Magazine editors and publicity coordination	Matthew & Sarah Jones 01225 443284 sarah.jones@christchurchbath.org
Churchwarden Chair of Church Council Home group leader Deanery Synod	Lewis Boyd 01225 329190 lewis.boyd@christchurchbath.org	Concert bookings Weekly notice sheet	Judith Bishop 01225 869409 concerts@christchurchbath.org notices@christchurchbath.org
Churchwarden	Malcolm Wall malcolm.wall@christchurchbath.org	USPG	Adrian Pegg 01225 858809
Verger	Angela Soboslay 01225 333297	Mothers' Union	Margaret Burrows 01225 334743
Treasurer	David Bishop 01225 869409 david.bishop@christchurchbath.org	CTB	Sylvia Ayers 01225 463976 Margaret Heath 01225 428272
Secretary to Church Council	Brenda Wall	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
NB: The choir takes a summer break so there will be no Choral Evensong in July or August

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

