



March
2019

St Michael's, Oulton.



Services and Events March 2019

Saturday 2nd March: Joint Tower Bell Practise.

10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. This is a joint tower practise in the art of change ringing. Led by Tony Crawford and Martin Dennison.

Sunday 3rd March: Sunday Before Lent.

(Please note there will be no 9:00 a.m. Holy Communion).

10:00am Holy Communion led by Rev. Nick Ktorides with Jill Pirrie with Debbie Allsop preaching.

Sides persons: Karen Langfield & Carol Keightley.

Wednesday 6th March: Ash Wednesday.

3:00pm: Ash Wednesday service led by Re. Nick Ktorides. (This will be the first of a series of weekly Lent Courses—further details to follow.)

Thursday 7th March: Women's Fellowship Meeting.

2.30pm: Meet at 1 Elmhurst Avenue. Speaker is Robin Keightley—'Living on the Edge.'

Sunday 10th March: First Sunday of Lent.

10:00 am : Holy Communion led by The Venerable David Hayden and Rev. Nick Ktorides.

Sides Persons: Elissa Norman and Stella Saunders.

Sunday 17th March: Second Sunday of Lent.

10:00am: Holy Communion led by the Rev. Nick Ktorides and Jill Pirrie.

Sides Persons: Jill Pirrie and Carolyn Woodcock.

Monday 18th March: Knit and Natter Group.

1:30pm: Meet at 1, Elmhurst Avenue, Oulton Broad.

Sunday 24th March: Third Sunday of Lent.

10:00am Morning Worship and Baptism led by the Rev. Nick Ktorides and Jill Pirrie.

Sides Persons: Tim Jones and Jane Boyce.

Friday 29th March: 'Young@Heart.'

9:30 am—12 noon. This is a wonderful opportunity to literally go back to school!

We have been invited by the pupils and staff of the Limes School to spend the morning with them.

Sunday 31st March: Fourth Sunday of Lent—'Mothering Sunday.'

10:00 am: Morning Prayer and Baptism led by Rev. Nick Ktorides and Debbie Allsop.

Sides Persons: Tracey Weaver and Margaret Nicholls.

Famous Christians.

This month we look at the inspirational missionary, Gladys Aylward.

Did you ever see the 1958 film “The Inn of the Sixth Happiness,” starring Ingrid Bergman? It was Hollywood telling the story of the inspirational Gladys Aylward. Apparently Gladys wasn’t too struck on their version of her story. For a kick-off Ingrid Berman was blonde and tall, while Gladys was dark haired with black eyes and tiny. So who was this women whose portrayal cinema goers flocked to see.

Gladys May Aylward was born in Edmonton, north London on February 24th 1902. As a young girl she worked in a high class residence as a housemaid. She was a devout Christian and had a yearning to go overseas as a missionary. She eventually enrolled in a course to study Chinese for aspiring missionaries but failed it because she struggled to learn the difficult Chinese language.

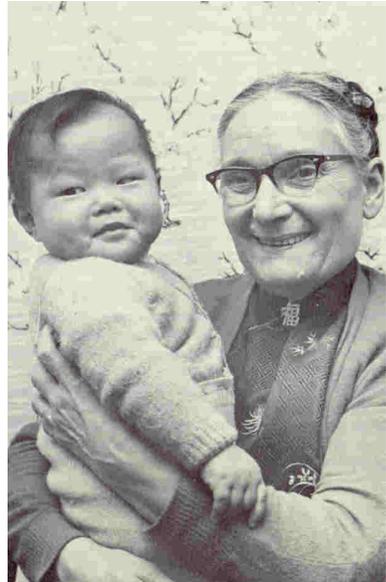
In October 1932 she took her life savings and bought a ticket to China on the Trans-Siberian Railway. She was detained by the Russians but managed to slip the net and travelled to China via Japan by sea.

On her arrival at Yangcheng she worked with the older missionary, Jennie Lawson and together the found the Inn of the Eight Happiness's. It was there that the women offered hospitality to travellers and shared stories of Jesus in order to share the Gospel.

It was also at this time that the government employed Gladys as a foot inspector, travelling the area ensuring that the practise of binding the feet of young girls was not being carried out.

In 1936 Gladys became a Chinese national and was a revered figure among the people, taking in orphans. During a prison riot where many inmates were killed she entered the prison alone and acted as an intermediary between the disgruntled prisoners and their captors.

In 1938 the region was invaded by the Japanese air force and many



Gladys Aylward.

people were killed. Japanese infantry followed up these aerial attacks and Gladys was severely beaten. In order to escape the invaders brutality she led more than a 1,000 orphans to safety over the mountains.

So incensed were the Japanese that they offered a sizable reward for her capture.

When they had crossed the mountain they then had to cross the Yellow River. There were no bridges or safe crossing so they prayed for deliverance. Their prayers were answered when a drifting boat was used to ferry the group across the waters.

Not only did she lead them to safety but cared for them thereafter, converting many of them to Christianity.

At the beginning of the second World War she was repatriated to Britain where she taught young people at Basingstoke Preparatory School. After 10 years she yearned to return to China but was rejected by the Communist Government. She eventually settled in Taiwan (formerly Formosa) in 1958. It was here that she founded the Gladys Aylward Orphanage where she stayed until her death at 67 years of age on 3rd January 1970. She is buried in a small cemetery in Guandu, New Taipei, Taiwan.

Quote by Gladys Aylward:

'Here was I worrying about my journey, while God was helping me all the way. It made me realize that I am very weak; my courage is only borrowed from Him, but, oh, the peace that flooded my soul; and although I know that I may be held up at the border, I am at peace within, because I know that He never faileth.

Editor's note: Having carried out some research on Gladys Aylward I thought it might be prudent to watch the film 'The Sixth Inn of Happiness.' Gladys had certain reservations on the Hollywood movie. It's 2.5 hours long and gives the viewer an idea of her story, her role played by the late Ingrid Bergman. Should you like to watch it, I will leave it on the book shelf at the back of the church





**MOVIE
MOMENTS**

Nick and Carol Pollard from EthosMedia.org share thought-provoking reflections on the latest films.

People in our way?

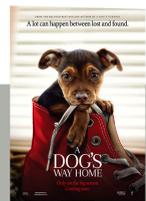
A Dog's Way Home tells the story of Bella, a beautiful dog who becomes separated from her beloved human family and embarks on an epic 400-mile journey home. For those of us who have despaired at films filled with ear-splitting explosions or salacious storylines, *A Dog's Way Home* will be a breath of fresh air (indeed you can almost feel the fresh air as Bella travels through wonderful scenery beautifully filmed). But this is more than a feel-good movie for dog-lovers, as it illustrates important lessons for our own journey through life.



Though Bella is ceaselessly focused on her goal, yet she still stops to provide comfort and support to those she meets along the way. And, although her love for others is unconditional, the help she provides subsequently leads to assistance for herself in her own time of need. Sometimes this is reciprocated directly, as with the orphaned baby cougar whom she adopts and feeds. At other times the benefit is tangential, as with the man she digs out of an avalanche. But, in each case, her gift of love is selfless and the benefit is serendipitous.



Written by the animal-loving husband and wife team Bruce Cameron and Cathryn Michon, this film does not claim to be a true story, but the underlying principles certainly are true-to-life. And it might cause us to reflect upon how we, as humans, treat others. When we are resolutely focused on a goal, how should we respond to the needs of those we meet along the way? Might apparent distractions turn out to be blessings in disguise?



**ETHOS
MEDIA**.org

EthosMedia.org provides free resources to help people explore spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through the latest feature films.

Lent Pilgrimage.

In Mathew's gospel, directly after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan river Jesus is led away into a desert place to be tempted by the devil.

The Lenten call to the discipline of prayer, fasting, bible reading and repentance may seem daunting ; we may be tempted to find arguments why we don't need to get into these spiritual disciplines.

A couple of years ago I and Shuba were in Israel with a band of 53 merry Pilgrims. We visited the river Jordan, somewhere very near where John the Baptist baptised Jesus 2000 years ago.

Led by Bishop Graham we all renewed our baptismal vows, in a short service on banks of the Jordan. Then following Jesus' footsteps we went to the Mount of Temptation the place believed to be where Jesus was tempted, after his baptism, by the devil.



The Mount of Temptation is said to be the hill where Jesus was tempted by the devil

We stopped at the foot of the mountain which stood ahead of us, at around 1,200 feet high in the Judean desert on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.

There was a sign in English and Arabic pointing the way which read "The Mount of Temptation 1.3 km". The mountain is also known as Mount Quarantania. Its Arabic name is Jabal al-Qarantal, meaning '40' - referring to Jesus' 40 day temptation. There's a Greek orthodox monastery 'The Monastery of the Temptation' that overlooks the city of Jericho half way up the mountain.

Before we left for our next destination we went into a Palestinian bazaar, at the foot of the mountain aptly called 'Temptation gallery'. There we succumbed to the temptations of the Palestinian Arabs selling their wares and we

were led into spending lots of our shekels. I have a picture of myself with my hand on a camel's head and my newly acquired Keffiyeh and agal the Arab headdress on my head. (I was tempted into buying this at a price which should have included the camel!).

But, more seriously, the objective lesson is that when we avoid the disciplines of our faith we can find ourselves becoming more Tourist than Pilgrim, and so less able to overcome the temptations and challenges of our lives.

Lent challenges us to realise that our lives on earth are valleys and mountains of temptations and vulnerabilities to varying degrees and varying intensity from one moment to the next.

We may be tempted to find arguments why we don't need to get into these spiritual disciplines. But we can enter into the true meaning of Easter when we undertake a Lenten trek towards Jesus' passion, and His resurrection on Easter morning.



A picture of Nick wondering if he'd bought the camel as well! camel home!

Nick Ktorides.

Adam & Eve

At Sunday School the children were learning how God created everything, including human beings. Little Josh was especially intent when the teacher told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down and looking scared. "Josh, what on earth is the matter?"

Josh whispered "I have pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife."

The Enquirer

This month long standing member, Jane Davey comes under the microscope.

St Michaels has always been close to my heart and has been a focal point for me throughout most of my life.

I was christened at St Michael's and also married there.

From about the age of 6, I also attended Sunday school which was run by Mrs Barnes. Sunday school back then was very well attended and always so much fun. I still have books that I received at the annual book giving day.

I vaguely remember in the warm summer months we would move outside to the playing field and pavilion opposite the church. The playing field was also the venue for the annual children's holiday club where we would spend long warm summer days playing games, singing and learning about the bible.



I have worked as a Dental Nurse since the age of eighteen starting out in general practice and then moving to the James Paget Hospital where I still work part time.

I have 2 children, Lewis who lives in Balham London working in PR and Hannah who is currently training as a Midwife at the UEA in Norwich.

In my spare time I enjoy walking, playing squash and reading books mainly on social history.

I am an avid Norwich City supporter and season ticket holder and what a season we are having !

I think I have grown closer to God over time he has always been there but during my late teens early twenties I left him in the background. After a personnel loss in 1998 he was there for me and was a great comfort. I know he is always by my side and that I can talk to him at any time. Life has many ups and downs but knowing God is with you all the way is a great comfort.

The Rectory,
St James the Least.

My dear Nephew Darren.

So, your vicar has appointed you to be the magazine editor; I wonder what you have done to offend him. I appointed our magazine editor 20 years ago, after his dog dug up my rose bed. Sadly, he seems unaware that I gave it to him as a penance and has been happily carrying on ever since. He has even developed a nasty persistence when it comes to chasing me for a vicar's letter every month. Becoming editor has brought out the tyrant in him.

I applaud your hope that your magazine will be a great force for good in the community, but I fear you may be disappointed. You will hardly believe this, but many readers of *our* magazine seem to ignore my pastoral letter altogether, and instead scan the adverts for plumbers and undertakers – and even for both - if there has been a major burst in their pipes.

In any case, here are some editorial tips to bear in mind: if you want to keep any piece of church information confidential, then publish it in your magazine. On the other hand, if you accidentally transpose the names of the ladies responsible for the altar pedestal and lectern on the flower rota, it will be spotted within seconds of publication. And you will not be easily forgiven.

Staffing rotas can be helpful, so that people know who to blame when anything goes wrong. Reports of meetings of monthly groups are also welcome, because not everyone who goes to these meetings can stay awake the whole time, and thus a report informs them about the bits they slept through.

Always include a list of contact details for all the church officers, but don't worry if you mix up their various phone numbers. In fact, it can help get people talking to each other, because in order to reach the PCC Secretary, they will have had to phone most of the other PCC members first.

My final piece of advice is to omit any deadline for submission for the following month. A deadline is like a red rag to a bull, and simply incites people to break it. Whereas if you have them a bit worried that they may be left out, they will get you the copy in good time.

I wish you many happy hours reading badly written copy, fending off fearful poems, and stalking your own vicar, in vain hopes of getting *his* clergy letter.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

THE NASRANIS -'DOUBTING PROOF' OF DOUBTING THOMAS.

In John's gospel, Thomas refused to accept the reports of his fellow disciples, that they had seen Jesus truly alive after his death. Thomas wanted proof beyond reasonable doubt i.e., not only see and hear Jesus, but touch the wounds if he was to believe. Thus he earned saintly notoriety as "Doubting Thomas". Unfortunately Thomas alone has received critical chastisement throughout history for being "The Doubter". Admittedly, Thomas is unique among Jesus's disciples, because he alone voiced the demand for irrefutable proof.

In truth each one of the eleven disciples had been a doubter. In Luke 24, v.37-39 Jesus Himself calls all his eleven disciples 'Doubters': "Why do you doubt?...touch me and see". Decades later John offers first-hand evidence for his belief that Jesus is alive as "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched" (1John 1:1).



This same Thomas went on to prove to the uttermost part of the then known world that Jesus lives on. Thomas is said to have boarded the shipping on the spice route that existed before the time of Christ between Palestine and Malabar (Kerala), and landed on the south west coast of India. There he went about publishing that Jesus is alive, first to the Jewish trading community who traded there, and then to the native population. The converts came to be called, in the local tongue, Nasranis (for Nazarenes), or followers of Thomas the Nasrani. (The early followers of Christ were called the Nazarene sect as they believed in Jesus the Nazarene). Marco Polo made mention of the ancient church in India, and Vasco da Gama reported their presence back to the Portuguese. These communities also came to be called the Syrian Christians of Kerala, as they also follow the traditions of the ancient Syrian Eastern Orthodox church. Their original liturgy is in Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic which was spoken by Jesus's disciples.

For the Nasrani communities, the post-resurrection story of Thomas's disbelief is not to his discredit, but the venerated history of their origins.

It is an intriguing Easter story - the jury is still out as to whether Thomas went to Kerala, but the primitive church traditions the Nasanis hold, which include some vestiges of first century Judaeo-Christian practices, could well be strong enough to authenticate the story of Thomas's mission to India.

Shuba Ktorides.

Shrove Tuesday

Don't forget that Shrove Tuesday is March 5th, before Ash Wednesday which is the first day of Lent. It's a day of penitence, to clean the soul, and a day of celebration as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. But there's more to Shrove Tuesday than pigging out on pancakes or taking part in a public pancake race. The pancakes themselves are part of an ancient custom with deeply religious roots.

Shrove Tuesday gets its name from the ritual of shricing that Christians used to undergo in the past. In shricing, a person confesses their sins and receives absolution for them. When a person receives absolution for their sins, they are forgiven for them and released from the guilt and pain that they have caused them. In the Catholic or Orthodox context, the absolution is pronounced by a priest. This tradition is very old. Over 1000 years ago a monk wrote in the Anglo-Saxon Ecclesiastical Institutes:



In the week immediately before Lent everyone shall go to his confessor and confess his deeds and the confessor shall so shrive him.

Shrove Tuesday is a day of celebration as well as penitence, because it's the last day before Lent. Lent is a time of abstinence, of giving things up. So Shrove Tuesday is the last chance to indulge yourself, and to use up the foods that aren't allowed in Lent. Giving up foods: but not wasting them. In the old days there were many foods that observant Christians would not eat during Lent: foods such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods. So that no food was wasted, families would have a feast on the shricing Tuesday, and eat up all the foods that wouldn't last the forty days of Lent without going off.

In the News.

BBC to run a 'Year of Beliefs'

The BBC is going to 'shine a light' on faith and spiritual values in Britain today by running a year of programmes dedicated to religion and ethics.

The move comes a year after the BBC promised to 'raise our game' in the way that it treated religion. That promise followed a year-long review of its religious and ethics output.

So what series should we look out for? Here are just some:

On BBC 1, Earth's Sacred Wonders will look at the rituals and monuments of faith around the world; Medical Ethics will be a documentary filmed at Great Ormond Street Hospital; and Pregnant and Platonic will be a documentary on people who have children without being in a romantic relationship.

On BBC 2, Inside the Vatican will show a year in the life of the Vatican community, including Pope Francis; and the popular Pilgrimage series will return.

The Bishop of Repton, the Rt. Revd. Jan McFarlane, who chairs the Sandford St Martin Trust, welcomed the BBC's plans. Especially "bringing issues of faith, belief and ethics to as wide an audience as possible."

Bishop welcomes Universal Credit announcement

Following comments by the Work and Pensions Secretary, Amber Rudd, on changes to Universal Credit, the Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who speaks for the Church of England on issues relating to children and young people, said:

"As a just and compassionate society, we believe that every child is a blessing and deserves to be treated equally.

"So I very much welcome today's announcement that the two-child limit policy will not be extended to children born before the policy came into effect in April 2017. I also welcome the Government's more considered approach to moving people on to Universal Credit from the old benefits system.

"I look forward to working with Ministers to continue reviewing these policies as part of a broader, coherent strategy to reduce child poverty, helping parents to give their children the best possible start in life."

OULTON PARISH COUNCIL hope you enjoy living in Oulton and invite you to attend Parish Council meetings.

These are held on the first Tuesday of each month (except August) commencing at 7p.m. in the small hall at Oulton Community Centre, Meadow Road, Oulton, NR32 3AZ.

At the beginning of each meeting there is an opportunity for an open forum to receive comments, observations and – yes- complaints about what is or what is not happening in the Parish.



In May this year there will also be an opportunity to be nominated to serve as a Parish Councillor when elections take place for the Parish Council. Interested parishioners are asked to get in touch with the Parish Council Clerk Lynne Ward at 61 Sands Lane, Oulton Broad, clerkoulttonparishsuffolk@hotmail.co.uk by the end of March who will gladly supply further details.



‘Life’s Like That.’

Did you hear about the Sunday School teacher who was describing that when Lot's wife looked back at Sodom she was turned into a pillar of salt, it was then that little Bobby interrupted, "My mummy looked back once while she was driving," he announced, "and she turned into a telephone pole."



Pause For Thought

This month John tells us of the final years of St. Francis life on earth.

One day St. Francis was preaching in a town near Florence. Amongst those listening to him was a rich nobleman called Count Orlando; he was so moved by what Francis had said and once he had finished talking and everyone had gone home, Orlando came to Francis and the brothers and said, 'I want to give you a present.' He continued, 'I want to give you and your Franciscan Order a mountain.' The mountain was at a place called La Vernia. Francis was delighted because it would be a gift for all Franciscans and laity in years to come. It is still a Franciscan retreat to this day. The mountain was very rugged, the lower parts were covered with enormous trees. As Francis and some of his brothers climbed, the panorama began to widen before them. Immense beech trees, mighty evergreen oaks and tall pines of a rare variety created fresh and enormous shadows. Francis felt as if he were in paradise. He said to his brothers, 'We are the happiest men on earth.'

Near the top Count Orlando had built some little huts, one for each brother. Nearby there was a great chasm. It could be crossed to a wooded area, by a bridge of wood, which could be drawn back once Francis had crossed over the chasm. Francis liked to be by himself in that wooded area, so that he could spend hours in contemplation, alone with God. Brother Francis told the brothers with him that no one but Leo should come across. There were times when Leo went over and he saw Francis in ecstasy and sometimes Leo saw him levitating. Francis loved solitude and Mt. La Vernia was just the place to find that solitude.

For the last remaining years of Francis' life he would make the long journey from Assisi, or wherever he had been preaching, to Mt. La Vernia arriving there from August the 15th. until St. Michael's Day. This was in order to spend time in solitude before the great feast day of St. Michael the Archangel. Francis went across the chasm to the place where he was alone.

In the year 1224 Francis went on a donkey, because of his failing health, with three or four brothers to spend his usual time from the Assumption

"until St. Michael the Archangel's Day. Francis went across the chasm to spend time alone with God. He so wanted to share in some way in Jesus' Passion. He prayed, 'I was to 'be' You for just a moment Lord Jesus. Release a torrent of love through my torrents of blood. Make my flesh a pyre of pain and my spirit a garden of love.'

My Crucified Christ, I would like for just a moment to climb that Cross, remove those nails and lie there in your place. About September the 14th. (Holy Cross Day) Leo went across the chasm and watched Francis. As the first glimmers of light appeared on the horizon to announce the coming of day. A flash of great pain and love entered Francis' arteries like a tempest. The beloved Crucified Christ descended from the skies like a meteor. The atmosphere was filled with sweetness. Jesus was a wave of fire, energy, strength, pain and delight over the Poor Little Man of Assisi.



The stigmatization of St. Francis.

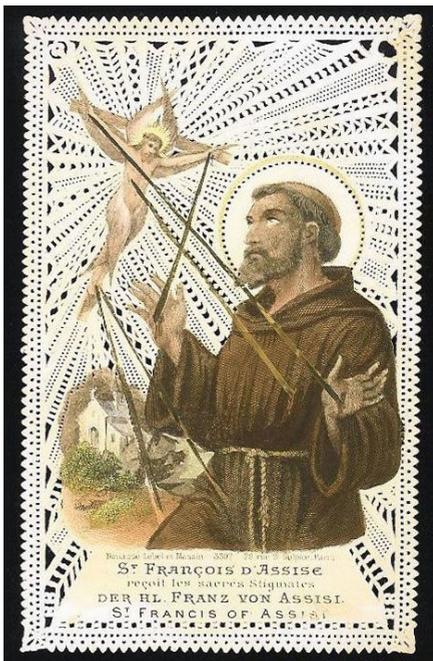
At that moment Francis was looking toward the East. An apparition resembling a seraph with six fiery wings appeared before his eyes. But as it approached, Brother Francis was able to discern the effigy of a crucified man under its wings. The Poor man suffered delirium: it was fright, jubilation, admiration, sorrow, crazed delight and excruciating pain. All the swords of the world were falling on Brother Francis. He felt as if he were dying. He was walking between life and death. He let out an agonising scream. Within minutes he felt something similar to bolts of lightning striking his body once again, five altogether. Francis thought that this was the end, that very soon

he would be reduced to nothing but ashes,

'My Crucified Christ, let all your pain fall mercilessly upon me. Lord what is more, I wish to end the world's pain and suffering and transform it into love.'

But there was no need for words. The hour had come, Francis was crucified. The vision disappeared. In the incipient light of day Francis was indeed able to ascertain that his hands, feet and side were burned wounded, pierced and bleeding. The wounds caused him terrible pain. He had received the wounds of Jesus in his body. Hands, feet and side were pierced and bleeding.

Until his death in 1226 Francis bore the Stigmata (the wounds of Christ on his body). He bound them up, but used a piece of leather to cover his side. The wounds would bleed. The piece of leather, which he used, is still in Assisi. The leather is rotted away in the middle. It has been tested and it is indeed rotted away by human blood. Francis also suffered badly from an eye disease, which also caused terrible pain, especially when he had to have both eyes cauterised with red-hot poker.



I myself have been to La Verna the mountain is indeed covered with enormous oak; beech and pine trees until you arrive at the Friary, which is near the top of the mountain.

Next time I want to tell you about the Third Order Franciscans, which Francis himself started in 1209 or 1210, and Francis' visit to the Sultan in 1219 and his visit to the Holy Land.

Editor: The Ven John Barton, former Archdeacon of Aston, looks back on 25 years of women priests in the C of E.

Women's ordination – 25 years on

Twenty-five years ago this month, women were ordained as priests in the Church of England. As the BBC commentator on the first service in Bristol Cathedral I was prepared for disruptions from demonstrators, but it proceeded reverently and without a hitch. The only protest was outside, where a group of approving Roman Catholic women held a banner saying, 'We're Next'.

Of course, there are still people who object to women's ordination on principle. Some believe the practice frustrates the prospect of church unity, others hold that God has created women and men to hold complementary but different roles - and leadership in the Church is reserved for men.

At the last count, 30% of the 20,000 active clergy were women and 23% of the senior posts were held by women, and that includes 18 bishops.

It would be difficult now to imagine the Church of England without women priests and bishops. They serve as chaplains in prison, hospital and the Armed Services, and of course as Vicars and Curates in parish churches.

Hannah Madin was ordained 18 months ago when she was 28, and is a Curate in York. She recalls visiting a parishioner whose husband had just died; the widow said, "I wasn't expecting a female Vicar, but I'm so glad you are". Hannah's husband is also ordained; she says it helps that he understands the random and unique nature of the job, they support each other in prayer, and they never talk shop on their day off!

Sue Restall was one of those ordained in Bristol 25 years ago and is now in active retirement in the Midlands, having been a parish priest and a hospital chaplain. In her experience, although women and men may have different talents, that is more to do with personality than gender. However, she does recall making a bereavement visit when a widower cried his eyes out, saying he could only have done that in front of a woman. Sue says her role is no longer controversial – "I am simply a priest who happens to be a woman".

My Favourite Hymns

I recently coerced Oonagh Boucher to give some thought to selecting her favourite hymns and at the top of her list is 'My God, how wonderful thou art.' It was written by, Frederick William Faber, D.D who was born at Calverley Vicarage, Yorkshire in 1814, and educated at Balliol College, Oxford, graduating B.A. in 1836. Taking Holy Orders in 1837, he became Rector of Elton, Huntingdonshire, in 1843, but in 1846 he seceded to the Church of Rome. After residing for some time at St. Wilfrid's, Staffordshire, he went to London in 1849. Dr. Faber died Sept. 26, 1863. Oonagh particularly likes the first and third verses:

My God, how wonderful Thou
art,
Thy majesty how bright,
How beautiful Thy mercy seat,
in depths of burning light!

How wonderful, how beautiful,
the sight of Thee must be,
Thine endless wisdom, bound-
less pow'r,
and awesome purity.



Oonagh's second choice is that wonderful hymn 'O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. Written by Isaac Watts it paraphrases the 90th Psalm of the Book of Psalms. Interestingly enough in 1738, John Wesley in his hymnal, Psalms and Hymns, changed the first line of the text from "Our God" to "O God." Both Watts' wording and Wesley's rewording remain in current use.

Coming in a close third place is 'Immortal, invisible, God only wise, In light inaccessible hid from our eyes.' Written by Walter Chalmers Smith in 1867 and is based on 1 Timothy 1 : 17.

To all life thou givest — to both great and small;
In all life thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish—but nought changeth thee.

Oonagh's next choice is that most beautiful hymn 'The day thou gavest, Lord is ended, the darkness falls at thy behest. Written by John Ellerton in 1870, it is the official evening hymn of the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy.

The hymn was selected to be sung as part of the celebrations for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897.

The hymn has been loved for many years, coming in third place in a BBC Songs of Praise poll of favourite hymns in 2005.

Oonagh certainly loves her hymns for she also chose, 'Praise my soul the King of Heaven, to his feet thy tributes bring,' that wonderful hymn which draws from Psalm 103, and was written by Anglican divine (clergyman) Henry Francis Lyte. The hymn was used in the 1947 royal wedding of H.R.H. the Princess Elizabeth, now Queen Elizabeth II, and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. It was also used as the opening hymn at the 2018 funeral of former U.S. President George H. W. Bush.

Bringing up the rear and by no means 'bottom of the pile' in Isaac Watts' moving hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross". Written in 1707 it is based on Galatians 4 v.16. Watts is considered to be the greatest hymn writer of all time (1674-1748) He was born in England, the first son of a family of the Dissenting tradition. Though his training in Greek, Latin and Hebrew would have allowed him the opportunity to become an Anglican priest, he chose to pastor a Dissenting congregation.

Many thanks to Oonagh for her selection of favourite hymns, their words and sentiment give us our faith, hope and direction in our daily lives. I close with the following quote from Isaac Watts:

'To be angry about trifles is mean and childish; to rage and be furious is brutish; and to maintain perpetual wrath is akin to the practice and temper of devils; but to prevent and suppress rising resentment is wise and glorious, is manly and divine.'

Isaac Watts

The Final Word

The wind was bracing as we set off to walk along the North Sea wall path towards the most easterly point one very cold January afternoon. The grey sea splashed up a salty spray and Gulliver appeared to be generating significant electricity.

As we stood in the circle which marks the most easterly point, we saw a small line fishing boat heading towards Lowestoft harbour. We watched as the boat was tossed in the swell and crashed down almost disappearing under the waves. The rods must have been securely tied and the fishermen used to going out in all sorts of weather.

No doubt there are times in all of our lives when we feel we are being tossed about with all the things that are happening and we long for calm. It was in the storm when the disciples found Jesus and that can be the same for us.

What I don't know about the fishermen that stormy afternoon was whether they had caught any fish or whether they had experienced the turbulent North Sea with nothing to show for it.

I recalled Jesus on the shore calling to the fishermen to recast

their nets, even though they had toiled without success all night. With wonder they caught so many fish that their boat began to sink.

They became some of Jesus' first disciples who were called, not to catch fish, but to reach out with God's love to people. I am thrilled that we have the opportunity before us now to really make an impact into sharing God's love and serving our communities.



David Hayden

If you have any contributions for the next monthly edition of the 'Pew News' please send your material to Robin Keightley

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