



TEAMword

4th June 2023

TRINITY SUNDAY

‘The Priestly Service’

In our lightning-speed age even a year ago feels like a long time, so forty years seems almost prehistoric! But let’s bless God for the gift of memory and for the power, should anyone decide to use it, to bring to mind how God has spoken ‘long ago...and in various ways’ (Hebrews 1.1) in each of our lives. A significant anniversary is surely a time for such recollection.

Although from one angle it seems like only yesterday that I was ordained in St Andrew’s Church in a middle-class suburb of north Dallas, Texas, much water has flowed under the proverbial bridge in every way. My personal circumstances, the country and place of my ministry, my citizenship, my circle of friends and acquaintances (mindful of the death of all those who formed me in life and faith), the world stage, social norms and Christian morals, the state and standing of Anglicanism and the Church of England – all have undergone kinds and degrees of change hardly imaginable in 1983. Whether one views such things as progress, regress or a mixture of the two, they are what they are and we all have to decide how to live and flourish (if we can) in the face of them.

On the evening of my ordination to the ministerial priesthood (I use that lapidary phrase to distinguish the ordered or ordained priesthood from the ‘royal priesthood’ of ‘God’s own people’ (1 Peter 2.9) the ordaining bishop preached on a phrase in the 15th chapter of St Paul’s Letter to the Romans. It was a phrase, he admitted, that he hadn’t ever noticed before. But as he was preparing for the occasion of ordination it struck him, so he underlined it in his Bible. ‘...[O]n some points’, the apostle writes, ‘I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit’ (15.16).

The priestly service of the Gospel of God.

Through the course of succeeding years and in the face of countless changes both personal and professional –some of which almost drowned me -- that phrase has stayed with me as a bench-mark, a kindly light, indeed a bright beam. So today, while I give thanks for priestly ministry among you ('I myself feel confident about you, my brother and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness...' [Romans 15.14]) I give thanks above all for my small share, exercised so feebly, in 'the priestly service of the Gospel of God'. At the same time I pray thankfully for eternal repose and blessing on the bishop who ordained me that evening forty years ago, my unforgettable, ever-precious-to-me spiritual father, + Robert, who was himself steadfast and faithful in 'the priestly service' of God's Good News.

The Revd Dr Charles Miller, Team Rector

New Faces in our Fellowship of Clergy

It's a delight when newly-arrived clergy in Abingdon wish to join our group of honorary clergy! With my sabbatical looming Richard and Ruth Pyke made haste with our Area Bishop to get the necessary approvals to begin ministering among us. Many of you will already have met them. But in Ruth and Richard deserve the chance to introduce themselves.

Ruth Pyke



I moved with Richard to Abingdon in July 2022 retiring here after living and working in Hertfordshire for 40 years. Together we have four children and six grandchildren and we are loving being more accessible to them all- in that we have more time and are geographically closer. My early working life was in teaching- initially in a middle school in Dorset and then in several primary schools in Hertfordshire- as a supply teacher and as a part time teacher of Music and RE.

In 1995 with Ordination now a possibility for women I went through the selection process and began training for ministry. I trained at a time when Oxford Diocese and St Albans Diocese shared training, a happy link with our retirement to Oxford Diocese.

I was ordained deacon in 1998 and Priest in 1999 subsequently serving in parishes in suburban, city and rural ministries alongside a period as Diocesan Childrens'

Work Advisor. As a children's advisor I also enjoyed working with colleagues across the dioceses and nationally. We enjoy walking, and singing and I am enjoying more time for knitting, cooking and dressmaking.

Richard Pyke



Although I was sponsored by Oxford Diocese, after training on the Aston Training Scheme, followed by studying at Salisbury Wells Theological College at the beginning of the Eighties, I served my title at St James Bushey in the Diocese of St Albans. I went on to serve a second Curacy as Curate of St Peters Berkhamsted and Priest in charge, of All Saints, which was also an Ecumenical project shared with Methodist Congregation and chaplain of St Francis Hospice. I then became Vicar of Mary Marshalswick in St Albans. My final appointment was as Team Rector of the Bishop's Hatfield Team Ministry, as Rector of St Etheldreda with close historical links to Hatfield House.

Ruth and I married in 1978, we have four children and six Grandchildren to date. Prior to Ordained Ministry, I worked for Berkshire Youth and Community Service in Maidenhead.

My other interests include painting and drawing, walking, railway modelling, bird watching and gardening.

Jen Brown

Having successfully completed her doctoral research last autumn, after 12 years Dr Brown leaves her post as Director of Training at Ripon College Cuddesdon at the end of this academic year. Jen will continue her work with the College of Preachers organizing courses and seminars across the country while having time in the coming months to attend to important family matters on the other side of the Atlantic. She will continue her two-Sundays a month routine in the parish but will have more opportunity for ministry in the parish during the week. This is most welcome and we look forward to Jen's regular presence at the Wednesday clergy chapter meetings from September.

Canon Charles and Felicity Mashedor

Canon Charles Mashedor has agreed with the Area Bishop of Dorchester that his last Sunday in the parish will be September 3rd. The clergy have agreed that we

will mark our 'farewell' to Charles and Felicity with a corporate Communion at 10.30 am that day in St Helen's Church. Canon Charles has exercised a rich, much appreciated ministry throughout the parish for the past four years so it seems right that we gather together to express our thanks and give him and Felicity a worthy send-off. In the meantime, Canon Charles has an important anniversary of his own to mark; on that see the notice on page 8.

The process to find a successor is underway as *per* the diocesan protocols which determine how and when we can proceed. With a post profile in almost final form we hope that we can both advertise and interview in June-July. Please prayer for an efficient and effective process and outcome.

A SAFER CHURCH

Over the past few years the dioceses of the Church of England have taken strides to up-grade promotion of a safe culture for all those in a parish context. The safety is not what usually comes under the category of 'health & safety', that is, matters related to prevention of accidents and physical harm on the church site/premises. (We have a 'Health & Safety' policy for the parish and officers in each congregation.) The safety at issue is emotional, physical and spiritual safety in relation to oneself and other members of the church community.

Many of us are aware of widely-reported incidences of sexual and spiritual abuse within the CoE (as indeed, more significantly within the Roman Catholic Church). Those incidents, which have caused pain and long-standing suffering to victim-survivors, have rightly prompted a serious look at what safety means first for children and young people, but also for those who are regarded as 'vulnerable' or in other ways 'at risk'.

The Diocese of Oxford has set up a robust approach to parish safe-guarding in terms of staff, procedures and protocols and surveillance.

At Church House, Langford Locks, Kidlington there is a safe-guarding team which guides procedures and protocols, organizes training at varied levels and provides support to parishes about safe-guarding matters. When an issue arises in a parish there is always a link to the safe-guarding team at Church House as any process or procedure takes shape and moves forward. The diocesan Head of Safe-guarding is **Louise Whitehead**.

Each Area of the diocese (e.g. our Dorchester Episcopal Area) has an officer; for our area it is **Erica Hegg**. She too is a point of reference for local help and concerns.

The Diocese of Oxford aims to promote a *culture* of parochial life where sensitivity to and embrace of safe-guarding are shared and, so to speak, natural within our spiritual communities. To that end our parish, like all parishes in the diocese, has a parish safe-guarding office (SGO). The post is currently vacant after the ten-year work of **Maria Gibson**. (A big “Thank you!” to Maria.) In addition, each congregation has its own SGO (St Helen’s, **currently vacant**; St Michael & All Angels, **currently vacant**; St Nicolas, **Jenny Fishpool**). These SGOs report regularly to the DCC and/or PCC and are the first point-of-contact when safe-guarding concerns arise.

To engender a safe-guarding culture the diocese ideally would like every parishioner/congregant to do the short ‘Foundation’ course, a 45-minute on-line awareness-raising exercise. The diocese insists that *all officers and volunteers do the course*. In addition, as responsibilities grow, other levels of training are offered of which ‘Safe Recruiting’ (i.e. of staff and volunteers) is most important, since it includes the provision of a DBS certificate for all staff and volunteers.

Helen Walker is the Safe-guarding Training Advisor and Domestic Abuse ‘champion’ in our diocese.

With the up-grading of certifications and checks on us all the diocese now uses the so-called safe-guarding ‘Dashboard’ to keep track of people, protocols and training at various levels for all concerned. In a large parish like ours that is perhaps useful, but it requires our officers at the two levels to work efficiently with the IT system.

With the need to find a new parish SGO we are using the situation to clarify the respective roles of the parish SGO and the congregational SGOs. With a shared concern and overall agenda, their roles are different and need to complement one another in a time- and energy-efficient way. I hope that task will be completed within the next month so that we can find from among YOU a new parish SGO and a new SGO for St Helen’s.

With or without a full complement of SGO, there is now a pattern of quarterly meetings of the SGOs to share concerns, discuss problem and successes and to make sure all is ‘in order’. Where problems arise, there is a direct line between the local SGOs and the parish SGO; and from there to the Team clergy and, if need be, to the diocesan team.

You will perhaps feel burdened in reading all this; there is no doubt the bureaucracy is increasing! That’s what institutions do, especially when they sense themselves under public scrutiny.

I find it helpful to re-frame the issue of safe-guarding in terms consonant with our Christian values. The first value is the foundational belief that *every person, in whatever circumstance or condition, is created in the image of God and deserves to be able to grow fully into that image*. The integrity of that image is the basis of genuine human flourishing, so that is the benchmark of our bearing toward one another. We remember too the words of Jesus, “In so far as you did to the least of these my brethren you did it to me...”, thinking of “the least” as those who are vulnerable or in some way dis-abled.

The second re-framing comes through a reflective meditation of Psalm 91. The “shelter of the Most High” and the “shadow of the Almighty” (v. 1) are powerful images and also appropriate goals for any and every Christian community to aim to be for those participating in its life. The aim of a robust safe-guarding culture is to live *into* and live *up to* those images in our life together as a parish and as congregations within the parish.

Thinking in those terms helps me see through the lapidary terminology and social-services-like processes to something familiar, moral and spiritual. One more thing. In a safe-guarding culture there is no fixed division between the *safe-guarded* and *those safe-guarding*. Of course individuals and teams have particular roles, and those are to be respected. More basically, though, any one of us can find him- or herself ‘vulnerable’ and in some way, gently or robustly, formally or informally, needing to be guarded vis-à-vis moral, spiritual, emotional and even physical health and well-being. There is no shame in that. A robust safe-guarding culture is where it is possible to speak out at the right time, to the right person about the right thing. I think in that regard of St Paul’s bold declaration: ‘For freedom Christ has set you free’ (Galatians 5.1).

The Revd Dr Charles Miller, Team Rector

FROM MY ORDINATION SERVICE (The American BCP, 1979):

‘As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God’s forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God’s blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ’s Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you. In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ’s people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.’ (‘The Examination’)

'Therefore, Father, through Jesus Christ your Son, give your Holy Spirit to *Charles*; fill him with grace and power, and make him a priest in your Church. May he exalt you, O Lord, in the midst of your people; offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you; boldly proclaim the gospel of salvation; and rightly administer the sacraments of the New Covenant. Make him a faithful pastor, a patient teacher, and a wise councillor. Grant that in all things he may serve without reproach, so that your people may be strengthened and your Name glorified in all the world. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.' ('The Consecration of the Priest')

OUR PARISH LEADERS 2023-24

Our new Wardens are:

St Helen's: Linda Hobbs, David Pope

St Michael's and All Angel's: Louise Heffernan, Joyce Kelly

St Nicolas: Eluned Hallas, Paul Rast-Lindsell

With thanks to retiring St Helen's Warden Geoff Meen

Treasurers: Susan Read (Parish, and St Helen's and St Michael's) and Jenny Metcalfe (St N)

Deanery Synod Reps:

Miss A Green

Dr H Glennie

Ms S Scott (also Deanery Lay Chair)

Miss A Scott (also a Diocesan Synod Representative)

Mrs E Hallas

The Revd R Rutherford, Clergy Representative

Elected PCC Representatives:

Mrs Kate Burland (St Helen's)

Mrs S Read (St Helen's)

Mr J Clare (St Michael's)

Dr G Lewis (St Nicolas)

Mrs J Fishpool (St Nicolas)

Dr J Metcalfe (St Nicolas)

Corpus Christi

Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion

Thursday 8th June

There will be a Said Mass at St Michael's at 12.30 pm as usual and there will also be a Sung Mass at 7 pm at which The Revd Elizabeth Birch will preach.

Charles Masheder

will be marking 50 years since his ordination
at the 10.30 am service
on
Sunday 2nd July

Notices

Music at St. Helen's. Come and enjoy a summer evening of relaxing chamber music (Brahms, Vaughan Williams), led by our very own Peter Foster, on Saturday 17th June at 7.30pm, in the church. Tickets: £10 adults, £2 under 16s available on the door, in church after the 10.30 service from Mary Anderson and Fiona Tonks and at www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/abingdon/st-helens-church/music-at-st-helens/2023-06-17/19:30/t-qjzkgoa Drinks will be available to buy in the interval and the proceeds will be shared between the Abingdon foodbank and St. Helen's church.

We are hoping to publish the June edition of the Parish Magazine on Sunday June 11th. Do contact: candle@abingdonparish.org.uk as soon as possible if you would like to contribute to it.

Abingdon & District Musical Society will be performing a concert on Saturday 10th June at 7.30pm in St Helen's Church. The programme features Brahms' A German Requiem and movements from Smetana's Ma Vlast. Tickets £15 on the door, £1 for children.

St Michael's Church Fundraising Event. Cream Teas, Saturday 17th June, 2.30 pm – 4.30 pm. Join us for an afternoon of live music. Tea/coffee with scone/cake £5. Proceeds to church funds. All welcome.