SPIRE & TOWER















This Edition



View from the Vacancy	P3
Meet the new Vicar	P4
The Discernment Process	P5
When St Mark's was Bombed	P6
My First Year as an Anglican Nun	P8
Down in Deepest Dorset	P11
Praying Together	P12
My Favourite Bible Verse	P13
Diary: Michael Johns Perring	P14
Crossword	P16

Editorial

Sometimes when I'm putting a magazine together, a theme emerges unintended. This time we've landed with a vocations theme: a new vicar, a former curate, a SASMer who is off to train for ordination and another who is now a nun. You might almost ask whether there will be any ordinary laypeople left in Surbiton, though if that's your concern, you'll be relieved to hear this ordinary layman of an editor has no plans to leave his post just yet.

On the theme of the ordinary, this is of course the time of year when most of us slip back into normal life after the summer: the choir, the children's Sunday club and all the other regular groups and events start back up, and we begin thinking ahead to Christmas. One festive date for your diaries is this year's Christmas Fair, which is on 21st November. Get your cakes baked, root out your bric-a-brac and get saving for the fabulous items in the auction, which can be an excellent source of last-minute Christmas presents. Not for me though: I started thinking about Christmas a month ago and bought most of my presents on holiday. No, I'm not smug at all. While we're talking about the auction though, could you please tell me if you ever work out the identity of the mystery 'spy' who calls people up if they win that particular bid?

Actually on second thoughts, please don't tell me that.

For something that certainly doesn't count as ordinary, see the photos of a bombed-out St Mark's on 6-7. I'd heard about the bombing before but the images drove home what a shocking event it must have been. There's a truism that a church is the people not the building; let's just say it's a theory I'd rather not test too often. Anyway, like most things of a historical nature the photos came from Helen Goepel's archive, so thanks Helen.

A piece of last-minute news, our old vicar Robert is doing a sponsored preach-a-thon on Tuesday 22nd Sept, in St Mary Magdalene Richmond. He'll be preaching from dawn to dusk - that's 6:47am to 6:59pm - to raise money for the church bells and the Richmond soup kitchen. He's got some celebrity guests throughout the day but I'm not quite sure what passages he'll be preaching on in between, so I'm sure he'll love it if you turn up and start sponsoring a half hour on each chapter of Numbers. Go on, I dare you.

All that's left to say is ... I look forward to articles by 1st November for the next issue of Spire & Tower!

Greg

View from the Vacancy

Rev'd Janice Price

While August has been less busy than usual with no weekday services, Carole and I have been busy with pastoral support, funerals, baptisms and requests for weddings. Pastoral needs do not go on holiday. It is an honour and a privilege to respond to these requests. In Surbiton these form the backbone of pastoral care and support for all the people of our parish.

The Vacancy Management Group have begun to prepare for the arrival of our new Vicar, Rev Chris Rankine. You may have noticed that the Vicarage is being renovated under the watchful eye of our Churchwardens Ruth and Katherine. Chris Rankine will be licensed as Vicar of the Parish on 18th October at 6pm in St Andrews. Please plan to come along to the service if at all possible.

One of the things that has stood out about this vacancy has been the excellent teamwork in the parish. Every Tuesday morning the Vacancy Management Group (comprising the Ministry Team, Churchwardens, Treasurer and others with expertise) meet to discuss parish matters. There have been some tangled issues that need to be addressed but these have been discussed with a sense of collective responsibility, working for the good of the whole parish. Vacancies aren't always like this, believe me!

This morning I took two bags of food, collected in our churches, to the Alfriston Day Centre in Berrylands.



Liam, the Deputy Manager, was delighted to receive them. He told me that often their clients are without food for a few days before their benefits come through. They know to come to Alfriston to get food to see them through. So, thank you to all who give in this way.

Elsewhere in Spire and Tower Emma Rush reflects upon her journey through discernment for ordained ministry. Both Emma and Charlie Bamford will be leaving us at some point in September to move to their training parishes where they will work alongside training at St Augustine's College. We will send them on their way with our blessings, but we will miss them enormously. They have been at the heart of parish life in different ways.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our common life in the parish over this vacancy period.

Janice

Spire & Tower is the parish magazine of St Andrew's & St Mark's Church Surbiton. It comes out four times a year. To submit an article, email the editor at gcr.melia@gmail.com; for publication dates, see the table below. The next issue is in December so submissions to by 1st November please.

	Lent	Summer	Harvest	Advent
Articles	1st Feb	1st May	1st Aug	1st Nov
Published	1st Mar	1st Jun	1st Sep	1st Dec



Meet the New Vicar

Some good news to report: we have a new vicar! Chris Rankine will start at SASM in a few weeks. *Spire & Tower* caught up with him to ask about how he's preparing for the move to Surbiton.

Chris says he came to faith when he was 14-15, when he was taken to a Christian youth group by a friend. He actually felt the call to ministry a few years before that, at the age of 12. If you're not quite sure how that works, try asking him about it when he starts here! He was ordained in his late twenties after a spell in accountancy, and spent the next few decades in churches around Hampshire before moving to London.

He sees his ministry in enabling churches to grow - both in numbers and faith - and in enabling each church to find and achieve its vision: he wants to help us to ask God what he wants us to do in Surbiton, and then to achieve that. He says he was attracted to Surbiton as a church with a strong foundation and an interest in growing, and he looks forward to using the gifts and skills God has given him. Chris believes that God's vision is for the people of the church, so his role as a vicar is to find out what is a church's DNA, and work with us to move to where we believe God wants us to be.

He has been involved in youth work - of both the Christian and secular varieties - since well before he was a vicar. He was a scout leader until 2019, but has also started and run several church youth groups; he's still in contact with many of his former charges, and jokes *(I hope! - Ed.)* that the litmus test for a good youth group is whether it gets better once you've left. On a more serious note, he says that he loves enabling young people to grow and develop and become the people God made them to be. He believes in whole life discipleship, and enabling both children and adults to grow as people and have the life and faith skills they need.



Chris is married to Fiona who works for the Shooting Star children's hospice leading the Counselling and Family support teams. They have four adult children and with their partners and two grandchildren, they make eleven around the dinner table. He's happy to report that Surbiton is on average a shorter journey to most of his family than his old parish in Fulham, so he'll look forward to some quality family time on his off days. Once he gets into the vicarage, he's also looking forward to doing some gardening and building his woodworking workshop.

Chris's Licensing Service

Chris will be licensed to our parish on Friday 18th October at 6pm in St Andrew's, by Bishop Martin. This will mark the start of his ministry here with us, and is a major event in the life ov our parish, so please do come along.

Mothers' Union turn 150!

Mothers' Union International has just turned 150 years old. We are blessed with an active Mothers Union group in Surbiton, so they hosted a service where they told us about all the valuable work the wider Mothers' Union does to support families across the world. To cap it all off, they provided some scrummy cake after the service!

If you want to find out more, the next Mothers' Union meeting will be on Weds 16th Sept in St Mark's from 7pm, where Janice Coombs will talk about life in South Africa.



The Discernment Process

I have often thought, over the last three years of discernment, that it would be really helpful to everyone discerning their calling if we had a "Damascus Road" right here in Surbiton (perhaps between St Mark's and St Andrew's?).

What then is a calling? For it is of course true that Christ calls us all, from the gospels and through our prayers, calls us to be disciples and pilgrims together.

A call to ministry is not a promotion or an honour in worldly terms. Its honour lies in allowing those of us on the Church of England's discernment pathway, who heard that first faint whisper from God, to take time to fully discern God's grace and mercy for us all and becoming closer to understanding our role shining grace and mercy wherever we are deployed.

This process is not for the faint-hearted. If you thought for a moment there was a fast-forward between hearing God's call, his summoning up of whatever gifts and talents you may carry for him, to the moment of ordination, you would be very wrong. The process is long; it is both bruising and burnishing, difficult and incomprehensible yet enormously enlightening, painful at times as you dig into the past to inform your future in ministry, joyful at times when you feel the first stirrings of what the call will look like when you are finally ordained. It can be lonely, bureaucratic, self-centred and yet also selfless, and there is a bereavement to this path as well. Remember the disciples being called as they worked at their boats. They left everything behind: family, friends, livelihood, their homes, their community. Whilst the Church of England does not (yet) ask you to abandon all your past life, there are many aspects of your life that must change and that you must leave behind.

And what are you called to do? I believe that being called means being prepared to follow the words of the ordinal, the service in which priests are ordained. You are commissioned to live the gospel as a shepherd, to preach the gospel both in and out of season, to set an example and that example is Christ both in mission and as our crucified saviour.

You are called to leave your church and set off into an unknown future; learn many new things, some of them academic; build new relationships; plough a new furrow in sometimes hard and unyielding ground.



And all the time, on the discernment process, you are asked to have a heart strong and big enough to hold the tension between the glorious promises of the kingdom and the crucifixion gateway to those promises. The tension between being just an ordinary disciple and asking God to give grace to your ministry of shepherding those disciples. Your life must begin to become that of the servant king, even as you dress in robes and process to the front of a congregation.

It is the road of a pilgrim, much like the road we all follow as a congregation but perhaps winding a little more.

If you are called, you may well find yourself in valleys you think will never end, you will make mistakes and learn from them, and you will fumble your way onwards in the half-dark of humanity.

But if you are called, and our prayers are that more follow me and Charlie and Mary, then I also believe that God will ensure that goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.

Emma Rush

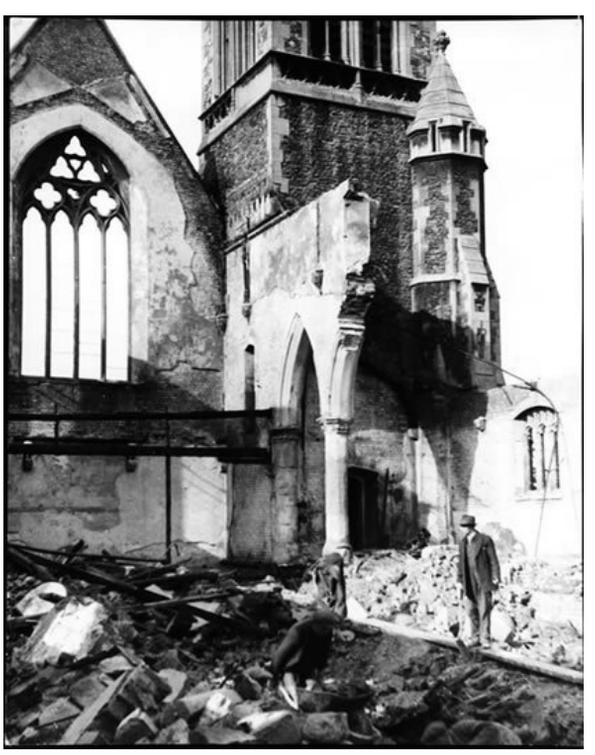
When St Mark's was Bombed

In 1940 St Mark's was hit by German bombs, which were probably aimed at the nearby railway. This is what was left after the dust had settled.

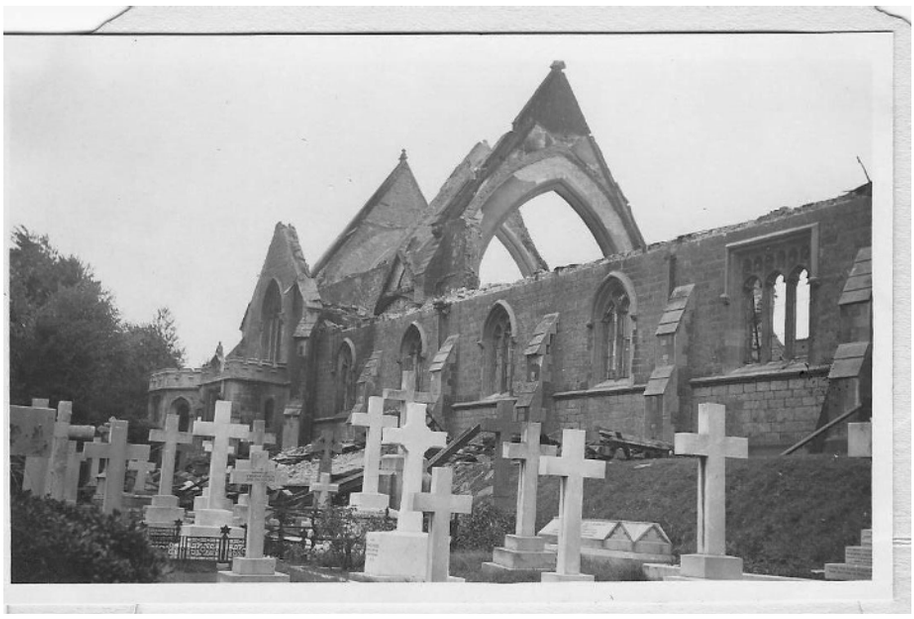












A PARISH CHURCH WRECKED

Nazi Bomb Causes Fierce Fire. Only Spire and Walls Remain.

It must be regarded as one of the blows of the war so far for a south-western suburb of London occurred in the early hours of Wednesday when the parish church was wrecked by enemy action.

A terrific explosion, caused by one of five bombs which fell in the vicinity, rocked houses in the district. One bomb struck the middle of the church roof and as the massive wooden beams crashed they became a mass of flames.

Shock for the Vicar

The Vicar, aroused by the shaking of his Vicarage, hurried out to find his church in ruins and blazing furiously.

Fire services were quickly on the scene and although they put up a gallant fight, they were unable to do much to quell the fierce flames and in a very short while only the shell of the building remained.

The walls of the church, which is built of stone in the perpendicular style, withstood the shock well and they are believed to be in a fairly safe condition.

Although the spacious and dignified interior is lost, the graceful spire still stands erect and challenging. The only visible damage is to the clock, the hour hand of which has been given a twist.

Another bomb fell in the Vicarage garden, without doing much damage. The Vicarage was shaken but not even a window was broken, and the Vicar escaped injury.

Two nights before a bomb had fallen in a neighbouring road close to another church. Splinters caused some damage to the church roof and windows and this, although appearing at a glance to be slight, is likely to form a substantial bill for the parish.

For the time being the usual Sunday services of St. Mark's Church, Surbiton, will be held at Surbiton County School for Boys[now Hollyfield – services held there for months after, but Communion wasn't celebrated as not sanctified ground D.V.of St. A's pers.comm.)] at the customary times—8 a.m., 11 a.m., and 6 p.m.

[The Surrey Comet, Saturday 5 October 1940]

My First Year as an Anglican Nun



My name is Caro Robson and until last June I was a very happy member of the SASM congregation. I left to join an Anglican religious community, a convent of contemplative nuns in Oxford called the Convent of the Incarnation, where I've been living as an aspiring nun for over a year. Here are some of the highlights of my first year in the cloister...

Some background: Anglican Religious Life

'Religious life' refers to any kind of consecrated life, where a person takes formal vows recognised by the Church to live according to certain rules. Not everyone in religious life lives in a convent or monastery (or 'community'). Consecrated single life, or being an associate or oblate of a community are both forms of religious life that involve taking vows, but living an otherwise 'normal' life.

Living in community means leaving your home and possessions to move into a monastery or convent. There are two kinds of community recognised by the Anglican Church: 'active' communities (also known as 'mendicant' or 'apostolic' communities) and 'contemplative' ('enclosed' or 'monastic'). 'Active' communities are usually involved in a form of ministry, such as nursing, teaching or working with the homeless (think Call the Midwife). 'Contemplative' communities have prayer itself as their primary purpose, usually focused on chanting services called 'offices' throughout the day. My community is in this category. Our work is prayer, and our Rule talks about offering "the whole of our life for the whole of our life". We aim to make every aspect of ourselves and our lives open to God as an offering to Him.

It varies between community, but the usual stages of becoming a 'religious' are: enquirer (initial visits), aspirant or alongsider (usually six months, trying out the life), postulant (a further six months, going a little deeper), novice (wearing the habit but continuing to learn), junior (living under vows after temporary profession), and life- or fully-professed (after taking vows for life). No one entering religious life is obliged to stay; even those who have taken life vows can leave. But leaving involves a little more admin (and increasingly-senior clergy) depending on how far into the process a person has gone.

Arrival: June 2025

My first weekend in the convent was spent in a guest room before I moved into my cell – yes, that's what we call it – the following week. The view from my room is beautiful, across the convent courtyard and garden. After giving away or selling most of my possessions before joining, my things all fit into my cell, which is about the size of a double bedroom, with a wardrobe, desk, small single bed and ensuite shower/toilet. It's very comfortable!

Early changes: July

I joined a convent to open myself up to God, and spiritual changes started quickly. Within two weeks I could feel aspects of my personality shifting. For example, I did my last professional event at an awards ceremony in July, before going off on retreat at a large monastery. I was afraid that I'd miss my professional life or wish I were at a bigger community, and feel dissatisfied with my new life. But I found myself feeling a deep love for my career, the large monastery and my new convent, all at the same time. Being able to love and appreciate three alternative lives without comparing came as a spiritual surprise!

Settling in and clothing a novice: August

I spent the rest of the summer settling-in. The timetable is fairly consistent (Matins at 6am, with periods for prayer and work until Compline at 7.30pm), though this means that minor changes can really throw you! I also started my work assignments: the kitchen and the printing press. I help in the kitchen four days a week, chopping, peeling, and following the instructions of our chef as closely as I can (since I'm a hopeless cook).

I also work in the convent's small publishing house, SLG Press. Although we no longer physically print the books in-house, we still edit and typeset them electronically. It's a huge privilege to edit works from illustrious authors like Rowan Williams, and I've learned a huge amount about electronic typesetting and coding eBooks. (You can find out more at: www.slgpress.co.uk)

August also saw the clothing of one of my novitiate as a novice. It was a short ceremony involving our Warden (a priest who helps guide the community on spiritual matters) and Reverend Mother. After signing a pledge to deepen her knowledge of our Rule and way of life, she went out and returned to chapel in the novice's habit, with a new religious name. We had a big celebration!

Inter-novitiate training: September

The Church of England doesn't have many religious communities, so we pool training resources by running an inter-novitiate study programme. This is a rolling series of six courses, each lasting a week, over a two-year period. In September I was lucky enough to join the course on managing relationships in community. It felt very much like a mini, religious MBA, but was a lot of fun! Swapping stories with my fellow-newbies was a great chance to connect, and I haven't laughed so much in a long time!

Preparations: Advent and Christmas

It's a tradition of my community that an aspirant should take a six-week break from the convent before becoming a postulant. For me, this meant leaving after Epiphany and returning just before Lent; I had some travel to plan! Realising this might be the last time I'd ever get to choose my own holiday, I decided I'd like a good, long walk... so I arranged to go trekking through the Himalayas and see the monasteries and temples of Nepal.

Christmas was very simple, and I must admit I missed SASM and the beautiful candlelit services and carol-singing. I took part in the community's traditional present-opening on Boxing Day (presents given to sisters are shared amongst the community), including ironing the wrapping paper afterwards for re-use next year. (It's the most nun-ly I have ever felt!)

Climbing mountains: January

In early January I set off on my trek across Nepal. I was blessed to have an incredible guide who showed me many religious sites, including a living Hindu goddess, animal sacrifice, a person possessed by a god, mountain-top monasteries (after a climb) and witnessing the final rites of river cremation. The heart of the trip was a nine-day trek through the Himalayas, climbing to the base camp of Annapurna, the world's tenth highest mountain. I took the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary with me (which I'd hand-pointed with Gregorian chant over Christmas!) and prayed Matins, Sext and Compline each day (often dropping to my knees and chanting in the mountains...I don't think the goats minded).

[I know this isn't a travelogue, but to summarise an incredible journey: I realised how deep my connection to the Office is, that living in -14°C with no heating is not for me, and that I'm glad Jesus' sacrifice means we don't need to offer animals any more (visiting the temples of Kathmandu and Pokhara were probably the closest I'll get to the Old Testament Temple).]

Becoming a postulant: February

I returned to the convent in February and became a postulant in a short ceremony in which I promised to continue exploring the community's life. Besides no longer being allowed to use my own money (a much bigger sacrifice than you may think!) there wasn't a huge change in my daily living. I still work in the press and kitchen, and wear my own clothes (washed by our wonderful laundry sister... a major perk of monastic life!).

Visits and discernment: Easter and April

Easter came around very quickly and, like Christmas, it was a time when the absence from parish life really hit me. I'd spent the previous Easter here on my final visit, so I was prepared, but still very sad not to be with you all.

(continues on next page ...)



The view from my bedroom window

After Easter I was given permission to visit other convents across the country as part of my broader discernment process, so I went to Catholic Benedictine convents at Stanbrook Abbey in Yorkshire and St Cecilia's Abbey on the Isle of Wight. I also spent time with the amazing Sisters of Mary the Virgin at Wantage, just outside of Oxford (one of the original Anglican Religious Communities). Getting to experience the life of other convents has been extremely valuable in discerning God's will for me, and I've met some wonderful, generous religious along the way.

Find Out More

To find out more about Anglican religious life, you can visit

https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/vocations/step-2-discover-ways-serve/religious-life

Alternatively, go to the Anglican Religious Life Yearbook

https://arlyb.org.uk/

Electing a new Rev'd Mother: May - June

After 11 years, our Rev'd Mother had served her full permitted term and it was time to elect a new superior. It was a privilege to be in the community at this time, though I think it was quite stressful for everyone!



Between my time as a postulant and an aspirant I went away to consider my vocation from outside the convent. I chose to travel to Annapurna in Nepal: a striking place to consider my life choices.

Each community elects its superior differently, but here all life-professed sisters vote by ballot. An outright majority is required for election, with up to three ballots being held until a result is reached. Those of us not fully-professed attended Mass each morning, then left during voting. Once the votes were counted, the bell would be rung and we returned to our places to hear the result. Once elected, our new Reverend Mother had a month to prepare before being installed by our Bishop Visitor on 24 June. After she took an oath to uphold the community's life and Rule, we each pledged obedience to her individually. It was a very moving ceremony, attended by friends, family and religious from different communities.

The end of the beginning..?

Well, that was my first year in religious life. It's been a big adjustment, especially learning to slow down; not to judge each day by how many tasks I get done but by whether I did my best to follow Christ. It is a huge privilege to have time for the Office and contemplative prayer, and I've been surprised by how many visits, trips and celebrations we've had! It's a beautiful life and I can't wait to go deeper as I begin my second year of this amazing journey. Thank you to everyone at SASM for all your prayers!

Crossword Answers

Across

1:Crops
4:Wide awake
9:Schooling
10:Pulse
11:Aleppo
12:Pine tree
14:Scrounge
16:Swede
18:Emits
20:Restless
23:Untaught
24:Baabaa
27:In ear
28:Dead horse
29:Equinoxes
30:Roses

Down

1:Cashah
2:Ochre
3:Scorpio
4:Wain
5:Dog license
6:Applets
7:Allergens
8:Ebenezer
13:Unorthodox
15:Cointreau
17:Deputize
19:Shukran
21:Leather
22:Bakers
25:Barns
26:Jams

Down in Deepest Dorset

Katrina Lidbetter

On a sunny Saturday in July, the combined choirs of St Andrews and St Mark and St Matthews disembarked from their charabanc to congregate at Sherborne Abbey in Dorset. We were there at the suggestion of former choir members, Tim Lavis and Sue Sabourin who had moved to Sherborne village a few years ago. It was a pleasure to be reunited with them and to have the opportunity to sing in such a beautiful and historic setting.

Tim Lavis kindly gave the choir a guided tour. The Abbey itself was founded by St Aldhelm in AD 705 and two Saxon kings were buried there. A few features, including a Saxon doorway, still survive from that early period. The awe-inspiring renaissance fan vaulting is one of the greatest and earliest in England, over a hundred years earlier than that at Eton College (so there!). There are some notable tombs and beautiful stained glass, including some medieval glass. In the quire, there are medieval misericords and a beautiful painted vaulted ceiling. At the back of the Abbey is a chapel for the Dorsetshire Regiment, recording their 150 years of service to the nation.

Next door, the gardens of the Abbey Tea Rooms provided a lovely setting for lunch – and the best scones in England (See picture: Janice and choir members Sarah Stokes and Tim and Katrina Lidbetter). After lunch, we gathered for a rehearsal before the service and then filed into the Abbey for evensong. We were ably conducted by Jason Edge, Director of Music at St Matthews, and expertly accompanied by "our" Simon Harvey. Alas the lovely pipe organ was covered up during the (vital) works to install a toilet and so Simon had to address an electronic organ. Nonetheless, he rose to the challenge. We were delighted to bring our evensong music to the denizens of Dorset – and a number of friendly Surbitonians who had come to listen. We had sung the key elements of the service in a joint evensong at St Mark's shortly before. This helped to ensure that the choirs were confident of the challenging music that we were to present to the (possibly startled) inhabitants of Sherborne.

The Psalm set for the day was Psalm 94, O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth. This Psalm is a plea for divine justice in the face of oppression. It promises that God sees all suffering and will never abandon his people. Jason explained that he had chosen the rest of the evensong music to match this psalm. Thus to reflect the message of hopefulness, we sang a very lively and upbeat setting of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by Bryan Kelly, written in the 1960s, influenced by Latin American jazz. For our anthem we returned to a more classical period with the fiery Haydn motet, written in the 1780s: "Insanae et Vanae Curae". This is jokingly known to generations of choristers as "insane and vain curates". It is of course nothing of the sort. Instead, it rebukes mankind for filling their minds with frantic and futile anxieties and striving after earthly matters whilst neglecting heaven. It promises that all will be well if God is on our side. Interspersed with these pieces was the lovely Humphrey Clucas setting of the traditional sung prayers – the Preces and Responses.

Time seemed to fly by and suddenly it was time to process out and receive our final clergy blessing from Catherine, the verger, who told us to come back soon!



Praying Together

Celia O'Neill

Praying is essential for our faith. Janice so often reiterates the importance of prayer and spotlights what we should pray about as situations present. There are prayer intentions each week on the Pew Sheet and these are also published on the Parish web site.

How and when we pray personally is entirely dependent on our circumstances. And, of course, we pray corporately during our services. But sometimes meeting and praying together in a small group (when two or three are gathered together) can be opportune in motivating, refocusing and resourcing our prayers and bringing refreshment to tired and sometimes empty minds.

Happening Now

A small group gathers regularly in St. Mark's on a Friday afternoon, usually after Jackie Robbs' Bible Study. We are 'Prayer Partners' and we meet to give thanks, to share concerns - those of the Parish and our own, to ask and to try and listen to God, (that's the hard part for me) and then we pray in silence together. We bring prayers to share and repeat prayers or themes from meeting to meeting.

And You?

Would you share a prayer with us? You can send a prayer to me at theoneills1@outlook.com - this can be your own or another's. If written by another please, if possible, cite author, source and date as appropriate.



If you like, I can pass prayers on to include in Spire & Tower, so other people in the parish can pray it too. The hope is that every future issue of the magazine will contain a prayer or two so we can build up and share resources.

Joining

Join prayer partners on a Friday? If you can't come in person we can pray for you and your particular concerns via our Whatsapp group. Everything we talk about and pray about is held in strict confidence within the group.

Prayers This Month

To start off what we hope will be a regular column inviting contributions, here is a prayer we used recently during Prayer Partners:

Lord, we pray for the unity of your Church. Help us to see ourselves as rays from the one sun, branches of a single tree and streams flowing from one river. May we remain united in you and to each other, because you are our common source of Life: and may we send out your light and pour fourth your flowing streams over all the earth, drawing our inspiration and joy from you. Amen.

(After St. Cyprian of Carthage c.200-258 CE)

We also have a prayer from a parishioner, who we encourage you all to pray for:

This year has been a difficult journey for my family. We have already said goodbye to two loved ones, while others continue their fight against cancer. My sister now faces major spinal surgery in July. Please keep her, our family, and everyone facing illness, loneliness, or financial hardship in your prayers.

Find Out More

Contact Celia on celiaoneill1@outlook.com
or text 07842297301.
Thank you and please pray for Prayer Partners

My Favourite Bible Verse

Carole Bourne

John 20:11-18.

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look[a] into the tomb; 12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' 14 When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' 16 Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew,[b] 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Mary Magdalene is a bit of an enigma. Over the years the church has used this Mary as a counter balance to the perfect Mother of God. As the latter becomes more perfect, Mary Magdalene becomes more real. No-one who's seen the musical Jesus Christ Superstar, either very recently or back in the day can fail to get this. So we're always hearing the question, "Did Mary Magdalene have a special relationship with Jesus?"

Well the answer is yes, because, of course, we all have a special relationship with Jesus.

Mary's encounter with Jesus in today's gospel is graphic – cinematic almost. The other disciples seem to be just an aside. This Gospel story is Mary's. Jesus simply uses her name: "Mary." It's a living encounter! But this intensely personal encounter isn't an exclusive one. Jesus tells Mary to tell others. We Christians can't turn our faith something exclusive and use it to attack others. Our faith is open to everyone - as Jesus was - not just to some. And our hope is that one day our faith will be realised here on earth as it is in heaven. So in the middle of chaos and destruction, abuse of power and greed, we can be bold to say, "Alleluya, Christ is risen.'

HE IS RISEN INDEED. ALLELUIA.

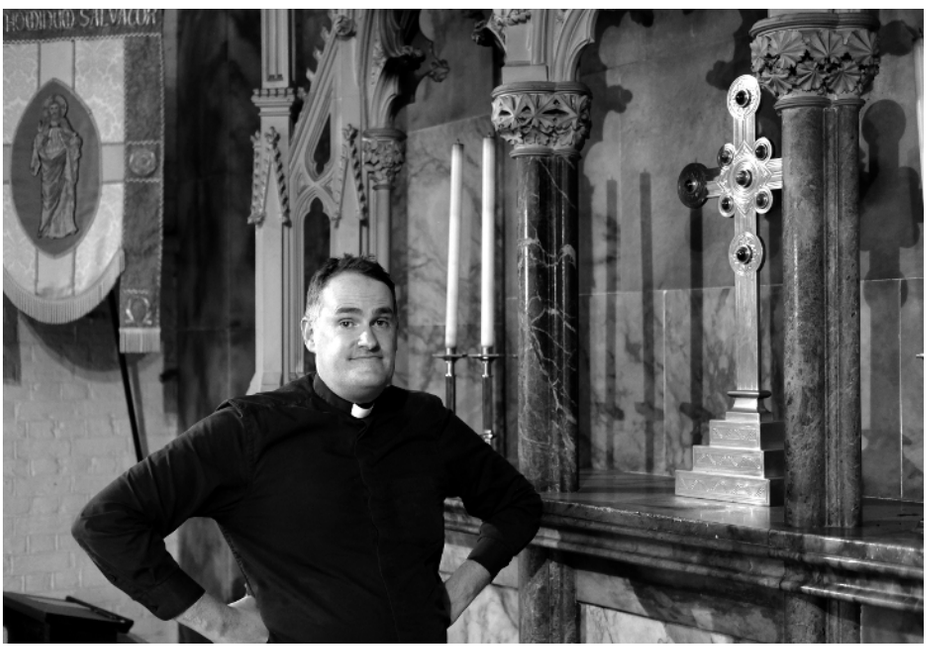
Errata

Keen crossword solvers will have noticed that the numbering was out in the last issue. The numbering should have been:

19 (not 20) down: Animals on poles in Num 21 (6 letters)
20 (not 21) down: Do this to impunity, debauchery etc (6 letters)
21 down did not exist, of course. Well done to all who spotted the error, and even bigger congratulations to those who solved the crossword anyway.

Diary: Michael Johns-Perring

Michael used to be curate here at SASM; he's now taken up a post just down the road. What does it take to make the day to day life of the vicar of Wandsworth.



“I got woken up by a cockerel today. That was a surprise in London Zone 3. The vicarage is next to an urban farm, so we get sheep bleating too. To think, this is four miles from Westminster!”

“There’s a lot of green space round here. In some ways it's an affluent suburb like Surbiton, but further in. There are a lot of quite affluent people who live round here, but being London you do get the entire spread, often living very close together. ”

“A local golf course has been redeveloped into new housing in my parish. The slightly unusual part is that the golf course used to interleave between wards of a psychiatric hospital, so now the new houses do that too, which gives a rather unique feel to the place. It's an extra new mission field for me, which is quite exciting!"

"I moved from outer London up to Edinburgh, now I’m back in inner London. I’m starting to think urbane ministry is my calling?”

“I learned a lot from Edinburgh. The Scottish Episcopal Church is in a quite different situation from the Church of England in some ways, so it will be interesting to see what lessons I can apply down here.”



“We get maybe 70 adults on a Sunday here. The oldest of those just turned 100, so happy birthday to her!”

“The buck stops with me now. Robert taught me a huge amount when I was curate in Surbiton, but having the responsibility for a parish puts a different shade on all the day to day decisions that are a part of church life.”

Caption competition:

Michael is deep in conversation with Ann's old parrot Basil, while reading her an Agatha Christie. What are they talking about? Fill in the blank to receive a bottle of ... something. Submissions to the editor, whose arbitrary decision is final.



Congratulations to Katrina Lidbetter, who won last issue's caption competition. with this entry

[Donkey] Oh, I thought I'd get at least an archbishop

[Janice] Don't you dare poo on my parade.

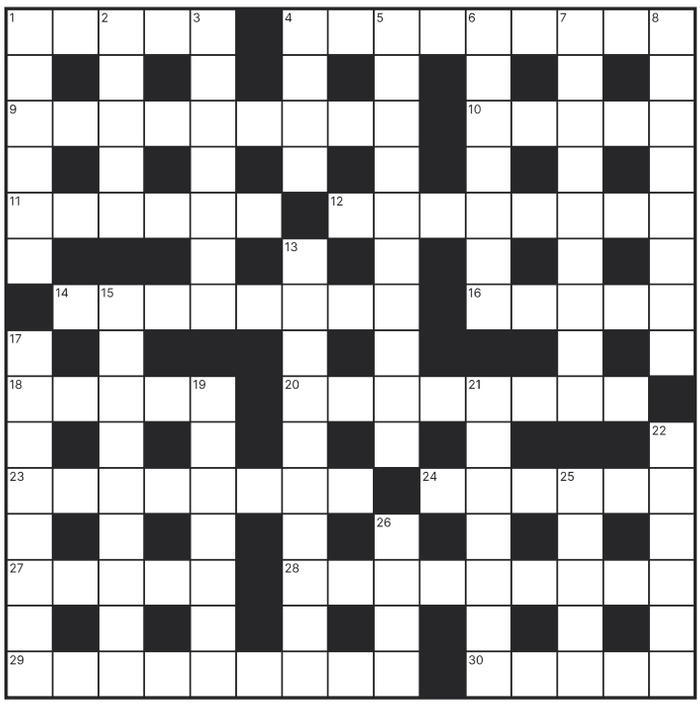
"One thing I miss about Surbiton is the 9:15 children's service. We only have one morning service here, so it's quite hard to make the Sunday school something that everyone will enjoy. We might get an age range of ten years between them, so entertaining the youngest without boring the older ones is always a challenge."

"I've started an 8am communion service once a month. The next step is seeing who comes - I'll wait and pray about it."

"My daughters have settled into schools. They are getting much more support than they did where we were before, which was the main reason for us moving back to London, so that's good news."

"I've inherited Ann Barker's parrot Basil. I think I've learned most of her calls (because despite the name, she's a lady parrot) but it's a bit unnerving, I'm not quite sure what she'll say next!"





Across

1. Farmers grow these (5)
4. Sleep state of someone who is 20A (4,5)
9. What young farmers get at Cirencester (9)
10. E.g. broad bean or lentil (5)
11. Type of pepper; city east of Antioch (6)
12. Grown in a conifer plantation (4,4)
14. "Help I've got no food, please give me some!" (8)
16. Nordic turnip (5)
18. A cow does this with methane (5)
20. Cain in Gen 4:12 (NIV) after God evicted him from his land (8)
23. Farmer who hasn't been to Cirencester (8)
24. Sheep noise (6)
27. Type of headphone; site of cow's tag (2,3)
28. The old nag was worked too hard - by famine or pestilence perhaps? (4,5)
29. Start points of astronomical spring & autumn (9)
30. Ornamental flowers, commercially grown in Holland and Kenya (5)

Down

1. North African citadel. Don't rock it! (6)
2. Red clay used as body paint (5)
3. Star sign for post-harvest period (7)
4. Carries hay (4)
5. Lassie hasn't needed one since 1988 (3,7)
6. Small fruity computer programs (e.g. in Java) (7)
7. They give you hayfever (9)
8. Samuel's stone (8)
13. Heretical (10)
15. Try distilling this if you've had a good orange harvest (9)
17. Farmer did this to three servants in Matt 25 (8)
19. Arabic thanks (7)
21. Animal product used for shoes (7)
22. They turn wheat into bread (6)
25. Farmer in Luke 12 built too many of these (5)
29. Paul Weller preserves fruit (4)

