

Special Events

SUNDAY 19 AUGUST

10 a.m FACS

7.30 p.m. Taizé Service

SATURDAY 25 AUGUST

Thanksgiving Sunday
2.00-4.00 pm Card making
workshop

THURSDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

8 am Box Hill Kiosk Stall

SATURDAY OCTOBER 13

9 am Spring Fair

SUNDAY 28 OCTOBER

SHOEBOX SUNDAY

PARISH CLERGY

Vicar.

Rev SHANE HÜBNER

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Sudanese Priest

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Rt Rev'd George Hearn, 9840 7816,

Rev. Betty Bracken, 9939 5881

Rev. John Stockdale 9890 8388

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GOOD NEWS

好消息

WELPIATH



Parish Magazine of the Anglican Parish of Box Hill
August 2018

The Vicar Writes

Welcome to another edition of our parish magazine. Since the last edition of the 'Good News' I have had the opportunity to attend the third international conference for the Anglican Society of Catholic Priests, held in Canterbury England in the first week of July a wonderful opportunity to gather with over fifty other Priests from the UK and North America. Meeting daily at Canterbury Cathedral for prayer, the Eucharist, and Choral Evensong, we were immersed in prayer and reminded of its place at the heart of all that we do. The theme was 'Turbulent Priests: The Saints of Canterbury and Catholic Mission.' The current Dean of the Cathedral, Robert Willis, gave a passionate address where we were introduced to the many



former Archbishops of Canterbury who were considered 'difficult' in their day and age, including of course, Thomas Becket, who was murdered in the Cathedral in 1170. Robert's main point however was that while there is always a place for 'turbulence' (and Priests and lay people who stir the pot and agitate for radical renewal) there is also the need for those who settle things down! He quoted his own father in saying that you can be a 'Line-layer' or a 'Station master.' The point being that both are needed! A high-light of the conference was the opportunity to preach and celebrate at St Martin's Church, Canterbury. Built in Roman times, it was the church used by St Augustine, sent by Pope

Gregory I to bring the good news of Christ to the Anglo-Saxons. Here in 597 AD Augustine worshipped with Queen Bertha and baptised her husband, King Æthelberht. This is the oldest church in the English speaking world and, with the Cathedral, forms the Canterbury World Heritage site. More interesting things from the conference can be found at the Vicar of Surrey Hills, Father Ian Morrison's blog <http://fatherm.com>.

I also took the opportunity to visit St-Martin's-in-field, London, and enquire about their network program, "HeartEdge". Among other things HeartEdge supports churches in blending their mission around four key areas:

Congregation – Inclusive approaches to liturgy, worship and day-to-day communal life

Community – models of outreach serving local need and addressing social justice

Culture – art, music and ideas to re-imagine the Christian narrative for the present moment

Commerce – Commercial activities that generate finance, creatively extending and enhancing mission and ministry through social enterprise.

More information about the network can be found: <https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/life-st-martins/mission/heartedge/>. As we as a community dream about what can happen with our redeveloped Parish hall and the new mission opportunities presented to us, this network may be an important one for us to join!

I draw parishioner's attention to our 'Stewardship Program' for 2018/19. Beginning on Sunday 29th July and running until Thanksgiving Sunday 26th August, it will be an opportunity for us to reflect upon our support of the Anglican Parish of Box Hill.

Using a very traditional division of time, talents, and treasures there will be material to guide our reflections over the weeks 5, 12, and 19 August. On the 19th August parishioners will be given a pack for them to fill in and return the following Sunday, the 26th (our Thanksgiving celebrations). While we have entered an agreement to build a child-care centre on the old St Philip's Box Hill North site, and we look to eventually receive a good income stream from this development, the lag time is about two years from now. Our financial position in the intervening period is very tight and I ask all parishioners to

reflect and pray about their financial commitment to God's church here in Box Hill. More

information will be available in the weeks ahead and also on the parish website: www.anglicansboxhill.org.au

Two other matters I wish to draw parishioner's attention to include: (1) Due to a lack of support right now, our planned evangelism course "Turning to Christ" which was due to start on Saturday 11th August is now postponed until after the Vicar gets back from his travels.

From 30th August to mid-September I will be leading a parish group on a pilgrimage to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. After this, I fly to Scotland to join up with the Australian Welsh Male Choir for our tour of the UK finishing with the Welsh festival concert at the Royal Albert Hall on 13th October. I will be home on Wednesday 17th October.

While I am away the Reverend Alasdair MacKinnon-Love will be acting Deacon-in-Charge, ably supported by Bishop George Hearn and Reverend Harry Kerr. If technology permits, there will be a travel blog available for parishioners to connect to so as to see the pilgrimage and choir tour in real time. Details will be posted on the parish web page and in the weekly LINK. I ask that you support and pray for Alasdair, George and Harry as they kindly look after things while I am away. Also continue to pray for our Diocese and our Archbishop Philip. The day I return is also the day our Diocesan Synod begins and it will be an interesting Synod as we address, alongside other important matters, the ramifications of being part of the redress scheme for victims of sexual abuse.

Thank You, Refugees

**A Thanksgiving for World Refugee Day, the Revd Carolyn Cooke
(La Côte chaplaincy, Diocese of Europe)**

A Word of thanks... to you in exile

A Word of thanks... to you who have risked so much

A Word of thanks... to you who have left behind loved ones and now offer love and care to the likes of us, strangers who, God-willing, become friends

A Word of thanks... for the deep wisdom of your heritage and experience

A Word of thanks... for the creativity and vibrancy of your cultures, which we glimpse and savour

A Word of thanks... for your stamina to learn... new languages, new humour, new food, new systems, new rules spoken and unspoken, new views, new manners, new just about everything

A Word of thanks... for not giving up in the face of prejudice and misunderstanding

A Word of thanks... for not giving up on the troubling wait for papers that spell permission to stay, permission to breathe easy, permission to put down roots with equal rights as those around you

A Word of thanks... for eliciting some good in us, sometimes, and being gracious and humble enough to accept our help

A Word of thanks... for your forgiveness and kindness towards us as we make mistakes and say hurtful things in our attempts to understand

A Word of thanks... for your honesty, for the vulnerable truth of your humanity, your dignity even as you deal with dreams of trauma while still dreaming of lighter days ahead

A Word of thanks... for your sense of humour

A Word of thanks... hunger for life

A Word of thanks... for your resilience

A Word of thanks... for your faith which inspires and challenges our faith

A Word of thanks... to you in exile opening our eyes to so much truth and beauty

So many words of thanks... still so much more to say...

Esther Writes



We give thanks to the Lord who delivers His people out of darkness into His marvelous light. **Linda Song, Helen Wang, Lanlan Yang** have been baptized and confirmed into God's family. **Little William Chu** also has been baptized. All of them have been through a difficult faith journey, they have experienced God's saving power in their family and personal lives. Especially with their Buddhist background, Helen's family have experienced a very real spiritual warfare before the baptism service. Thanks be to God, He calmed the storm. On the day, all of the candidates received baptism with peace and joy. Now we invite them to join one of the cell groups, prayer meeting or discipleship class to encourage them to keep growing in the new life.

Welcome Wendy



Wendy Tang was inducted as Children's Minister on 24th of June on St Peter's Day. We thank God for her continuous dedication and faithful service in Chinese congregation. We pray for God's power and wisdom fill her day by day to continue to fill her day by day.

'Notes About a Saint' by Gwen McDonald

St Teresa of Avila, also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, was a prominent 16th century Spanish Roman Catholic saint. She was a reformer of the Carmelite Order and a major figure of the Counter-Reformation a period of Catholic revival initiated in response to the Protestant Reformation during the mid-16th century.

The following Reflection is attributed to her and I believe is relevant for us today. For me it speaks of Hope in a changing and uncertain world. (Read Psalm 91:v 1&2 and Hymn 739 in Together in Song)

*"Let nothing disturb thee;
Let nothing dismay thee;
All things pass;
God never changes. Patience attains
All that it struggles for.
He who has God,
finds he lacks nothing.
God alone suffices"*

St. Peter's Day 2018



THANK YOU Fund Raising August 2018

We thank everyone for their continued support with Fundraising.

You pray for and support our events by coming or donating and working on the days.
We would love to see you at our next events. Do say that you can come on:

August 26 at 2 pm. Card making workshop in the Undercroft. Supplies available.

September 6 between 8 am to 2 pm. Box Hill Kiosk stall. We will sell home produce, crafts and cakes to raise awareness of our Parish and for our Spring Fair.

13 October 9am to 2.00 pm. SPRING FAIR At St Peter's.

THIS IS OUR MAJOR FUND RAISER!

We warmly welcome you, your friends and families.

We have the best raffle prizes! Delicious food to eat !

Wonderful Stalls selling Home produce, Cakes, Steptoe, Books, Clothing, Collectables, beautiful Crafts , hardy Plants, our Saturday School stall and More!
Bargains for everyone!

This is only possible with your support. Please contact me if you can help delivering letterbox flyers, selling raffle tickets, setting up, cleaning up or working on the day.

Thank you everyone.

Hilary Blakeman. 9899 7553

SHOEBOX SUNDAY IS OCTOBER 28

We were privileged to participate in an Operation Christmas Child distribution in a remote and extremely poor village in Cambodia, called Tatrei. The distribution was done on the grounds of a primary school that is being built by Samaritan's Purse for 181 children who currently attend school in two old, decaying wooden shacks. The community is very excited to see the new school building being constructed, The children played wonderful games prior to the Operation Christmas Child distribution; they played soccer against our team (and beat us!), even though some of them were barely of school-going age. The Good News of Jesus Christ was shared, and with their shoeboxes, each child received a

beautifully illustrated book containing the story of Jesus. A few hours after the distribution, we were delighted to receive a visit on the school grounds by a mother with her beautifully dressed daughter, Srey (not her real name). Srey is three years old and the shoebox she received contained a gorgeous white satin skirt, pink blouse, and a lot of wonderful necklaces as well as a silver tiara. When Srey was dressed up with this beautiful ensemble, she was so joyous that she asked her mother, 'Please take me back to the strangers so that they can see me with my new clothes and take a photograph.' We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our supporters for partnering with us to positively impact the lives of children in the name of Jesus.



**SHOEBOXES AND STARTER BAGS (\$10) FROM JAN GUNST
STAR FILLING NOW!**

TO BE A PILGRIM

INTRODUCING THE PILGRIM COURSE.



WE ARE ALL ON A JOURNEY , a journey through life, through death and beyond.

WHERE ARE WE GOING? What does it mean? What is our destination?

Pilgrimage is a

- journey of faith,
- a journey into faith
- It is a journey into who God is and who we are.
- A journey of meeting with Jesus.

YOU ARE INVITED to travel with us on the PILGRIM COURSE.

Pilgrim is

- ideal for explorers on the fringes of church life,
- for mature Christians who want to explore the faith at a deeper level. I
- It allows opportunity for deep and honest discussion, allowing everyone to share whatever their level of experience and knowledge.
- It is a time for **ASKING QUESTIONS**
- And listening to other people's questions, the church's answer to the ABC programme: *You can't ask that!*

BASED ON

- Sharing our journeys, our ups and downs, our doubts and faith.
- Listening to the Bible exploring in depth and bringing our questions.
- In an atmosphere of quiet prayer and meditation.

For more details
about when this will begin

WATCH THIS SPACE

WOMEN CHOOSING PEACE

Phil Wilmot

SOUTH SUDAN is the world's youngest and most fragile state. The outbreak of civil war in 2013 pushed millions out of the country and into refugee camps. Oil revenues fuel President Salva Kiir's regime, notorious for kidnapping and torturing those who criticize him.

Kiir's suppression hasn't stopped courageous Christian women from taking their prayers for peace to the streets. On the first Saturday of every month, hundreds of women gather to demand an end to war.

"All 64 tribes are represented in the women's division of the South Sudan Council of Churches," said Maria Bol (not her real name), a member of the ecumenical body responsible for organizing the marches. "The challenge in South Sudan is that the government has no tear gas. They just use live bullets against peaceful protesters. But our actions often go on uninterrupted, since they know we are peaceful and prayerful."

Although the international media portrays South Sudan's women and youth as passive victims of circumstances, it is exactly these demographics that are pushing back against this brutal regime. In November, youth members of more than 40 women's organizations convened the largest anti-war demonstration since the war began. Thousands turned up, wielding messages of peace while Kiir's security forces—responsible for intimidating and abusing his critics—attempted to single out leaders.

These leaders continue to suffer—some even being intimidated in the neighbouring countries to which they fled—and threats continue against their family members back home.

"This militancy is born of Sudanese rule, of our former colonial masters," said Juba-based conflict resolution analyst Fareed Musa Fataki. "There is a school of thought that powerful men are not subjected to any rules. Thus, South Sudan has no clear distinction between politics and militarism."

The recent normalization of militarism—guns wielded by those in civilian attire, kidnappings of peace activists beyond South Sudan's borders, road checkpoints throughout the supposedly secure capital city of Juba, rampant disappearances, and use of secret detention sites—may be the reason why many South Sudanese choose peaceful over violent resistance. South Sudan is a nation born into peace. Broad nonviolent campaigns (including those prompted by the 2002 South Sudan Council of Churches document "Let My People Choose") led to a national referendum across the 10 original states that birthed a new nation into existence, with about 99 percent voting for self-determination.

The people of South Sudan have never tolerated their descent into war. Since the first shots were fired, Christian women have marched and preached against violence in marketplaces and police stations. Artists have flooded the streets with symbols of peace. Children in peace clubs

have shouted songs against bloodshed. Peacemaking trainings have undermined the efforts of politicians to recruit and arm youth. Activists have carried dead bodies to parliament. The South Sudanese have been anything but passive.

The South Sudan Council of Churches' 2017 action plan for peace invites people of Christian faith across the globe to join their advocacy for a comprehensive peace agreement. "We call upon the church in the United States to join us in nonviolent advocacy to stop the war," said Bol.

Yet the ecumenical thrust for peace in South Sudan isn't idly waiting for international solidarity. Christians standing up to militarism have chosen the path of Jesus—speaking truth to power despite the risks. In the words of one female youth activist, "Nonviolence is the way we choose to live. We all have power. Nonviolence is the choice to use it."

[Phil Wilmot](#)

Phil Wilmot directs Solidarity Uganda, an organization that links nonviolence training with movement for social change in Africa. He writes on African activists and lives in Uganda.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE OF NON-VIOLENCE

An in-depth Bible study. Janet Hubner

I have previously shared with you my interest in and exploration of the Gospel message of nonviolence and how Jesus reveals God's character of love. I have recently come across a Bible study that explores this theme in depth across the whole scope of the Bible. It explores what the Bible reveals about human nature and God's character and how Jesus brings salvation in a completely nonviolent way.

I've decided to follow this Bible study plan and I invite you to join me on this journey of discovery. I love Bible study because I feel it helps me grow in my faith and understanding of God and opens me to God's transforming Spirit in me. I have found that I always get more out of Bible study when I do it with others, so I'm excited about this chance to study, learn and grow as a group.

So, for this journey, we'll be following the map laid out in the new study manual, ***Seven Stories: How to study and teach the nonviolent Bible*** by Anthony Bartlett, a former priest in the UK and now a professor of religion in the USA and the leader of a small Christian community.

This study will be profoundly interesting, surprising, challenging, thought-provoking and, I hope, life-changing. We may find our ideas disrupted or turned upside down; we might learn a new way of reading the Bible; we will have the chance to practise talking about our faith with each other.

I plan to start in November and the study will extend over 8 months, with



3 meetings per month. It sounds like a big commitment, but you don't have to commit to the whole program. I would love you to give it a try for the first month, and then decide if you'd like to come along to the next. I will encourage people to come and go as you wish, join halfway through or stop coming at any time. Any one is welcome to any session. Of course, you will gain the most benefit if you participate in the whole series, but even if you come once, I am sure you will find the study enriching.

We will meet for the first three weeks of each month, focusing on one of the seven stories, then break for the fourth/fifth weeks before moving on to the next story the following month. All you need to bring is your Bible and a notebook. You don't need to

have the study book, as I will be using it as a leader's guide (though you are welcome to order it for yourself if you want to have it).

My initial plan is to follow this timetable, but this is flexible. Once our group is gathered we can decide together how to proceed.

- **November** – Introduction: Study Method, Atonement & Violence
- **December** – 1: Oppression to Justice
- **January** – break
- **February** – 2: Violence to Forgiveness
- **March** – 3: The Land and its Loss
- **April** – 4: Wrath to Compassion
- **May** – 5: Victim to Vindication
- **June** – 6: The Temple and its Deconstruction
- **July** – 7: History to its End

I have not yet decided on the meeting time as I would like to hear what would suit those interested. My initial thought is to meet on either Thursday nights (7.30-9.30 pm) or Saturday afternoons (2-4 pm), remembering that it will be for the first three weeks of each month.

If you are interested in joining this study, at least for the first month, please let me know and indicate which meeting time would suit you best. If you've been looking for a stimulating, in-depth Bible study, then I think this series will give you that and much more!

Janet Hubner

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Email: janet.hubner@hotmail.com

NOT UNTIL YOU GIVE ME YOUR BLESSING

A sermon on Marriage AND Blessing by Revd. Dr Sam Wells

I have bad news for you. The Prayer of St Francis of Assisi, sometimes known as the Peace Prayer or 'Make me a channel of your peace,' wasn't written by St Francis in the twelfth century. It was written in 1912 by a French Catholic priest, Esther Bouquerel, and published in a small-circulation spiritual magazine. At the end of the First World War, the French Franciscan Étienne Benoît printed millions of copies of the prayer on a card that depicted St Francis on the back. A few years later an English translation was printed in a Quaker magazine in the US under the title A Prayer of St Francis of

Assisi – and the rest is history. By the time the South African third order Franciscan Sebastian Temple wrote 'Make me a channel' in 1967 all connection with historical attribution was long gone.

Like the Prayer of St Francis, the connection between the blessing of same-sex unions and the controversy that surrounds them sometimes gets lost in sweeping assumptions and half-remembered history. I'm not attempting to talk in any detail about marriage, to survey the scriptural terrain, or to offer any definitive statement. I'm simply going to explore some Old Testament themes that have hitherto been largely neglected. Some maintain that same-sex unions constitute a threat to historic heterosexual marriage. On the face of it it's rather absurd to suggest that an institution could be placed in jeopardy because a whole new tranche of people want to join it. But something's clearly under threat, even if that something isn't marriage itself. Perhaps what's really under threat are the multiple confusions, double standards and ambiguities that underwrite the compromise that has been marriage in the last few

To offer some examples: is marriage always, in every case, monogamous? Only in theory. Statistics suggest that

45% of married women and 55% of married men cheat on their spouses. Is marriage always lifelong? Clearly not, since around 40% of UK marriages end in divorce. Do marriages invariably bring forth children?

Evidently not, whether by accident or design. Is church or society clear about what the relative roles of married couples should be, in relation to income, career development, housekeeping, and child-rearing, or are we all in fact at sea about such things, or perhaps instead swimming in a sea of hypocrisy? What is the place of erotic desire within marriage? Is it central, dangerous and safely contained, only there at the start, crucial and to be carefully maintained, or best not discussed? Is marriage akin to friendship, or completely different?

These are the kinds of questions that are wholly or largely unresolved, and that make the onset of same-sex unions so threatening, because same-sex unions bring their own norms and ambiguities into this already complex and in large degree incoherent set of expectations and anomalies. On the face of it, why would any social group be so eager to join an institution that's evidently so beleaguered and floundering? We don't know if it's monogamous, if it's permanent, if it's about children, what equality should look like, what the role of desire should be, or what love in fact means – but otherwise it's great. In such circumstances one theologian speculates that there are four reasons why couples seek same-sex blessings. He observes couples that celebrate at an anniversary (or as death draws near), who want to mark a sense of reconciliation with God, who seek the support of a community, or who are in fact trying to save their relationship. He ironically remarks that heterosexual couples seek marriage for broadly similar reasons. In other words, it's not that we all know what regular

marriage is, and same-sex unions are something irregular and undefined: it's that we're all scratching around for fixed points in the fields of love, desire, commitment, sex, faithfulness and family, and same-sex couples are

simply highlighting the anomalies that already exist.

In such circumstances, what might blessing mean? I want to start by pointing out three things blessing certainly doesn't mean. It doesn't mean a casual benevolent waft of goodwill. Think about when you sneeze, and a person beside you on the bus says, 'Bless you.' That's a mixture of social habit and bland kindness. Recall the occasion when someone in the office is watching a YouTube video of a puppy being kind to a baby, and a passer-by says, patronisingly but sentimentally, 'Awww – bless.'

Consider the moment when a friend goes out of their way to be considerate and you want to say something more than just 'Thanks,' so you say 'Bless you.' Blessing is about a lot more than such casual acknowledgements. But then second, blessing means something beyond the sense of an abundance of offspring, military advantage, and material goods. At the end of the book of Job, we're told 'The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys.' (Job 42:12) So that's all right then. All the sufferings – we can forget about them. Perhaps most significantly, what blessing doesn't mean is the sense of a God whose fundamental purpose is to furnish us with plenty, comfort, and fortune, who is, in short, our joker to be played in difficult circumstances, our trump card in adversity, our get-out-of-jail token to bail us out when we mess up.

So if blessing doesn't mean these things, what does blessing mean? I

picture of blessing, and might describe more accurately and less cynically what same-sex couples might actually be searching for when they ask for their relationships to be blessed.

It might seem to be stating the obvious, but the first dimension of blessing is love. In Isaiah 43.4 God says to Israel, 'You are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you.' That's the first thing we're looking for when we seek a blessing, from God or from another person: that we may know that we are precious, honoured, and loved. I don't know why that text isn't more often used at weddings, because those three words say most of that the marriage service is wanting to say. You are precious: you are unique, wondrously made, fragile, glorious, of infinite value. You are honoured: respected, with dignity, to be treated properly, given thanks for, listened to, not taken for granted. You are loved: adored, desired, cherished, longed for, cradled. It's no good to be honoured without being loved; that's just kindness. It's no good being loved without being honoured: that's exploitative. LGBT+ people don't want just to be loved, if that means being patronised, being regarded as an exception, living life as an indulged anomaly. LGBT+ people want to be seen as precious, honoured, and loved, with the right balance of justice and mercy, challenge and acceptance.

And the second dimension of blessing is the redemption of hurt. To be blessed is to be able to look back into the most mysterious and complex parts of your personal history and, perhaps for the first time, find them not layers of curse or unexploded gelnite but storehouses of wisdom, sources of understanding, textures of depth and perception and soil for healing. Jacob is a complex figure in the Old Testament. His life is a search for reconciliation and

blessing. In Genesis 32 a man comes and wrestles with him all night. It's more or less a draw; the man pleads for Jacob to let him go; but Jacob says, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' And Jacob knows he has seen God face to face. He leaves the place, limping because the man had struck him on the hip socket. The wound becomes a sign of the blessing. Jacob becomes Israel, the one who strives with God. Israel is beginning to understand that this relationship means as much to God as it does to itself. What LGBT+ people are looking for in blessing is to make sense of a story that in many cases began with a sense of difference, may have involved rejection or even demonisation, could have included self-hatred, and invariably involved some level of secrecy, yet has come to embrace love, acceptance, joy and hope. The limp becomes a sign of blessing. God is in this place, though I never knew it. Blessing is about redemption of the past, as much as it's about love in the present.

Which brings us to the third dimension of blessing, which is about vocation, and the future. It's about you. It's fundamentally about blessing, in this third sense. The great Mommy and Daddy of passages about blessing in the Old Testament is Genesis 12, where God makes seven promises to Abraham. The ones that really count are the middle one and the last one, number four and number seven: 'You will be a blessing,' and, 'In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' In other words, 'Make me a channel of your peace.' None of us want to be rejected – we want to be respected, understood, and loved. None of us want to be fobbed off with a superficial and patronising acceptance – we want our past and our hurts to be integrated back into God's story; we want to feel that our insight and

experience is valuable and our struggle is part of God's struggle. But beyond either of those things, we want to be useful, to be put to work, to be able to move past fixation on our own struggles and be able to enrich the life of those worse off than us. That's what vocation is – the moment when you realise God's love for you has redeemed your past so that all the previously unexplained and unresolved incidents of your life now cluster back in in such a way that they can be a blessing to others.

You've known hatred; through you the Holy Spirit can turn hatred into love. You've known discord; through you the Holy Spirit can turn discord into harmony. You've known doubt; through you the Holy Spirit can turn doubt into faith. You've known despair; through you the Holy Spirit can turn despair into hope. You've known sadness; through you the Holy Spirit can turn sadness into joy. That's why a couple comes for blessing: to inherit the mantle of Abraham, and become a sacrament with whom and through whom many others will find a blessing.

Let's not fear same-sex couples will destroy heterosexual marriage; conventional marriage is fast becoming unconventional without any assistance from elsewhere. Let's not be put off by the weakness and folly to which we're all prone: people seek a blessing for many ambivalent reasons. Let's not be waylaid by inadequate views of blessing – it's not necessarily a casual, worldly, or instrumental thing. Let's see the call for same-sex blessings as an opportunity to renew our understanding of what blessing really involves: a request to discover what love is, what healing encompasses, and what it means to be an instrument of God's peace.

Rev'd Dr Same Wells is Vicar of St. Martin in the Fields, London

In the face of the man-made calamity that every war is, one must affirm and reaffirm, again and again, that the waging of war is not inevitable or unchangeable. Humanity is not destined to self-destruction. Clashes of ideologies, aspirations and needs can and must be settled and resolved by means other than war and violence.

Pope John Paul II, Appeal for Peace, Hiroshima, Japan.

We must all pray that no human hand will ever again do what has been done here.

Mother Teresa, Nagasaki, Japan.

A BLESSING FOR MY TRANSGENDER SON

How witnessing Samson's renaming ceremony changed my church

Dani Gabriel

MY CONGREGATION, All Souls Episcopal Parish, is in a college town. In the summer our numbers thin considerably, so we move the pews to create a more intimate space in the round. But today the pews were overfull. People were sitting on the sides, and there were extra chairs in the back.

My son Samson stood in front of our pew. One of the men in the congregation knelt and fixed his bow tie. The Sunday morning sunlight was streaming through the stained glass and the skylight. I hugged friends. *This is going to be good, right?* I prayed. *Please, Lord, I hope we're doing the right thing.*

On Aug. 13 we renamed and blessed my son, Samson Red Gabriel. Samson is transgender. That week we had gone to court to legally change his name and gender, and that week he turned 10. That Sunday held the joy of five baptisms, all the hilarity and devotion that goes along with that, and this incredible rite that had never been done before in the Episcopal Church. As far as we know, nothing like it had been done for a child in a mainline church before, period.

After a long period of exploration, my daughter Isabel came out as a boy named Samson, and he was ecstatic. That excitement quickly faded with the arrival of awkwardness, inappropriate comments, and harassment at school. There were all kinds of discussion in the news about transgender people, the military, bathrooms, and Trump. Samson was confused, hurt, and overwhelmed. As Samson's parents, we were also overwhelmed and terrified. Samson's papa and I are both queer, with complicated gender identities of our own. Many of our chosen family, Samson's aunts and uncles, are queer and transgender. We felt relief in knowing that Samson would grow up in our protective bubble. "Kids

these days have it so much easier than we did," we thought. We were wrong. *By the end of March, Samson was in a deep depression. All of his sparkle and talkativeness was gone. His downhill slide ended with a four-day hospitalization. The hospital was about an hour from where we live, and I remember driving back and forth every day. I wasn't sleeping. People brought us food, but I didn't taste it. My little boy was hurting, and I couldn't fix it.*

The moral principle

The first time we visited Samson, our priest, Mother Liz, came with us. She sat on the bed with Samson. He asked her to pray for him, and she anointed him. Her presence kept me mindful of the Spirit's presence, even there. Samson left the hospital and, bit by bit, got stronger and began to ignore the bullies, looking to his friends, family, and church family. Church was his safe space. When he came up the aisle in his acolyte robes on Sundays, I relaxed a little. Samson was going to be okay.

Sometime later, we were sitting at a cafe a few blocks from church when Samson asked Liz, "Could you rebaptise me?" She said "No, we baptised you, it worked the first time. But we can do something special." Over the next couple of months, we shared ideas back and forth, and Liz did some hard work. She researched, talked to other clergy, and wrote a beautiful rite for Samson based on the form of commitment to Christian service in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

There have been some blessings and renamings of transgender adults in mainline Christian traditions. There are several beautiful and affirming rites, but they are all for adults. Their language speaks to the experiences of people much further along in life than children. Transgender children and youth have particular challenges. Families feel isolated, fending off suggestions that their children are "playing" or that it's wrong to allow a child to transition. within their extended family; she's lost someone she counted on because of her kid's

transition. A rite like this, and the support of clergy, holds the young person and their family.

Rev. Liz Tichenor and Rev. Phil Brochard, our associate rector and rector, are revolutionaries in the most Episcopalian way possible. They were 100 percent willing to take the risk of publicly supporting Samson and our family in this way, but they were not going to go rogue. They were going to do it with our bishop's approval. They were going to make it real. Our bishop, Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus, helped edit and approve the final rite, and this meant a lot to Samson. It meant that it wasn't just our parish family that loved him. It was the church, too. And what follows is that God loves him, too.

Our presiding bishop, Michael Curry, had this to say in a statement about the ban on transgender people in the military: "I am compelled to oppose these actions and to affirm the moral principle of equal rights for all persons, including the LGBTQ communities. I do so as a follower of Jesus Christ, as presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, and as a citizen who loves this country." Again, a revolutionary in the most Episcopalian way. He's not going rogue. We don't do this alone. This is how we behave, as followers of Jesus Christ, as the bearers of his love.

This is so often not the case. I volunteer as a chaplain, and one of my trainers told me that if I encounter a transgender person who is suicidal, I *must* say, "God does not condemn you," that that—more than any other statement—is critical. LGBTQ people have grown up in religious institutions, and I have the most experience with people who grew up in Christian traditions, with people who grew up in Christian traditions, being rejected, shamed, and excluded. It is estimated that 40 percent of transgender people attempt suicide. And there is no way to know what the real number of attempts and suicides is, because

lives of transgender people are often shrouded in shame and secrecy. Much of the pain LGBTQ people struggle with comes from the communities, communities that are supposed to be centred around the teachings of Jesus Christ.

“The church I know”

So there we were, in the sun and shadow, with Tripp fixing Samson’s pink polka dot bow tie. And I was thinking, *Maybe we shouldn’t do this.* I was thinking about telling Liz, “Maybe you believe in transgender rights, maybe you want to support transgender youth, but maybe not this kid. Should the media show up, we are not the family you want to be seen with. “How much love is there, really? How much room in the body of Christ is there, really? After the beauty of the baptisms, it was Samson’s turn. We stood in front of the stained glass: me, my partner Jonah, Samson’s sister Magdalene, and Samson’s godparents. Samson nodded vigorously to Liz’s question, “Samson, do you claim again your identity as a beloved child of God?” And then came the singing, and the holy water, and the crying. And then we shared communion, for real, in a way I didn’t feel like I had before. Afterward I watched parishioners, young and old, of every imaginable background, come up to Samson and tell him congratulations. I know for a fact that some of these people have very different political views than I do. But these are our brothers and sisters, and the love of Christ is big.

Really big. The support of a church is different from the support of a parent, teacher, or another institution. The rite we did for Samson spoke to a love that follows him everywhere, at all times. It was done on behalf of a community that he can turn to when we, as his family, fail, when his friends fail, when his school fails. It targets a deep shame that he has picked up from so many places, a shame that says that he is a mistake. “At its best, this is what the church can do. Over the months since Samson’s blessing, it has come up at church over and over. People have told me about the pain that lingered from their childhood experiences with a punitive church. They have told me that witnessing Samson’s blessing changed things for them, that it changed what they thought church could be. And my LGBTQ community has felt it deeply. They are absolutely blown away, and it has started an unfolding of healing. Even my hairdresser cried when I told her. “That’s not the church I “Yeah, it’s not,” I said. Transgender inclusion in the church is not a political issue. It is the coming home of people who have been denied their full personhood and the recognition that they are beloved of God. It is the expansion, for all of us, of our capacity to follow Christ.

What the church could be

Transgender people have so much to offer the church. In 2012, the Episcopal Church voted to remove

the legal barriers to transgender people being ordained. Chris Paige, a organizer and educator on transgender spirituality, says, “Some of the fundamental religious questions—Who am I? How do I fit into the world?—those are very familiar questions that people ask on a journey of gender exploration.”

This change in church canons does not mean universal acceptance. Many transgender people are still discouraged from becoming clergy. But paths of transgender clergy offer guidance to the whole church, and the perspectives of transgender people widen our worlds and open our eyes to difference and to our common humanity. And, like anyone else, transgender people can become a part of the church in many ways. We have a lot of questions to ask ourselves right now, about who we want to be as the holy catholic church. I believe that we have just started a turn around a corner. A lot of people took risks to make Samson’s rite happen. A lot of people put aside their judgments to demonstrate that the love of God has no bounds. I asked Samson how he felt that day. He said, “I feel like the luckiest boy in the world.” A few weeks later, Samson told us that when he grows up, he is going to be a professional basketball player, a lawyer, or the first openly transgender bishop in the Episcopal Church. I like that last one, I told him. But someone might get there first.

Do You Claim Again Your Identity?’

The rite used for Samson’s blessing, written by Rev. Liz Tichenor.

Presider, Samson, and his parents and godparents gather near the front. One godparent lights Samson’s original baptismal candle from the paschalcandle as the presider begins.

Presider: *Dear friends in Christ, we trust that God has known every one of us from the time we were being knit together in the womb, making us in their image. At every turn in the wonder of creation, God paused to name that life is very good. Throughout the ages, God has called people to follow and renamed them. In the journey: Jacob wrestled God’s angel through the night and emerged blessed as Israel; God renamed Abraham and Sarah as they gave themselves to God’s covenant in the wilderness; scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he began a new life as Paul, a trailblazer for God’s love. We too are called to open ourselves to God’s ongoing revelation. Today, we come together to celebrate Samson’s unfolding understanding of God’s revelation, marked by his taking on a new name. (Presider turns to Samson.)*

Presider: *Samson, do you claim again your identity as a beloved*

child of God?

Samson: *I do.*

Presider: *Will you continue to listen for God’s call in your life, opening yourself to the Spirit’s revelation?*

Samson: *I will, with God’s help. (Presider turns to the congregation.)*

Presider: *Will all you here present do all in your power to love and support this person in his newly revealed life in Christ?*

All: *We will!*

Presider (to parents and godparents): *Name this child.*

Parents and Godparents: *Samson Red Gabriel.*

Presider: *Samson, may your name be a blessing. Share that blessing freely. (Presider lays a hand on Samson.)*

Presider: *Let us pray. has now reaffirmed his commitment to follow Christ and to serve in His name. Give him courage, patience, and vision as he bears this new name, and strengthen us all in our Christian witness to the world and service to others, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

"CREATIVE ARTS CONVERSATION" ON 23RD JUNE 2018 SUMMARY NOTES

Expressing our gifts in worship and service

Overall themes

- 1 Liturgical seasons and celebrations
- 2 Inter-generational and inter-cultural parish - Current creativity
- 3 Where to from here?
"Weave in faith, and God will provide the thread"

Theme 1

Liturgical seasons and celebrations

- The liturgical structure of our year (calendar); seasons of the year, colours
- Celebrations incl. Feast days, Saints' days
- Church décor and seasonal colours, often joyful and vibrant
- Banners

Theme 2

Inter-generational and inter-cultural parish

- Current creativity
"Our people are the centre of creativity..."

Music and singing

- Taizé
- Choir
- Organ and piano
- Recitals
- Welsh singers

Dream stitches

- Embroidery, stitching, sewing

Prayer and praise resources

- Photography
- Digital creativity
- Website
- Overhead screen

Spring Fair

- "Fellowship in creating"*

Family and Children's Service [FACS]

- Children's liturgy and worship
- Visual contributions
- Crafts and biblical storytelling

Good News – monthly magazine

Other

- Garden and gardening
- Cooking
- Functions
- Mosaic (front wall)
- Stained glass windows
- Flowers
- Wax- work and candles
- Palm crosses
- Card-making for fundraising

Theme 3

Where to from here?

Inter-generational and Inter-cultural liturgical opportunities

- eg thanksgiving, harvest festival,

Preparations for creativity tied with the liturgical seasons and church calendar

- November tide 2018?
- Epiphany?
- Easter tide 2019?
- Advent 2019?

Stations of the cross

- Cultural and. Inter cultural - meanings, significance and purpose...
- Explanatory words and notes (interpretive) for liturgy, decor, celebrations, etc
- Indigenous expressions of belief and creativity

Digital creativity

- Use of screen for liturgical sacred imagery/es during services
- Prayer and praise resources

Collaborations to make book/s about our lived

- experience in fellowship, in worship, of God, of prayer....
- Adults
- Children
- Inter-generational
- Inter cultural.

Space

- How we use our space/s
- Opportunities for enhanced worship, prayer, praise, fellowship, outreach...

Other

- Labyrinth?
- Scholarship of theology and creativity?
- Laughter, joy, comedy?
- Dance, movement...

Language

- Words, preferences, cultural meaning and significance,

Perhaps?

- + \- Parish mandala - who we are collectively
- + \- Australia mandala - who we are collectively

Parish makers and creativity guide?

- . What shall we call our 'creativity'?"
- "The gifts around the table"
- "Expressing our creative gifts, in service and worship"
- "Makers in the worship and service of God"

Jude Westrop