

# St Mary's News

March 2020



**Finding the treasure behind living as disciples**

- the Revd Tony Rindl

**PCC Report** - Roger Courtney

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## Finding the treasure behind living as disciples...

There are many legitimate ways in which we can approach Lent. It is a gift that we should eagerly embrace as an opportunity to draw closer to God and renew our faith in Jesus. The Communion Prayer used during Lent captures brilliantly the resources available to us to enable us to draw closer to God: 'For in these forty days you lead us into the desert of repentance that through a pilgrimage of prayer and discipline



we may grow in grace and learn to be your people once again. Through fasting, prayer and acts of service you bring us back to your generous heart. Through study of your holy word you open our eyes to your presence in the world and free our hands to welcome others into the radiant splendour of your

love.' We do this in order to prepare to celebrate the Easter feast with joyful hearts and minds.

At the Ash Wednesday service, marking the start of Lent, Marcus brilliantly captured how, when approached properly, Lent can be a way in which we can align ourselves afresh with the values of the Kingdom of God and indeed to see God at work in the world. It shows us how we can put into practice the Good News of Jesus Christ – this Good News is for everyone; a Gospel of justice as we seek God's just and gentle rule in this world. In other words, Lent need not be some austere, sombre and miserable duty which we reluctantly feel obliged to fulfil, but rather a joyful delight as we celebrate the reality of our faith as we put it into practice.

At our Ash Wednesday service, we reintroduced the tradition of the imposition of ashes - the sign of the cross being made in ash. Ash has always been associated with repentance. It is also a very good fertiliser as any gardener will tell you. The discipline of repentance is so often misinterpreted as a process of bringing to light all the things we have done wrong and humbly apologising. Although there is a time

and place for acknowledging our sins and wrong doings before God, repentance has more to do with seeing things differently, from a new perspective. It is about seeing how we can do things better in a more godly and righteous way. I think that is a key part of discipleship: how can we learn to do things differently, to live better lives and to grow and flourish in our faith. There is much we can do with ashes!

There is no doubt faith is a precious gift. It informs the most important decisions we have to make, and it sustains us in the most difficult situations we experience in life. Accompanying our faith are many other treasures. Part of our discipleship and commitment to God and to one another is learning from each other – the sharing of the gift of our ideas and wisdom is rich plunder indeed.

In the Book of Job, we read of how humankind will literally go to great depths to extract gems and precious metals such as gold. Even for coal people will dig deep, mining this precious commodity. The question then is how far are we prepared to go to get wisdom, this precious treasure? What must we do to find such a priceless commodity? The writer of the Book of Job goes on to say, ‘Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds in the sky. Destruction and Death say, “Only a rumour of it has reached our ears.” God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.’



In St. Matthew’s account of the birth of Jesus, we read of the gifts the Magi bring – that of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh - and these gifts are hugely symbolic. They carry with them prophetic meanings, symbolizing Jesus' roles as a King, Priest and Saviour. Gold is associated with royalty, the wise men's first gift of gold symbolized Jesus' role as the King of Kings. Frankincense was a type of incense burned as a sacrifice and used by priests during services of worship around the time of Christ's birth. The wise men's gift of frankincense

symbolized Jesus' priesthood. During the time of Christ's birth, the Jews used myrrh as an embalming ointment when preparing bodies for burial. The wise men's gift of myrrh prophetically signified that Jesus was born to suffer and die, while also symbolizing his burial.

We know very little about the Magi, or the Wise Men as we often call them, but our traditional understanding is they were astronomers dedicating their lives to the study of the night sky looking for truth and meaning, searching after wisdom. In finding Jesus they found the source of all wisdom. Not the narrow wisdom of this world but from the wider perspective of our Eternal God. What gifts do we have that enable us to see more clearly the very nature of who Jesus is?

When preparing for my Dad's funeral recently, and wondering what to write, I reflected on what a great teacher my father had been remembering many of the pieces of advice he had given me over the



years. I was quite surprised how much of that was rooted in scripture, but then again, the Psalmist does say, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

This Lent I commend to you the Lent Study Course - 'Living as Disciples'. May I direct you to the objectives outlined in the introduction to the course:

- Help you to grow in your understanding of discipleship
- Increase your desire to live as a disciple of Christ
- Connect with your real day to day life
- Help you reflect on some practices and disciplines which nurture disciples.

There are five sessions

- Disciples as learners
- Disciples as followers
- Disciples as friends
- Disciples as those who serve

The final session is Gathering things together in the light of the resurrection.

I very much hope you can find the opportunity to join one of our Connect Groups so that you can learn together as a small group sharing thoughts and insights together. If you have never been part of a small group, maybe this is a way of finding out how they might work for you. After all it is only for four weeks. The last session Gathering things together in the light of the resurrection we plan to study at our Connect Together on 1<sup>st</sup> April. There we will be able to gather the learning and insights of all the groups. There may be a very good reason why you can't join a Connect Group - please do take a course book with you, and study at home but perhaps plan to come to the Connect Together event. I think it could be an exciting evening if we all bring our treasure with us and share the plunder.

Lent is such a great gift, don't waste the opportunity!

*The Revd Tony Rindl*



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## PCC Meeting Report

Amongst the subjects considered at the meeting were:

**Finance and Giving** The Council considered again the financial forecasts for 2020, continuing the discussion that had taken place at the January meeting. Concern was expressed at the scale of the possible deficit, which could exhaust our reserves, and measures to address this were considered. There was limited scope for reducing

expenditure except through staff cuts, but these would seriously affect our mission. The key to resolving the issue lay in increased giving. It was agreed that there should be a further communication of the financial position to the congregation, building on the presentation at the end of January, with further examination of the cost estimates and the scope for reducing expenditure.

Peter Dean noted that text giving had not produced significant extra income, but it was now possible to have a card reader installation in the church, as at St Albans Cathedral. It was agreed that this should be investigated.

**Buildings** Roger Courtney reported that the temporary roof over the Church Centre was complete. The initial rental period was 20 weeks (ie to early July) and he hoped that renewal of the permanent roofs could be achieved by then, since extension of the rental period would incur more costs. Having examined the roof in detail, our architect was drawing up proposals for replacing the present covering. One piece of good news was that we had been advised that we could reclaim VAT on repair costs for the Church Centre as we had done for the church.

**MAP process** The principal themes for the next Mission Action Plan were considered. These were likely to be Strategy, Structure and Facilities – all related to making our mission more effective and growing St Mary’s both numerically and spiritually over the next five or more years. Developing the MAP was a task for 2020 but the main effort would be after the APCM, with the new PCC.

**‘The Big Conversation’** The Vicar reported that the Church of England nationally was developing initiatives aimed at attracting younger members of society. These included facilitated discussions where senior members of the diocese met PCCs to consider the action relevant to their particular communities. The Council agreed that

such a discussion should take place this year, possibly at the June PCC meeting.

**Audio-Visual facilities** The Council considered a note from Steve Fish which reminded them that a decision on upgrading the AV facilities in the church had been deferred until we had experience of using the refurbished building. But some elements of the present system were failing and it was necessary to start considering possible upgrades in order that decisions about short-term replacements might be compatible with the longer-term changes. The Council agreed that, to start the upgrade process, suggestions for what facilities we needed should be sought from users, including external interests that were now using the church, and that proposals should be developed to meet immediate requirements.

**Vicar's report** The Vicar reported that

- He had had a very constructive meeting with the Elected Mayor who greatly appreciated the contribution of St Mary's to the town centre. He thought there was scope for greater collaboration with the Borough Council, including perhaps drawing on their expertise in fund-raising for major projects.
- The Connect Group Leaders Away Day had been a valuable occasion with good exchange of ideas
- He commended the Lent Course on Discipleship – this was the foundation of our mission.

The minutes of the meeting on 20th January 2020 are on the notice board in the Church Centre.

**Roger Courtney**

# The Current Affairs **Connect Group**

## Multiculturalism

*Britain has a long history of migration and diverse cultures. Modern immigration began with Windrush in the 1950s and has resulted in the UK being one of the most diverse countries in the world. How should Christians regard the multiculturalism adopted at local and national levels? Does it threaten Christian faith or does it present opportunities for the gospel?*

In February, the Current Affairs Group met to discuss *Multiculturalism: Threat or opportunity for Christians?* This article is a summary of that discussion.

### **What is multiculturalism?**

According to the BBC website:

Academics' definitions of multiculturalism refer to anything from people of different communities living alongside each other to ethnic or religious groups leading completely separate lives<sup>1</sup>.

It includes the policy or process whereby the distinctive identities of the cultural groups within a society are maintained or supported. Some hold to the belief that all cultures are equally valid, so that no one culture is better than another, all cultures are worthy of equal respect, and treating them otherwise is racist. But, at its simplest, it is a pluralism in which various ethnic groups collaborate and enter into a dialogue with one another without having to sacrifice their particular identities.

### **Multiculturalism in Britain**

In Britain, multicultural policies were adopted by local administrations from the 1970s. In 1997, the newly elected Labour government committed to a multiculturalism nationally.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-12381027>



From 2001, this approach was criticised by centre-left commentators such as Trevor Phillips<sup>2</sup>, former head of the Commission for Racial Equality, as allowing people to live separate lives. He said in 2004 that multiculturalism was out of date and should be replaced with policies which promote integration and "assert a core of Britishness". The Labour Government subsequently embraced a policy of community cohesion instead.<sup>3</sup>

In 2011, Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron said in a controversial speech that "state multiculturalism has failed". He defined it as a strategy which has "encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream".

The different cultural and ethnic communities have brought a diversity that has resulted in many good things: a wider range of food, arts, and skills; small corner shops that are an essential service for the community; a shoring up of family; and, from a Christian perspective, a greater resistance to the tide of secularism and atheism.

British laws are tolerant. For example, Jews may divorce through their own Beth Din courts (although they can still then appeal to the normal Courts); Sikh men are not required to wear motorcycle helmets; Muslims and Jews may circumcise male children for religious reasons.

But with this diversity have also come less welcome aspects. At Heathrow in the 1970s and 1980s there were staffing problems where high caste Hindu Asians were working under more senior officers from lower castes. The media often self-censors when referring to Mohammed or Islam. Moreover, despite legislation, practices such as FGM, forced marriage, honour killings, polygamy, sex without consent in marriage, persist. Disputes are settled in parallel Sharia courts. And perhaps more controversially, there has been child abuse in Rochdale

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<sup>2</sup> Phillips is of British Guianan heritage.

<sup>3</sup> This change in thinking occurred over the period between the 9/11 terrorist attack on the USA in 2001 and Britain's internal Islamist terrorism problems from 7 July 2005.

and other places committed by largely Muslim Asian men against largely white girls<sup>4</sup>.

There are instances where society's tolerance has not extended to Christians. A Christian Red Cross volunteer was dismissed for publicly protesting about gay marriage. The media does not self-censor in respect of its treatment of Christianity. TV dramas regularly use Jesus's name as a swear word and Christians are often portrayed in a bad light. There can be much political correctness over Christian festivals like Christmas.

### Reflections

We considered that in the Old Testament, Israel was commanded to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Leviticus 19.18) and this included the immigrant who was subject to the same rights and obligations as a native Israelite (Leviticus 19.33-34). Nevertheless, extreme religious practices such as sacrificing one's children to the foreign god, Molech, were forbidden both to native Israelites and immigrants. Thus, although immigrants were embraced and integrated into the national community, its core (godly) values were retained and not compromised for the immigrant.

We noted that in the New Testament, it was originally the practice of Jews to keep separate from Gentiles but Peter overturned this practice in the church after he received a vision from God and was told to preach the gospel to the Gentile centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10-11 especially 10.28-29).

At the Council of Jerusalem, where the early church debated the extent to which Gentiles should follow Jewish practices such as circumcision and food laws, there was flexibility on both sides. Gentiles were not required to be circumcised but agreed to some food restrictions (Acts 15.24-29). Christ removes barriers and heals

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<sup>4</sup> Nazir Afzal, formerly Chief Prosecutor in North West England, has stated that while the majority of child abuse is carried out by white men in Britain, ethnicity was nevertheless a factor in Rochdale and similar cases. He has criticised the lack of leadership from local Muslim communities on this issue. A practising Muslim himself, he has been outspoken on women's rights and highly critical of forced marriage, honour killings and FGM.

divisions so that in him there is neither Jew nor Greek (Galatians 3.28; Colossians 3.11).

We considered that all people and cultures were, in principle, equal in scripture. However, just as an individual's behaviour can fall short of God's values and in some cases eventually lead to that person becoming evil (e.g. Adolf Hitler), so individual aspects of any given culture can fall short of God's standards and in some cases lead to the culture becoming predominantly evil e.g. (the Nazi regime).

We observed that culture is complex and layers build up over time as different groups impact upon a country. In Britain the four nations are distinct in many ways but share an overall culture. There is a need for us to separate mere culture from Christian faith. We must not accept unquestionably the culture to which we belong, but constantly test its various aspects against God's standards in scripture. Irrespective of our cultural background, Christians should not tolerate FGM, forced marriage or honour killings<sup>5</sup> since they are clearly contrary to the will of God.

Some of us felt that in some parts of the country immigrant communities with very different values had developed. However, others pointed to the very real difficulties immigrant groups faced in integrating. Before the Race Relations Act of 1976, for example, it was common to see in homes for rental signs that read "No Irish. No blacks". Even now there are barriers for immigrants trying to obtain accommodation or jobs. There had to be a recognition that immigrants were in a vulnerable situation and that the weaker had to be raised up into the same position as the rest, in line with God's desire to create equality of opportunity.

We considered whether Christianity - with its exclusive claim that Jesus was the only way (John 14.6) and that there is no other name under heaven by which we are saved (Acts 4.12) - is fundamentally opposed to other religions and their cultures. We felt that, due to the Council of Jerusalem, Christianity has tended to adapt itself well to

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<sup>5</sup> Ash David has advised that while honour killing is common in India, it is not practised in its Christian community.

other cultures. It has incorporated their local practices and feasts into the church by Christianising them notably with Christmas and Easter (which according to Bede is named after the Saxon Spring and fertility goddess Eostre!). Our belief that Jesus is the only way to salvation does not mean that we should regard people of other faith as inferior or be dismissive of their faith. We should not be so arrogant as to suggest that people of other faiths have no wisdom about the things of God<sup>6</sup>. If people of other faiths are saved, they are saved because of Jesus. Indeed, C.S. Lewis considered that a person of another faith who did good deeds and lead a righteous life did so to Christ, even though they did not know it.<sup>7</sup>

We concluded that multiculturalism is not a threat to Christianity but an opportunity for the gospel. We were especially grateful for the Christians in St Mary's and across Britain who have come here from other countries, increasing Christian witness and impact. Unlike secular, atheistic Western culture, many immigrant communities have an understanding of faith, making it easier to speak to them about Jesus. However, we felt it was important to be respectful and sensitive. Attacking another's faith is likely to be interpreted as an attack on the person. Consequently, a message such as "you're going to burn in hell if you don't accept Jesus" is not going to be productive. Nor is it Good News! Rather, we should engage as equals in dialogue. While holding to what we believe about Jesus, we should seek out what is common in other faiths, especially love for all and hate for none, and build upon this. For example, it can be fruitful to discuss how they deal with sin and then explain how Christ does.

**Next meeting:** The Current Affairs Group will meet downstairs in the Church Centre at 8pm on 13 March to discuss *Christians & Debt: Moral issue or the new normal?* Whether you want to join in with the discussion or just listen, come and join us!

*The Current Affairs Group*

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<sup>6</sup> Calvin argued in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Book 2, 2.15) that Christians who ignore or reject truth from non-Christian sources risk offending the Spirit of God.

<sup>7</sup> See *The Last Battle*, dialogue between Emeth and Aslan, page 149 c.f. Romans 1.12-16.

# Current Affairs Connect Group

Dates and Programme – Winter to Summer 2020

8pm in the Church Centre – normally second Friday of each month

13 March	Christians & Debt: Moral issue or the new normal?
10 April	Good Friday - No meeting
1 May	The transgender debate: How should Christians respond?
12 June	Press Freedom: Essential safeguard or abuse of power?
10 July	Compulsory vaccination: State control or public good?

Join a  
Connect  
Group!

andyroby2001@yahoo.com  
or office: 225189



# St Mary's Children and Families

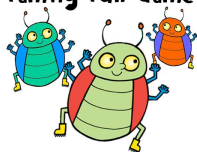
This year has already started off with a bang and the past two months have been busy, but we have loads of exciting events and activities coming up:

## This Lent

- The Women's Group will be hosting a Quilting Lent Group at various times during the month – please let me know if you would like to be contacted with times and dates. This group will teach you the skill of quilting and together we hope to prayerfully create a quilt which we will use for a good cause. (*The Women's Group meets once a month on a Thursday morning and supports each other via What's App the rest of the month – it is open to all women so please do let me know if you are interested in joining.*)
- Access to Communion course – we are running a course starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> March for those children who are ready to take part in the communion. The course will explore the children's understanding and beliefs a little and they will take their first communion on Easter Sunday. Please do contact me if you would like to discuss your child joining this group.



## Beetle Drive Family Fun Game



- 22nd March is Mothering Sunday – please join us between 4.00 and 6.00pm for a fun Beetle Drive with afternoon tea. All are welcome.

## This Easter

- If you are a knitter, please don't forget our knitted chicks outreach project – it was amazing to go all the schools in our parish last year and to give out chicks knitted by people from St Mary's. The children really appreciate and treasure this sweet gift. Please speak to Christine or me for more details or if you need a pattern.

- We are putting together a very special project with schools based on retelling the Easter story to school children from the week of 23<sup>rd</sup> March. This will involve creating interactive prayer space stations based on the stations of the cross where the children can learn about and engage in Jesus's journey to the cross and beyond. If you would like to be involved in this project, please do let me know.



- 1st April - Connect Together starting at 6.15pm with supper
- Palm Sunday is on 5<sup>th</sup> April this year. As has become our tradition, we would like to put on a play or other creative worship service – so many of you are blessed with amazing talents and skills in singing and acting – please let me know if you would like to be involved in putting something really special together.
- 5th–12th April - The Journey to the Cross: this will be an opportunity for all at St Mary's and the public to engage in the prayer stations which were put together for the school outreach project. It is an opportunity for you to engage afresh with the story of how Jesus died for all our sins and the journey he made to get there from Palm Sunday to Good Friday and of course then the continuation of that story into the resurrection. This space is suitable for children of all ages so please do bring your children or grandchildren and use it as a means to retell the story in an interactive and fresh way. This space is open to all so please do come and use the space for yourself as well. It would be wonderful if we had welcomers around who can welcome, support



HOLY



WEEK

people, answer questions people may have and tell people about Easter and other services St Mary's provides. Please do let me know if you are free for any of the sessions.

- 10th April 9.30–12pm We will be holding our traditional and very exciting Easter Eggsperience. Join us for fun games, Easter craft, Hot Cross Bun making and Easter Eggs. This event is suitable for primary school children and those over the age of 6 may be left. Younger



- children are welcome, but an adult will have to remain with the child during the whole session. A donation of £2 per child is requested to cover costs.
- Easter Sunday morning, 12<sup>th</sup> April, we will be having a Sunrise Service at 6.00 am with breakfast; a service of Family Holy Communion will be at 10.30am.
- 13<sup>th</sup> April do join us for the St Albans pilgrimage – we will be meeting at St Mary’s at 9.00am for breakfast before setting off. Please let me if you are planning to walk, run or bike the route.

Don’t forget our regular clubs which we run term time in the church centre:

- **Kids Connect** on Mondays from 3.45 to 5.00pm (This is a parent and child craft group aimed at primary school children but younger children welcome).
- **Centre Club** Tuesdays from 9.30 to 11.30am (Coffee / tea for parents and age appropriate toys and activities for your toddler).
- **Bravers** – our youth group for 8 to 13 year olds meets on Thursdays from 6.00 to 7.30pm
- Sundays during the 10.30 service (all Sundays during term time apart from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday when we meet together for Worship for All) – currently we have two groups: **Sunday school** for toddlers & primary school aged children up to the age of 10 meet downstairs and those 10+ meet upstairs in **Pathfinders**. We are looking at whether we should provide a third group to better cater for the



children's needs, but we would need more helpers to facilitate this. Please pray for this and if you feel God calling you to help more directly please do speak to me.



God Bless

Cath Da Costa

(07961564382 / [familyworker.stmaryswatford@gmail.com](mailto:familyworker.stmaryswatford@gmail.com))

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## Volunteering



Handy with a Hoover? Dandy with a duster? If anyone would like to help in the day-to-day upkeep of the church, please contact Liz [stmarysfacilitiesmanager@gmail.com](mailto:stmarysfacilitiesmanager@gmail.com)

Our team of minibus drivers is very small, and we would welcome anyone who might be able to drive it on a Sunday morning, during the week for Wednesday Fellowship or the occasional event at other times. No special qualifications are required, just a full UK (category B) car driving licence; held for at least 2 years. Please speak to Dave Hedges, Margaret Greenstreet or Helen Hunter if you are interested in having a go, before you commit to anything.



# Weekly Gatherings



**Monday: Kids Connect**

3.45pm to 5pm during term time in the Church Centre  
craft and play session for toddlers and primary aged children

**Tuesday: Centre Club**

9.30 to 11.30am during term time in the Church Centre  
for preschool children and their parents/carers

**Wednesday: Wednesday Fellowship**

2.00pm in the Church Centre

**Thursday: Bravers Youth Club**

5.30 to 7pm during term time in the Church Centre  
for those between the ages of 8 and 13;  
fun, games and science experiments!

**Saturday: Morning Coffee**

10.00am to 12noon in the Church

**St Mary's Runners**

8.30am (meet at 6 Cassiobury Drive)

For more information on the children's activities listed above  
contact Cath [07961 564385/familyworker.stmaryswatford@gmail.com](mailto:07961564385/familyworker.stmaryswatford@gmail.com)

***In line with the PCC 'Safe Use of Images Policy' please do not take photos unless you have permission to do so from those included in the photo.***

## Services – March 2020

### Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March

10.30am	Holy Communion
6.30pm	Evening Worship

### Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March

8.00am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Morning Worship
6.30pm	Evening Worship

### Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March

10.30am	Worship for All
6.30pm	Holy Communion

### Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March – Mothering Sunday

8.00am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Morning Worship
6.30pm	Café Church

### Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March

8.00am	Holy Communion
10.30 am	Morning Worship
6.30 pm	Evening Worship

Children's Groups and Crèche meet during 10.30am services  
on 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March

Holy Communion services every Wednesday at 12.30pm

# Who's Who:

## Vicar:

The Revd Tony Rindl | 225189 / 07792 505480  
tonyrindl.stmaryswatford@gmail.com

## Curate:

The Revd Joshua Brocklesby | 07764 738596  
jbrocklesby.stmaryswatford@gmail.com

## Churchwardens:

Alison Saunders (244390)  
Peter Dean (07876 154387)

## Children & Families Worker:

Cath Da Costa (07961 564385)  
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