

Ask politicians ‘Who is My Neighbour?’ and use your vote, says Church of England



A fifty-two page ‘letter’ issued by the House of Bishops is aimed helping politicians to discern “a fresh moral vision of the kind of country we want to be” ahead of the General Election in May of this year.

The letter is addressed to the people and parishes of the Church of England and in it the Bishops urge Christians to consider how can we “build the kind of society which many people say they want but which is not yet being expressed in the vision of any of the parties?”

It encourages church members to engage in the political process ahead of the General Election and to put aside self-interest and vote for ‘the common good’: “The privileges of living in a democracy mean that we should use our votes thoughtfully, prayerfully and with the good of others in mind, not just our own interests.” But it warns: “It is the duty of every Christian adult to vote, even though it may have to be a vote for something less than a vision that inspires us.”

So how can it connect the politicians with the people of the Church of England?

Asking Questions

One way of achieving this engagement is through Hustings where members of the public can put questions to

politicians. At the time of writing, the list of Hustings being held in several deaneries around the diocese and in St Albans Cathedral is growing daily. There will be a listing of those that are happy to be publicised in this way at: <http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/parliamentary-constituencies/>



Young Voters

Encouraging politicians to improve their offering to the public is only one side of the coin: Bishop Alan has been active and instrumental in encouraging young people to register to vote and exercise their democratic inheritance at the election.

He teamed up with ‘Bite the Ballot,’ when they visited

Who is my neighbour.../continued



Townsend School in St Albans, one of the diocese's five secondary schools. Bite the Ballot is a not-for-profit movement that empowers young people to speak up, act, and make their votes and opinions count.

Bishop Alan joined in with about 60 sixth formers and answered quiz questions as well as creating a mock budget for all the things the nation spends money on in groupwork.

Read the whole story on p3.

The Bishops' letter: Who is my Neighbour

The letter specifically avoids advocacy for one any political party but instead encourages those in the Church to seek from political candidates a commitment to building a society of common bonds not individual consumerism.

The bishops say Britain is hungry for a new approach to political life which reaffirms our ties at a national, regional, community and neighbourhood level. There is a need for a strong corrective to halt the move towards increasing social isolation, they say, through strengthening the idea that that Britain is still a "community of communities." This, they say, is a theme which has roots in the historic traditions of different parties: "We are seeking, not a string of policy offers, but a way of conceiving and ordering our political and economic life which can be pursued in a conservative idiom, a socialist idiom, a liberal idiom - and by others not aligned to party."

The letter also states that: "In Britain, we have become so used to believing that self-interest drives every decision, that it takes a leap of imagination to argue that there should be stronger institutions for those we disagree with as well as for those 'on our side.' Breaking free of self-interest and welcoming our opponents as well as our supporters into a messy, noisy, yet rich and creative community of communities is, perhaps, the only way we will enrich our almost-moribund political culture."

The letter draws on the experience of the Church in every community and argues that: "the different parties have failed to offer attractive visions of the kind of society and culture they wish to see.... There is no idealism in this prospectus".

The letter encourages political parties across the spectrum to seek bold new visions of hope and idealism rather than "sterile arguments about who might manage the existing system best."

The bishops also argue Britain is in need of a stronger politics of community to boost solidarity between people and reverse a drift towards social isolation: "The extent of loneliness in society today, with the attendant problems of mental and physical health, is one indication of how far we have drifted into a society of strangers. But that drift is far from complete - and few people, if asked, would say that a society of strangers represents a vision of society which they desire."

The letter argues that intermediate institutions such as housing associations, credit unions and churches are needed for their role in building stronger communities. A thriving society needs many intermediate institutions, they say, including those who disagree with each other.

The letter also recognises the inherent danger where people are disengaging from politics, arguing that restoring faith in both politicians and the political process requires a new politics that engages at both a deeper and more local level within a wider, broader vision for the country.

In the letter, the bishops warn against despair and urge: "Unless we exercise the democratic rights that our ancestors struggled for, we will share responsibility for the failures of the political classes. It is the duty of every Christian adult to vote, even though it may have to be a vote for something less than a vision that inspires us."

Who is my Neighbour can be downloaded from:

<https://churchofengland.org/media/2170230/whoismyneighbour-pages.pdf>

Copies, £3.99, can be ordered from Church House bookshop: <http://www.chbookshop.co.uk/books/9780715146941/who-is-my-neighbour-a-letter-from-the-house-of-bishops>

A guide to the letter can be read here: <https://churchofengland.org/media/2170269/pastoral%20letter%20-%20quotes%20final.docx>

Bishop says it's time to 'Bite the Ballot'



voting in elections, for example, by hosting hustings and supporting National Voter Registration Day (5 February)."

During that debate, about marking 800 years since Magna Carta was sealed, the Bishop said: "We are living at a time of deep suspicion and scepticism and cynicism about politics, and it does not help when we, unthinkingly, join in always assuming the worst motives to politicians. It is a time when fewer and fewer people are engaged in the political process and are actually voting in elections. It is a deeply worrying development."

Following the visit to Townsend school, he added: "As a Christian leader I am passionate about getting as many people involved in the political process as possible to seek the common good together through the ballot box."

"I was really impressed that the students engaged so readily when asked questions and given information. I was also really impressed by Bite the Ballot's approach to helping young people to understand that if they want their concerns heard, engaging with the political process is a good place to start."

Bite the Ballot said: "'Bite The Ballot is a movement seeking to inspire, engage and register to vote as many young people as possible. We believe in the power of face-to-face engagement in school, in showing a student the importance and benefits of being registered to vote."

"We thoroughly enjoyed welcoming Bishop Alan at a BTB session of "The Basics" (our democratic learning games) at Townsend and we hope that similar sessions could take place in all Church of England schools around the country, to ensure a generation grows up aware of their democratic rights and responsibility."

"We fully support the work of Bishop Alan to this end and all his work in the Diocese of St Albans."

The last day for voter registration is 20 April.

Bishop Alan is calling on schools to help sixth formers approaching voting age to engage with politics and prepare to vote by joining the Register of Electors if they are over 16.

He says that all who seek the common good should engage with the political process.

To make his point, he visited a group of sixth formers at Townsend School, St Albans with Bite the Ballot, a not-for-profit movement that empowers young people to speak up, act, and make their votes and opinions count.

Bishop Alan joined in with about 60 sixth formers and answered quiz questions as well as creating a mock budget for all the things the nation spends money on in groupwork.

The quiz questions included "should sixteen year olds have the vote?" and "Should the death penalty be brought back?" to which the Bishop answered yes and no, respectively.

His attendance at the event was not the only action he has taken to challenge young people to take a stake in their own future.

Last July he proposed an amendment, which was passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, calling on churches to "seek to increase the number of people

Honour one another



Following the terrible murders in Paris at the offices of Charlie Hebdo in January, there has been much debate about the importance of freedom of speech. There have even been articles about whether we have a 'right to offend' other people.

Although freedom of speech is limited in every country, it is important that we encourage robust debate, not least with

those with whom we disagree. Indeed, it is often through such exchanges that we learn and grow. However, we need to think about how we choose to express ourselves. It is significant that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with a statement which talks both about rights but also the responsibility to treat one another as brothers and sisters:

'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.'

Whilst Charlie Hebo may have the legal right under French law to mock and humiliate those with whom they disagree, they need to remember that there is also a moral dimension to all relationships. For many of us Charlie Hebdo's response seemed designed to whip up further

hatred: an eye for an eye. As Ghandi pointed out, this ultimately results in a world where everyone is blind.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught a different way 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matt 5. 11-12).

As Christians we follow a Saviour who was mocked as he hung on the cross: 'Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads (Matt 27.39). St Peter, reflecting on what he had witnessed, commented 'When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.' (1 Peter. 2. 23). He exhorted his fellow Christians when facing opposition 'Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.'

As we journey through Lent, the media will be full of debates in the run up to the General Election. The statement 'Who is my Neighbour' recently released by the House of Bishops, calls for a new vision of how we do politics. I hope that one of the things that Christians can contribute is the way that we treat others, especially those with whom we disagree: **honour one another.**

+ Alan St Albans .

bishop@stalbands.anglican.org

See p1 and 2 for information about how to obtain 'Who is my Neighbour'

Sleepout's record £52,500 is still growing!



2014's Sleepout at St Albans Abbey has turned out to be a bumper event, bringing in over £52,500, a record, with money still being collected from sponsorship. The event, in sometimes sub-zero temperatures, attracted 470 sleepers, well up on the 370 total from the previous year and there was even room for a few more. A record 12 charities were supported, this perhaps helping to explain the large turnout.

Brian Peyton, chair of the Sleepout Committee, said: "In Sleepout's 21st year it has come of age and broken the £50,000 barrier, which we always hoped it would. The total is highly motivating for the organising committee and our great thanks go to all who have slept out over the years and to those have supported them financially."

At 8:30pm on 5th December, by which time of the evening Sleepout's registration desks are usually busy, it looked like it was going to be a bleak night with fewer than usual turning out. Fifteen minutes later, people were cascading through the door and spirits rose.

Around half the participants were under 18, coming from church and civic youth groups as well as uniformed organisations. Among the adult sleepers were four mayors and an MP alongside the many groups and individuals, some coming from places of work, churches and charities.

The atmosphere was jovial and convivial, despite the conditions. One of the purposes of Sleepout is help people get even a small inkling of what it is like to be a homeless person, enduring not just the discomfort but also the disturbances of noise and neighbours that rough sleepers put up with, not just for one night, but relentlessly, night following night. Few rough sleepers will find either the conviviality or the discipline of the peace and quiet that largely descends after 2 am.

Emmaus, a charity which enables people to move on from homelessness, providing work and a home in a supportive, family environment, took part for the third year. They brought some of their residents, or companions as they are known, to Sleepout and one, Leon Webster, had this to say: "Speaking to (Emmaus furniture shop) customers in the run up to the Sleep Out they all told me I was mad to want to do this. It couldn't have been a colder evening - I was homeless over the summer, so hadn't really experienced sleeping rough in this kind of weather - but it was really interesting and I wasn't expecting so many people to turn out. I only did one night, but there are so many people out there who are without anywhere to go and it really puts things into perspective."

The previous record of £46,100 was raised in 2011.

A million sold and voted the UK's favourite Fairtrade Egg!



The Real Easter Egg, the only easter egg sold with with a copy of the Easter story in each box, has sold a million since it was introduced in 2010.

Initially turned down by supermarkets, as they were unsure that a 'faith egg' would sell, the Real Easter Egg was voted the UK's favourite Fairtrade egg in a national poll last year. How wrong they were.

There is also a charitable donation for every 150g egg sold. More than £140,000 has been donated from sales. It also supports farmers and producers in the developing world by using Fairtrade chocolate.

David Marshall, who heads up the Meaningful Chocolate Company, said; "The Real Easter Egg campaign aims to establish giving a Real Easter Egg as a tradition. We can be found in Tesco, Waitrose and Morrison's. However, we make very little from supermarket sales so we do rely on direct sales from churches and schools. Last year we sent more than 400,000 eggs through the post. This is a very positive example of putting our faith into practice so I hope churches will support this year's Real Easter Egg campaign by visiting www.realeasteregg.co.uk and ordering.

New eggs

Each year the content of the Real Easter Egg changes. This year blue egg has a unique 3ft storybook/banner, the Premium Peace Edition contains an olive wood key ring made in Bethlehem and there is a dairy free dark chocolate egg.

Order your Real Easter Eggs from:

www.realeasteregg.co.uk

WIN AN EGG!

Competition: send in your stories about who you gave, are giving or would like to give a Real Easter Egg to and we'll give five winners a Real Easter Egg. Email us your entries to Comms@stalbans.anglican.org.

Closing date: 24th March 2015.

Pictured inset: A £10,000 donation cheque to Traidcraft Exchange in front of some of the 400,000 eggs that will be sent through the post. David Marshall CEO of The Meaningful Chocolate Company and Jenny Borden, Non-Executive Director, Traidcraft.



Parish Development

The Diocese of St Albans in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton & Barnet

Lay Leaders of Worship – 2015 courses now booking!



Last autumn the Diocese ran a pilot phase for the new Leaders of Worship (LLWs) scheme and the first LLWs will shortly be receiving their letter of permission from Bishop Richard.

The scheme is particularly aimed at enabling every parish to have a service at the same time every Sunday by authorising lay people to lead Services of the Word (but not preach) in their local parish church. By doing this, the confusion often experienced over which Sunday of the month it is can be avoided – benefiting both local regular worshippers and occasional visitors!

Feedback from the pilot phase has been positive. Many started out somewhat nervous and soon realised how much there is to discover. Comments from participants included: "I feel so much more confident about the structures of services and leading.", and "Have really enjoyed the course...It has far exceeded my needs and expectations, preparing us all well for what we can and what we can't do." They found that although leading worship was daunting, it was also deeply rewarding, encouraging them in their own Christian discipleship.

In 2015 there will be three courses, one in each archdeaconry. Training includes practical leading of services, reading, and six sessions run on two Saturdays. Participants need to be recommended by their parish priest and PCC, and once registration forms are completed, can choose whichever date combination or venue suits them from those listed below.

Dates for 2015:

First Saturday – 18th April (St Albans), 6th June (Bedford), 19th September (Ware)

Second Saturday – 11th July (St Albans), 3rd October (Bedford), 7th November (Ware).

If you would like to know more about the Scheme, please contact Revd Jeanette Gosney (pdo@stalbans.anglican.org, 01727 818141) or go to <http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/lay-leaders-worship/> for the introductory leaflet, handbook and how to register.

Pilgrim: Is it any Good? Most say 'yes'!



'Going deeper into God' is one Living God's Love strand. Many parishes across the Diocese are encouraging people in this and to grow as disciples through the Pilgrim course launched in 2013 by the House of Bishops. The overall the response you can see from the selection published here is very positive. All of the parishes named here are willing to be contacted if you would like to know more about the course and how it works. For more detailed information on the course itself, go to www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/pilgrim

Standon and the Mundens with Sacombe have done the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes modules and say "We have found them very interesting and there is always much discussion, even from members who don't always get involved in discussion". They have been able to select material even for groups that meet only for an hour. They go on to say: "The audio clips are easily down-loadable and the easy-to-download video clip which is used near the start of the session is good to relax people into the session." There is one word of warning: "Although these sessions are in the 'Follow' stage for new Christians, I feel that it would be quite difficult for new Christians. Our home group is made up of more mature Christians and we still get a lot from it," said one.

Christ Church, St Albans make the following comment: "We have completed Module 1 of Pilgrim ("Turning to Christ") and there have been four leaders accompanying 12 fellow pilgrims on the journey. It has gone well, and with a mixture of seekers, new Christians and more experienced, we all found that we have learnt from one another."

Great Wymondley are also very positive: "I can't speak highly enough about the course. The presentation is professional standard with regard to the video/audio content. The booklets giving the outline of the sessions and the Leaders Guide gave me all the info I needed. We were about 8-10 participants each time from within the village and everyone found the course brilliant. We were aged between 15 and 65 and there is no doubt that the course has brought us all closer together as well as the obvious teaching element."

Why not encourage your parish to 'Go deeper into God' – and give it a go? For more information on other courses, go to www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/equipping-god-s-people/ or contact the Parish Development Office 01727 818141, pdadmin@stalbans.anglican.org.

Geoff Fletcher RIP

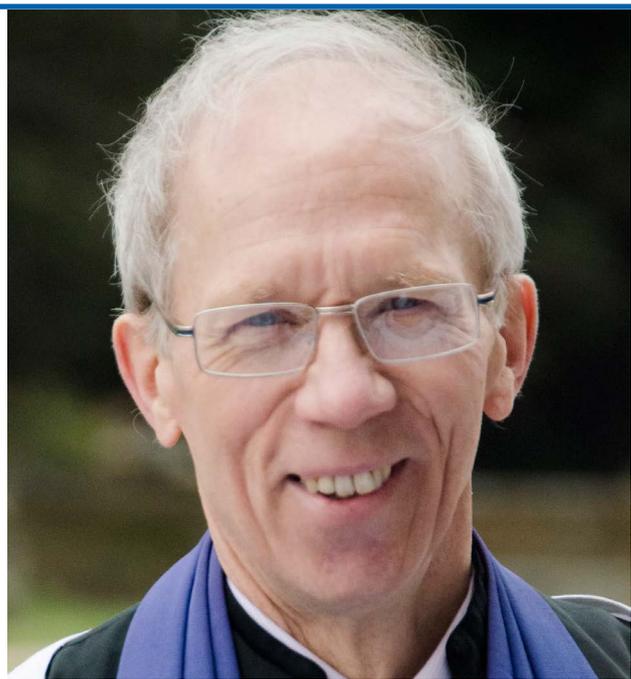
It was deeply sad to learn of the death of Geoff Fletcher, on 29th January.

Many people across the diocese knew Geoff. Many benefitted from his ministry as a Reader, through his role as Lay Chair of Barnet Deanery and his work as Diocesan Stewardship Adviser.

There will be a memorial service for Geoff at St Albans Cathedral combined with Evensong, on Saturday 28th March at 4pm.

We are grateful to the Venerable Gordon Ogilvie, a former Vicar of St James's, New Barnet, for permission to publish an abridged version of the address he gave at the Memorial and Thanksgiving Service for Geoff in Peebles on 7th February.

Please note that the address is © Gordon Ogilvie 2015. The text is reproduced here on the understanding that it is for personal use only and not for further publication.



St Andrew's, Leckie, Peebles: Saturday 07.02.15 Thanksgiving Service for Geoffrey Martin Fletcher

It was a summer Sunday in 1977. When Geoff first set foot in St James's Church, New Barnet. He and Eileen were church-hunting, which was at least as important to them as house-hunting when moving from Edinburgh to London. They sat behind my family that morning; our daughter – like Ruth aged two - made the first move; and thus the Fletchers came to tea. I had been vicar for five years; we had grown a sizeable fringe of new members and adherents, but we needed more mature Christian leaders. And God sent us Geoff and Eileen, and a few more also. After another three years I moved on but our friendship stayed strong.

Early Life

As a pupil at Marlborough, it was to be Christian camps for schoolboys that helped Geoffrey make his own the Christian faith in which he had been raised; a faith he steadily developed, with a formative gap year in Kenya, and then off to Edinburgh University.

A friend from those days writes:

"It was through the International Friendship Campaign run by the Christian Union that we became friends. Geoff,

amongst a bunch of Scots and Irish, was a calm gentle influence, full of wisdom and common sense and true godliness peppered with a lovely sense of humour. We admired his many spiritual, academic and managerial gifts but were deeply impressed that he could turn his hand to making delicious bread. That was the essence of the man - hospitable with a desire to nourish the hungry inside and outside the household of faith."

Family time

Edinburgh in due course saw marriage to Eileen and the birth of Ruth, with Alison a couple of years later, after the move south. In talking about their Dad the other day, the girls emphasised how fair he always was with them and to them – despite joking, for he loved fun, that one was his favourite Scottish daughter and the other his favourite English one. Indeed if it existed, Geoff would be a prime candidate for the title of Honorary Scotsman.

However, as for many before and since, the high road south beckoned, Barnet welcomed and Geoff found himself into almost 30 years working for Post Office Counters - based in London but travelling elsewhere as well. Quite how a degree in Botany and a PhD entitled *The Mechanisms of Tillering in Barley Stalks* fitted finance and accounting in either Post Office or Diocesan

Geoff Fletcher RIP.../continued

Stewardship is a mystery. But the metaphor of sowing and reaping is a familiar biblical one, about life in general and in particular about giving. At least Geoff knew how many beans make five.

All the time Geoff was with the Post Office, he was a mainstay of lay leadership at St James's New Barnet.

One couple recall: "We appreciated Geoff as a valued church leader and Christian role model."

While others recall something rather different: "As Geoff led and talked on Sunday morning, we remember his rich chocolate brown voice coming over the sound system!"

And among clergy memories from New Barnet we have this:

"I remember his sermon on Jacob's Ladder, half of which he gave from half way up a D-I-Y aluminium ladder. I remember him giving wise counsel at tricky PCCs, and always being a peacemaker. He was willing to serve in any way, at any personal cost to himself."

And this:

"The thing I most admired about Geoff was his great care for the people society leaves behind. The Bible speaks of God 'defending the cause of the fatherless and the widow, loving the alien, giving him food and clothing.' Geoff didn't just believe that – he lived it. His practical pastoral care for the lonely and vulnerable in New Barnet, and his selfless generosity towards the homeless, the refugee, the cultural misfit – gave those who experienced it a glimpse of the love of Jesus."

Another could add:

"I will always remember his care and his lovely laugh and giggle."

Those of you who are Church of England members will know that people do not always rush to volunteer to serve on the local deanery synod. But Geoff gave distinguished service to that dimension of the wider church.

Thus:

"I always knew I could rely on him as lay chairman. When some deanery reorganisation had ruffled a few feathers Geoff worked tirelessly to contact various people and smooth the path. Meetings involving Geoff were never tedious!"

When the chance of early retirement from the Post Office came along, Geoff took it. Content though he had been there for 30 years, he found the next nine years as Stewardship Development Officer for the Diocese of St Albans a rewarding blend of his financial skills and Christian insights.

Several members, past and present, of the Bishop's staff in St Albans have shared their appreciation of Geoff's leadership.

Here is one:

"I have very fond memories of Geoff – his modesty, his witty asides, his smile, his loyalty. I am certain that in heaven, even though he will very courteously ask for entrance, he will be overwhelmed by an angelic and saintly welcome."

And so to Peebles, where Geoff's physical strength was increasingly limited. And where there was the opportunity for his immediate family to return the support that he had given them through the demanding times of their own lives – at school, at work and in other ways. Despite his illness, Geoff's desire to serve and care for others was undiminished.

So many memories – so much for which to give thanks. And we are only scratching the surface. The exchange of memories will continue, as we share with each other after this service. Some words have recurred this afternoon: Caring; Calmness; Integrity; Contentment; Generous. Some of those words, and others we have used, are about doing and others are about being. Geoffrey did what he did because of what he was. He did and he was, because he was motivated by Jesus Christ and he was empowered by the Spirit of God, not least through reading his Bible every night.

Among the targets Geoff achieved in his last weeks, he was able to share in the leading of worship on Christmas Day. He received Communion at home with his family shortly before his death. He observed that "There are not many more sermons for me to preach." But Geoff's whole life, his living and his dying, was a sermon. And I think that one of his stewardship colleagues got it just about right when he wrote:

"Geoff was a really good bloke and a rock solid follower of Jesus."

For that – and for all of that: Thanks be to God. And all the people said: Amen!

Concerts & Drama

St Peter's Church St Albans, Lunchtime Recitals on Wednesdays at 1pm. **4th March** Geoffrey Ward (tenor) & Alex Hall. **11th March** Amalia Trio (Violin/Cello/Piano) **18th March** Linden Innes-Hopkins (organ) **25th March** Mitra Aline Tham (piano).

St Paul's Church Bedford. The London Welsh Male Voice Choir will perform in a concert on **Saturday 7th March** at 7pm. Conductor: Edward-Rhys Harry, Soloist: Matthew Jones, Accompanist: Annabel Thwaite. Tickets £15.00 available from: Bedford Tourist Office: tel: 01234 718112.

St Andrews Church, Kimbolton Road Bedford. Douglas Coombes conducts The Ensemble of Friends and Double Take. A diverse evening including madrigals, folk songs, spirituals and barber shop. **Saturday 7th March**, 7.30pm. Adv tickets £9, Conc £8 Students (16-21) £4 and children with fee paying adult free. Tickets on door £10. Ticket office 01234 216881 or email centremanager@standrewsbedford.org. Also 'Lenten Meditation' a sequence of Sacred choral music for lent sung by Concord Singers on **Sunday 22nd March** at 3.30pm, admission free, retiring collection.

St Saviour's Church, Sandpit Lane, St Albans AL1 4DF. Radlett Choral Society performs Haydn - 'The Storm'; Symphony No 103 'Drum Roll'; 'Nelson' Mass with the Amadeus Orchestra, Conductor Alex Flood. **Saturday March 14th** 7:30pm. Tickets £12 from Box Office 01923 226836/243545 or on the door.

Holy Saviour Church, Radcliffe Road Hitchin SG1 1QG Concert Gloria (Vivaldi) and Requiem (Faure) Holy Saviour Church Choir & The Radcliffe Singers with Gainsford Ensemble conducted by Trevor Hughes on **Saturday 14th March** 7.30pm. Also 'A Festal Flourish' concert with Trevor & Gillian Hughes including music by Elgar, Parry, Bach and much more. **Sunday 29th March** at 3.30pm. Admission for each event incl refreshments £10 concs £8. 01462 646257 or clarefleck7@gmail.com.

Christ Church, Goldington Road Bedford, MK40 3TJ. The Gate of Heaven - A concert of great English cathedral anthems from five centuries by Cantamus chamber choir, conducted by Paul Edwards, on **Saturday 14th March**, 7.30pm, Tickets £8 on the door or from the

church office 01234 327150

St John's Church, Harpenden. RSCM event 'Let's sing Tudor to Modern' on **Saturday 14th March** 10am-4pm led by Richard Pinel. 60 minutes on each style Tudor, 19thC and Modern. Three sessions then a half hour mini concert for friends and family.

St John the Baptist, Chipping Barnet. The Choir of Boys and Gentlemen, with guest soloists, perform J.S.Bach's 'St John Passion' on **Sunday 15th March** at 6.30pm. Conducted by Terence Atkins Admission free, donations invited. Details: 020 8440 8593.

St Andrew's Church, Cuffley. Organ Concert by the Revd Rachel Phillips plus other instruments played by The Wilson Ensemble. Part of the 50th Jubilee celebrations at **Saturday 21st March** 7.30pm. Tickets £10 (incl light refreshments) from Jessica Hollings, tel: 01707 873821.

St Mary the Virgin, Rickmansworth, Herts WD3 1JB Bring and sing or come and listen to Mozart's Requiem on **Sunday 22nd March**. Rehearsal 2pm, performance 6 pm. Please let us know if you are coming to sing. 01923 721002. There will be a retiring collection for Michael Sobell Hospice and Water Aid.

Talks & Courses

Alistair Burt MP

is coming to BELIEF to speak on :

"Being a Christian in Politics"

Saturday 14th March
10am-1pm

at **Priory Methodist Church**
Newnham Ave. Bedford
MK41 9QJ.



Cost is £10 per person, payable on the day.

To book please call 01234 330314 or email belief@standrewsbedford.org

Pirton Methodist Church, High Street, Pirton, SG5 3PS The churches in Pirton present 'Issues of Life and Faith'. Five Talks for Lent on 'Hot Potato' issues. Tuesdays at 7.30pm, until **24th March**. Admission free. Details 01462 712631

The Hitchin Christian Centre, Bedford Rd, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1HF. Theology Cafe Evening event series continues on **Tues 24 Mar** - 'Creation & Evolution' (Dr Denis Alexander, Cambridge University) and **Tues 28 Apr** - 'Was Jesus Inclusive?' All events are free with refreshments and will take place at 7.30pm each evening.

Equipping God's People Courses



www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/find-a-course

Local Ministry Conference: "We are the Body of Christ"

Saturday 21st March 10am - 3.30pm
St Paul's Church, Letchworth, SG6 1QL
A training day for Local Ministry Development Teams and anyone interested in Local Ministry, with the Rt Rev'd Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans helping us reflect on this topic and with group work in the afternoon. Book in advance online or via the course contact. Cost: Free
Contact: Gabby 01727 818141
pdadmin@stalbands.anglican.org

The Residential Experience

Saturday 18th April 10am - 2.30pm
The Chellington Centre, CARLTON, Bedford, MK43 7NA
- For those who are thinking about or who may need a refresher of this aspect of youthwork. This training will walk through the planning and development of safe and fruitful times away, sharing life and faith, and whilst sharing best practice look at 5 key words around this: why, who, what, when and how. Book in advance online or via the course contact. Cost: Free. Contact: Julie youthoffice@stalbands.anglican.org 01727 818160

Open Days & Festivals

St Mary's Church, Ashwell. The 14th Ashwell Flea Market will be held on **Saturday, 21st March** from 9.30 - 1.00pm. This is a very popular event, with many weird and wonderful items on sale at bargain prices. Tea and coffee available. Proceeds to the Church Restoration Appeal.