Prepare the way for Pentecost

As Easter will soon be past, thoughts and plans are already turning to Pentecost; and those of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York already have. Their desire, their ‘great longing’ is to see a wave of prayer in Church of England and ‘many other churches’ between 8th and 15th May, ending at Pentecost. Resources for churches of all traditions to take part are being made available on www.thykingdom.co.uk. In the video accompanying the launch of the initiative, Archbishop Justin speaks of his hope that the wave of prayer can change the way that the church reaches out to the communities around us and the way that we serve and love them.

The plans were outlined to General Synod in the report of the Archbishops’ Evangelism Task Group. That report says: “Sharing Christ with others is a joyful, encouraging and empowering feature of being a Christian disciple.” The hope is that through concerted prayer, people will discover new confidence in sharing their faith.

In their letter to every parish priest the Archbishops write: “At the heart of our prayers will be words that Jesus himself taught us – ‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.’ It is impossible to overstate the life-transforming power of the Lord’s Prayer. It is a prayer that is reassuring enough to be on the lips of the dying and yet dangerous enough to be banned in cinemas. It is famous enough to be spoken each day by billions in hundreds of languages and yet intimate enough to draw us ever closer into friendship with Jesus Christ. It is simple enough to be memorised by small children and yet profound enough to sustain a whole lifetime of prayer. When we pray it with sincerity and with joy, there is no imagining the new ways in which God can use us to his glory.”

Sharing faith in pictures:

www.faithpictures.org

Faith Pictures is a new downloadable free course to help you talk to friends, neighbours and colleagues about what you believe. At the heart of it is identifying an image that says something about your faith. Each of the six sessions includes a short video and lively discussion-starters. Faith Pictures is a little different from most other courses. It has three main distinctives: Honesty about our faith journeys, without bracketing out the hard questions.

Humour - Faith Pictures is designed to be fun and profound at the same time.
Whole Church - Faith Pictures is a simple idea that can be used across different traditions and with different age groups.
Faith Pictures is an easy way to open up potentially life-changing conversations, and it is free.
Bishop’s Letter

How should Christians vote in the forthcoming EU referendum?

I am not going to tell you (or anyone else, for that matter) which way I think you should vote in the EU referendum. What I do want to do, however, is to think about how we as Christians should participate in the debate and vote in the referendum.

First, at the heart of Christian worship there is an act of remembering ("Do this in remembrance of me"). We need to recall that the European ideal began after centuries of bloodshed, culminating in two terrible world wars that killed around 80 million people. One of the aims was to bind countries so closely together that we would never again go to war. If we leave the EU, we need to think about how we are going to protect that legacy and ensure that Europe never again descends into killing and genocide.

Secondly, much of the popular discussion in the media so far has been narrow-minded and mean-spirited. It has tended to focus around two main themes:

- Are we going to be economically worse or better off if we stay or leave?
- Which option is going to help us keep the most migrants and asylum seekers out of our country?

Virtually no one seems to be grappling with the big questions about what sort of society we want. Few people are asking how we can all co-operate to build a better, fairer world. Only a few voices are asking how a reformed EU could contribute to solving some of the big challenges facing us, such as climate change and poverty.

Thirdly, rather than being motivated by the fear that is being engendered by both sides of the debate, can we find a better way to engage with the issues, rooted in prayer? Week by week, individually and corporately, many of us pray the Living God’s Love prayer. What does it mean in the context of this referendum to pray that we may live God’s love ‘with generosity and joy, imagination and courage’?

Instead of being consumed with anxiety, might we ask “How can we approach the debates and the referendum with generosity and joy?” Instead of giving into fear, we might ask for the ‘imagination and courage’ to think about what we can contribute for the flourishing of our world, rather than simply asking “What can I get out of it?”

To really pray the Living God’s Love prayer might just change us and allow us, under God, to make a distinctive contribution to the discussions and debates that we will all be having over the coming months.

Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans

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Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans

Twitter: @BishopStAlbans
Email: Bishop@stalbans.anglican.org

The Diocesan Europe Group has produced a new downloadable leaflet containing information about the diocese’s European links here: www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/european-links/
In the years immediately succeeding women’s ordination to the priesthood, the signs were good that gender balance in the Church’s ministry was not far off. Ten years after women’s ordination, about 20% of stipendiary priests were women and in 2012 almost a third were. This seemed to disclose a direction of travel that would lead to gender balance in ministry in the not too distant future.

However, in 2011, Archbishop Rowan convened the Transformations Conference to investigate the experience of women in ministry 17 years after they were first admitted to the priesthood. One of the tasks undertaken by this group was research and this has looked beneath the bare statistics to discover a deeper analysis of the situation. At March’s Diocesan Synod, the Revd Lucy Davis and The Revd Jenny Hill, Diocesan Adviser for Women’s Ministry, presented some of these research findings.

Lucy said: “Research shows that in order to work to their full potential, teams need to be balanced according to gender. Balance means that the minority gender needs to reach 30%, male or female. If in the church we work in teams which are unbalanced, our mission and ministry will be damaged. We will not be fulfilling our potential as God’s church.”

It is believed that unless the issue is taken seriously, it could take as long as 80 years for the equilibrium to be reached in secular organisations and there is little to suggest that the church would be any different.

Some of the research conducted by the national Transformations Group has discovered that 77% of men recommended for training at a Bishop’s Advisory Panel are recommended for incumbency status while the corresponding number for women is 48%. Another statistic to emerge is that 80% of young ordinands under 30 are men.

In response to the Church of England’s national recognition of this issue, a group was formed in the diocese to look at what needs to be done. Working with Bishop Alan, the group has begun to address three areas:

1. Women tend to undersell themselves in job applications and, at the same time, an application in a female name is judged weaker than a male one even if the contents are identical. Training is being offered through the Continuing Ministerial Education programme to address this.

2. There is a need to increase the number and variety of applicants to posts. Women will only apply for a job if they feel they fit 90% of the criteria whereas a man will apply if he is a 60% fit. The group has prepared a language style guide to help parishes increase the number and variety of applicants for clergy posts using language large scale quantitative research shows will encourage female applicants without deterring men.

3. Women clergy need to be part of coaching and mentoring networks that encourage them to apply for posts. More local women’s officers will be appointed across the diocese to encourage this and create informal networks that can encourage women to apply for posts they might not have considered.
Soul Survivor Watford featured in C of E Church Growth Bulletin

Soul Survivor Watford began as a church meeting in a front room and has grown to be “a large and active multigenerational church, with a team of 21 and a programme which includes three weekly Sunday services, numerous activities and community outreach,” says the latest Church of England Resourcing Mission Bulletin on Church Growth, which features the story of the church. Here is an extract from the report by Catherine Ellerby.

Support from the outset
The Revds Mike Pilavachi and Andy Croft, the church’s Senior Pastors, say they can look back to those early days, and see how Soul Survivor Watford has been supported with wisdom - both at the outset, and subsequently - by the Church of England at a time when it was very hard to plant a church outside parish boundaries. As a consequence of that support, Soul Survivor Watford has grown up within the Church of England’s structures. 18 months ago, it became a Bishop’s Mission Order (BMO) under the joint leadership of Andy and Mike. Twenty-three years later, the church has over a thousand members and is still growing.

Early days: seeds sown for a different sort of church
Back when it started, Mike was youth minister at St Andrew’s, Chorleywood. Seeing only a trickle of young people becoming Christians, he says: “I watched these young people and started to realise that what we considered to be a modern service was just as alien to young people as any high or more traditional church service. I talked to them and found out that despite our efforts, church was not working for them.”

Mike and a team of eleven left St Andrew’s to set up a “different sort of church, one which would fit within the youth culture of the time.”

Café and Assemblies
Mike wrote to local schools offering to do assemblies and some accepted. Alongside this, they provided a place where they could invite the young people to come, starting up “Dreggs” café with music, games and food. Everything was aimed at offering young people a place to be and to relax in a comfortable and non-threatening setting. Mike says: “We took some of our musicians from the group, with Matt (Redman) heading up the band which did covers of well-known songs – Wonderwall by Oasis was a favourite – along with karaoke..... The band and other leaders had space and time to chat to the kids, play card games with them, start to get to know them a bit”.

Don’t talk about Jesus!
The café started attracting young people immediately - first a few came and before long a hundred of them. Aware that there was a big gap between assemblies and coming to the café for the young people, Mike was anxious not to put them off by offering anything overtly Christian: “The assemblies involved telling a moral story and letting people know that we were Christians – but inviting them to the café was different. I promised them that if they came we wouldn’t try to convert them... I then went back to the team and made things very clear indeed, that they must not talk about Jesus! We couldn’t break our promise to the kids... The team were open about being Christians; they just didn’t preach to them, instead they cared for and befriended them.”

As a result, some of the young people started talking to the leaders about what was going on in their lives, opening up about the issues which were important to them and the things they were facing. Then some started asking them about their faith and a “rumour” that they met on a Sunday night. Mike says: “When I told them that the “rumour” was true, they asked if they could come along. It was so natural – they were our friends so they wanted to join us. So the next thing was to find somewhere to meet.

“We hired a school hall and decked it out just like the café but on a Sunday. The band was the same as at the café. It all felt very familiar to them – they knew them already and it felt like their place with their people there playing music. One went up to Matt and asked if he was going to play Wonderwall and Matt told him he was going to play a song which he’d written himself.”
Soul Survivor.../continued

Being in their world
Mike says that he thinks of what they did then as building a bridge between the team and the young people and walking over the bridge to where they were; then walking back bringing the young people too. The same principle stands today in reaching young people, he says: “What we sometimes don’t realise, even now, is that church is a frightening thing and teenagers are asking “am I allowed to go?” or “what if I do something wrong?” We focused just on making relationships which allowed us to be in their world.”

Everyone grew up!
The church has evolved from being a church just for young people. It has members ranging in age from 20–65 but much of the congregation is made up of people in their 40s with children. There are 100 children in the children’s club. Mike explains this evolution: “The reason we’ve become like this is that everyone grew up! I had assumed that young people would move on, but whenever I ask people about what they planned to do they always say ”Why would I want to leave?” Some have got married and now some have children so we now have a challenge to keep investing in the next generations.”
The pattern and style of services on Sundays reflects what they are trying to achieve to reach the different groups and different ages.

Getting alongside today’s culture
Alongside the Sunday worshipping communities, helping people to grow in their faith is another area where Soul Survivor is changing and adapting all the time. Andy says that they are currently looking again at how to disciple people. “We’re trying to reflect the context we’re in now – in modern culture which is actively hostile to the Christian faith, people need to know more than ever why they believe what they believe. Thirty years ago, people had a foundation of knowing the Bible but young people today don’t have that foundation. They don’t know the scriptures and don’t look to the Bible as a source of authority.”

To help address this, the church is challenging the congregation on why they hold their beliefs through a unique teaching series for the 7pm service on the Apostles Creed.

Everyone who comes is also encouraged to join a connect group which come in many shapes, sizes and forms: there is one for new people on the basics of faith; some are more traditional Bible study and prayer groups; and others are very different. This includes one group which goes to the gym together, a crochet and knitting group and even a wine tasting and Bible study group.

Spiritual Growth
There are clear signs of spiritual growth. Not only are young people coming to faith and growing in discipleship, they are also going on to become church leaders. In the last five years, over 25 people have been ordained or are training for ordained ministry.

Mike continues: “We try to have a range of different events so that there is something for everyone – alongside our services and meetings, we have purely social events, and some with a bit more input. For example, we held a series of talks in January on the new year’s resolution theme, another evening on CAP and one with a health theme when we invited a doctor, a nutritionist and a fitness expert (all of them Christians) to come to tell us about how to keep fit and eat well. People really liked it and they said there was a nice ambience.”

The church is involved in a Watford Trust for homeless people and in outreach to other groups in the town for people in crisis. “These are lonely days,” says Mike, “and people are longing to belong.”

Emphasis on welcome
Being a welcoming church is a strength and ensuring people feel loved and at home, wherever they are in their lives or in their faith is a priority for the team. “We don’t always put on overtly evangelistic events but want people to enjoy coming and feel comfortable with us. One lady said recently, ‘Is it ok if I keep coming even though I’m not a believer? I love the community atmosphere.’ I pray that one day she will come to know Jesus, but I’m glad that she wants to come, wants to get to know us and is part of our community.”

Read the full report at: http://www.churchgrowthrd.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Resourcing_Mission_Bulletin/Mar_2016/Soul_Survivor_Watford_FINAL.pdf
How to save £3m in 3 years

This is not a post-budget savings scheme and so no disclaimers are required! It’s about how the Parish Buying Scheme’s energy basket has saved churches £3m pounds in three years and with 25% growth in the scheme last year, the savings are only going to increase.

The deadline for signing up for next year’s Energy Basket is the 1st May, and as it grows, the reasons to join only become greater.

Time saved
Joining the Energy Basket means that you don’t have to undergo the time-consuming process of hunting for a new contract each year. Through Parish Buying you get competitive prices year after year, avoiding expensive roll-over contracts and leaving time freed up for you to spend on other duties.

Competitive pricing
Parish Buying’s energy experts purchase energy from the wholesale market throughout the year when the market is low, reducing the risk of sudden market spikes. And, of course, as more sites join the Energy Basket, the more competitive this price will become.

Customer service
The Parish Buying team have helped thousands of parishes join the Energy Basket in the first three years. They appreciate that every site is different and the customer service team is always on hand to help you through the process – whether it’s initial enquiries, signing up, interim contracts or transferring supply.

What is Parish Buying?
Parish Buying is a professionally managed procurement service set up and run by the Church of England to assist parishes in their buying – allowing parishes to buy with confidence, as well as saving time and money to release back into mission and ministry.

Sign up or find out more. Visit www.parishbuying.org.uk
Or get in touch Call: 0800 368 0887 or Email: energy@parishbuying.org.uk

LED lighting brings churches more savings in money and effort

Buildings need to be well lit in order to be welcoming and safe, but the cost to the environment and the church budget for regular lighting is high.

LED lighting offers an environmental and long-term cost benefit for churches seeking to make the switch. It is fast becoming a popular solution to the problem of energy efficiency in churches. Maintenance costs are also reduced as replacement cycles are much longer.

Parish Buying will work with churches that register their interest in LED lighting to calculate the cost and the energy savings that could be made. They will then run a full selection process to find the best suppliers in the market.

Currently, Parish Buying has two suppliers for LED lighting who both have experience and expertise in the heritage sector and can offer discounts off their standard pricing - up to 25%. The DAC has recently advised on several installations of LED lighting, with one at All Saints Leighton Buzzard pictured, right. It is important to use the right colour quality of LED lights and to source high-quality and appropriate fittings. The DAC can provide names of more local contractors for LED lighting schemes and installation.
Clergy Appointments

Sarah Eynstone, presently Associate Priest (SSM) in London Diocese is to become Team Vicar (half-time) with special responsibility for St John's Aldbury (three year fixed term).

Dr Rachel Pennant, currently Assistant Curate in the Parish of St Andrew, Biggleswade, has been appointed as Vicar of St Catherine and St Paul, Hoddesdon.

Barry Unwin, presently vicar at St James's Church, New Barnet, is to become Priest-in-charge of the benefice of Upton on Severn, Ripple, The Hook, Hanley Castle, Hanley Swan, Welland, Hill Croome, Strensham and Earls Croome in Worcester Diocese.

Canon David White, Vicar of St Andrew’s Church, Chorleywood is to take semi-retirement in Truro Diocese in July.

Obituary

With sadness, we report the following deaths.

Cyril Flood, who was a member of the DBF from 2005 to 2014, died in March. He served on the General Committee, Parish Shares Committee and Budget Review Group and was a member of Diocesan and Deanery Synod for a number of years. He was also previously a churchwarden and treasurer of Toddington.

Mary Code died in March. From St Albans, she will not be known by name to most See Round readers, but a great many will have cause to be thankful to her. She was for many years one of the ‘Bundle Ladies’ who faithfully came to Holywell Lodge every month to pack the Clergy and Readers’ Bundles and the packages of See Round that accompanied them to parishes all over the diocese.

Lambeth Awards

On the third anniversary of his installation, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has announced a new set of non-academic Lambeth Awards to recognise outstanding service in various fields. The new suite of awards consist of three existing Lambeth Awards – the Lambeth Cross, the Canterbury Cross and the Cross of St Augustine – and six new awards named after previous holders of the office of Archbishop of Canterbury.

Each recognises outstanding service in different fields, including those of Archbishop Justin’s ministry priorities: prayer and the religious life; reconciliation; and evangelism and witness.

There are two recipients in this diocese:

The Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism has been bestowed on His Grace, Bishop Angaelos OBE, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom.

The Cranmer Award for Worship has been bestowed on Mr Matt Redman of Soul Survivor. Matt is an award-winning songwriter, worship leader and writer and he was part of the initial team of young people who left St Andrew’s Chorleywood 23 years ago to start Soul Survivor Watford. You can read more about that story on pages 4 & 5 of See Round Online.

Coming soon!

This year, the Bishop’s Harvest Appeal is partnering with WaterAid, to help bring clean, safe water and good sanitation to rural communities in Madagascar.

Madagascar is off the south-eastern coast of Africa and has a population of almost 22 million. Perhaps a country better known for its natural beauty and wildlife, it is, in fact, also one of the poorest countries, with 90% of the population living below the poverty line.

Publicity of the launch events happening around the diocese in the next couple of months will appear on the website, and mail-packs will be sent out at the beginning of July in the normal way.

Keep you eyes open for this logo!
EVENT LISTINGS
for April 2016
The Diocese of St.Albans in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton & Barnet

Concerts & Drama

St. Michael’s Church Bishop’s Stortford. Organ concert by Simon Johnson, Organist and Asst Director of Music at St Paul’s Cathedral. Saturday 16th April at 7.30pm. Includes music by JS Bach, Durufle, Stanford and Vierne. Tickets £12 (U18s & Students £8) from eventbrite.co.uk. Includes free glass of prosecco at interval.

St. Andrews Church, Kimbolton Road, Bedford MK40 2PF. Albion Choir will perform British folk songs and more on Saturday 23rd April at 7.30pm. Tickets £10/conc £8, Students (16-21) £4 U16s accompanied by paying adult free. Tel 01234 216881 or email musa@standrewsbedford.org.

St. Mary Magdalene Church, Westonbury, MK45 5JW. An evening with Charles Timberlake on Saturday 30th April at 7.30pm. Charles is a pianist and composer who has featured on Radio 2. Ticket £10 to include wine and nibbles, 01525 714064.

St. James the Apostle, Bushey. Saturday Recital Series. 12 noon for St James the Apostle, Bushey. Saturday Recital Series. 12 noon for Saturday 14th May at 7.30pm. Tickets £8 (inc refreshments) Tel 01582 729194.

St. Swithun’s Church, Sandy. Concert with the Hitchin Band on Saturday 21st May at 7.30pm. Tickets £5, available from Sandy Information Centre at Sandy Town Council Offices or from Colin Osborne on 01767 682032. Proceeds to The Leprosy Mission.

Open Days & Festivals

St Mary’s Church, St. Peter’s Church, Welwyn. Flower Festival on Saturday 23rd April (12 noon - 3pm).


St Albans Church, Hatfield Road, St. Swithun’s Church, Sandy. Ed Rocha Training Days - Saturday 23rd April. For further information about the different events see the bundle notice posters or visit www.stpauls-stalbans.org/ed-rocha.

St Mary’s Church, Kinsbourne Green and 9th Harpenden Scouts will be running Kinsbourne Common Fete on Saturday 23rd April (12 noon - 3pm).

St Peter’s Church, Lilley. Flower Festival on April 30th, May 1st and May 2nd. Theme: Inns of England. Refreshments, books, plants, white elephant stalls each day. We look forward to welcoming you.

St Albans Woodland Burial Ground. Keysoe Beds. Open Day on Saturday 29th May from 2-5pm. Further details from St Mark’s Church 01234 342613 or office@woodlandburialtrust.com.

All Saints Church, Datchworth. SG3 6TL. 10 village gardens will be open on Sunday 29th May 12.30pm-5pm. Lunches, BBQ and cream teas, live music and beautifully decorated 800 year-old church. Leisurly walk or courtesy bus. Admission inc gardens guide and car park Adults £6 accompanied children free.

Courses/Conferences

Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship Conference
‘Daniel In Exile’
A model for church leadership today. Speaker Revd John Dunnett
Tuesday 19th April 10.30-3pm at Christ Church St Albans AL3 6DJ. Tickets £12 including Lunch Book online: www.stalbansdef.org.uk or see bundle notices for flyer.

St Paul’s Church, Hatfield Road, St Albans. Ed Rocha Training Days

Liverpool St. Swithun’s Church, Sandy. ‘Daniel In Exile’
A model for church leadership today. Speaker Revd John Dunnett
Tuesday 19th April 10.30-3pm at Christ Church St Albans AL3 6DJ. Tickets £12 including Lunch Book online: www.stalbansdef.org.uk or see bundle notices for flyer.

St Thomas’s Church, Stopsley, Luton. LU2 7UL. Concert by the Luton Male Voice Choir on Saturday 14th May at 7.30pm. Tickets £8 (inc refreshments) Tel 01582 729194.

St Mary’s Church, Pirton, Crabtree Lane, Pirton, SG5 3QI. Please book by emailing Debbie Cochrane: dcochane@stalbans.anglican.org by Wednesday 20th April.

40/04/16 - Significant Adults / Significant Clergy
Led by Dean Pusey, Diocesan Youth Officer, this session will help you to engage more confidently with adolescent young people.

St Mary’s Church, North Mymms, AL9 7TN. Book direct with Laura Hart lhart@stalbans.anglican.org 01727 818151
Also See EGP leaflet and Giving Matters leaflet in bundle notices.

St Mary’s Church Welwyn. Enfield & District Organists’ Association is running an Organist Clinic/workshop with Roger Carter from 10am. on Saturday 14th May. If you are interested in improving skills, settings or technique please contact Roger on 07774 164950 or email roger@edoa.org.uk by Wednesday 20th April.

Early Saints of Northern England Pilgrimage to Holy Island & Northumbria 14th-18th September 2016 led by Revd Terrance Bell £639 per person See poster in e-bundle notices for full details or visit www.paxtravel.co.uk or call 01462 786123