Banned prayer video goes viral

More than 500,000 people have a video in which the Archbishop of Canterbury begins a recitation of the Lord’s prayer by different people after it was banned from being shown in Odeon, Vue and Cineworld cinemas. See www.justpray.uk.

It had been intended to show the video as part of the advertisement reel before the new Star Wars film when it is launched in December, but the advertising agency for major cinemas has refused to show it, citing its policy not to show political or religious advertising as it may cause offence to those of different faiths or other beliefs.

It transpired as we went to press that the ‘religious’ bit of the policy may well have been added to the ad agency’s website within the last few weeks.

The reaction from the Church of England as well as from leading figures including the Prime Minister has been to question the decision and ask how the video could be considered offensive. David Cameron is reported to have described the ban as ‘ridiculous’.

The decision has been called incomprehensible and possibly contrary to the Equality Act which makes it illegal to discriminate against people on the grounds of religion in the provision of services. The Revd Peter Crumpler, curate in Sandridge, formerly national Director of Communications for the Church of England said: “It’s clear that the cinema chains got this decision completely wrong, and also misjudged the reaction of the public. On the plus side, the furore around the ban has meant that many more people have seen the ad for themselves, online and via extracts on TV and other media. It also made the launch of the excellent JustPray website much more high profile.”

New website
The heart of the message is that prayer is for everyone and is intended to re-invigorate prayer in the nation. Some of the people who each say a line or a stanza of the prayer in the video are depicted, right: (top to bottom): Jonny, a commuter, currently training to be a priest at St Mellitus College, London; Kameo and Enrico tied the knot in the beautiful St Stephen’s Church, Lindley, Huddersfield in October; children from St Mary’s Church Primary School, Kilburn, London and finally two refugees at Borderlands, Bristol, a registered charity working especially with people seeking asylum in the UK or those who have become refugees from other countries. Watch the video and discover others.

Free Speech
The Church of England has said that although on one level the ban is just plain silly, on another it is rather a chilling restriction on free speech and freedom of religion. It seems that supermarket Christmas ads, about the ‘religion’ of commerce can be shown in cinemas but the church’s own ad for its own festival cannot.
Are you ready?

Traditionally preparations for Christmas began on Advent Sunday, signaling the start of a period of prayer and fasting in readiness to celebrate the birth of Christ. When I was young we knew that the countdown to Christmas had started because of the Advent calendar on the mantelpiece. I still remember the sense of anticipation as the children took turns to open the cardboard windows each day and read the scripture verses out loud.

Today Christmas preparations are rather different. If you watch the television ads you will know that they begin on the same weekend, although nowadays it’s heralded by Black Friday rather than Advent Sunday. With longer opening hours in shops and the promise of bargains, Black Friday can be dangerous. Last November police were called out to seven shops in Manchester, arresting three men and summoning medical help for a woman was injured by a ‘falling television’ as they fought over the bargains. It’s become so problematic that this year some police forces are suggesting that retailers should spread the sales over a longer period to avoid violence. Of course, long gone are the traditional Advent calendars. Today it is almost impossible to buy one unless it is a dispenser of chocolates and there are certainly no verses of scripture recounting the events of the first Christmas. It seems that today’s preparations for Christmas are more about personal excess and indulgence. Now, I don’t want to be a spoil sport. I enjoy all the trappings of Christmas but I think we are missing something – not least because unbridled consumption has created an epidemic of obesity which threatens our health and wellbeing.

Perhaps it’s a good time to recapture the original spirit of Advent, drawing nearer to the God who is always pouring his life out in generosity. One of the best ways we can prepare for Christmas is to practice generosity. By that I don’t mean buying even more expensive presents for our friends and families, but the giving which does not expect any return. As John Bunyan, one of the great Christians of Bedfordshire, said ‘You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.’ This spirit of generosity sets us free from our self-absorption and allows us to grow into the people that God created us to be. Now I think that’s the best form of preparation for Christmas.

Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans

Get ready:

Live the Challenge this Advent

Sign up now for a daily email or text (charges apply) during Advent to help bring a moment of stillness and reflection to the business of the season.

www.livethechallenge.co.uk
London Luton Airport opens new multi-faith Prayer Room

London Luton Airport (LLA) has opened a new multi-faith airside Prayer Room which is available for staff and departing passengers to use around the clock. The room is located near departure gate 20, just beyond the retail area of the Departures Lounge. Prayer mats and faith literature are provided and the carpeting features ‘direction of prayer’ for those faiths that require it.

The Airport Chaplaincy Team led by The Revd. Canon Liz Hughes advised London Luton Airport and the contractors on the design and finishing of the Prayer Room and will care for the facility on a day to day basis. The improved new facility has been opened as the airport begins its £110m redevelopment programme. The investment will increase the airport’s annual capacity from 12 million to 18 million by 2026 and transform the experience for passengers by delivering major upgrades to the airport’s facilities including a complete redesign of the terminal to create a quick, efficient, friendly and convenient passenger experience ... including the new prayer room, a facility lost in earlier phases of the redevelopment process. The existing Christian chapel will also be relocated as part of this plan and be available, as at present.

Speaking about the opening of the prayer room, Canon Liz said: “The new facility offers an opportunity to people of different faiths to make use of a moment of free time as they depart on a long journey for prayer or peaceful contemplation. Many people find this a vital part of their journey and I am delighted that we can now offer this in a location that I hope more people will take advantage of when travelling.”

Holding a candle for confirmation

Bishop Michael conducted a baptism and confirmation service for 26 candidates from the deanery of Bishop’s Stortford on Wednesday 18 November at All Saints, Hockerill. The candidates ranged across three generations and several decades with the youngest being 12 and the eldest considerably older!
Living God’s Love: the way forward is with 2020 vision

A 2020 Vision

So that God’s kingdom might grow in our world, we have a vision of:

- flourishing Christ-centred communities,
- inspiring people of all ages and backgrounds,
- to discover God,
- to grow in their relationship with him and
to respond to his transforming love,
through serving others.

Values:
As we travel together on our journey, we are constantly seeking to Live God’s Love with the:
generosity, joy, imagination, and courage
that the Holy Spirit releases in us.

Vision
The new 2020 vision statement takes us forward with a sharper and clearer expression of our purpose and destination.
It is a vision about growth, flourishing, inspiration, discovery, and service. It does not dictate what parishes, schools and chaplaincies should be doing on a day-to-day basis, which is consistent with the diversity of local ambitions for 2020 across the diocese disclosed during the listening exercise. There will continue to be local flexibility to carry out God’s work in a way that is most effective and relevant for different contexts, yet a shared vision will inspire all of the different parts of our diocese, united behind it, to play their unique part in realising the vision’s objectives.

Values
Values are ingredients in the glue that creates common purpose.
A set of values to which everyone in the diocese can commit has the potential to help us work better together; inspire us to action; enhance our leadership; and communicate to others what is important to us.
The Living God’s Love prayer has provided the inspiration for these values. The prayer is one of the best known and liked parts of Living God’s Love. It is becoming better and better known and from its very heart, the call for God's help so that we can live God’s Love, come our values: generosity, joy, imagination, and courage.
### A Prayer

Living God,
Draw us deeper into your love;
Jesus our Lord,
send us to care and serve;
Holy Spirit,
make us heralds of good news.
Stir us, strengthen us,
teach and inspire us
to live your love
with generosity and joy,
with imagination and courage;
for the sake of your world
and in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

### A journey:

Because God loves the world without limit,
bringing life and transformation,
we are seeking to live God’s love.

**We’ll know we’re achieving our vision when we see growth**
The vision is not about achieving growth for growth’s sake: it’s all about serving God. It’s all about becoming the people and the church he wants us to be. From that will come the growth we seek. Growth in faith, discipleship, numbers of all ages, and in service to others.

### Journey

At the heart of Living God’s Love, the three paths, ‘Going Deeper into God,’ ‘Transforming Communities,’ and ‘Making New Disciples,’ remain the key ingredients of our common journey. Following these paths will keep us on track.

### New Resources

New resources and more support for parishes making their mission action plans will focus on:

- Discerning our different contributions to Living God’s Love
- Equipping ourselves to Live God’s Love
- Supporting each other to Live God’s Love
- Making things simpler

Keep up with developments by visiting:
[www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/living-god-s-love](http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/living-god-s-love)
The Revd Philip Waller is the diocese’s newest Associate Director of Ordinands and Team Vicar in Codicote. He’s filling two new posts – an extra half-time post in the Vocations Team and Codicote’s first half-time Team Vicar from the Welwyn Team Ministry, which Codicote has just joined.

His Vocations Team appointment is key to the plan to increase the number of vocations and curates-in-training, to address the large number of clergy retirements in prospect in the coming years.

Philip himself worked in industry for some years before he sought ordination, but always felt restless. Whilst employed as a recruitment consultant, he began exploring a vocation to ordination, and was himself recruited into the church’s ranks. Affirmation by both clergy and lay people about his calling was vital during the process. He adds: “I hope that anyone will feel they can play a part in spotting and encouraging those in our local churches whom God may be calling along this path.” Since ordination, he says he hasn’t had a day when he felt the need to consider any other job. Being a parish priest has been both deeply challenging and deeply rewarding and finding new recruits to the priestly ranks has been much more exciting than secular recruitment, although requiring many of the same skills.

Reflecting on his previous career, Philip says there are similarities and differences between helping to identify vocations and recruiting people to secular jobs. In secular recruitment, the task is mostly about finding if the pieces of a jigsaw, made up of the candidate and employer, fit. Identifying a vocation is much more about going on a journey with someone to help them to hear the call of God to ministry, and the affirmation of others that this is the right path for them. It is also much more about their potential than their qualifications or exact fit to the role. Of course, both processes can, occasionally, get it wrong, but on the whole, Philip says he wishes, somewhat idealistically, that the secular process could be more gradual and take longer to identify the right person for the job rather than hinging it all on a brief interview. At the same time, some of the standard processes for job finding, such as giving presentations, are much more frequently used now with clergy seeking parish posts, which is entirely appropriate, given the public nature of ministry. Philip is looking forward to fostering vocations to ordained ministry, while remaining firmly engaged with parish work. In his last appointment, Philip took on the role of Assistant DDO on a “portfolio” basis, so comes to us with considerable experience of discerning vocations. “It’s very exciting to accompany men and women from many different walks of life in their exploration of God’s call”, Philip told SeeRound. “Some candidates begin the process when still at school, others (like myself) after a few years work in the wider world, and yet others do so in middle-age. Some sense God’s call repeatedly over many years, but haven’t been ready to answer it. For others, the call comes as an unexpected prompting to reconsider the direction of their lives.”

Philip was extracted from Derby Diocese to take up his new appointment here in October. Over a period of 24 years, Philip served in three different parishes in the Derby Archdeaconry – in an ex-mining community, in a Local Ecumenical Project on a new housing estate, and lately in a small manufacturing town – all a far cry from rural Hertfordshire. Some local place names are familiar to him, as he lived in Enfield both prior to ordination and during his curacy there. He occasionally ventured beyond the M25 ring to breathe some fresh air.

The next Vocations event is in Kempston, Bedfordshire.

See the full sized poster PDF and information in the ebundle notices...

Is God calling you?

Are you wondering about a call to some kind of ministry in God’s church?

Come and join us on

Saturday 23rd January 2016

9.30am – 1.30pm at All Saints Church Hall
Church Lane, Kempston, MK42 8PH

Keynote address: The Bishop of Bedford
Clergy Appointments

Jane Banister, previously Associate Minister (SSM) in the Tring Team Ministry has become Team Vicar (half-time) in the same benefice.

David Beresford, presently Priest-in-charge in the benefice of Marsh Farm, Luton, is to move to the Diocese of Delaware USA.

Sarah Burrow, presently Priest-in-charge in the benefice of Renhold and Bishop’s Representative at Crematoria for Bedford, is to become a Member of St Michael’s Priory, Willen and an associate member of the Society of the Sacred Mission, also having PTO in this diocese.

Rachel Wadey, previously working with PTO in the East & North Herts NHS Trust, has become Chaplaincy Team Leader of the same.

Obituary

Nigel Sylvester, Reader Emeritus from Little Chalfont died in November.

Penny achieves diocese’s first Gold Award

Penny Paton, Junior Church Leader in Knebworth Parish was awarded the first Equipping God’s People Gold Specialist Award in Children’s Ministry in November.

Penny (pictured below receiving her certifate from Bishop Alan), commented at the time, “It’s taken 2.5 years, 24 course sessions and three projects to get the Gold Specialist Award in Children’s Ministry (first Gold Award in the Diocese for Children’s Ministry, I understand) and today I was presented with it by the Bishop of St Albans during one of our Centenary services. Thanks must go to Revd Ruth Pyke who helped me greatly in reaching this goal. It has been great fun and I have learnt a lot, I would certainly encourage others to go on some of the Dioceses courses.”

Want to know more about working with children? Contact Julie Cirillo, Children’s Work Administrator on 01727 818160, youthoffice@stalbans.anglican.org.

Paschal Light is organised by a small group of clergy and laity who are supporting the work done by Janet Gentles, who has prepared the courses and resources which are available on: www.paschallight.uk

From her teenage years Janet was innately aware that there was a deeper truth and wisdom to be found in the Bible and she set out to find it. She has passionately pursued her quest for over forty years and her journey has taken her deeply into Christian spirituality and Christian and Jewish Mysticism. She has seen that there are many things we believe without understanding and many texts in the Scriptures which, on the surface, seem incomprehensible. In seeking to come to know and understand these things Janet has uncovered many profound truths in the sublime beauty which lies at the very heart of the Christian faith. As progress is made on this journey things which once seemed impossible to perceive begin to reveal themselves in clarity and simplicity and what they speak of sheds light on the road that still lies ahead. Through an extended programme of study and practice, the Spiritual Pilgrimage, Janet invites others who wish to walk this way to engage with that path which, through Christ, leads ever deeper into God.

Bishop Richard Atkinson comments:

‘At the heart of our journey of Christian faith is this deepening encounter with the light, life and love of God. Janet Gentles and the members of ‘Paschal Light’ provide us with insightful material that not only celebrates the mystical and spiritual tradition of the Church, but also provides practical guidance on the spiritual life. I encourage you to explore what it has to offer.’

25th ANNIVERSARY CHARITY
CHRISTMAS PUZZLE

This year sees the 25th Anniversary of the annual Puzzle set by Gordon Gray, Reader at Eaton Bray with Edlesborough. The Puzzle is rated by participants as one of the most enjoyable (and devious) they have tackled and, with a theme designed to help completion, it will appeal to people who enjoy doing word puzzles. Puzzlers have plenty of time to find the answers and Puzzles should be returned, with a donation, by 24th January.

Four highest scorers will each receive a £30 prize.

Everyone who enters will qualify for one of five £10 prizes.

Copies of the Puzzle can be accessed from the web at: www.christmaspuzzle.co.uk.

You can register early to receive a copy on the issue date of 8 December.

Over £63,000 raised for charity.

£5,900 donated last year. This year’s puzzle will support five nominated charities.
Concerts & Drama

St. Swithin’s Church, Sandy. Christmas Concert featuring the Stotfold Salvation Army Band and local groups on Tuesday 8th December at Sandy Upper School, Bedfordshire at 7pm. Admission £4. Proceeds for The Leprosy Mission. Contact: Colin Osborne 01767 682032.

St. Mary’s Church, Marshalswick. A Christmas Cracker Concert by the Fayrfax Consort, director David Ireson, on Thursday 10th December at 8pm. Tickets £6.50 for Adults and £3 U18s, from 01727 852364.

St. Mary the Virgin, Maulden. The Seasonal Sing Along this year will be at 3pm on Sunday 13th December in Maulden Village Hall. A mixture of carols and other Christmas songs and readings, both amusing and more serious. It will be followed by tea or coffee. Entrance is free but there will be a collection for a local food bank.

St Mary’s Church, Eaton Bray. Music at 2016. March. Book your tickets from the Box Office.

Fayrfax Consort, director David Ireson, St. Mary’s Church, Marshalswick from 01727 852364.

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St Mary’s Church, Eaton Bray. Music at St Mary’s – 2.00pm, St Mary’s Church, Eaton Bray. Music at 2016.


St. Mary’s Church, Watford. Christmas Tree Festival Friday 11th & Saturday 12th (9.30-6pm) Sunday 13th December (12noon-4pm) followed by Christingle Service at 4pm, with a live nativity on Saturday. Entry is free but please bring plenty of coins to donate to local charities who have decorated the trees. Includes Festival Cafe and musical interludes. Also a concert by the Amici Choir at 7.30pm on Saturday with carols, readings and more - tickets £10 including refreshments, Call 01923 225189 or www.stmaryswatford.org.

All Saints Church Houghton Conquest, Bedfordshire. Christmas Tree Festival on Friday 11th (6.30pm-9pm) Saturday 12th (10.30am-4pm) and 13th December (11-4pm). Admission free.

Holy Saviour Church, Radcliffe Rd, Hitchin. SG5 1QG. Christmas Tree Festival: Preview and Concert of Seasonal Music. Friday December 11th, from 6.30pm-9pm (concert starts 7.45.) Pam Rhodes will read extracts from her new book, with music by Holy Saviour Church Choir, and The Radcliffe Singers. Admission by ticket (inc. mulled wine) £12 from 01462 712212; toryevans@greatgreen.plus.com. Christmas Tree Festival continues Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th December (12 noon to 6pm). Display of 50 decorated trees; Live music throughout the weekend; lunches and teas available. Entry £3.50 (accompanied children free).

St. Mary’s Eaton Bray, LU6 2DP. Crib Festival. Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th December. Come and see cribs, crèches and nativities with performances by local school-children, refreshments, stalls and storytelling culminating in the Service of Lessons and Carols at 6pm on 13th Dec. Admission free.

St. Andrew’s Church, Hertford. ‘A Christmas Cracker’ Concert by Fayrfax Consort, director David Ireson, on Thursday 10th December at 8pm. Tickets £6.50 for Adults and £3 U18s, from 01727 852364.

St. Lawrence’s Church, Dunstable. ‘A Christmas Cracker’ Concert by Fayrfax Consort, director David Ireson, on Thursday 10th December at 8pm. Tickets £6.50 for Adults and £3 U18s, from 01727 852364.

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St. Paul’s Church, Hatfield Road, St Albans. Jo Moody & Team Training Days Youth Event and Healing Service taking place over February 11th-13th 2016. For more information about the different events see the ebundle notice posters and see further details on www.stpauls-stalbans.org/jo-moody.

Courses/Conferences

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Equipping God’s People for Ministry
e-Bundle

Download via the bundle notices here: www.stalbans.anglican.org/news/e-bundle/ or www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/about-egp/