Bishop John Taylor RIP 1929-2016

Bishop John Taylor was Bishop of St Albans from 1980 to 1995, preceeding Bishop Christopher Herbert. His appointment was a return to the county of his childhood, having attended Watford Boys Grammar School and having found faith at the youth group in St Luke’s Church, Watford. Ordained in 1956, his early parish experienced was followed by a long and distinguished teaching career at Oak Hill. Following that he had 8 very happy years in Chelmsford Diocese as DDO, some of that time being combined with parish ministry in Woodford Wells. There followed by 5 years as Archdeacon of West Ham before his consecration. He was troubled at the thought of leaving parish life for Archdiocenal responsibilities, but was obedient to the call of God and his Bishop’s wishes. His calling to the episcopate, in a similar vein, echoed the traditional response ‘nolo episcopari,’ ~ I do not wish to be a bishop. Archdeacon Jonathan Smith remembers Bishop John for many qualities: “The word that keeps coming to mind when I remember him is ‘grace’. He was a man of extraordinary grace.” His pastoral skills also made a deep impression: “He had a genuine interest in the welfare of people, especially his ministers.” Bishop John was universally recognised as a great teacher, having gained a double first at Cambridge, including in Hebrew, which led to his love of the Holy land and Presidency of CMJ, the Church’s Ministry among the Jews. “For Bishop John the two great roles of episcopacy, pastoring and teaching were indissolubly linked. He was a great Old Testament scholar. And he was a natural communicator,” Jonathan recalls.

That sentiment is echoed by the Revd Peter Crumpler, who lived and worshipped in the diocese before becoming Diocesan Communications Officer under Bishop John: “He was a gifted communicator and encouraged the Church to raise its game in the way it ‘spread the word.’ In 1993 I wrote a guide to Church communications and Bishop John contributed the foreword.” It said: “The Church’s communication should be accessible, not obscure, and human, not lost in technicality. In these media-minded days, the Church needs to follow the example of its Lord in taking infinite pains to get the message heard.” Peter reflects: “Bishop John’s advice is as relevant today as it was more than 20 years ago.” Bishop Alan took Bishop John’s funeral service in a packed cathedral. The notes to the service say: “In spite of his apprehensions, John was Bishop of St Albans for 15 deeply happy years, and loved ministering to the clergy and people of the St Albans diocese, with Linda always by his side. He was especially proud to be (nearly) the first diocesan bishop to ordain women priests in 1992. As a member of the House of Lords and as Chair of the Communications Committee he spoke up for the church and Christian values on a number of key issues. In 1988 he was appointed Lord High Almoner, which involved attending the Queen each year on her cathedral visits for Maundy Thursday. The lovely anthem ‘Wash me throughly from my wickedness’, included in today’s service, was one of John’s favourite Maundy anthems. In 1998 he was appointed KCVO.”

Tributes to Bishop John given by Bishop Robin Smith, retired Bishop of Hertford and the Revd Canon Tom Parker, Bishop John’s son-in-law, whose words included these: “John was wise, kind, accepting, joyous and his very presence brought a sense of security and welcome. ... John epitomised to me the character of the Lord Jesus he served so faithfully his whole adult life.” The sermon, preached by the Revd Canon Rupert Charkham QHC, spoke about the foundation of Bishop John’s life on prayer. The tributes also spoke at length of Bishop John’s love of family life and his family’s love for him and his infectious joy and laughter. It was hard not to feel a great sense of loss at the end of the service, but also deep thanks to God.
Bishop’s Letter

An old vaccine for a new disease

A few years ago Oliver James wrote a book called ‘Affluenza’. In order to research his book, James (who is a psychologist) visited Sydney, Singapore, Moscow, Copenhagen, New York and Shanghai and interviewed people about the worldwide epidemic of what he calls ‘affluenza’. What is it? He defined it as “an obsessive, envious, keeping-up-with-the-Joneses that has resulted in huge increases in depression and anxiety among millions”. James argued that, “We have become absolutely obsessed with measuring ourselves and others through the distorted lens of affluenza values” and he thinks that it is causing many of our contemporary social problems, such as the breakdown in family life and marriage. He says that the results of this are evident in the growth in addiction, anxiety and depression.

His book reminds me of an article which quoted research published in The Journal of Happiness Studies. Apparently British people are not very happy compared with others. As a nation we are now ranked 20th in the world, well below other countries, including much poorer nations such as Uruguay, Mexico, Ghana and Colomba. This is extraordinary: despite the fact that there has been an 80% increase in average income over the past thirty years, the levels of happiness have hardly changed at all. Oliver James thinks that religion is part of the answer. “Wherever I went,” he wrote, “I found that religion seemed to be a powerful vaccine. I should not have been surprised, because scientific evidence has long been there: much to the consternation of social scientists, on average regular church-goers suffer less depression or unhappiness than unbelievers.”

There are several probable reasons for this, all of which are rooted in Christian practices. When we worship we are invited to pray for others, which directs our focus away from ourselves and helps us to reflect on those who may be less fortunate than we are. A fundamental part of prayer is thanksgiving, which helps us to reflect on the positive things in life, rather than on the negative. We are also likely to be involved in some aspect of our church’s charitable work, which brings us directly in touch with people who have far greater challenges to face than we do. In different ways, all these activities mean that we look outwards to others. In our fast moving age, it is all too easy to overlook the ancient wisdom that the Christian faith has distilled in its scriptures and through centuries of spiritual teaching. As St Paul put it:

I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Philippians 4.11-12).

Let’s keep taking the ancient vaccine of faith to ward off the contemporary disease of affluenza.

An old vaccine for a new disease

Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans

Bishop addresses EU Referendum result

Immediately after the result, Bishop Alan said: “The people of this nation have spoken, although the referendum has also highlighted the deep divisions that exist in our country. We must now move forward together. However, healing the divisions will require an acknowledgement that the vote in part reflects the increasingly polarised circumstances between the poorest and the richest people in our nation.

It is my hope that all who voted will show grace whether they side with the victorious or the defeated. We must seek to rebuild neighbourly trust and acceptance on our streets, in our workplaces and clubs and schools. We will start with prayer in our churches and continue with our longstanding service to all the people of our communities. Most of all, it is vital for us to offer friendship and reassurance to those who might fear that this result will be exploited by factions peddling hatred and division.” Some of these remarks were quoted in the ‘Observer’ on Sunday 26th June.

The difference between going to church and being church

Refresh is not so much a book as a journey between two book-covers. It has so excited Canon Tim Lomax, Director of Mission, that he's sent it to all clergy. If he could, I think he'd send it to everyone in the diocese. Perhaps he hopes that clergy will share it with as many people as are interested. After all, it is only a thirty–minute read. It describes itself as a “Not-so-new guide to being church and doing life,” and is about a fresh expression of church being refreshed expressions of the people who make up the church, doing some very ancient things: some of the things that Jesus and his disciples did.

Challenging readers with some seemingly simple questions, the book is adept at two things. It takes us on a journey from faith being about us personally, to it being about us collectively, and it breaks the process of reaching out to others into obvious and natural steps. It makes living out our faith about building relationships and making friends with those outside the church in ways that connect them with us as well as Jesus.

The book's two authors, are: the Revd Michael Moynagh, an authority on new types of church, and an American pastor who left a large US church as he no longer wanted to be a Chief Executive, but craved being a pastor once again. He heads up Fresh Expressions’ pioneering work in the next generation.

A fresh expression of a Civic Service?

St Alban’s Church, Warners End and Gadebridge, celebrated their Patronal Festival and the final completion of extensive building works over a weekend in June. Money from the sale of St. Peter’s Church, Gadebridge and grants from the Historic Churches Trust and the Boxmoor Trust were used to improve St. Albans Church, Warners End. The major improvements include a new parish room, St. Peter’s Room, a disabled toilet, St. Peter’s Privy, ramps to the side and front of the building for disabled access and a new tea station.

On the Sunday, representatives of various groups within the congregation, as well as invited guests, chose the hymns for a ‘Songs of Praise’ service and introduced them. This gave the service, with invited local dignitaries such as local MP, Mike Penning and the Mayor of Dacorum, a sense of informality and getting to know each other. The Vicar, the Revd Pete Stevenson, chose the Alban Hymn, as a fitting patronal keynote. It includes the words: “I am Alban, I worship and adore the true and Living God.” This was followed by “Make me a Channel of your Peace,” because of its connection with St Francis and the parish’s Volunteers for St Francis Hospice, who chose it.

Mike Penning MP chose “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” as it was sung at his wedding when his beautiful bride Angie walked down the aisle. Junior Church chose: “He’s Got the Whole World in his Hands,” sung with a little help from Revd Michael Macey and daughter, just visible, left. ‘I, the Lord of sea and sky’ was chosen by the Friday Craft Group and introduced by a newer member, Valerie, who spoke warmly of the children at church and how this hymn reminded her of the Sunday School at her previous church. St Alban’s oldest member Alice Wear chose ‘Great is thy faithfulness.’ The second verse reminded her of her time with the Land Girls during World War II.

The Reverend Rex Merry, a former vicar of the parish chose ‘I Cannot Tell’ describing the tension between ‘I cannot tell’ and ‘this I know’ in our journey of faith. Cllr Bob Mclean, Mayor of Dacorum, explained how his choice, ‘Jerusalem,’ inspired all to continue worshipping and adoring the true and living God in England’s green and pleasant land.
A harvest of new Deacons, Priests and Readers

Nine Readers, 11 priests and 16 deacons began ministries in St Albans Diocese this month. In June, seven new Readers were licensed, two more licensed from other dioceses and the first weekend of July saw the ordinations of priests and deacons to serve in 15 of our 20 deaneries. The diocese’s ministry strategy, to increase the number and geographical and age spread of curates in training is bearing fruit. There is also a desire to see more vocations to Reader ministry, especially from younger people.

Orders of service at the Ordination Services carried a page, asking people gathered for the services, “Do you have a calling?” It’s a question which all those licensed or ordained have answered on their journey of faith and it’s a question which any Christian can ask. The service sheet continues with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s answer: “The good news is yes! You have! Our first calling is to live life in all its fullness and to represent Christ in the world.” … All who are baptised are called to ministry, whether lay or ordained, to serve all people. … The further calling to a vocation is not for everybody, but may be for you.”

The Revd Theresa Musiwacho’s story - new deacon to serve at St John the Baptist, Royston

Married mother of two, Theresa Musiwacho is from Zimbabwe, but lived in Luton for many years. She trained as a Primary School teacher and taught in various schools. She also worked as a carer, where she says, “I learnt to be sensitive, responsive to people’s needs and respect diversity. Alongside my work I also was studying at the University of Bedfordshire. Prior to and during my ministerial training I was exposed to different Church traditions.”

“I feel I have benefited enormously by undergoing ministerial training with Eastern Region Ministry Course (ERMC). ERMC has helped me to grow academically, spiritually and socially. Furthermore, EMRC has helped me to clarify my understanding of what God has called me to be. I feel I was well supported over the process and in the various Churches where I was attached.”

“I would like to give glory to God for what He has called me to be. I am very much looking forward to serve God as an assistant curate at St John the Baptist Church in Royston, learning from my Incumbent, working with the community and offering my gifts.”

The Revd Eugene Hanshaw’s story - new deacon to serve in the Chipping Barnet Team Ministry

“I had been a part of the congregation of St Peter’s in Stevenage for six months when I felt called to explore vocation. I was a house husband, looking after our young son, but had had many jobs in the past, including cinema manager and baker.

I had been away from church, and God, for many years but I had felt a similar urge to serve during my teenage years, and being a volunteer youth worker in the church only increased my desire to explore. To my surprise I was selected for training. Academic study has never been a strong area but I enjoyed it and I was ok at it, but the greatest joy has been discovering the wide breadth of churchmanship within the Church of England. I think it’s easy for us to become blinkered within our own tradition, I certainly had been, and we can miss where God is working in other parts of His church, and His Creation.

As a deacon I hope to serve, and stand, at the edge of church, helping those that are outside to come in and ‘belong’, and those who are on the inside to ‘go out, to love and serve the Lord’.”

For full details of the Deacons, Priests and Readers names and allocated parishes as well as more photographs, please see this page on the diocesan website: www.stalbans.anglican.org/new-deacons-priests/
Readers’ Licensing: Bishop Michael was quite explicit: “We ought to do the photograph outside the cathedral to symbolise the Readers’ role outside the church and in the world. How would we like to get more life into the picture? “Jump for joy,” I suggested. No sooner had he repeated this, there were nine Readers and one bishop leaping into the air, brandishing Bibles.

All this was unsurprising behaviour given the theme of Bishop Michael’s sermon on the Body of Christ. He spoke on St Paul’s writing’s on the Body of Christ being made of many parts all essential for the health of the church. He added that it was vital for the voices of the Readers, who had one foot in the church and one in the world, to be heard. He urged them to keep making sure they were.

Second from the left, above, is Obinna Eneli who was licensed to St. Peter, Broadwater, Stevenage, which happens to be Eugene’s sending church (see left). Val’s story (pictured above, right on the end) Val didn’t want to become a Reader, someone suggested it to her and she thought, no, “I don’t want to do that, I’ll get tied into the church. God kept tugging me, in was as if I was forced, in the nicest possible way.” During training, some of which had been unexpectedly a bit of a slog for her, the best bit had been the ‘formation’. “You hardly notice its happening, but very gradually you start to be formed into the sort of person that God may be able to use, and I’m not sure that would be true without this three year’s of Reader training.”
Farewell & thanks, Archdeacon Trevor

A packed All Saints Church, Hertford, was the venue for the Archdeacon of Hertford's farewell service, after 19 years' in the diocese, almost half his ministry, coming here in 1997. A great many other figures from throughout Trevor’s ministry came to All Saints to wish him and Mrs Jones well in retirement, among them Bishop Christopher Herbert who had appointed him Archdeacon. They had both known each other in Hereford Diocese, where Bishop Christopher had been Director of Education and where Trevor's ministry started. Trevor often held two posts at the same time. While he was Warden of the Bishop Mascall Centre, Ludlow, the Diocesan Education and Conference Centre, he was also a member of the Diocesan Education Team and for some of that time he was also Diocesan Communications Officer. When he first became Team Rector of the South Wye Team Ministry, he was still Communications Officer and a year later, became Chaplain to the Forces. He relinquished his other roles, ceasing to be Communications Officer in 1986 and a Team Rector in 1987. He was made a Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral in 1992.

Trevor’s sermon was filled with his scholarship, humour and spiritual insight. He gave several literary references to Archdeacons, starting with Chaucer (from the prologue to The Friar’s Tale: “In my part of the land there used to be | An archdeacon, a man of high degree) and ending with Susan Howatch, via Trollope. Mingled with these were also many references to ecclesiastical writings, including those of Richard Vaughn, the 17th century Bishop of London who, “declared, ‘the Archdeacon is to be our eyes, whereby I see into every part of my diocese’ and this gave rise to that famous description of the Archdeacon as Oculus Episcopi – ‘the eye of the bishop’.” Trevor continued: “They (Archdeacons) indeed share with the bishop in the oversight of the diocese, but must do so with insight and discretion; being ever mindful of human fallibility and the needful gift of the grace of God. And whilst a key task of the Archdeacon is discipline, the Archdeacon must remember that it is always exercised in the name of him who, ‘while we were yet sinners, died for us’. Discipline, albeit firm, which lacks kindness, gentleness, is far from the loving character of the God who seeks to embrace us and bring us home; the character we are called to reflect in all that we do and say.”

Trevor concluded: So, I take my leave of you after 19 profoundly happy years – years that have tested me, years that have shaped me – but with a deep sense of gratitude to those who have entrusted me with this office and to you, and to the communities you represent, but above all to God for the privilege of this opportunity and calling, to serve with you and among you.’

A final ‘thank you’ after the event: ‘Sue and I are most grateful for the warmth of affection and generosity shown to us in so many ways, especially at our farewell service on Saturday 25 June but also before and after! Many joined us for the service; many also sent their apologies, good wishes and prayers. We are most grateful and leave with many deep, happy and lasting memories of a great diocese and a fantastic archdeaconry where I have been privileged to serve as its first Archdeacon. We will pray for you, please pray for us’. 
Clergy Appointments

Dr Stephen (Steve) Bate, presently Associate Vicar in the benefice of Stratford upon Avon, Luddington and Clifford Chambers, is to become Priest-in-Charge/Rector Designate in the benefice of Albury, Little Hadham & Much Hadham (in the proposed Ash & Quin Valleys Group Ministry).

Stefan Chrysostomou, presently Assistant Curate at St Mary-at-Finchley in London diocese, is to become Vicar in the benefice of Norton.

Darren Collins, presently Vicar in the benefice of Norton, is to become Team Rector (with special responsibility for Bishop’s Hatfield St Etheldreda w. St Luke) in Bishop’s Hatfield Team Ministry.

Nevsky Everett, presently Assistant Curate in the benefice of Norton, is to become Chaplain of Keeble College, Oxford.

Matthew (Matt) Graham, presently Assistant Curate at Christ Church, Little Heath, is to become Team Rector (with special responsibility for Bishop's Hatfield St Etheldredaw. St Luke) in Bishop’s Hatfield Team Ministry.

Keith Murphy, presently Assistant Curate at Christ Church Ware has been seconded temporarily to Cheshunt Team Ministry for 6 months.

James Robertson, presently Rector of the benefice of Holwell, Ickleford & Pirtton, will retire to Dorset in October.

Gill Webb, presently Priest-in-Charge (SSM) in the benefice of Marston Moretayne and Lidlington, is to retire seeking PTO in the diocese.

Graham White, Assistant Curate in Tring Team Ministry, has resigned.

Linda Williams, presently Associate Minister (full time) in the benefice of Harpenden, remains but in a part-time (0.83 stipend) role.

Diocesan ‘Hellos and Goodbyes’

The Diocesan Office bid a sad farewell to The Revd Ysmena Pentelow, as Diocesan Officer for Initial Ministerial Education Phase 2 in June. She has been appointed fulltime Vicar of St Mary’s Church in Ware, having left St Paul’s Langlebury.

Gabby Parikh, Parish Development Administrator has also left the diocesan office and will be joining Southwark Diocese as Parish Giving Comms Officer. We wish her well.

Iain Blythe, has joined the Estates Department as Estates and Trusts Officer. Iain was a partner in law firms in London and Liverpool before moving to the charity sector, most recently working for the Archbishops’ Council.

Kathryn McNamara has joined the Parish Development Team as Administrator. Kathryn was previously Head of Marketing for a large unit within Royal Mail.

Archdeacon of Hertford’s Collation Service

The Revd Janet MacKenzie will be collated as Archdeacon at St Andrew & St George’s Church, Stevenage on Tuesday 6th September at 7.30pm.

Please put this date in your diary.

All welcome.

A Ringing Success

Saturday 2nd July saw the 6th annual Ringing World National Youth Contest being held in London. 24 teams of young ringers (all 18 or under) entered from across the country – Scotland to the Isle of Wight and everywhere in between. St Albans Diocese was well represented with 2 teams from Hertfordshire and 1 from Bedfordshire. 2 of these teams came away with all the gold medals, awarded to the winners of each of the 2 categories in the contest! One of the Hertfordshire Teams were winners of the Call Change Category, Bedfordshire (pictured aside) won the Method Ringing Category (2 courses of Plain Bob Triples) and were overall winners of the contest (for the fourth successive year!!).
Elstow Abbey  Castle Theatre  Company with being performing Much Ado About Nothing on 12th July at 7pm. Details from www.elstow-abbey.org.uk.

St James the Great, Thorley  Festival of Flowers and Music on the theme ‘Show Time’ over August Bank Holiday Weekend Saturday, Sunday & Monday 12 noon - 5pm. Craft Fair. Talk on the history and architecture of the Barnabas Centre Sun/Mon 3pm. Refreshments, plants, souvenirs and raffle tickets throughout the weekend. Festival Praise on Sunday 6pm.

St Lawrence Church, Ardeley  SG2 7AG. Come and join us on 7th August & 4th September for cream teas. 2.30pm – 5pm. Homemade scones & cakes. We look forward to welcoming you to our pretty village with its beautiful 13th century church and thatched cottages round The Green. For further information please contact Wendy Waygood 01438 861260.

St Katharine’s Church, Ickleford  ‘Happy and Glorious’ – A Festival of Flowers, Arts and Crafts to celebrate Queen Elizabeth’s 90 years from 11am-4pm on Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th September. Admission – adults £2.50, children free. Refreshments available. Raffle with great prizes. Join us at 6pm on Sunday 11th for the Queen’s Celebration Service.

St John’s Church Bourne End, HP1 2RU  ‘Art in Bourne End’ in the Parish Room on Monday 12th, Tuesday 13th, Thursday 15th and Saturday 17th September 10-4pm. Works by Claudia Brown, Martin Warner and Rebecca Wood as part of HVAF Open Studios. Cake and refreshments available. Contact Claudia on 07714 761261 for more information or www hvaf org uk.

The Church Of St John The Baptist  Chipping Barnet, EN5 4BW  ‘Blooming Musicals!’ Flower Festival from 16th to 18th September. Theme is West End Musicals and will be complemented by displays of church vestments and plate. Local musical bands and choirs will entertain throughout the festival. For festival opening times and details visit www barnetparishchurch org uk.

SeeRound Online Events Jul/Aug 2016/06  p8  www.stalbans.anglican.org/news/ seesound