Munchin eats up the miles on the road to Rome

The Team Rector of the Welwyn Team Ministry, the Revd Dr David Munchin, is on sabbatical. He is to spend it at the Anglican Centre in Rome and instead of flying, driving or catching a train to get there he has chosen to cycle, at the same time raising much-needed funds for Herts Welcomes Syrian Families.

The distance from Welwyn to Rome is about 1700 miles, about as far as an averagely-used family car might go in two months. According to Strava, the GPS cycle journey tracking service, the journey to Rome represents 17 weeks average cycle commuting. He expects to complete the journey in less than a quarter of that time.

David says he is following: "...the old pilgrims route known as the via Francigina, first documented by the splendidly named Sigeric the Serious, Archbishop of Canterbury who undertook the journey at the end of the 10th century."

Archbishop Sigeric walked and would not have foreseen that the route would last more than 1000 years and be renamed ‘Eurovelo Route 5’ (from Canterbury onwards) David is hoping that his ride will raise at least £2500 for Herts Welcomes Syrian Families www.hwsf.org.uk an established charity working with Syrian families for which David has fundraised before. Anyone wanting to donate can do so here: https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/revdavidmunchin

You can follow David’s journey via his parish website www.welwyn.org.uk and his blog on Facebook - just search ‘David Munchin’. Those not on FB will find instructions on the parish website for how to access the Blog.

And here are some of David’s brilliant bulletins sent during his breaks on the trip:

Three days into the trip, just across the channel and on the way to Roubaix, a stop on one of the great cycling race routes, David said: “...am trying to come to terms with the fact that today was a very easy day. Perfect weather, easy distance, mostly flat, no mishaps - there will be very few days like this - and I know some will be just grim - every time the bike goes up hill the weight makes climbing unbearable, and there will be a lot of that. But there we are - nothing to do for it now except enjoy this beautiful evening.”

And on Day 5: Now a little gentle rain is not necessarily bad news for the cyclist - it can be rather refreshing. Indeed the real danger is not the water - it is the getting cold that you worry about. Well I thought the Ardenne were just a type of pate - but frankly it would indeed be easier to get a tank through them than bicycle. At first it was fine. I followed the river Meuse at a good pace - and saw a novelty - for the first time in 450 miles a Eurovelo 5 sign!

And then the climbing started. Pretty fierce and steep. But then a flatter section. However by this time it had really started raining hard. I must have gone over 10 hills and valleys. Long slow climbs and slightly terrifying descents. It went on and on. It was still raining. Finally however the overnight stop Bastogne was in range and the sun even made an appearance. By the time I reached the hotel I was warm again. 81 miles on the clock. The moment i walked in the door the battery collapsed on all 3 devices - iPad, gps, phone, literally within seconds.”

Lewis-Anthony helpfully said: you’re not going through the Ardenne? That so hilly and dense with forest that it was undefended in the war, because it was assumed Hitler couldn’t get his tanks through.

Well I thought the Ardenne were just a type of pate - but frankly it would indeed be easier to get a tank through them than bicycle. At first it was fine. I followed the river Meuse at a good pace - and saw a novelty - for the first time in 450 miles a Eurovelo 5 sign!

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Bishop’s Letter

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

Bishop’s Letter

Living Well Together

Inter Faith Week
11-18 November
www.interfaithweek.org

What’s the link? They are the venues for this year’s Political Party Conferences: occasions that are often mired in the minutiae of party wrangling, but which offer the opportunity of the renewing and retuning of vision. A time to tackle some of the bigger issues such as those addressed by the recent IPPR report ‘Prosperity and Justice: A Plan for the New Economy’ to which the Archbishop of Canterbury contributed. A time for purposeful and hopeful direction post-Brexit.

Sadly the run up to this year’s conference season has at times been focused on what divides us as a nation, rather than on the essential interdependence of what should be an united and flourishing people. In particular, significant concerns about anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, have dominated the agenda. As important, as internal party issues, has been a wider context of growing concern about hate crime, extremism – not least on the far right – and racism.

Dame Helen Hyde, the former Head of Watford Grammar School for Girls recently wrote of her concern about the growing anti-Semitic threat and commented that ‘The same-old anti-Semitic myths and conspiracy theories are spreading openly and seem to be equally acceptable to educated people on the left and the right’. Tell Mama, which measures anti-Muslim attacks, has recorded growing numbers of incidents in recent months. The Brexit related debate about national identity often acquires a Xenophobic character.

As I enter my fifth and final year as Co-Chair of the national Inter Faith Network, which works to bring together the faith communities of our country to enhance understanding, co-operation and good relations, in order to promote the common good, I am all the more concerned that we champion a society where all are welcome; all are valued. Celebrating this, affirming this and furthering this should very much be the agenda of the party conferences. At its heart it is the fundamental call to love our neighbour which Christ commands.

Later this year it will be the tenth national Inter Faith Week which runs from November 11th to November 18th www.interfaithweek.org/

Each year since 2009 growing numbers of organisations from within and without the faith communities have come together in local events and activities to build co-operation and understanding. Is this the opportunity for you with colleagues in your congregation, and through groups in the community to which you belong, to reach out to brothers and sisters in other faith traditions? Why not take the opportunity to do something that strengthens the bonds of friendship and society? For then we begin to model that just, integrated and harmonious living together that ought to be the priority for those gatherings in Birmingham, Liverpool, Brighton, Cardigan, Bristol, and Glasgow.

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STOP PRESS: Bishops adopt IHRA definition anti-semitism

During their annual residential meeting, the College of Bishops endorsed the IHRA definition of antisemitism – including all of its examples – on behalf of the Church. They also issued a call to everyone in public life to reject any language or actions which could cause “prejudice, stigma or hatred towards people on the grounds of their religion, culture, origins, identity or beliefs”. The Church of England’s interfaith team and national advisers already use the IHRA’s definition of antisemitism as the benchmark in their work and ministry. However, the bishops noted the “necessity of making explicit” the Church’s adoption of and adherence to the definition without qualification or exemption.
Parish kick-starts WW1 commemorations

In almost every corner or along every wall of St Michael’s Church, St Albans over the first weekend in September, there was a reminder, an installation or an artefact about the First World War. On September 7th, The Great War was remembered in words and music in a specially written programme telling the story of the war using music of the time, letters, poetry and newspaper reports, with some of the accounts featuring men from St Michael’s, and St Albans in general.

On Saturday there was a musical entertainment and over Saturday and Sunday, there was an Exhibition covering the History of The Great War, a Flower Festival echoing the story of the war using floral displays and a church fete.

One of the undoubted high spots of the weekend was the unveiling and blessing of a plaque commemorating five additional names to St Michael’s Great War memorial, on Sunday morning during St Michael’s morning service.

During her research for an unrelated World War 1 project, St Michael’s archivist and local historian, Ann Dean, discovered the names of five local men who were not listed on the memorial. So that these men could be included, an additional plaque, sympathetic in design to the original, on which their names could be inscribed was produced and a faculty granted for its inclusion in the memorial.

You can see more photos of the service here: https://flic.kr/s/aHsmrJxZyh and of the flower festival here: https://flic.kr/s/aHsmii5Tgb

For more resources for WW1 commemorations see: https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/remembrance2018/
For details of ‘Poppy Field’ at St Albans Cathedral, see: www.stalbanscathedral.org/whatson/poppy-field
‘Faithful and extraordinarily effective’ Archdeacon of Bedford to retire at year end

After a ministry spanning 36 years as curate, Vicar and Archdeacon, the Venerable Paul Hughes has announced that he will retire on 31st December 2018.

During his time as Archdeacon he has served the hundred or so parishes of Bedfordshire as well as acting as a school Governor and a member of various diocesan committees, including the Diocesan Property Committee where both his pastoral instincts and his experience as a Residential Property Surveyor before his ordination have served the diocese well.

Archdeacon Paul is married to the Revd Canon Liz Hughes, who is Senior Chaplain to Luton Airport. Liz was first ordained Deaconess in 1983 and was one of the first cohort of women to be priested in the Church of England in 1994.

Having lived here before ordination, their family has grown up in the Diocese of St Albans. Paul and Liz will continue to live in the diocese after retirement and Liz will continue in her role at Luton Airport.

Paul is a long-time listener and contributor to BBC Three Counties Radio, where he has known many presenters, producers and managers. He encouraged Anthony Isaacs amongst others to seek a career in radio. He has also known the station’s religious producers and had the privilege of preparing the late Ian Pearce for baptism before a diocesan visit to the Holy Land, where Ian was baptised in the River Jordan by the then Bishop of Hertford, the Rt Revd Christopher Foster.

The Bishop of St Albans, Dr Alan Smith, speaking about the Archdeacon’s ministry, said: “Paul has been a faithful and extraordinarily effective servant of the Diocese of St Albans, where he has spent his entire ordained ministry. Having served in Chipping Barnet, Dunstable, Boxmoor and as Archdeacon of Bedford, his ministry has been appreciated both inside and outside of the church. I know many people will share my sadness that he is retiring. However, I am delighted that he will still be living in the diocese where he is hoping to exercise an active retirement ministry. I wish Paul and Liz our best wishes for this next stage of their life and ministry.”

Archdeacon Paul said: “I was hugely surprised to be asked by Bishop Christopher Herbert to become Archdeacon of Bedford.

“It has, however, been a great privilege to serve the very diverse communities of Bedfordshire and Luton for the last 15 years. Together with my wife and family, we have been made so welcome and in particular, living in Luton has been a wonderful experience.

“I pray that my successor will find this a very rewarding ministry, supported as they will be by great colleagues, lay and ordained alike.

There will be a farewell service on Saturday 12th January at St Paul’s Bedford at 4pm. All are welcome.”

St Albans Woodland Burial Trust is runner-up for 2nd year

St Albans Woodland Burial Trust, which provides a woodland burial site for those people and families wishing to be buried in consecrated/protected ground in an environmentally and ecologically sustainable manner, has won significant recognition for the second year running. Amongst natural burial grounds in the South East region, it has been awarded runner-up - again!

The awards are run by the natural death centre and were announced over the summer. The St Albans Woodland Burial Trust is located in Keysoe, Bedfordshire, and has been running for 11 years. Chair of trustees, the Revd Charles Royden, said: “This year we have not only got on top of our two acres, with the help of our hands on woodland manager Will Saunders, we have achieved a remarkable transformation of ten additional acres. As trustees we never thought that this would be possible in such a short time. It is a remarkable achievement which has only been possible because so many people have chosen to come to our woodland for burial or interment of cremated remains. This has enabled us to invest in professional manage- ment which has cut back the brambles which were choking trees and thinned out diseased ash and other weak trees.

Encouraging Diversity when: “Your words say I am welcome but the situation says I am not.”

Encouraging diversity in our churches is a bigger issue than just seeking more BAME (Black and Ethnic Minority) vocations, but that is a key part of diocesan vocations policy alongside encouraging more and younger vocations. In time, this should produce a church which more readily reflects the population it seeks to serve, better fitting it to that task.

A one-day conference aimed primarily at encouraging BAME vocations in the diocese drew 30 participants. The Church of England’s National Minority Ethnic Vocations Officer, Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed, was the main speaker.

The core problem is the reported experience of many in the Church who do not fit the mould of white, male and middle class: “Your words say I am welcome but the situation says I am not.”

The conference studied survey data showing where people from ethnic minorities are to be found, as worshippers and as leaders in our churches. It then considered how diversity and inclusion might be encouraged. The keynote address was on unconscious bias, followed by a session on encouraging vocations to ministry.

Beyond the confines of vocations officers and advisers and those professionally encouraging vocations in the church, this topic is relevant to everybody in the church. First, because we can all have a role affirming, encouraging and welcoming people into church in the first place, before we concern ourselves with encouraging their vocations.

As Canon Tim Lomax, Director of Mission, puts it: “If we believe we are made in the image and likeness of God than we can also believe that we can show his extravagant hospitality to others. God includes us without missing a beat and is motivated by the conscious bias of loving all of creation. We urgently need to rediscover this spirit of hospitality in both nation and church.”

Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed, the Church’s National Minority Ethnic Vocations Officer, says:

“The subtlety of bias is often so slight as to be unnoticed by those perpetrating it, which makes it all the more important that we are able to identify our own unconscious bias. This applies to each one of us, but is particularly true for those who act as gatekeepers to formal vocations in the Church. Unknowingly turning away talent hinders the excluder as well as the excluded. Bias must be overcome, and our leadership demonstrably more inclusive, if the Church is to fulfil its mission to be a light to all people.

Here’s the science bit. As we go through life, our brain is continually required to make a tremendous number of decisions. In order to cope, many of these judgments are made unconsciously and instantaneously. This is generally a good thing. Just think how little we would get done if all of our unconscious behaviour required the careful weighing up associated with deliberate decision making. However, the inherent problem is that because these assessments are really assumptions, based on our background, cultural environment and personal experience, they often end up being flawed. Take a look at this video produced by the Royal Society to see what I mean: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVp9Z5k0dEE

As a Church, we preach that all are welcome, but the lack of visible role models can make it difficult for people to feel they truly belong. This video, presented to General Synod two years ago, captures this feeling well: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WckVuVLiyg

All of us have a perspective. None of us are immune from it. It doesn’t make you a bad person, but it is something you should reflect on. A good test then to overcome it is to take a step back and ask oneself, would I have thought the same if this person looked or sounded like me? By asking this question we move towards inclusion. Inclusion is different to diversity. Diversity is the mix, inclusion is how we make it work. Diversity is a given, inclusion is a choice.”
Perceptions of Christianity may be shifting – post-millennials are the most open of all generations towards Christianity

In a major new survey* over 4,000 people were asked about their feelings towards religion and only 10% of the public agreed with the statement that ‘religion is a negative influence on society’.

In fact, 44% of people surveyed agreed that they have had a positive experience of Christians and Christianity and half of British adults (51%) disagree that Christians are a negative force in society.

Statistics gathered from the 18-24-year-old ‘Gen Z’ age group – sometimes known as the ‘Post-Millennials’ and often labelled the first post-Christian generation were the most likely to report that being atheist or non-religious is ‘more normal’. But they were also the most likely to agree that they have had a positive experience of Christians and Christianity – a higher proportion than any other age group (51% vs 38-49%). They are also the most likely to report that they go to church services (33% vs 22-31%).

Three in five British adults aged 18-24 (62%) also agree that they feel comfortable discussing their religious beliefs with people at work – again, a higher proportion than any other age group (62% vs 34-56%). Gen Z, it would seem, is showing the greatest openness and positivity towards faith.

This new survey coincides with the launch of a new book, ‘Faitheism’ by Dr Krish Kandiah. In this book, Krish explores how Christians and atheists might have more in common than you think, looking at how – in a time of increased racial, sexual and gender equality – we need to move towards being a ‘genuinely inclusive society’ in terms of faith literacy and collaboration. As an Anglo-Indian-Sri Lankan-Malaysian Christian who was brought up in a Hindu household and who has fostered children from Muslim, Hindu, Christian and atheist backgrounds, Krish is well placed to discuss issues of exclusion and acceptance. In ‘Faitheism’, he presents a series of stereotypes about Christians and atheists – such as ‘Christians are judgemental and atheists are tolerant’ – before unpacking and challenging each one. He concludes by sharing his dream that one day ‘we will believe the best about each other, even when we don’t believe the same as each other’.

In his work with Home for Good, the adoption and fostering charity he founded, Krish appeals to Christians to provide loving homes for children in care. Home for Good raises awareness of the needs of vulnerable children, believing the Church is ideally placed to meet these needs and ensure that no children in the UK are without a safe and loving home. Faitheism was partially written in response to the resistance Krish has at times encountered from social services to place children in the care of Christians.

Krish says of his interactions: ‘we have found that some social workers show a high degree of unconscious bias, suspicion and reluctance to accept Christians as foster carers and adoptive parents’. Yet the recent ComRes survey also revealed that fewer than one in ten (7%) British adults would hesitate about leaving their child with a Christian.

*ComRes interviewed 4,087 British adults online in two waves between 2nd and 6th March 2018. It is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.
**Clergy Appointments**

**Glyn Ackerley**, Vicar in the benefice of Christchurch, Bushmead (Luton), to retire later this year.

**Paul Boulter**, Assistant Curate in Training, Christ Church Bedford to be Vicar of the benefice of St Paul’s Caton with Littledale and St Cuthbert’s Over Kellet, Blackburn Diocese.

**Victoria Bryson**, Assistant Curate in Training at the Church of the Transfiguration, Kempston, to be Rector of the benefice of St John and St Leonard, Bedford.

**Ruth Carroll** (see right) Assistant Curate in the Alford Group of Churches (Lincoln Diocese) to be Vicar of the benefice of Holy Trinity, Stevenage.

**Timothy Davis**, Vicar of the benefice of St Mary’s, Clifton-Upon-Dunsmore, The Good Shepherd, Newton, and Christ Church, Brownsover (Coventry Diocese) to be Team Vicar in the Dunstable Team Ministry, with responsibility for St Fremunds and also Chaplain for Manshead Academy and All Saints Academy Dunstable.

**Simon Dommett**, Rector of the Astwick Vale Benefice, Peterborough Diocese, to be Priest-in-Charge of the benefice of Goldington.

**Amanda Duncan**, Team Vicar in the Bishop’s Hatfield Team Ministry with special responsibility for St John’s Hatfield, to be Vicar of the benefice of High Cross and the benefice of Thundridge (held in plurality).

**Nicholas Henderson**, Vicar of the benefice of St John, Harpenden, to retire.

**Sally Jones**, Minor Canon and Youth Chaplain at St Albans Cathedral, to be Priest in Charge of Christ Church with St Mary Magdalene, Munster Square, London NW1 (London Diocese).

**Nicholas Sharp**, Team Vicar, (with special responsibility for Little Amwell, Holy Trinity) in the Hertford Team Ministry, to be Vicar in the benefice of St Cuthbert, Rye Park.

**American priest chosen as Stevenage vicar**

The next vicar of Holy Trinity and Christ the King churches in Stevenage will be the Rev Dr Ruth Carroll (right), a USA-born priest, Morris dancer and linguist. She is currently assistant curate in the Alford Group of churches in Lincolnshire. Born in Massachusetts, Ruth went to University in Washington DC. “My professor advised me to go to England if I wanted to study the history of the English language, so I went to Oxford for my master’s and then a doctorate. I loved living in England!” she said.

In Oxford she also joined the Church of England and took up Morris dancing. Even when her academic career took her to Finland, she kept some of her adopted English ways joining the Helsinki Morris dancers, and worshipping with the Anglicans.

She grew up in a Christian home, and church has always played an important part in her life. Gradually she recognised her calling to the priesthood and trained on the Eastern Region Ministry Course. Her husband Keith, who lived in Finland for 40 years, hails from Hull. He trained to become a Lay Reader in the Church while Ruth was studying for the priesthood. “I’m looking forward to coming to Stevenage, getting to know the people of Holy Trinity and Christ the King, and sharing their hopes for the future,” she said.

Ruth succeeds Canon Vincent Oram, who now works in an Anglican parish in Spain.

**Diocesan Appointments**

**Kate Ford** has been appointed Communications Assistant in the Diocesan Office in succession to Claudia Ashley-Brown.

**Richard Pyke**, Canon Emeritus with PtO, to be also a Diocesan Vocations Adviser.

**Alison Schroeder**, MMDR Administrator, has been appointed Estates and Trusts Administrator.

**Maria Taylor** has been appointed HR MMDR Administrator in the Diocesan Office to succeed Alison Schroeder, in a slightly expanded role, when Alison moves to the Estates team.

**Canon Emeritus**

**Margaret Tinsley**, Lay Canon of St Albans Cathedral to be Canon Emeritus and continue as Reader and Pastoral Chaplain at St Peter, St Albans.
Concerts & Drama

The Friends of Elstow Abbey:
‘An Evening with Quartet Camerata’.
Saturday 29 September, Elstow Abbey Church, MK42 9XT, 7:30 pm, doors open 6:30. Tickets £20 (£15 to members of the Friends) from treasurer@elstow-abbey.org.uk or Twitter DM to @ElstowAbbeyFrds Programme includes Quartets from: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Borodin, Debussy, Dvorak, Shostakovich, Walton Also Thomas Tallis, Sibielus, Ades, Danish String Quartet

St. Mary’s the Virgin, Church Street, Rickmansworth
An Autumn Evening in Harmony with Harrow Apollo Male Choir, also featuring HeartStrings, a string quartet and Hilary Pearce, Soprano and David Conway, Guitar. Saturday 29th. September at 7.30 with donations to Water Aid.

Open Days & Festivals

St. Andrew’s Church, Shortmead Street, Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 0AT
Country Fare, an action packed day with plenty to keep the family busy. Saturday 22nd September 2018, 10.00 am – 3.30 pm. Free Admission: all proceeds to two charities: CHUMS - a Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Service for Children and Young People which provides therapeutic support across Luton and Bedfordshire and COMBAT STRESS - the UK’s leading charity for veterans’ mental health and for almost a century, they have helped former servicemen and women deal with trauma-related mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

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An Autumn Evening in Harmony with Harrow Apollo Male Choir, also featuring HeartStrings, a string quartet and Hilary Pearce, Soprano and David Conway, Guitar. Saturday 29th. September at 7.30 with donations to Water Aid.

Talks & Courses

‘The Church is a Field Hospital’
A day for Clergy and Readers to explore a way of praying for freedom and inner healing and apply it personally. Tuesday 9 October 2018, 9.30am-4pm, (with optional Prayer Ministry until 6pm). Venue: Spring Meadow Barn Whelpley Hill BERKHAMSTED Herts. HP4 2SX Cost: £18 includes 2 course Lunch (contact Jaspreet Biring jiring@stalbans.anglican.org and submit receipt to claim from Training Grant) Information and contact: houseofmercy.org.uk or call 07712 308842

September- December’s Prayer Diary
Now live on September’s E-Bundle: www.stalbans.anglican.org/news/e-bundle/

Pilgrimage to Padua and Venice

8 – 13 MAY 2019
LED BY REV'D TERRANCE BELL

£849 per person
includes return flights from Stansted to Treviso Airport, UK and Italy airport taxes, return hotel transfers in Padua, accommodation, breakfasts, dinners, entrance fees, return train tickets to Venice, local guides and the services of a Pax Travel Italian speaking Tour Manager

Single Supplement £80
(imited availability)

Highlights of the Pilgrimage include:
- Guided tour of Padua & Basilica including a visit to the Shrine of the Franciscan Saint Anthony
- Visit to the celebrated Capella degli Scrovegni to see the wonderful frescoes by Giotto
- Guided tour of St. Mark’s Basilica and surrounding area in Venice
- Follow in the footsteps of Saint Anthony with visits to Assisi, where he died and Camposampiero where he had a cell built in a Walnut Tree.
- Time at leisure to explore Venice and Padua
- Optional excursion in Venice to the Cathedral on Torcello island with wonderful Byzantine mosaics

Brochure, Booking Form & further information:
Call: 01462 768 123
Email: kwol@binternet.com
Online: www.paxtravel.co.uk