Dr Williams calls on Christians to be agents of social justice as he takes up Chair of Christian Aid

Dr Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, became Chair of Christian Aid’s Board of Trustees on May 1 with a plea to Christians to become agents of social justice. Dr Williams said: “I believe it’s of the first importance that Christians say we live from a set of values, in the Kingdom of God, that will challenge a great deal about the way the world runs.” He added: “While we’re not in the business of violent revolution, or the expectation of overnight change we have to go on saying change is possible, we’ve seen it happen, we can make it happen and with the grace of God we go on with a commitment to making it happen. Christian Aid has a major role to play in this with its fight against the systems and structures that force people to live in poverty. It is essential that the organisation retains its radical agenda for bringing about change,” he said.

“We are in Christian Aid because we’re not prepared to sit down quietly under a system that seems unjust, that seems radically to push people out of the way for the sake of profit.”

“I think it’s very important that Christian Aid has a perfectly clear Christian vision animating and energising it. I think without that energy we wouldn’t be where we are. It is an energy that overflows the boundaries, which says that all human beings are in the image of God, that all human beings have a dignity that needs respect.”

“Christian Aid therefore is in a brilliant position to say yes of course we come from a Christian background and because of that we have no qualms about extending what we do, how we serve, how we partner with anyone and everyone.”

Make Open Church Sunday Succeed

Over 200 churches in the diocese will take part in the third Open Church Sunday on 23rd June. It is a day which provides an opportunity for the local community to come and find out “what’s inside”, and become familiar with nearby churches or ones that they have become curious about.

Despite the statistic that more than 4 in 5 people visit a church at some time during any year, there are still large numbers of people who have never stepped inside a church and popular opinion is that they are nervous about doing so.

Canon Malcolm Grant, one of the organisers of Open Church Sunday said: “Some parishes will be organizing special attractions for Sunday, 23rd June, to invite visitors to experience both the building and the friendship of the local Christian community. Many more will be offering refreshments as part of their welcome to those who call. All, we hope, will be making use of an opportunity to let people know what goes on there and what they stand for.” To find out more, please go to www.openchurchsunday.co.uk.
It was Oscar Wilde who joked ‘Most modern calendars mar the sweet simplicity of our lives by reminding us that each day that passes is the anniversary of some perfectly uninteresting event.’ Yet for many people anniversaries and birthdays help us reflect on our lives, giving them context, shape and purpose.

This month marks the diamond anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The grainy black and white television pictures from the day of her coronation remind us how much life has changed since the early 1950s when food was still rationed, all young men did National Service and pop music was dominated by Bill Haley and His Comets. The Queen’s unswerving commitment to her role and her clear Christian faith over six decades are an inspiration as well as a challenge to us all in an age of constant change.

Next year will also be a year of anniversaries, when we observe the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. As Europe was engulfed in the most unimaginable carnage, millions of young men lost their lives. Estimates vary greatly but it is thought that between five and thirteen million people died in the warfare and even more were left with terrible injuries, both physical and mental. The conflict scarred the soul of our nation, which is why most communities still have war memorials with their poignant lists of people who lost their lives, most of them on foreign soil. Such an anniversary should be a powerful impetus to work for peace in our world and to vow that we never resort to warfare again.

In the same year, 1914, a radical change also took place in the Diocese of St Albans. When it was founded, the diocese comprised the counties of Hertfordshire and Essex. However, it was an elongated diocese which had little natural geographical identity. Indeed, for some time the Bishop of St Albans lived in London, as it was easier to travel out to the parishes by trains from the capital. With the growing population to the east of London, it became clear that a new diocese was required and the Diocese of Chelmsford was formed. So in 1914, Bedfordshire left the Diocese of Ely and joined Hertfordshire and Barnet in the newly-reconfigured Diocese of St Albans.

For the past ninety-nine years our diocese has straddled two counties, both of which have long and proud histories. In 2014, we will have a number of events to mark the anniversary of Bedfordshire becoming part of the Diocese of St Albans. These will climax in a Family Celebration Day at the Equestrian Centre at Keysoe, Bedfordshire on Bank Holiday Monday, 25th August 2014. It is a great venue and there will be a fun packed programme with a variety of different activities for all ages, culminating in an act of worship. Please put the date in your diary now and make it a priority. Further details will follow before long.
Make an informed choice about the Roma Gypsy People

Coronation Jubilee Celebrations

Adoramus Choir and Orchestra will be celebrating the coronation jubilee on 29th June with their coronation anniversary concert, “The Crown and the Glory” at the Alban Arena, St Albans. Adoramus is an ecumenical Christian choir and orchestra which has been giving concerts in the St. Albans Diocese for some 10 years, including concerts at the Watford Colosseum with Christians Across Watford, and regularly working with St Albans churches for concerts in the Alban Arena and in St Albans Cathedral.

The coronation concert will celebrate the Queen’s faithful service in response to her coronation vows as well as reflecting key nostalgic events from 1953 such as the conquest of Mount Everest, Crick’s response to her coronation vows as well as reflecting key nostalgic events from 1953 such as the conquest of Mount Everest, Crick’s discovery of DNA, the launch of the Royal Yacht Britannia and the launch of the BBC programme ‘Panorama’.

The concert programme is packed with favourites from a range of musical genres recalling those events. It includes highlights from Mozart’s Coronation Mass, Handel’s Zadok the Priest, Walton’s Coronation Te Deum, Coronation Scot, the theme tune to Panorama, choruses from HMS Pinafore and Climb Every Mountain from The Sound of Music.

David Hooke, Music Director of Adoramus, commented, “Our imaginative and sensitive blend of high quality music and gently thought provoking Christian input proves very popular with our audiences. It is very much hoped that people will be drawn into local churches through the gentle witness of these regular Adoramus concerts”.

Ticket Prices: £22, £19 and £16 www.alban-arena.co.uk/

Adoramus also perform in individual churches where requested, often as part of an outreach initiative, and past concerts have included “Glory of Easter” concerts, “Love Classics from Operas”, “Fit for a King”, a Battle of Britain 70th Anniversary Concert, “St Albans Celebrates the Jubilee” as well as their “Ready CHRISTmas” concert.

Animal Blessing Service

St Michael and All Angels Church, Mildred Avenue, Watford

Sunday 16th June 2013 at 3pm

Speaker: Revd Dr Martin Heng, Vice President of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals

Light refreshments after the service. Animals and their people, and people without animals, welcome! If your animal is timid bring a photo.

Enquiries: 01923 467502
Registered charity number: 108279

Ivy House Retreat Centre

Warmminster BA12 8PG

Summer Retreats:
24-28 June: Jeremy Taylor - retreat with Prayer Book Worship £235
15-19 July: The Beatitudes- preached retreat led by St Thomas SCL £235
31 July - 7 August: CARP: Painting or Calligraphy & Prayer £350
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For further details: Tel 01985 214624 or www.anglican.org

Thinking about adoption?

St Francis’ Children’s Society is an ‘Outstanding’ rated adoption charity based in Milton Keynes.

We offer lifelong post adoption support to our adoptive families including: counselling, advice and support, therapy, training, workshops and family events.

Our specialist social workers and therapists are on hand to offer support at every step of your adoption journey.

Adoption information evenings

Wednesday 5th June
Wednesday 3rd July

Starting at 6.30pm ending at 8.00pm

A warm welcome awaits you!

St Francis’ CHILDREN’S SOCIETY

01908 587200

www.sfsf.org.uk email: enquiries@sfsf.org.uk

Venue: St Francis’ Children’s Society, Collis House, 48 Newport Road, Woolstone, Milton Keynes MK15 8AA

Registered Charity Number 211810

Make an informed choice about the Roma Gypsy People

LIVE MOCK TRIAL WITH JUDGE AND JURY!

Beech Hill Methodist Church, Dunstable Road, Luton LU4 8BY.
Saturday 29th June from 11am-1pm.

The Chaplain to the Roma Travellers and Gypsies, the Revd Martin Burrell is arranging a Mock Trial with a real judge (JudgeThomas Ryan) and a jury drawn widely from the community.

Martin says: “The idea is to bring to the surface the issues that the Roma face in Europe and how Europe has failed to come to their rescue.”

The Roma are one of Europe’s oldest and largest ethnic minorities, and also one of the most disadvantaged.

According to Amnesty International, on almost every indicator of human development, in almost every European country, the Roma fall far below the national average. They have lower incomes, worse health, poorer housing, lower literacy rates and higher levels of unemployment than the rest of the population. There are sizeable Romani minorities in western Europe, especially in Spain (800,000 to 800,000), France and the UK (up to 300,000 Roma and Travellers in each).

All welcome, admission free. Schools are welcome to bring groups of older pupils. For further details of this event please email Revd Andrew Coleby - acoleby@stalbans.anglican.org

The images on the right show the vibrant people of the Luton Roma Church.

The following Prayer has been commended for use throughout the Church of England by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on or around 4th June 2013. Other churches are also welcome to use this prayer.

The prayer reads:

Modern language:
Almighty God,
At the hands of priests and prophets
You anoint your chosen servants with the oil of gladness
...and upon all thy people the spirit of humility and service,
...shown forth in the life and death of him who is the anointed King of all,
...Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Adoramus Choir and Orchestra will be celebrating a Mock Trial with a real judge (Judge Thomas Ryan) and a jury drawn widely from the community.

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Fifty years ago, Peter Hurford, then Master of Music at St Albans Cathedral, started the St Albans International Organ Festival specifically: “to foster among young English organists a high standard of organ performance through contact with their contemporaries from abroad and with the many internationally distinguished musicians invited to give concerts and judge the competitions; secondly, to encourage the art of improvisation.”

One of the ways that the anniversary is being marked is that the winner of the first competition – Susan Landale - will be a judge for the 2013 competition and will also talk about her favourite music in an event at the Deanery.

In 1963 the first prize was £30 and a BBC recital. This year, the first prize is £6000 plus ‘recital engagements’. In real terms, this represents an increase of more than tenfold - perhaps signifying the growth of the competition in scope and stature to become the world’s premier organ competition as well as a wide ranging international arts festival. By way of comparison, although not a very direct one, the Wimbledon prize fund which has recently been in the press has gone up more than three times as much.

The 50th anniversary festival takes place from 11-20 July 2013 when competitors from countries including USA, Japan, South Korea, Croatia, Italy and the UK arrive in St Albans. The main festival opens on the 13 July with Britten’s epic War Requiem in St Albans Cathedral. On the 15 July is the ever popular Three Choirs Concert this year featuring boys and girls choirs from St Albans Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral and York Minster. Among the other artists in the festival, such as Brecon Baroque, the Gould Piano Trio, cellist Matthew Barley, is the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. Jazz has always been in the festival - perhaps this is because of Peter Hurford’s desire to encourage improvisation. Full details and booking for all the Concerts in the Festival can be found at www.organfestival.com

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Your own retirement home in a Christian neighbourhood with help when needed.

Dorothea Court has apartments for retirement, and for assisted living, and we currently have three available - two for a couple and one for a single person. Dorothea Court offers help and support where needed, with independent living in a Christian community, in a pleasant setting opposite Bedford Park, with its own large central garden. Domiciliary care (personal care in your own apartment) can be arranged with Social Services or privately, if required.

Residents say, “It is like belonging to a big family. We love the staff as they are so kind and helpful, and it is in such beautiful surroundings.”

“The best is that it is my home and it is in a Christian community.”

“The main pleasure is because I am amongst Christian friends and it is so different from living anywhere else.”

Bedford is a well situated market town with good access to Oxford, Cambridge and Milton Keynes and a 35 minute train journey to London.

For more information or to arrange a visit, email: dorothea@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk or telephone 0100 303 1490

www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

Dorothea Court

Pilgrim Homes

Serving Older Christians

Pilgrim's Friend Society

Survey: Requests for pre-recorded music at weddings and funerals increasing

Themes from Star Wars, Dr Who and even Benny Hill and Captain Pugwash, have been played at funerals and weddings in churches although respondents to a recent RSCM survey described such special requests for pre-recorded music at weddings and funerals as occasional rather than frequent. However, slightly more than half said that these requests were being received more often. Churches have been asked to play music ranging from traditional works such as Pachelbel’s Canon and arias by Handel, to more unusual requests; one respondent cited music from the film Sister Act starring Whoopi Goldberg “being the most ridiculous in recent years”. At funerals, there’s a wide range of choices ranging from Elgar’s “Nimrod” to “Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye”, and even “I fell into a burning ring of fire” for one deceased bound for a crematorium.

Very few respondents reported a refusal to play specially requested music. However, some exercise advance checking of the lyrics of pop songs in particular, or suggest that a certain song might be more suitable for playing later elsewhere. Refusals such as Lennon’s Imagine and the Worzels’ Combine Harvester are also reported.

The full survey report can be viewed at: http://www.rscm.com/survey
Minister and mission supporter make mincemeat of Marathon

Barnet curate the Revd Charlotte Ballinger ran Sunday March 31st’s London Marathon in a respectable 4 hours 3 mins. Graham Wilson, from St Paul’s, St Albans, running for Mission Without Borders, ran it in 4 hours 52 mins.

There are many anecdotes about marathon running: one is that running is addictive, another that running is pleasurable and satisfying and another is that the last four miles are all willpower. Make up your own mind about which are true.

Charlotte’s Story

“I had an amazing day running the London Marathon for the Stroke Association, a cause very dear to my heart.

My initial target was £2000, but thanks to the enormous generosity of so many people the total has reached nearly £4500, with Gift Aid and the last slice of support from people at church.

Yes, I’ll definitely be doing it again - just a matter of finding some other people in the diocese who want to do it as well!

Is running addictive? Maybe. Although I was exhausted at the end, it was altogether an amazing day. The crowd support was incredible and the whole day had a great atmosphere and yes, the last four hours were tough!”

Graham’s Story

“I did the London marathon once before back in 2002, swearing I never would do it again.

I kept to that until approached by the UK Director of Mission Without Borders (David Hardisty) at church. I wasn’t overjoyed by the idea but after thought and prayer came to believe that God was asking me to do this - as he wasn’t offering me a way of ducking out! In fact, I was really drawn to the targeted nature of Mission Without Borders’ work. The £2000 I have raised is enough to see one family take their final steps out of poverty.

So my wife dug up a training plan and the rest was running misery, although with a happy conclusion. I will, not, however, be putting myself through that again!"

(More on Mission Without Borders below).

Pray for our farmers

The Church of England has published a prayer for farming communities recovering from weather conditions that have led to thousands of sheep and cattle being lost and crops being ruined weeks late or ruined.

The Rt Rev Anthony Priddis, Bishop of Hereford, has called on churches to pray regularly for local farmers and their families, remember the farming help charities, such as the Farming Community Network, Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, and buy local British produce wherever possible.

See the Pimms and Pudding Evening in Gardens at St Paul’s Walden Bury for the Farming Community Network, p.9.

Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson, the CoE’s National Rural Officer has written this prayer for farmers struggling to recover from the severe weather.

Gracious God,
you provide us with food from the earth through the work of human hands; after a poor summer and long winter, we pray for all those who grow and produce our food.
in the most difficult conditions.
We remember the physical hardships and distress of farmers dealing with livestock that have died, and those who are still to sow crops to harvest this year.
Bless the work of all those who care for your land and animals so that we may have food to sustain us.
This we ask through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mission Without Borders: planting ‘Seeds of Hope’

Graham Wilson (marathon runner, top) said he chose Mission Without Borders because their targeted work appealed to him.

MWB is providing thousands of impoverished families with boxes of ‘Seeds of Hope’ to plant their way out of poverty this spring. For over 1,500 families across Eastern Europe who struggle to have enough to eat, these seeds produce healthy vegetables giving essential food and a self-sufficient future.

Graham says: “Many of the families in MWB’s sponsorship scheme are managing okay - yet they are on the very edge of becoming totally self-sufficient. All they need is one final, extra hand-up. ‘MWB supports families by providing appropriate items, such as a mini-farm of chickens or piglets, sewing machines or power tools. Families receiving these have to prove they are dependable and they want to make a difference for themselves. Many go on to help others - a virtuous circle.

The Korra family, in Albania, experienced significant change with MWB’s Seeds of Hope boxes. “It is so hard to cope with life when you have nothing to give the children to eat,” Sonila Korra explains, “and our poverty ignites arguments when Petrit cannot find work.” In addition to suffering domestic violence, the Korra children also risked missing school simply because they could not afford pens and books.

Since receiving Seeds of Hope, the Korra family is transformed. “We work together as a team now,” admits Sonila. “We are not the family we were. The seeds are changing our relationships, our behaviour and our lives.”

For more information, see www.mwbuk.org

Thoughts for the month

With our new Ordinands in mind as they prepare to be ordained on 29th June:

“The place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”
Frederick Buechner

“We are called, near to Jesus and with Jesus and in Jesus, to be with people with God on our heart.”

“You will find yourself, as celebrant at the Eucharist, privileged with a unique intensity to ‘be with God with the people on your heart’.”

Rejoice with Zimbabwe’s Anglicans

In early April, celebrations took place in the Diocese of Manicaland, Zimbabwe, with over 3,000 dancing Anglicans gathering for the ‘cleansing and rededication’ of church properties. The celebrations brought to an end a conflict that began five years ago when two renegade bishops, in Manicaland and Harare, took control of diocesan properties. Last year, Zimbabwe’s Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Anglican Church, legally restoring their rightful ownership.

During their period in exile, Anglicans were kept out of their places of worship, often with violence. Congregations faced harassment and intimidation when they met to worship.

But all that is now over.

On Saturday and Sunday 6th and 7th April, over 3,000 worshippers danced and sang their way back into the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, in Mutare, and St Augustine’s Mission church (pictured), in Penhalonga, led by the Rt Revd Julius Makoni, Bishop of Manicaland.

During a cleansing ceremony in the reclaimed cathedral, Bishop Julius spoke about arrests made by police during a period of persecution.

He said: ‘A new sight was seen in our police cells as our sisters in habits, our priests in robes and our bishops in mitres paced the floors’.

The Rt Revd Albert Chama, Archbishop of the Province of Central Africa, told the congregation: ‘Go back to your churches and keep your obedience to the gospel by extending the hand of love and forgiveness that people may see the light of God in you.’

The archbishops’ words were met with cheers and applause.

The Bishop of Woolwich, the Rt Revd Michael Igrave, brought greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and with the Bishop of Guildford, represented by the Revd Kate Wyles, he assured Zimbabwean Christians of the continued prayers and support of Anglicans in Britain.

The International Christian charity Us (formerly USPG) stood alongside the church in Zimbabwe throughout their time of testing. The Revd Canon Edgar Ruddock, representing Us at the celebrations, said: ‘The down to earth faith and matter of fact way in which local Anglicans have stuck together through these tough times has been a great witness to Christians around the world. The message of healing, generosity and forgiveness at the heart of the weekend resonates so strongly with our new name ‘Us’, and all that it stands for, as we move forward together in mission.’

PHOTO: Celebrations last weekend at St Augustine’s Mission church, in Penhalonga, Manicaland (credit: Teddy Chigwanda)

And for next summer...why not consider a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Next year will see the Archdeacons of Bedford and Hertford leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from 12th - 21st August as the diocese marks its centenary. Calling it a ‘once in a lifetime opportunity,’ they describe the programme as the best they have ever offered.

Covering eight nights, the Pilgrimage is offered with McCabe Pilgrimages who have been the Archdeacon’s chosen travel agent for 15 years.

In and around Jerusalem, the pilgrimage will walk the Via Dolorosa, see the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Western Wall and spend a morning in Bethlehem.

An optional day visit to Qumran, Masada and the Dead Sea is offered. Later we travel north to Galilee and visit Nazareth as well as many locations associated with Jesus’ lakeside ministry such as Capernaum, Tabgha and the Mount of Beatitudes. A special addition is a day excursion to the Golan Heights and the Mount of Beatitudes. A special addition is a day excursion to the Golan Heights and the Mount of Beatitudes.

For those who wish to have an experience of God with a more Anglo Catholic flavour with hundreds of other young people, worth a visit if you haven’t been before. Details can be found here www.soulsurvivor.com/summer-2013. The dates are: Week A at Stafford Showground is 26th – 30th July; Week B at Bath & West Showground is 13th – 17th August; and Week C at Bath & West Showground is 18th – 22nd August. I will be attending on 13th August (during week B).

Greenbelt

Finally, the Greenbelt festival celebrates its 40th birthday over the August Bank Holiday weekend. A really good space to think and enjoy. Our friends from the 2:67 Project in St Albans are part of the team working with young people around the site, so some familiar faces! I will be attending on Sunday 25th August.

SOUL SURVIVOR

The Soul Survivor Festival based in our own diocese in Watford have been offering young people another space to encounter God. I commend this also as another space of encouragement and refreshment. Details can be found at http://soulsurvivor.com/summer-2013.

DOMFRONT LOWER NORMANDY

Near romantic Roman town of Caen. Two bedroom cottage in rural setting. Sleeps 4, double ensuite, twin with bathroom, all mod cons. Tel: 07836 650834.

WALINGHAM LOWER NORMANDY

On my return, heading to the East of England, to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham and the youth pilgrimage that happens annually. For those who wish to have an experience of God with a more Anglo Catholic flavour with hundreds of other young people, worth a visit if you haven’t been before. Details can be found here www.soulsurvivor.com/summer-2013.

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Thirty years after it began, the Bushey Festival bears witness to the role that a parish can play in strengthening its community. Originally conceived by Kate Morgan (whose husband, Philip, was Rector there having been Sub-Dean at St Albans Abbey) the Festival is still going strong. Having started in and around the Parish of Bushey it now has a far wider community appeal and involvement and is now one of the larger voluntarily run festivals in the country attracting thousands of visitors a year during the first two weeks of July. It starts on 29th June this year and the full and varied programme can be seen on www.busheyfestival.org.uk but it’s breadth can be seen from this sample: 

- Antiques Auction
- St. James’s Church Choir Concert
- Teddy Bears’ Picnic
- Introduction to Scottish Dancing
- Football Tournament for boys and girls
- Dog Show

Bushey’s Rector, Father Neil Kelley, has been in post for just under a year and this is his first festival, although he was aware of the festival before he came. He has embraced this aspect of parish life enthusiastically and is contributing his musical skills - twice - to this year’s festival.

Fr Neil warms to this. Describing his parish as “Outward looking and inclusive,” he sees the Festival’s value in making friends and links in the community. “If people come to church as a result that is a bonus. One of my priorities is to help my three diverse congregations find a common vision.” He thinks that community facing activities like concerts can often help with that.

His view is that effective mission in the community is “trying to see what God is doing and joining in with it,” so it is appropriate for the church in Bushey to engage with the community through the arts, because these things are already going on there. It’s an approach that Canon John Kiddle, Diocesan Director of Mission, is trying to encourage through asking parishes to look outwards at their communities and what their needs are when they form and review Mission Action Plans.

Fr Neil has gone a step further: having done the Mission Shaped Introduction course with Fr Neil has gone a step further: having done the course in Bushey to engage with the church in Bushey to engage with the church in Bushey to engage with the church... He is playing the organ for 24 hours non-stop from 4pm on Sunday 25th August. When he did that in Liverpool, it raised £7000. The parishes’ commitment to looking outwards is nicely crowned in the Festival anniversary year by the imminent arrival of the Revd Dave Poultney as Pioneer Minister. Fr Neil says: “Dave brings with him a passion to see the church grow and develop in new ways which will complement our regular service patterns. We have three churches in the parish, good relationships with many of the 13 schools and work which is developing with children and young people. It is a very exciting time for the parish.”

July 2012’s Bushey Festival Gala Concert

There are as many reasons for starting festivals as there are festivals, and they vary from the promotion of one art form, to the promotion of the myriad of art forms, to the indulgence of one man. But Kate Morgan, wife of the Rector of the parish of Bushey, is very clear why she decided to launch the Bushey Festival, and what she wanted to achieve with it. “Bushey is a funny rather nebulous place,” she explained. There is the village, of course, which gives it a kind of identity, but actually Bushey extends much further, with about 18,000 people dotted over quite a large area. What I wanted to do was to try and draw the place and the people together more – that was the basic idea behind the festival.” And it continues to be the purpose today. It has never been intended to be an ‘arts festival’ (although Bushey boasts an Arts College, a Music School and other credentials).

And it was before, he has done the course in Bushey and found it to have helped. “A lot of people saw that if we want to be around in the future, we are going to have to do things differently. We have to build a stronger future – when I arrived we had a deficit, something we have now almost completely dealt with. Funny enough, Philip Morgan faced the same challenge when he arrived.” Fr Neil is doing his bit to help with that too. He is playing the organ for 24 hours non-stop from 4pm on Sunday 25th August. When he did that in Liverpool, it raised £7000. The parishes’ commitment to looking outwards is nicely crowned in the Festival anniversary year by the imminent arrival of the Revd Dave Poultney as Pioneer Minister. Fr Neil says: “Dave brings with him a passion to see the church grow and develop in new ways which will complement our regular service patterns. We have three churches in the parish, good relationships with many of the 13 schools and work which is developing with children and young people. It is a very exciting time for the parish.”
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Laura Alm  Tel: 01837 851240,  Fax: 01837 851520,  laura.alm@gilead.org.uk

Addiction Counselling Training School

If you or someone you know would like more information about ACTS or would like to make an application, please contact: Laura Alm  Tel: 01837 851240,  Fax: 01837 851520,  laura.alm@gilead.org.uk

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Gilead Foundations is a Therapeutic Community

offering a residential rehabilitation program, called ACTS, for people with life-controlling addictions such as drug or alcohol abuse, homelessness, poverty, eating disorders, gambling, self-harm and other addictive behaviours. Based on a 300 acre dairy farm in rural Devon, Gilead also offers the following training in addiction counselling:

- Restoration Ministry (11 courses) 150 hours
- Recovery Support Counselling (17 courses) 280 hours
- Addiction Studies (23 courses) 300 hours

Gilead Foundations is also offering:

- Biblical Theology
- The Holy Spirit
- The Person of Jesus Christ

All Gilead Foundations use the Genesis Process Relapse Prevention program. This training is the Genesis tool and is used throughout the program at Gilead. We also have a correspondence course in counselling by Jay Adams.

www.gilead.org.uk

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THE SOLAR POWER SPECIALISTS
Event Listings

Concerts & Drama

St Andrew’s Church, Kimbolton Road, Bedford, MK40 2PF. Concert featuring Dame Felicity Lott – Soprano and Joseph Midleton – Piano. Saturday 21st June. 8.40pm. Tickets Adults £8, Concessions £7, Students 16-21 £3, children free accompanied by an adult. Tel 01234 216881.

St Mary the Virgin & All Saints Potters Bar. Lunchtime recitals starting 12.30pm and lasting 40 minutes. Light lunches available before and after recital. 4th June - Rarescale Flute Academy, 2nd July - Katy Elman, percussion.

All Saints Church, Chalgrove. Are pleased to welcome Dunstable Ladies Choir for their 3rd Concert with us, on Saturday 29th June 8pm. £5.50 inclusive of light refreshments. Tickets £12 (concs £10).

St Paul’s Church, Milton Keynes. Organ Recital on Sunday 22nd at 3pm - ‘Memories of the Lavender Farm’. £10 Tickets available at the church.

St. Katharine’s Church, Ickleford. On Saturday 22nd & Sunday 23rd June there will be a display on local Ickleford Mills in the church and an exhibition of local Art & Photography. Sunday 23rd, Ickleford Open Village will have gardens on display, lunchrooms, cream teas, a scarecrow competition and local organisations participating in various ways. Contact John on 01462 625047 for further details.

St Martin’s Church, Clapham Road Bedford. Open Weekend 22nd-23rd June. Summer Fayre Saturday 22nd 2-5pm including stalls, raffle and refreshments. Sunday 23rd 10am Sung Eucharist, then fine Victorian Church is open 2pm-5pm. Details 01234 374673.


Christ Church, New Road, Ware, SG12 7BS. CPAS Event: ‘Leading Edge – Realising Your Church’s Vision’ Wednesday 26 June, 7.30-9.45pm. Leader: Graham Archer, CPAS Director of Ministry. £10 per participant, and £5 for each additional participant from the same church. Book online at www.cpas.org or on 01438 138553.

St Paul’s Woburn Bryd (or Hitchin) Pinns and Pudding Evening for Farming Community Network on Friday June 28th from 6pm. There will be music, some garden games and a draw. Admission is £5 (Under 12s £1) - this entitles the entrant to a drink from the bar (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) and a choice of puddings. Contact Selina 01438 139190.

Dunstable Priory Church. The Fayrfax Consort will perform A Musical History Tour on June 29th, starting at 7.30pm. Music from across the centuries, starting in the 1120s with the founding of the Priory and will encompass such people as Henry I, Stremford, Queen Eleanor, John Dunstable, Henry VIII and Mary Tudor. The Fayrfax Consort is led by David Ireson. The narration is by Hugh Garrard. Tickets £10, on sale at Priory House or on the door. Refreshments available inside.

Leading Edge. CPAS Event: ‘The Village Priory’. MK41 4AP Summer Fete Saturday, June 29th 11.30am to 3.00pm – stalls, refreshments etc Patronal Festival Parish Communion Sunday, June 30th 9.30am – Preacher: the Rev’d Canon Peter Hill.

St Peter’s Church Benington. Flower Festival and Village Gardens open on Saturday/Sunday 29/30th June from noon – 5.00pm. £4 to include entrance to all village gardens and Church Flower Festival. Lunches and Teas available in Village Hall as well as stalls of all kinds. Bennington Lordship Garden open also – separate entrance fee.

St Peter’s Church, Harrold, Bedfordshire, MK43 7DG. Wedding and flower festival Saturday 29th June 11.00am-5.00pm - £4.00 entry including admission to all village gardens and Church Festival. Lunches and Teas available in Village Hall as well as stalls of all kinds. Please note - no alcohol will be available in the church from 11.00am.

Holy Trinity Church, Parish of Weston. Icon Classing 29th July to 3rd August (10am – 4pm flexible attendance). Enquiries and bookings to: Juliet Venter (artist@juliet-icons.co.uk) tel 01462 612416

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A staggering 88% of service users who complete Gilead’s therapeutic programme remain free from their addictions, during the critical first few years after leaving the community. Michelle is just one of many who have found hope, freedom and restoration that has so far lasted ten years. This is her story...

Michelle’s family background was very difficult, and as a young girl she felt insecure, unloved, unsafe and very alone. The family fell apart when Michelle was about thirteen, and on top of lot of traumatic incidents this led to Michelle having a breakdown, and ultimately being taken into care.

“I started drinking when I was in care,” said Michelle, “to numb myself. I would drink sometimes until I passed out. As long as I was drunk, I felt alright.”

By the age of fourteen, Michelle was injecting amphetamines. She started using heroin when she was twenty. Her boyfriend, a recovering addict, died from an accidental overdose of prescription drugs. She tried many times to stop her addictions, but couldn’t. “It was like being on a roundabout, and you want to get off. I tried getting clean, I wanted a good life for my daughter, and I would last four or five days, but then you get some money, something would take over and I was back on heroin again. In the end, heroin made me feel normal, and I drank to make myself numb.”

Repeated failures led to hopelessness, and increasingly serious suicide attempts. “Then my sister called me and said she had found me somewhere that could take me in and help me, but the only thing was they believed in God. I had no faith at the time, but I had tried everything else and thought ‘I’ve got nothing to lose, I’ll give it a go.” On Mothers’ Day 2003 Michelle moved into the therapeutic community at Gilead’s 200 acre dairy farm in Devon.

Michelle’s family background was very difficult, and as any other young couple, they face the trials and the joys of family life together. Michelle remains grateful to Gilead, “If I hadn’t gone to Gilead, I wouldn’t be here today. It’s God, but Gilead gave me a life and a future to look forward to.”

Without Gilead, Michelle says she would not be alive nor have a future. Many more people could be helped by Gilead, but in these days of austerity and funding cuts they need financial help towards the costs of their rehabilitation.

Please consider giving a gift or a regular monthly donation towards students’ costs, or to help Gilead finish the new, purpose built accommodation that their students desperately need. You can find more details below, or call Chris Cole (Trustee) on 079567 439397, or Lois Samuel on 01837 851240, email lois.samuel@gilead.org.uk

New accommodation will help more people find hope

We have plans and permission to build three purpose designed bungalows to provide excellent quality accommodation for 24 students with support workers. At the time of writing, we are so very close to finishing the first of these family homes. This will accommodate up to 8 students, 2 support workers and house parents, yet there is still a great deal of work to do!

Project update

In August we were able to complete the installation of the Renewable Energy Heating and Hot Water System, with ground source heating and solar panels. This will supply power to the house, which means we will have very low ongoing energy costs. We are now moving onto working on the internal part of the project with the hope of moving in very soon. This involves: the completion of 4 student bedrooms with bunk beds giving us accommodation for up to 8 students; the installation of the kitchens, one in the main living area and the second in the living quarters of the staff flat, accommodating 2 male support workers. On completion we will comply with the Care Quality Commission criteria enabling us to move in. In order for us to accomplish this we need to raise £50,000.

Funding raised so far

We have been able to raise £35,000 towards phase 2 so we just need to raise another £15,000 to enable us to move in new students.

Without the partnership between our financial supporters and the volunteers who work here we would not be able to achieve the success of seeing many hurting people, like Michelle, unlocked from addictions.

How you can help

Please can you help, with either loans or donations towards the £50,000, as we are looking forward to moving in.

Michelle

Michelle was reunited with her daughter. She joined a local church, and took part in various volunteer work which led to her permanent paid job with a Christian publishing company. In 2005 she married Ray, with whom she now has a lovely family of three children. They bought their home in 2007, and like any other young couple, they face the challenges of their family and work together, with funding of the students’ fees. A one-off gift or interest free loan will help us finish our first building.

Almost there - the first new bungalow nears completion
You can advertise in this newspaper with a monthly circulation of 15,750, at a very reasonable cost, reaching a great church audience in parishes throughout the Diocese of St Albans which covers parts of Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton & Barnet. We can also help you to advertise in seven other Diocesan newspapers throughout the South of England and the Home Counties, with a total circulation nearly 170,000.

To find out more, contact Glenda, Michelle, Frankie or Steve on 01752 225623 or email glenda@cornerstonevision.com
Prayer Grows on Trees in South Oxhey

Once a month the main Sunday morning worship at All Saints South Oxhey takes the form of Breakfast Church. People gather at 9.30am and sit at tables eating breakfast and sharing fellowship. When the breakfast things are cleared away there is a seamless move into the Eucharist. Rather than a sermon, there is an extended teaching time. Recently Archdeacon Jonathan visited and after an excellent breakfast of coffee, toast and fruit (honest) gave a teaching session on prayer which concluded with the whole congregation going into Blue Peter mode and making leaves bearing prayers to adorn the bare branches of the Prayer Tree. Rather than Pick up a Penguin it was Pop up a Prayer. (l to r Jonathan Peter mode and making leaves bearing prayers to adorn the bare branches of the Prayer Tree. Rather than Pick up a Penguin it was Pop up a Prayer. (l to r Jonathan

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Giving Up

(charitably speaking)

Statistics gleaned from Parish accounts show that giving to various charities is on the increase. In 2009 parishes gave away £1.4m but this figure had increased to £2.0m in 2011. Not only is this a huge increase in cash terms (42% increase) but parishes increased the percentage of their unrestricted income that was given away. Over the same period this went up from 7% to 8%. Yet again, we see that in spite of very difficult economic times, church members are not reducing their commitments to charities that rely heavily on voluntary giving. Let’s celebrate the generosity of church goers in the diocese.

David Nye

Recognise this?

“Please can anyone in the St Albans Diocese give me some information about the badge which I recently bought on eBay? I am a retired Reader and worship at St Edmundsbury Cathedral. One of my hobbies is collecting the badges formerly worn by Readers and similar badges with an ecclesiastical connection. I am intrigued about what a ‘Diocesan Messenger’ might be and what were his duties? I expect the badge is long obsolete. Sqn Ldr Alan Birt.” Please reply to comms@stalbans.anglican.org.

Three more Canons

Canons Royden, Burns and Middlebrook join Bishop Alan before their installation at St Albans Cathedral on 27th April

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