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St George's Parish Church Stalybridge

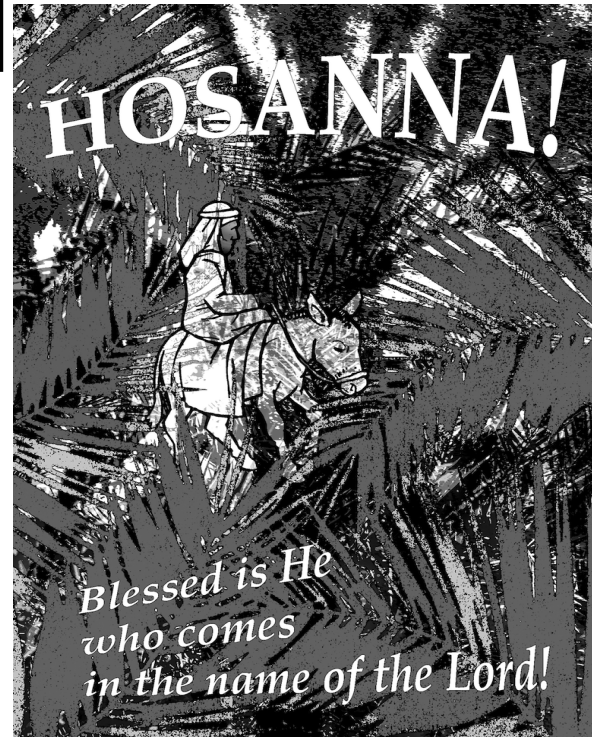


Diocese of Manchester



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

35p



April 2011

St George's Church Stalybridge

Clergy

| | | |
|---------|----------------------|----------|
| Vicar | | 338 2368 |
| Curates | Revd Philip Brierley | 303 0809 |
| | Revd Keith Stewart | 303 7483 |

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Associate Priest | Revd Doreen Broadbent | 330 9085 |
|------------------|-----------------------|----------|

| | | |
|---------|-----------------|----------|
| Wardens | Mrs Nancy Nield | 338 4985 |
| | Ms Janet Vidler | 303 7689 |

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|----------|
| P.C.C. Secretary | Mrs Margaret Smith | 338 3702 |
|------------------|--------------------|----------|

| | | |
|-----------|----------------------|----------|
| Treasurer | Mrs Julianna Stewart | 303 7483 |
|-----------|----------------------|----------|

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------|
| Magazine Editor | Mrs Linda Hurst | 330 0518 |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------|

Worship

Sunday

| | |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.30 a.m. | Holy Communion (2 nd & 4 th Sundays) |
| 10.45 a.m. | Sung Communion and Sunday School (4 th Sunday – Family Service) |
| 18.00 p.m. | Occasional Special Services as announced |

Tuesday

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| 10.30 a.m. | Holy Communion |
|------------|----------------|

To receive Communion at home when you are sick or housebound, or to have the name of a departed friend or relation entered in the Book of Remembrance, please contact one of the clergy or Wardens.

For Baptisms, marriages and funerals please phone the Vicarage and follow the information given.

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care worth talking about

FAREWELL TO A FRIEND

On one of the first spring-like days early in March, a good number of our congregation gathered at Dukinfield Crematorium to say goodbye to Nellie Alcock. Nellie was such a familiar figure for many years, in the neighbourhood and here in church sitting in her usual seat in the back pew.

Gil and Derek Cooper remember her family moving into the newly built house in West Avenue when they were growing up nearby and where she lived for most of her 91 years. They told of the war years and the air raid shelter which on-one would use because it was dirty and smelly. Instead people would stand on their steps watching planes overhead, waiting for bombs to drop. They knew too of her dancing days, how much she loved going to social events and the local hops.

Dorothy Hewitt and her family were neighbours. Nellie worked at Calico Printers in Carrbrook and when Dorothy left school she took her on the first day of her new job there. That reminded Dorothy how she wasn't best pleased with *her* mum who made her go to work for the first time wearing white ankle socks. Later, when Betty Sykes worked at Senior Service, Nellie was in the laboratory there..

Mildred and Ken were with her as regular members of Old St George's until it closed. It seemed a sad time to them in 1967 but they settled happily and have remained here ever since. When she was no longer able to walk to church Mildred would pick her up each week to bring her for Sunday services and Minnie Walsh was her pastoral care visitor.

I only knew Nellie in the last 20 years or so of her life. Each Christmas she was my best customer for Willow Wood calendars. She would ask for 3 or 4, then think of someone else to give one to – one year ending up with ten to give as gifts to friends. I took a card for her 90th birthday and she was sitting looking with anticipation at the huge block of her favourite chocolate that Minnie had just taken her.

We'll miss her deep distinctive voice as we remember times shared over the years, chats over cups of tea at Ladies Guild, prayers said together, hymns sung together. Somehow I can't quite think of Nellie singing in the heavenly choir but I'm sure she will be at peace in her own special place with our Lord. As Bishop Christopher would say – another friend gone to Glory. Doreen

Thanks to a donation from Gladys Spencer Nellie's name will be entered in our Book of Remembrance.

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Readings and Psalms for April 2011

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun 3 rd | 10.45 | 4th Sunday of Lent <i>Mothers' Sunday</i> Exodus 2.1-10; Psalm 34.11-20; 2 Corinthians 1.3-7; Luke 2.33-35 |
| Tues 5 th | 10.30 | Ezekiel 47.1-9,12; Psalm 46.1-8; John 5.1-3,5-16 |
| Sun 10 th | 8.30 10.45 | 5th Sunday of Lent Ezekiel 37.1-14; John 11.1-45 Ezekiel 37.1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8.6-11; John 11.1-45 |
| Tues 12 th | 10.30 | Numbers 21.4-9; Psalm 102.1-3,16-23; John 8.21-30 |
| Sun 17 th | 10.45 | Palm Sunday Matthew 21.1-11 <i>Liturgy of the Palms</i>; Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 31.9-16; Philippians 2.5-11; Matthew 26.14-27.end |
| HOLY WEEK | | |
| Mon 18 th | 20.00 | Isaiah 42.1-9; Psalm 36.5-11; Hebrews 9.11-15; John 12.1-11 |
| Tues 19 th | 10.30 | Isaiah 49.1-7; Psalm 71.1-8 1 Corinthians 1.18-31; John 12.20-36 |
| Weds 20 th | 20.00 | Stations of the Cross |
| Thurs 21 st | 20.00 | Maundy Thursday Exodus 12.1-4,11-14; Psalm 116.1,10-end; 1 Corinthians 11.23-26; John 13.1-17,31b-35 |
| Fri 22 nd | 10.45 | Good Friday Isaiah 52.13-53.end; Psalm 22.1-21; Hebrews 10.16-25; John 18.1-19.end |
| Sun 24 th | 8.30 10.45 18.00 | Easter Day Acts 10.34-43; John 20.1-18 Acts 10.34-43; Psalm 118.1-2,14-24; Colossians 3.1-4; John 20.1-18 Song of Solomon 3.2-5;8.6-7; John 20.11-18 BCP Holy Communion |
| Tues 26 th | 10.30 | Acts 2.36-41; Psalm 33.4-5,18-end; John 20.11-18 |

From the Registers

Baptisms



6th March

Luke Jones, The Moorings, Mossley
 Leon Jones, The Moorings, Mossley
 James Steven Barton, Staveley Avenue, Stalybridge

27 March

Lewis James Vickers, Elgin Street, Stalybridge
 Lottie Rose Chell, Hamilton Street, Stalybridge

Funerals



28th February

Ann Wilkinson (72) Clarendon Road, Audenshaw

9th March

Jessie Birch (100) Parkhill Nursing Home and formerly of Wakefield Road, Heyrod

10th March

Paulette Davenport (60) Redhill Drive, Bredbury (Interment of ashes)
 Lucy Wilson (74) Pine Grove, Dukinfield

As we have no 'From the Vicar' at the moment some members of the congregation have kindly agreed to take it in turn to write the lead article. This month Philip tells us more about Ordained Local Ministry.

LOCATION, VOCATION, LOCATION

Dear Friends

I am writing this article in the middle of March and the season of Lent has just begun. By the time you are (hopefully) reading it, we will be steeped in the solemn liturgy that leads us through the wilderness to Palm Sunday, Holy Week and, at the end of the month, the joyful celebrations of Easter.

As our worship changes with the Lenten season, we are also settling into a different routine, which we hope will be temporary, of parish life without a full-time vicar.

Since Ian left us in January, the question has been asked as to whether Keith or I would now 'be promoted' and become the vicar. This seems then a suitable occasion to say something about Ordained Local Ministry or OLM for short.

I was privileged to have been a member of the very first group of five people in Manchester Diocese to be ordained to this particular ministry. I was made a deacon in 1992 and ordained priest a year later.

This scheme came to fruition in our Diocese largely as a result of the vision of the then Bishop of Middleton, The Rt. Revd. Donald Tytler. The basic idea is that a parish identifies a particular need to be fulfilled (e.g. work with children, the elderly, communication, outreach etc.) and then nominates someone from within its own ranks to fulfil that need. The parish itself needs to meet certain criteria in order to be accredited for OLM and, once it has been achieved, the chosen person goes forward for selection for training for the priesthood.

The selection procedure is the same as for those entering full-time ministry. The course includes general theological training but is also geared to the specific job description of the ordinand. The training sessions take place on one evening per week and there are several weekend residentials during the three academic years that it takes to complete the course.

This was my experience, but our group, being the first, were very much the guinea pigs. The dynamics may have changed over the years but the principle is still more or less the same.

From Our Book of Remembrance

| | | | | | |
|--------|-----------------------|------|--------|--------------------------|------|
| Apr 3 | Alan Wilson | 1970 | Apr 17 | Bertha Stanley | 1965 |
| | Fred Peck | 1977 | | Dennis Baxter | 2001 |
| | William Dawson | 1982 | Apr 18 | Edith Smith | 1988 |
| | Joan Brocklehurst | 1994 | | Ada Sayce | 1989 |
| Apr 4 | Grace Lee | 1975 | Apr 19 | Mary Elizabeth Parkinson | 1944 |
| Apr 5 | Percy Dudleston | 1979 | | Doris Hibbert | 1970 |
| Apr 6 | Herbert Brocklehurst | 1975 | | Samuel Cook | 1989 |
| Apr 7 | Ellen Ratcliffe | 1937 | Apr 20 | Louis Bowler | 1990 |
| Apr 8 | Alistair William Rose | 1983 | | Lena Schofield | 1997 |
| | Forbes | | | Mary Wright | 1989 |
| Apr 9 | John (Jack) Ireson | 1987 | Apr 22 | Mark Allen Cowley | 2009 |
| | Kenneth Langton | 2007 | Apr 23 | James Johnson | 1984 |
| | Howard Steven Fogg | 2008 | | Jennie Cook | 1995 |
| Apr 10 | Walter Bramall | 1977 | Apr 24 | George Wardle | 1997 |
| | Minnie Talbot | 1984 | | Joan Lindley | 1983 |
| | Freda Mary Day | 1987 | | Doreen Iilian Pritchard | 2009 |
| Apr 12 | Jacqueline Ruth | 1987 | | Graham Webster | 2009 |
| | Gillaspy | | Apr 25 | John Jepson Thomas | 1991 |
| | Andrea Louise Johnson | 2004 | | Alice Ann Walton | 1998 |
| Apr 14 | Helen Shaw | 1996 | Apr 26 | Elsie Beatrice Dugdale | 1974 |
| Apr 15 | Ernest Norris | 1965 | | Beatrice Isabella Brien | 1985 |
| | Joseph Parry | 2007 | | Harry Blackburn | 2003 |
| | Alice Banks | 2009 | Apr 27 | John Kenyon | 2001 |
| Apr 16 | Joseph Shaw | 1961 | Apr 28 | Ada Broadbent | 1962 |
| | Emily Spencer | 1990 | Apr 29 | Laura Wright | 2007 |

OLMs continue in their secular employment (the day job) and fulfil their job description in the evenings and at weekends. They do not receive any payment from the church or the Diocese, other than expenses for travel, postage etc. They remain perpetual curates and only in unusual circumstances would ever become the vicar. Even during an interregnum, they do not carry any legal responsibility for the parish – this is in the hands of the wardens and the Area Dean. We are extremely fortunate to be well cared for in this way here at St. George's.

OLMs are ordained priests just in the same way that a full-time vicar is. There is only one priesthood. It is the area of ministry which is different. The Church of England is having to rely more and more on those who are 'self-supporting ministers' and the focus of OLM may well have to change to keep up with this need. As the number of stipendiary clergy falls and more parishes move towards team ministry – the ideal of one full-time vicar for each parish is no longer the reality. Bishop Nigel's vision for the Manchester Diocese by 2025 places great emphasis on the ministry of OLMs and other 'volunteer' roles.

Both Keith and I are now retired from paid employment which frees us to offer more time to the parish. However, by the very essence that we are retired, it means that we are not in the first flush of youth (appearances can be very deceptive). OLMs must retire by the age of seventy, although they can receive the Bishop's permission to officiate at services. It would be wonderful if any of you felt that OLM was something you might be called by God to do and so continue the tradition of Ordained Local Ministry in this parish.

Throughout Lent the theme of our Sunday morning sermons is Vocation and guest preachers are talking to us about different aspects of ministry, both lay and ordained. There are many different paths to follow and these can also be explored at an event called Living Stones. These days are offered annually by the Diocese and the one for our Archdeaconry (Rochdale) takes place this year on Saturday 7th May from 9.30a.m. to 2.30p.m. at St. Martin, Castleton. If you are interested, please do go and have a look and maybe ask some questions. If you want any further information about this event then please have a word with me.

As we move toward Easter and the promise of new life that it brings, please pray for our parish at this time of change and give some thought as to whether you might be able to be a part of that change.

With my very best wishes to you all for a reflective Lent and a joyful Easter season.

Philip

Some dates for your diary April 2011

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday | 1st | 3.00pm to 4.00pm | Cllr C. Patrick - Surgery |
| Sunday | 3rd | 10.45a.m. | 4th Sunday of Lent - Mothering Sunday Service for Mothering Sunday |
| Tuesday | 5th | 10.30a.m. | Holy Eucharist |
| | | 11.15a.m. | Lent Discussion Group |
| Thursday | 7th | 9.30a.m. | Time 4 Fun 0 - 5yrs |
| Sunday | 10th | 8.30a.m. | 5th Sunday of Lent - Passiontide begins Holy Eucharist |
| | | 10.45a.m. | Parish Eucharist with Guest & Junior Church |
| Tuesday | 12th | 10.30a.m. | Holy Eucharist |
| | | 11.15a.m. | Lent Discussion Group |
| | | 8.00p.m. | Annual Parochial Church Meeting |
| Thursday | | 9.30a.m. | Time 4 Fun 0 - 5yrs |
| Sunday | 17th | 10.45a.m. | Palm Sunday - Holy Week Blessing of Palms & Parish Eucharist & Junior Church |
| | | 12.30p.m. | Holy Baptism x 1 |
| | | | HOLY WEEK |
| Monday | 18th | 8.00p.m. | Agapé Meal |
| Tuesday | 19th | 10.30a.m. | Holy Eucharist |
| | | 11.15a.m. | Lent Discussion Group |
| Wednesday | 20th | 8.00p.m. | Stations of the Cross |
| Thursday | 21st | 8.00p.m. | MAUNDAY THURSDAY Sung Communion of the Last Supper - Stripping of the Altars followed by Vigil |
| Friday | 22nd | 10.45a.m. | GOOD FRIDAY Service of The Cross |
| Saturday | 23rd | 2.00p.m. to 4.00p.m. | St. GEORGE'S DAY Fair Trade Afternoon Tea & Gift Day |
| Sunday | 24th | 8.30a.m. | EASTER DAY Holy Eucharist with Hymns |
| | | 10.45a.m. | A Service for Easter day |
| | | 6.00p.m. | Holy Communion BCP |
| Tuesday | 26th | 10.45a.m. | Holy Eucharist |



WANTED : WEB PAGE MANAGER

We are looking for someone who would be interested in editing our web page.

Ideally this should be someone who is familiar with what's going on at St. George's.

Knowledge of Microsoft Word and an enjoyment of using a computer is all you need. Help will always be around.

Please take a look at the web page at: www.stg.org.uk and if you think you would like to have a go please phone 0161 338 3702.



Thank You.

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'200' CLUB

If you are a member of the '200' Club April commences the year for 2011-2012.

To renew your application please see Mildred Bradshaw or ring 339 3225.

A total of £617 for St George's has been received with the same amount being paid out in three prizes each month.

I would like to thank our members for their loyal support to this fundraiser, and new members to this scheme would be greatly appreciated.

Mildred Bradshaw
'200' Club Treasurer

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Rev Ian Stubbs is Licensed at Glossop

On Sunday 6 February 2011 Ian was licensed as Priest in Charge of Glossop at a special service help at Glossop Parish Church.

The licensing was conducted by the Bishop of Derby, the Rt Rev Dr Alistair LJ Redfern, assisted by the Archdeacon of Chesterfield, the Venerable Christine L Wilson.

As well as Priest In Charge Ian also became assistant curate of Hadfield, Charlesworth, Gamesley and Dinting Vale



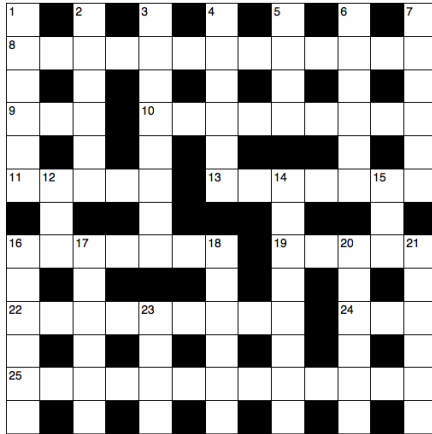
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March Crossword Solution

ACROSS: 1, Wine. 3, The alert. 8, Ooze. 9, Passover. 11, Garden Tomb. 14, Cannot. 15, Elisha. 17, Gethsemane. 20, Own house. 21, Lisa. 22, Flogging. 23, Stye. DOWN: 1, Wrong act. 2, Nazarene. 4, Health. 5, Assemblies. 6, Envy. 7, Turn. 10, Before long. 12, Iscariot. 13, Take care. 16, The Son. 18, Loaf. 19, Unto

+++++

April Crossword



CLUES


Across

- 8 'He poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the — ' (Isaiah 53:12) (13)
 9 'When they had sung a hymn, they went — to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30) (3)
 10 Comes between Galatians and Philippians (9)
 11 'Your heart will — and swell with joy' (Isaiah 60:5) (5)
 13 Muslim holy month (7)
 16 Ten ears (anag.) (7)
 19 Under (poetic abbrev.) (5)
 22 How Abram described himself to God when he complained that his inheritance would pass to a servant (Genesis 15:2) (9)
 24 'Go to the — , you sluggard' (Proverbs 6:6) (3)
 25 Debar from receiving Communion (13)

Down

- 1 My — for His Highest (Oswald Chambers' best-known book) (6)
 2 Festival of the resurrection (6)
 3 'His sons will prepare for war and — a great army' (Daniel 11:10) (8)
 4 'Let not the — string his bow' (Jeremiah 51:3) (6)
 5 Name of the River Thames in and around Oxford (4)
 6 'From then on Judas watched for an opportunity — — him over' (Matthew 26:16) (2,4)
 7 'But Christ is faithful — — — over God's house' (Hebrews 3:6) (2,1,3)
 12 Long-handled implement used to till the soil (Isaiah 7:25) (3)
 14 Order to which monks and nuns devote themselves (8)
 15 Appropriate (Proverbs 15:23) (3)
 16 I, uncle (anag.) (6)
 17 'They gave him — — of broiled fish' (Luke 24:42) (1,5)
 18 'Weren't there three men that we — — and threw into the fire?' (Daniel 3:24) (4,2)
 20 Mountain where Noah's ark came to rest (Genesis 8:4) (6)
 21 'Don't you know that friendship with the world is — towards God?' (James 4:4) (6)
 23 Prominent architectural feature of large cathedrals such as St Paul's (4)

Children's Page



Mouse Makes

Follow the Easter story using the Bible references, then look for the words in the wordsearch puzzle

Into Jerusalem
read Matthew 21:1-11
 DONKEY • ROAD
 BRANCHES • PALMS
 KING • HOSANNA

Last Supper
read Matthew 26:17-30
 PASSOVER • ROOM
 BREAD • WINE
 BODY • BLOOD
 CUP • MEAL

Betrayal and Death
read Matthew 26:36 - 27:56
 KISS • MESSIAH
 CHRIST • SON
 CRUCIFY • JESUS
 CROWN • THORNS
 ROBE • TREE
 NAILS • CROSS
 DARKNESS • QUAKE
 DEATH • LOTS

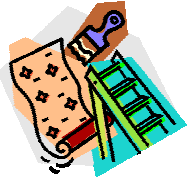
Easter Wordsearch

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | R | A | N | C | H | E | S | D | |
| | O | D | O | N | K | E | Y | | |
| | M | E | S | S | I | A | H | B | |
| | C | U | P | A | S | S | O | V | E |
| | W | A | N | O | S | W | I | N | E |
| S | M | E | A | L | N | N | M | E | S |
| R | O | A | D | M | A | N | B | L | O |
| | | | S | C | R | O | S | S | D |
| | | | C | R | U | C | I | F | Y |
| D | E | A | T | H | O | R | N | S | Q |
| | | | R | W | M | A | R | Y | G |
| | | | K | I | N | G | I | O | R |
| | | | S | Y | H | L | A | N | G |
| | | | T | A | E | S | T | O | N |
| M | | | Q | A | B | O | D | Y | D |
| O | U | G | U | V | O | M | U | K | A |
| R | O | O | M | T | A | E | O | B | U |
| N | K | D | A | R | K | N | E | S | S |
| I | P | E | A | C | E | U | J | S | P |
| N | J | G | O | O | D | N | E | W | S |
| G | O | T | E | L | L | I | S | A | G |
| V | Y | S | A | V | I | O | U | R | E |
| P | R | A | I | S | E | A | S | T | E |

Burial and Resurrection
read Matthew 27:57 - 28:20
 TOMB • STONE • LINEN • BODY
 BURY • THREE DAYS • MORNING
 MARY • ANGEL • HEAVEN
 GOD • RAISED • JOY • GO TELL
 GOOD NEWS • PEACE • SPIRIT
 SAVIOUR • PRAISE

EASTER

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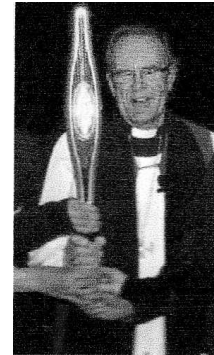
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"It's the only way we can cope with all the
couples who want to get married on the
same day as William and Kate."

RUNNING THE RACE



It was just over two years ago, in March 2009, that Bishop Nigel visited our parish during his 'Run the Race' Parish Pilgrimages. Quite a few members of our congregation still wear the small red and gold badges we were given then. His visits to nearly 350 churches in our diocese were started in 2005 and completed just before Christmas 2010. He took with him one of the batons from the Commonwealth Games as a powerful symbol to encourage the members of each church to 'run the race look to Jesus and pass on His faith, hope and love'.

So on the last day of February it was a privilege to be at his service of thanksgiving in the cathedral which was attended by both the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. It was a very cold and frosty night and the queue was very long. To help speed us up the sidespeople were handing out service books while we were outside, but it still took 20 minutes of slowly moving forward before we reached the porch.

Inside there were six or seven large TV screens which were needed as the service moved to different parts of the building. The Dean welcomed the congregation by saying 'why stay at home and watch TV when you can come here and watch it'. We did see most of the service on screen but were within touching distance of the procession just once.

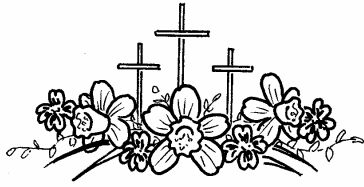
As we sang 'Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord' the two Archbishops walked past us on their stately way to the Regimental Chapel singing 'Glory, glory hallelujah'. A fitting phrase for the whole service. Bishop Nigel lead us in the prayer used in each of the churches he visited

Eternal God you call us to be a pilgrim people,
Grant that we may run the race that is set before us
With stronger faith, firmer hope and greater love;
That, persevering to the end, we in our generation,
May bear the baton of the Gospel with our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Amen

Not one to rest on his achievements you can see a picture of him on the front of Crux magazine for march. He is standing on the Coronation Street set reading the bible – the headline says 'Bringing the Bible to Corrie – Bishop Nigel swaps his pulpit for cobbles'

Doreen



Happy Easter!

A happy and blessed Easter to you! Easter is the most joyful day of the year for Christians. Christ has died for our sins. We are forgiven. Christ has

risen! He has risen indeed! We are redeemed! We can look forward to an eternity in his joy! Hallelujah!

The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message so simple that you can explain it to someone in a few minutes. It is so profound that for the rest of their lives they will be still be 'growing' in their Christian walk with God.

Why does the date for Easter move about so?

When's Easter in any given year? Easy – find the first Sunday after the full moon that follows the Spring Equinox (March 20 or 21). What? If it all sounds a bit confusing, well, here's the history behind it all...

It all began with the ancient Hebrews. They based their calendars upon the rhythms of the moon. These lunar calendars worked well for them, and everything was fine.

Then Christianity arrived – in the Holy Land, where the first century Jews were still using the lunar calendar. Fine. But then Christianity moved on to Rome, which was using a different calendar – one based upon the sun. (The Gregorian calendar, which we use today, and which is in widest use throughout the world, is based on the Roman sun calendar.)

Now establishing certain days in the year became difficult. Especially Easter. The results were often confusing. Early church leaders, both Jewish and Roman, agreed that everything to do with the coming of Jesus Christ had been prepared, even the position of the sun, the moon and the stars. They could not agree, however, on how to fix the day for the yearly celebration of Easter.

It was not until the fourth century, with the help of astronomers who took into account the position of both the moon and the sun in relation to the earth, that a decision was finally made. At last it was accepted that Easter would always be celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon that follows the Spring Equinox (March 20 or 21). That is why Easter falls anytime between 22 March and 25 April.

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Royal promises - and no escape clauses!

Probably not since the marriage of Prince Charles and Lady Diana in 1981 will so many people be watching a Christian wedding ceremony as will doubtless be on April 29th. The future heir to the throne, Prince William, will marry Kate Middleton in Westminster Abbey.

The solemn and moving words of the service will echo around the world: 'to have and to hold, from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part'. As one groom - a lawyer, needless to say - remarked to me, 'Not many escape clauses there!'

The exchanging of rings is equally uncompromising: 'all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you'. All that I am? All that I have? My car, my laptop, my precious handbag . . . and my aching heart? All? It's such a comprehensive word; it leaves nothing outside its limits.

Marriage is, on these terms, the total giving of one person to another, for life. It's both wonderful and awesome. No matter how many weddings you attend, those vows still move you. This is what love, as God understands it, is all about. It's not 'I love you and I want you and I'm going to have you' (which is how modern culture sometimes portrays it) but about the total giving of one human being to another. It mirrors the self-giving love of God as we see it in the life of Jesus - which may be why St Paul compares the love of a husband for his wife to Christ's love for his people (Ephesians 5:25).

You may notice, as the service proceeds, just how often the word 'love' occurs in it. Indeed, the opening words sum it all up: 'God is love, and those who live in love live in God and God lives in them.' This is the great sacrament of love. On April 29th we can - wherever we are - share in its joy.

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