



Holy Trinity



St.
Gabriel

The Parish of The Good Shepherd, Ashton-under-Lyne



St. James



St. Peter



St. Michael and All Angels

JUNE 2021

Price 50p

Editorial

One thing that we've probably missed over the past year is parties. This month should enable us to party again! Lots of Jesus' parables focus on parties, as they are a picture of the joy, hope and life of the kingdom of God. The parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14: 15-24) challenges us not to miss out on this.

In Jesus' day, when people accepted an *invitation* to a banquet, they were only told the actual time on the day: '*Come, for everything is now ready*' (17). Jesus' invites each one of us to share in the life of His kingdom.

However, the guests made *excuses* for not coming. At the time, this would have been extremely insulting to the host. They said: '*I have just bought a field; I must try out my new team of oxen; I have just got married*' (18-20). These are all good things in themselves, however they reveal their priorities were elsewhere. We too can be pre-occupied with our own routines of work, family, retirement, holidays, friends, home, social media, that we forget God's priorities for our lives. Jesus calls for total commitment from His disciples. *What priority in my life is holding me back from accepting His invitation?*

How did the host *respond*? He ordered His servants to '*Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.*' (21). He invited the unexpected and unacceptable people to his banquet. Jesus makes the point that *God's kingdom is open to all!* Thinking about our family, friends, colleagues and neighbours, even if they're not like us or show little interest in God: *Are we willing to offer them God's invitation to share His love and life?*

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The views expressed in articles in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Parish of The Good Shepherd. The editor reserves the right to amend articles as appropriate, for editorial purposes. Please consider writing something for the magazine yourself! And, if you have any comments to make on the Magazine you can contact the editor, Roger Farnworth on 0161 330 2771 or talk to a member of your DCC or PCC who will pass on any comments that are made.

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The Parish Prayer

Father God, whose Son came to bring love and peace to the world, help us to grow in faith and share our hope and joy with all whom we meet, so that we can work together to build your kingdom in Ashton, welcome new people into our churches, and be relevant to those around us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Farewell and Thank You!

I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you. I really can't say it enough!

The last four years have been incredibly formative for me, not just as a priest but as a person. I leave my home here as a product of my experiences and my relationships and I will always be incredibly grateful for your kindness, generosity, and patience with me in this.

During my time here, I have had the pleasure of baptisms, joy of weddings and the great sadness of funerals. I've drunk my fair share of tea and coffee and eaten more cake than was good for me. Over the years I've turned up to church happy, giddy, grumpy and even sometimes a little apprehensive but I've come home from church lifted by your company and the pleasure of our shared journeys of faith.

Bekah and I were a little nervous when we first arrived in Ashton-under-Lyne. Straight out of college, I had always anticipated



returning to York - where our families live - and starting my ministry somewhere that I knew and loved. It was scary turning up somewhere completely new, somewhere without any familiar faces or favourite pubs to hide out in! Well that all changed! We were made to feel incredibly welcome both in and out of church and I have such fond memories of all five! Some particular favourites include leading Lent courses, First Communion and Confirmation classes at St James'; eating my body weight in homemade cakes at Tuesday lunchtime Communion with St Peter's; preaching from the three-tiered pulpit in St Michael's (it's like watching tennis turning my head from side to side and so high up - I love it); swinging incense around Holy Trinity with a big grin on my face; and of course the wonderful Place of Welcome at St Gabriel's where I reigned

supreme at Bingo! And, of course, that's not even to mention the whole 'Dancing Vicar' malarkey!

When Stanley arrived in October 2019 Ashton became even more special and (although I will always struggle with the fact that he was born this side of the Pennines) I am delighted that this will always be his first home. We really felt the distance from our family in those first few months but knew we were not alone. Both Bekah and I agree that Ashton truly became our home during lockdown. Of course, like everyone, we missed seeing our family and not having the chance to travel to see friends, but we were really able to focus on where we were and what we had here- and we appreciated it on a whole new level. It taught us how to be a family of three in a community where we were not born but where we definitely belonged.

Of course, I won't just remember the serious stuff! I've had amazing opportunities to travel to Africa and Pakistan

along with plenty of fun closer to home - I loved forming a band with Gibson Music, recording with local artists, discovering a deep snobbery in coffee and spending a great deal of time in Market Grounds, talking my way around the indoor market, and somehow persuading the lovely Fruits and Roots greengrocers to give me a banoffee pie every weekend!

I truly believe that all the wonderful experiences, the challenges and fun that have filled my time in Ashton will set me up well in the future. Here is just a little bit of information on where I'm heading next:

St Swithin's Church is in the centre of Lincoln city, close to the Cathedral at the bottom of Steep Hill (and yes - it is very, very steep). In 2014, a church plant arrived to help a struggling congregation and since then it has seen significant growth. It is a family church that also has an active student ministry, connecting with the two universities in the city. It has a contemporary style of worship with the music led by a band.

The St Swithin's church building is, itself, unusable due to costly repairs, and so the church family meet in a building opposite. This venue (which was once an old dance hall and then a Laser Quest!) has been used creatively with space for a stage, a cafe, offices, and children's work, and is still under development.

I will also be connected to St Faith's (and St Martin's with St Peter's at Arches) which is quite similar to the style of the Parish of The Good Shepherd. Although it lists three church names,

there is now only one building, St Faith's. This church is close to my vicarage and linked to a school and I look forward to joining their community.

I'm gutted that due to restrictions we could not all gather one last time. I would definitely have bought you ALL a drink- but alas I'm just not allowed! I will miss you all. Please stay in touch and if you are ever near Lincoln, give us a call!

All my love and prayers,

Rev. Ben

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Ashton Deanery

On Monday 10th May 2021, Ashton Deanery Synod met for the last time – in June our Deanery will merge with Oldham East Deanery and Oldham West Deanery to form the Ashton and Oldham Deanery. This much larger deanery will have a new Area Dean, Revd Daniel Ramble, and new (yet to be elected) Lay Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

At the final meeting, Bishop Mark paid tribute to the work and dedication of Revd Roger Farnworth, our previous Area Dean, and of Revd Roger Dixon and Eric Bynon, who retire as Area Dean and Lay Chair at the end of May.

Revd Roger Dixon and Eric looked back over their time with Ashton Deanery and thanked all Deanery Reps, past and present, for their support.

Eric Bynon will continue as a Deanery Synod Rep – Revd Roger Dixon retires at the end of July, when he leaves St Stephen's Audenshaw, and moves to Heaton Chapel.

Please pray for Roger, Eric, Daniel and the work of the new deanery.

June Services

Our churches are open for public worship. We are required to keep services as short as possible, follow social distancing rules and all government restrictions and safety advice. Also, it may be necessary to change or cancel any of these services at short notice should government or local guidance change. Please check our weekly sheets or with your wardens for up-to-date information.

Please note that those who are extremely clinically vulnerable/shielding, or who have symptoms of a continuous cough or a high temperature or loss of or change to sense of smell or taste, should not attend church.

Sundays

9.30am Holy Communion or Morning Prayer	St Gabriel and St James
11.00am Holy Communion or Morning Prayer	St Michael and St Peter
St James on Sunday Afternoon	4.00pm 13 th and 27 th June

Thursdays

3.30pm Evening Prayer or Holy Communion Holy Trinity

Please be aware of the need to maintain social distancing and wear your mask in church unless you are exempt from doing so.

We shall continue to send out, either by post or email, a weekly sheet containing prayers and readings for each Sunday and the readings for the following week.

Where are our birds?

British birds are in big trouble. 80 per cent of our most popular species are in severe decline, according to recent data from the RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch.

The world's largest wildlife survey has found that 16 out of the 20 most spotted garden birds have been in decline since 2020. There are now concerns about the greenfinch and chaffinch, which were seen in their lowest ever numbers this year.



The top five birds seen in people's gardens were: house sparrows, blue tits, starlings, blackbirds and wood pigeons. Only robins, blackbirds, carrion crows and the song thrush grew in number in 2020.

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Duration

No-one wants to suffer, even Jesus didn't, and it is not always our own fault. But long-term duration of pain can be worse than what is actually wrong and some people do suffer from cradle to grave, literally. For example, a skin condition - the skin doesn't regenerate, so each day there is a very painful procedure of removing bandages cleansing, applying ointment and rebandaging. This could take an hour or longer.

Yes, we can and do endure, as Jesus did.

But also, like Jesus, we say 'Father, why hast thou forsaken me?'

We all have a pain/faith/courage and endurance threshold - it is the human condition, not weakness, which is why all our hope in God is founded.

God Bless us all.

Barry Bowden



5th Mark of Mission: Sustain and Renew the Earth

Church of England partners with Durham University to support de-carbonisation

The Church of England will be supported in its ambitious aim of achieving net-zero carbon by 2030 through a new partnership with the Durham Energy Institute.

In February 2020, the General Synod voted for a new target for all parts of the Church to work to become carbon net zero by 2030.

Heating buildings is one of the main sources of Greenhouse Gas emissions for the Church, along with electricity use and transport. The CofE owns and operates around 40,000 buildings, including 42 cathedrals, of which Durham Cathedral is an outstanding example.

A significant proportion of the Church's buildings are heritage and listed buildings. The challenge for the CofE is that the majority of these buildings cannot be retro-fitted with conventional energy-saving strategies like building insulation and cladding; yet these buildings retain enormous community value.

Becky Clark, Director of Churches and Cathedrals and Church Buildings said: "The Church has set an ambitious aim – to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. This task, set by our governing body – the General Synod – in 2020, is only achievable with a clear plan.

"This partnership will allow us to fully assess the carbon emissions from churches and cathedrals, develop a realistic scenario for achieving net zero carbon, share knowledge, and access the latest research from Durham University.

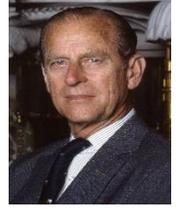
"Through projects like this cathedral and church buildings are acting as trailblazers, showing how even the most significant historic buildings can make a real contribution to the care of creation and the fight against climate change."





Few things are more satisfying than seeing your children have teenagers of their own.

A Prince's legacy on matters of faith



Just when we thought the last word had been written about the late Duke of Edinburgh, it emerged that he had a genuine interest in theology. That dashing young naval officer, who became the Queen's dutiful consort and accompanied her to thousands of church services, was someone who listened intently to sermons, thought through what was being said, and then asked questions.

Every Sunday when the royal couple were at Sandringham, a diocesan bishop was invited to preach in the parish church. Afterwards, they were grilled by the Duke who, we are told by one of them, showed that he "wanted to be intellectually and spiritually engaged". That's a polite way of saying he wasn't prepared to swallow what came out of the pulpit if he wasn't convinced by it.

Some Christians are suspicious of people who probe the faith. Should it not be taken on trust? Who are we to question the Almighty? For others, doubt hovers uninvited. Honest doubt won't settle for unbelief but will continue to persevere with its enquiries. The Russian writer and philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote: "It is not as a child that I believe and confess Jesus Christ. My hosanna is born of a furnace of doubt." Dostoyevsky had lived a turbulent life, both personally and publicly, and wrestled mentally

with himself and God. Some people are like that.

Prince Philip had been baptised into the Greek Orthodox Church and was received into the Church of England just before his marriage. He organised much of his own funeral, and if you followed it, you will remember how traditional it was. Many of the prayers were from the 17th Century Book of Common Prayer, the hymns were more ancient than modern, and the Bible readings confidently proclaimed the magnificence of God's Creation and Jesus' teaching about the resurrection. These are basic to Christianity and it was from such a foundation that he was able to explore.

So, if you wake up one morning questioning everything you have believed, take it as a spur to dig deeper and ask questions. Be encouraged by Philip, who shunned a second-hand faith because he wanted to know the truth for himself.

The next time you hear a sermon which you can't understand or disagree with, don't let the preacher get away with it. And if, in your private conversations with God, you find yourself praying, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief,' you won't be the first. See Mark 9, verse 24.

Parish Notices

From the May registers:

There were no baptisms, weddings or funerals in May

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Free national phonenumber bringing worship and prayer

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, recently launched a free national phonenumber to bring worship and prayer into the homes of those without access to the internet.

Daily Hope, which is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044 – offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England.



Nothing is ever lost by courtesy. It is the cheapest of pleasures; costs nothing and conveys much. - Erastus Wiman

CONTACT DETAILS

CLERGY: (*usual day off)

Revd Roger Farnworth, Team Rector (*Tues.)

The Vicarage, Westbury Street, Ashton OL6 9NL

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