



Parish News

JULY/AUGUST 2018

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St Michael, St Albans with
St Mary, Childwick Green

St Michael's Community Weekend

Commemorating the end of World War 1

7th - 9th September 2018

**Location: Church &
Churchyard, AL3 4SL**



Saturday 8th: 11am - 5pm

Sunday 9th: 12pm - 5pm

Tickets: £5 per adult

Tea, coffee, cakes and soft drinks
available in the Parish Centre



Traditional

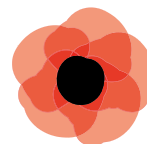
Saturday 8th: 11am - 4pm
FREE ENTRY

Bell Ringers at midday

Performances from Children's Theatre Group
and St. Albans Morris

Music from St. Albans City Band

• Stalls • Refreshments (Food Tent)



St Michael's Church 1918-2018

Lest We Forget

Remembering sacrifice, celebrating freedom

See inside for Friday evening event & your Parish Magazine >>

St Michael's Community Weekend

Commemorating
the end of World War 1

The Great War Remembered in Words & Music

Friday 7th September 2018

St Michael's Church, St Albans, AL3 4SL

Doors open 6:30pm for 7:30pm start

Tickets £20 each - ON SALE NOW

TO BUY TICKETS:

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St Michael's Church 1918–2018

Lest We Forget

Remembering sacrifice, celebrating freedom

**For full details, please visit our website:
stmichaels-parishchurch.org.uk**

LETTER FROM THE VICARAGE

Transfiguration, 6 August

Kenneth is on extended study leave until the end of June 2018. For information about this sabbatical, please see his extended article in February's *Parish News*. During his absence, Kenneth would offer for your meditations in July and August this window from the east end of St Michael's.



Under the old calendar, 6 August was kept as the Feast of the Transfiguration, the date that commemorated Jesus going up a mountain with his three leading disciples, and where he shone as white as the sun in revelation of his divine identity. This is the subject of the east window at St Michael's, a suitably prominent location for the best piece of stained glass in the church. It was given as a memorial to a nineteenth-century earl and countess of Verulam.



Jesus in the centre of the window is so prominent and masterful that I have heard observers misidentify the image as a depiction of the resurrection. The confusion is understandable, because the transfiguration in the gospel narrative is a foretaste of Easter. Nonetheless, the characters in this story are from the transfiguration as recorded by Matthew 17; the Latin text at the top is quoting from that chapter.

Either side of Jesus are Moses and Elijah. They are surrounded by stars – shrouded in relative night compared with Jesus' brightness. Elijah can be identified from the raven, the bird which was said to have fed him in the desert (I Kings 17.6). Moses can be identified because he is carrying the Ten Commandments in his right hand. He is also marked by an iconographical commonplace: a pair of horns on his head. When St Jerome translated his famous Vulgate edition of the Bible, he made a mistake in his rendering of the Hebrew of Exodus 34.29. Instead of saying that Moses had a shining face, he said that he had horns. This mistake had been known for 500 years and has become a bit of a joke at Jerome's expense. However, the joke is such fun that Moses has continued to be shown with horns ever since.

Kneeling at Jesus' feet are the disciples Peter, James and John. Peter can be assumed to be the central one. John is the one on the viewer's left; this is because he is often shown as the youngest of the disciples – without a beard – because evidence points to John being the last of the disciples to die, perhaps as late as the 90s AD.

This is a perfect image to put into an east window; on many Sundays during our morning service the sun streams through, expressing something of what Peter, James and John must have seen on the mountain. The transfiguration is all about heavenly brilliance breaking into our ordinary world, through the person of Jesus.

Kenneth

YOUR MAGAZINE NEEDS YOU

Co-editor

The *Parish News* is looking for someone to co-edit the magazine, along with our very experienced Sandie North. Our co-editor would share the responsibility for commissioning articles and organising the magazine's production, which sounds official but really isn't at all onerous; you would be supported through the process as you find your way.

Copy-editor

Do you know your colons from your semicolons? Or maybe your possessive apostrophes from your, er, well, all the other kinds of apostrophes? If so, you might be able to help us edit the articles the magazine receives. Our lovely copy-editor, Katherine, will be stepping down for pastures new in September, and the magazine needs someone to fill her grammatically-correct shoes. If this might be you, please let us know. Your magazine needs you!

Editorial Committee

If you enjoy the *Parish News*, have you ever thought about joining the editorial committee? We are looking for enthusiastic people who would like to join us once a month for a meeting in the pub, a drink and a chat about what sort of thing to include in our next edition. If this might be you, then join us for a meeting to see how it all works.

For all enquiries please email Sandie North at sandrich2@btinternet.com

ST MICHAEL'S AND ST ALBANS THROUGH ALASKAN EYES

During our recent holiday abroad, my husband and I had the pleasure of travelling to St Albans to spend time with our dear friends, Richard and Sandie North. We instantly fell in love with the area. We were abundantly aware that history was all around us – from the churches and pubs to bits and pieces of the Roman Wall. The fact that there are many ancient fragments remaining allows one to physically see, touch and breathe the past. Pieces of history that had been but words in a textbook to us, now becoming tangible truths, eliciting an overwhelming sense of awe and wonder – and so unlike any ‘recorded’ history in the US!

Another exciting aspect of our holiday was the fact that Richard and Sandie are practising Anglicans. My husband and I are devoutly practising Episcopalians (the US version of Anglicans). We knew that God had put us in the right hands to demonstrate the idiosyncrasies of our two churches and cultures. Truly we couldn't have asked for a better couple to share their love for St Michael's and St Albans with us.

Our first experience of St Michael's was a private weekday visit, when Richard and Sandie showed us around the grounds and the interior, introducing us to the history and beauty of the church. Again, quite mind-boggling for these two Alaskans, whose Anglican Church history only dates back to 1887; Alaska did not even become a state within the US until 1959.

Our first impression? We were officially gobsmacked! We were walking into history. We were excited to know we would be able to worship inside these walls. We were also eager to meet the people who currently breathe life into this church. Gratefully, we had the privilege of attending two services at St Michael's during our visit: Ascension Thursday and Sunday-morning worship.

Thursday night's service was much like a weeknight service in our home parish: lightly yet committedly attended. The choir added a very soothing ambiance, their voices resonating from behind. The evening's message included the reading of a poem from Geoff Goodall [published in the June edition of *Parish News* – editor] . Looking at the architecture of the nave whilst listening to the poem, I imagined this gathering in the past, in the same place, hearing the stories of thousands of years ago. Sacred stories in a very sacred space, which continue to evolve. Often we hear or use the term ‘If the walls could talk’ – yours really do!

Next time you are in the nave, especially while you are listening to a sermon, take some time to look around. Let what you see and hear soak in. Do you realise your nave dates back to before the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century? Have you noticed how your roof looks like an upside-down wooden boat? The altar in our church in Alaska is in the shape of an Inupiaq whaling boat. Both are very symbolic of our journey in the cycle of life, especially as we strive to follow God's path, individually and collectively. And I would be totally remiss if I didn't mention the huge grin that crept across my face at the sight of the hourglass to the side of the pulpit!

Also worthy of mention is the meeting in the Six Bells after the Ascension Day service, where we were able to talk a bit more intimately with a few of the congregation (I am not sure such an outing would have taken place back in our hometown – perhaps, instead, there would be a gathering at someone’s home). We don’t have pubs in Alaska; we have bars. Bars are better known as places for dating or flirting, so don’t have quite the same social and public role of pubs in Europe.

On Sunday morning we were in for a treat when we found it was ‘Children’s Sunday’, when the sermon is geared toward the youngsters. Since I had been heavily involved in Children’s Ministries for over twenty-five years – both locally and nationally – I was truly excited. Then, knowing there would be a substitute for the regular vicar (who was on sabbatical), I knew the experience would be memorable, one way or another. Either you are comfortable and relate well with children or you don’t. There is usually little middle ground. And asking a substitute to come in and take over on such a Sunday could be a recipe for disaster. Time would tell.

The worship itself followed the same pattern that we are familiar with, yet it was amazing to realise that St Michael’s uses an adaptation of the 1622 Prayer Book. For us, the two prayer-book versions still in use across the US are the contentious 1928 edition and the more widely-used 1979 edition. The one thing I would say in advocacy for the more revised versions of prayer books is they are very user-friendly and welcoming for new parishioners and ‘explorers’ to the Anglican/Episcopalian faiths; they take the time to educate about the rituals of our faith, especially as the reader is following the ‘live’ experience on a Sunday morning. They offer a deeper meaning to the rote worship many of us grew up with.

Anyway, Sunday’s service was presided over by Joss, who was on loan through the diocese. Remember I mentioned earlier that either a person has it or they don’t when relating to children and adults? Let’s just say Joss knocked it out of the ballpark. For you, that phrase probably elicits visions of cricket or football, but, coming from us, it is referring to all-American baseball! Joss’s message was multi-dimensional and multi-sensory, but best of all she beautifully and intentionally created an intergenerational bridge between the children and adults of the congregation. Her lesson was simple, and illustrated with the help of the children present: always believe in yourself, even when you’re not perfect, and don’t allow anyone else to define who you are or what you think of yourself. Through a live, mega-sized ‘Jenga’ building illustration, we learned about using different gifts to accomplish a goal. We were not all necessarily blessed with the same talents, and each of us encounters different challenges in life. Rejoice in that! And, most of all, be willing to accept and take that next step forward.

As for the other powerful illustration in the sermon, each member of the congregation had been supplied with a blank piece of paper and pencil upon entering that morning. Later in the service, we were asked to take a couple of minutes to write a prayer for someone or something dear to our heart on the paper. The next direction brought a twinkle to even the most reverent member of the congregation’s eye: we were all guided in folding paper airplanes with our prayers. Once they were complete, we were instructed to launch our planes across the nave.

Amidst smiles and chuckles, airplanes were flying – and crashing – all around us! Each of us picked up a plane that landed nearby to carry home, lifting up the prayers of others. It was a very powerful experience indeed. There is no doubt in my mind Joss has had much experience with youngsters. Her ability to tie in the adults too was sheer magic. Bravo, Joss, bravo!

One other little noteworthy difference in our services is that we have a segment for a personal ‘Offertory’, the Offertory being the readying for Communion, but also the offering of ourselves and our ‘gifts’, which is central to our faith. At this time in the service, for most Episcopal congregations in America, a collection plate is passed among the congregants. It is certainly not mandatory to give, but is more for those who may wish to give a bit extra (beyond their regular household pledge) for something they are particularly thankful for in their lives. It is also a way for visitors or non-members to show their gratitude or support for the mission of the church. We were fully expecting a plate to be passed, and were a bit disappointed when it wasn’t. It wasn’t until later, when Richard told us about a collection spot near the entrance/exit, that we realised we had totally missed it – and we were looking! If only hindsight were 20/20.

Our time at St Michael’s, with its kind people, was an absolute gift, for which we will be forever grateful. If we leave you with nothing else, don’t forget to take time to absorb some of that which you perhaps take for granted: the deep, rich history that surrounds you. Seeing the familiar through the eyes of a visitor – or those of a child – can be totally transformational!

Many blessings,

Stacy and Stephen Thorpe

Eagle River, Alaska



During



Before



After

Phillips - for more than just the funeral.

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WHO IS JO FROST?

Younger members of the congregation probably wonder who this lady is, as she has been on our Prayer List for so many years.

In the late sixties, St Michael's Church had a Young Wives Group, and among its members were young mothers, Jo, Jan, Ann and Maggy.

Jo and Michael Frost lived at 103 Westfields with their family and were fully involved with St Michael's. The three children attended the school; the boys sang in the choir and Louise was a lively member of the Sunday School.

During the seventies, Michael served as churchwarden, loyally backed by Jo. Then in about 1980, Jo was appointed the first parish administrator by Hugh Dickinson, a job that she carried out with great efficiency and good humour.

Louise married in 1990 and was on her honeymoon when Michael was diagnosed with myeloma. He and Jo faced this with great fortitude, supported by their children. They were an example to us all. Michael died in 1994 and the church was full to overflowing at his funeral.

Jo showed great courage in coping with her grief. Maybe the strength of her relationship with Michael and their shared faith helped her through it.

She made the decision to move to Market Harborough to be near Louise, and joined the local church, later becoming churchwarden. She made a lot of new friends, including one she worked with in the Cancer UK shop and with whom she enjoyed several holidays. Her family loved having Grandma around and she thrived on her involvement with them.

Jo always kept in contact with her St Michael's friends, frequently attending weddings and parties and never missing celebrating New Year with her contemporaries.

Sadly, she has developed the kind of dementia caused by multiple mini strokes. She is now living in a care home, where Louise can visit her most days. She is well looked after and contented, and, when we visit, she seems to enjoy remembering old times.

Jo was a person you could not fail to like: bright, efficient and lively, with a fantastic sense of humour. She was always thoughtful, caring and kind. There are others – apart from the 'old wives' – who knew Jo, and I'm sure all of us feel very fortunate.

Jo knows we pray for her at St Michael's and she and her family are grateful and feel supported.

Maggy Bedwell

LIVING WITH ALZHEIMER'S

At the beginning of June, Richard and I went to help look after my school friend, Jan, for a week, while her husband was in the Isle of Man for the TT races. It was the first break he had had on his own since Jan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease nine years ago. We were staying in the bungalow of a mutual friend, Heather, who lives near Milton Keynes.

A few weeks beforehand, we had a lady from Dementia Friends come to talk to us about dementia. She described it as a bookshelf where the books on the top shelf – i.e. immediate memory – have fallen down, followed by the second and third shelves until one can only remember when one was young. A few times, Jan said that she had to phone her parents to let them know where she was. The Dementia Friends lady gave us little pin badges to wear so that if we were in a public place and someone was in need of help, say with a relative, we could be asked and would hopefully understand the situation.

Luckily, Jan enjoys the outdoors and was happy to walk the Jack Russell twice a day with Heather and Richard. She is very familiar with the bungalow in which we were staying. She was up and dressed by 7.00 a.m. every day, but slept all through the night during our week with her. She wrote in her diary what she had done each day, with helpful reminders from us where necessary. We found that the mornings were better for Jan and tried to do something different every day – a garden centre, country park, a day's gardening. The week went by at its own pace. We did have to practise patience, however, when being asked the same question for the umpteenth time. One day we took Heather to Bedford Hospital for a routine appointment and popped in to see Joy Wakeling (a former member of the St Michael's congregation) for half an hour. It was lovely to catch up with Joy after quite a few years and hear all about her family.

During the week, we learnt many things about caring for people with Alzheimer's. Everybody is different and there is no 'one size fits all' set of symptoms or behaviour. Jan is not aggressive or violent, but did get agitated on several occasions when she thought that she had to go home because her husband was there. Quite often she hovered about, not knowing what to do next. Because of the short-term memory issue we quickly realised not to bombard her with questions, but to ask one at a time. Similarly, if requesting a task to be done, we would use simple phrases and not too many details.

It was an eye-opener for all three of us and a very steep learning curve. It gave us an appreciation of the effort that carers all over the country give to their family and friends to keep people like Jan out of care homes, and to live as good a life as possible.

Sandie North

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DIARY FOR JUNE 2018

- 24 FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 6.30 p.m. Choral Evensong (St Michael's)
- 26 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

DIARY FOR JULY 2018

- 1 FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 11.15 a.m. Ordination (Cathedral)
During this service, Charles King (new curate in our parish) will be ordained deacon.
- 6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)
- 3 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 4 8.00 p.m. Folk Night (St Michael's churchyard)
- 8 SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. All Age Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 10 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 11 8.00 p.m. Parochial Church Council (Memorial Hall)
- 12 8.30 p.m. onwards Men's Night (Lower Red Lion)
- 15 SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 17 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 19 8.00 p.m. onwards Ladies' Night (Portland Arms)
- 22 EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 6.30 p.m. Choral Evensong (St Michael's)
- 29 NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Compline (St Mary's)

DIARY FOR AUGUST 2018

5 TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)

The popular parish walk from St Michael's to St Mary's will take place today. A great afternoon for people of all ages – and dogs! The itinerary is as follows:

2.00 p.m. – leave St Michael's (AL3 4SL)

3.00 p.m. (approx.) – arrive at St Mary's (AL3 6JJ): picnic and short outdoor service.

Food is not provided this year, so please bring your own refreshments and picnic. Please join us for this part of the afternoon if you don't want to do the walk.

4.00 p.m. (approx.) – leave St Mary's

5.00 p.m. (approx.) – arrive home

NB there will be no Eucharist service in St Mary's this day.

12 ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)

6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)

19 TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)

6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)

26 THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)

6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)

6.30 p.m. Evensong (St Michael's)

DIARY FOR SEPTEMBER 2018

2 FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)

6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)

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ST MICHAEL'S COMMUNITY WEEKEND, 7-9 SEPTEMBER, 2018

In the previous issue of the magazine, I gave a brief outline of the events for the Community Weekend in September but now, as we are only a couple of months away, I can give some more details of what will be happening.

Friday Evening, 7 September

Tickets are now on sale for the first element of the weekend event which takes place in St Michael's Church on the evening of Friday 7 September. The evening event '*The Great War in Words and Music*' tells the story of the war using music of the time, letters, poetry and newspaper reports.

Doors open at 6.30 p.m. for a 7.30 p.m. start and a ticket costs £20 per person, to include a glass of wine or soft drink, and light refreshments, and the audience will have a first look at the displays in church. As the price of the ticket includes the £5 entry fee to visit the Flower Festival and Exhibition, the purchaser is entitled to return the following day (Saturday) to revisit the church.

Those wishing to purchase tickets can contact the Parish Office on 01727 835037 between 9.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m. on weekdays. If you call outside of these hours, please leave your message on the answerphone and your call will be returned as soon as possible. Alternatively, please send an email to l.w.f.092018@gmail.com to reserve your tickets.

Payment for tickets can be made by cash, cheque (made payable to St Michael's PCC) or by electronic transfer to our bank account. If you wish to know more please use either of the contact arrangements as shown above.

Georgie Ray

Saturday 8 September – Churchyard Fete

The Churchyard Fete will open to the public at 11.00 a.m. There is no entry fee, and it promises to be a fun and enjoyable day for the whole family. There will be a variety of stalls selling handmade produce, and refreshments to cater for all tastes. We also have live entertainment throughout the day, and you can look forward to the following:

- 12.00 p.m. St Michael's Church Bells
- 12.15 p.m. St Albans City Band
- 1.00 p.m. St Albans Morris Dancers
- 1.30 p.m. Hurst Children's Theatre Group
- 2.00 p.m. St Albans City Band
- 2.45 p.m. St Albans Morris Dancers
- 3.15 p.m. Grand Raffle Prize Draw

From 12 noon the Food Tent will host a BBQ, serving meat and vegetarian options, soft drinks and alcoholic refreshments. Alternatively, tea, coffee, cakes and scones will be available in the Parish Centre.

Stalls to visit include: Handmade Cupcakes * Sweet Treats * Grand Raffle * Face Painting * Chocolate Tombola * Gifts and Crafts * Games * Children's Craft Table and much more!

During the afternoon, tours of the church tower can be enjoyed (restrictions apply).

We need YOUR help, please! Could you donate any of the following items?

- Used books, in good condition
- DVDs and CDs
- Quality goods for the raffle and tombola (for example, jar of chutney or bottle of wine)

Donations can be brought to the Parish Office, which is attached to St Michael's Vicarage, weekdays between 9.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m. – our preferred option – or handed to a steward after the Sunday service in church.

Thank you in advance for helping us to make this event a success.

Danielle Argent

Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 September – Flower Festival and History Exhibition

The Flower Festival and Exhibition will be open from 11.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. on Saturday 8 September, and from 12.00 p.m. until 5.00 p.m. on Sunday 9 September, and the entry fee is £5 per adult, payable at the church door.

If you are a returning visitor from the Friday evening event, please make sure that you bring with you both your ticket and the Flower Festival programme, which was handed to you on your arrival at the church for the evening performance.

The floral displays have been designed to illustrate the sacrifices made during the Great War by both men and women. The church has been divided into separate areas representing the period leading up to war, the war years and the aftermath, with the floral displays being interspersed with informative text and exhibits.

We still require more poppies and *Maggy Bedwell* has kindly offered to host a sewing morning on *Friday 6 July, 10.00 a.m.–12.00 p.m. at 14 Gonnerston, St Albans, AL3 4SZ*, with the aim of the group being able to create 50 fabric poppies for use in the displays during the Flower Festival. There is no need to bring anything with you, as Maggy has plenty of red fabric, buttons and needles; all you need to do is just turn up for a coffee and a chat!

There is still time for you to take part in the Flower Festival. If you feel that you could either put together a display or help others with their display, please get in touch with Anita Lindeman by phone on 07906 655641 or by email to anita.lindeman@ntlworld.com

Anita Lindeman

Over the next few weeks, posters for this commemorative event will be appearing in various locations around St Albans. We will also have *Save-the-Date* cards available for you to pick up at St Michael's Folk Night, which is taking place in St Michael's churchyard on Wednesday 4 July.

If you would like to offer your help in the churchyard or church on any of these days, or to give a donation towards the commemorative event in September, please get in touch. I can be reached in the Parish Office on weekdays (excluding Wednesday) on 01727 835037 or email admin.stmichaels@btconnect.com

Georgie Ray



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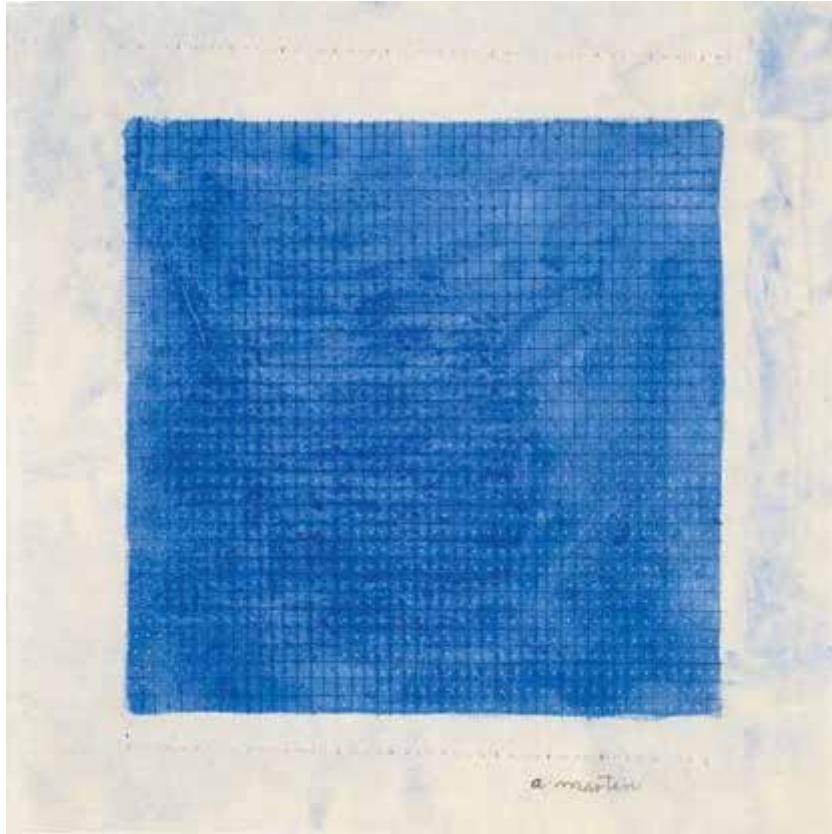
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FAITH, TRUTH AND ART: A PERSONAL VIEW (PART TWO)

(Part One of this article can be found in the June 2018 edition of *Parish News*)



Agnes Martin, *Stars*, 1963. Ink and watercolour on paper, Guggenheim Museum, New York. Her subtle paintings are underpinned by her deep conviction in the emotive and expressive power of art, and that spiritual inspiration is the key to making it. 'Without awareness of beauty innocence and happiness' Martin wrote, 'one cannot make works of art'.

Our very viewing of an art object is to set up an unspoken dialogue through which we can experience the way an artwork points beyond and outside of itself, perhaps to something more profound, such as universal truths about us as people, our place in society or matters of spirituality, birth, love, life and death. Peter Brook, the theatre director, in his book *The Empty Space*, talks of something very similar, using the concept of the 'Holy Theatre' as making 'the invisible made visible'. In other words, something is revealed beyond the thing created. There is substance below the surface because it is sufficiently good. In this case, it is theatrical performance that achieves it, but it is equally possible for all art forms to deliver this deeper insight. The resultant artwork becomes something more rewarding than simple entertainment.

The viewer is an inextricable part of the making of art, because without a viewer the work of art is in fact incomplete. The dynamic between artist and audience is mediated through the artwork alone, because the artist, usually, is absent. Let's go back to the cave paintings. They resonate not because of their function (we can't know with any certainty what purpose they were created to perform), but because of what they tell us about ourselves that still has relevance to us and, in recognising it, we can unconsciously overlay something of ourselves back onto them to create new connections. Between distant generations, between the past and the present, something elemental is shared, yet something fundamental has clearly remained unchanged. This is probably what makes all really great art of any period durable, how it survives the passage of time. Deeper meanings are not eroded, even if more ephemeral meanings, contemporaneous with its making, are. When we look at contemporary art, it is the very same process of exchange. That leaves us with a question: what is 'otherness'?

Artists, just like the rest of us, tend to believe there is meaning to life, and that the making of art is a viable investigative method through which imagination can explore human existence and our place in the world, to reveal a version of truth even out of the everyday. This belief is inherent in humanity's impulse – indeed, its compulsion – to make art. As we have already seen, not only has this need always been deep-seated within us since pre-history and pre-language, it has real purpose. It is intelligent and thoughtful and often aesthetically beautiful. It is innate. The making of art doesn't create a finished form of precise outward communication, like, say, advertising or design might, rather, the process tends to be an internalised and private one, an inward exploration of itself through doing and making with no externally defined objective, albeit a process that, when complete, might result in a thing worth sharing: a painting, a sculpture, a film or video, an installation or even a soundscape.

Writing about how art gets created is inevitably difficult, because we have to try to put into words a creative process that doesn't need self-articulation in order to succeed any more than its viewing does. The process of making art is both fully conscious and self-critical, yet it is an unspoken act, whose imaginative complexities are not easily expressed in words. It is rather esoteric. It is certainly hidden. At its simplest, artists re-represent to us something of the world they have experienced, in a way that allows us to see the world differently, because it is that re-representation that is placed before us – a work of art.

Importantly, most artists, within whichever artistic discipline they work, want what they create to be imbued with this intangible property of 'otherness', this elusive sense that, when viewed, the work is about more than just itself and that something intellectually valuable is initiated outside of itself or stimulated within something else, such as the thoughts of the audience, something intelligible but not so easily decipherable as to make it mundane or part of the everyday. 'Otherness' has some interrelationship with 'beauty', but it is hard to define precisely in what way this works.



Sean Scully, *Raval-Rojo*, 2004. Oil on linen, private collection. His block-like paintings are a contemporary restatement of abstraction. His paintings are often informed by real places he has visited. They are his re-presentations of his personal experience. He describes them as 'presenting an extreme state of one kind or another'. He is a painter who wants to make intangible feelings visible. What those feelings are exactly is up to the viewer. The painting is only the starting point. Only our viewing of it can reveal something meaningful for ourselves.

Perhaps 'otherness' only exists when rightness and goodness are evident, or is it the other way round? Presence of this 'otherness' is what art uses to point beyond itself, beyond its own imagery, to both the mythic and the metaphysical, to the possibility of new thinking, something not of this world but of another, something in which we might have faith unsupported by definitive knowledge. A work of art, therefore, is a starting point not an end point. The contribution made by viewing brings the object into our own personal space, to be interpreted directly from within us and through the prism of our own humanness. This can be an emotional place, a place of inspiration, revelation and enlightenment that can link us to something deep within ourselves, that allows us somehow to move beyond our own limited life experiences to share in the broader human experience, within which we can find universal truths, beauty, the spiritual and a sense of the transcendental. Art is the catalyst. Just like our ancestors, we are still asking the same enduring questions, seeking to acquire a fuller understanding of ourselves by interrogating the point of our existence, looking for evidence of a greater plan beyond our individual lives and hoping for the rock-solid certainty that nothing really changes, while all around us everything certainly does. Perhaps here, in the human soul, lies our deep-seated need for, and belief in, God. In the early twentieth century, Rudolf Otto, the German theologian and philosopher, wrote about the 'numinous', the experiencing of the 'wholly other', something entirely different from anything we encounter in normal life, a feeling of awe and wonder, of the merciful and gracious, a sense of human nothingness in the presence of an almighty and transcendent being. It feels very relevant somehow to how art and, indeed, music might work on us.



Antoni Tàpies, *Verticals en bas*, 1968, colour lithograph. The work of Antoni Tàpies often investigated the existential 'void', the suggestion of something that lies beyond the material world but is only sensed in its absence.

Ultimately, we must conclude God cannot be revealed to us directly by art. Art is just a human artefact, however innate our need to make it. But interaction with art can bring us nearer to the necessity for God and can, I believe, awaken the longing for faith. It can help us crystallise those thoughts, possibilities and questions that we don't know how to put into words. The case for art being able to take us from the physiologically pleasing to the psychologically revelatory is compelling. To engage with art, with its beauty and rightness, with its goodness, either as a maker or as a viewer, is one way to participate in the beauty and goodness within our wider world, the ultimate masterpiece. For those of faith, all that is good and beautiful comes from God the Creator. As humans, to create 'otherness' is the privilege to participate in the ongoing work of creation, however feeble and imperfect our human contribution may be by comparison. Making and viewing art of any kind is to glimpse something of the divine that exists beyond our ability to comprehend or describe – a glimpse of the unknowable, perhaps of the numinous. Made in God's image, those of us who make art of every sort, whether with religious faith or not, do so with love, a love of what we do and for the world we do it within. That love unquestionably shines out of all the great art created since the late nineteenth century, like the radiantly suffuse, all-enveloping light of those Orthodox icons.

Gerhard Richter, the great German painter, wrote:

Art is the pure realisation of religious feeling, capacity for faith, longing for God. The ability to believe is our outstanding quality, and only art adequately translates it into reality.



Gerhard Richter, *Phantom Interceptors*, 1964. Oil on canvas, Froehlich Collection, Stuttgart.

Art stimulates an intuitive awareness of things that are seemingly beyond our own individual conscious experience. It fashions a spiritual opening to reveal something hard-wired within us all, something that lies at a more fundamental and collective emotional level. Yet, if there cannot be some sort of collective soul, because God creates each one of us uniquely at the point he breathes life into us, perhaps in each of our individual souls resides a common gift. This gift is an enquiring mind, a need to know more about what we don't yet understand, to search for that thing we might call absolute truth. Perhaps, inherent within us all, is a sense of a shared belonging, an interconnectedness that means each of us, and each succeeding generational wave of humanity that we belong to, need not feel alone, but instead is part of something greater, protective and eternal. And it gives us comfort. It is the biggest picture of all, one that we all need, and many still recognise – the love of God.

Nicholas Herbert

MENDELSSOHN'S *ELIJAH*: SATURDAY 14 JULY 2018 AT ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL

A Fitting Programme for a Flaming Hot Summer

As close to an opera as Mendelssohn ever came, *Elijah* contains all the elements you expect for a flaming hot evening with the Bach Choir at St Albans Cathedral. Music director Andrew Lucas conducts the choirs and soloists, with the welcome return of Sinfonia Verdi accompanying.

Mendelssohn composed *Elijah* to a German text, but had the libretto translated into English for its first performance. It did not appear in German until after Mendelssohn's death. The story is taken from the Old Testament, from the two books of Kings, and includes the dramatic stories of the resurrection of a young man, the contest between Jehovah and Baal (Beelzebub), Elijah's exile to the desert after falling out with Queen Jezebel, his struggle with faith and return to the one true God, and final ascension to heaven.

The music reflects the drama of the action.

The work is scored for four-part chorus, but members of the Cathedral Choirs will also be adding a heavenly harmony to the performance, alongside soloists Gareth Brynmor John (baritone – Elijah), Rachel Nicholls (soprano), Anna Harvey (alto) and Ed Lyon (tenor). The choirs also take part in the narrative as well as commenting on the drama.

Elijah was the last of Mendelssohn's great works before his death in 1847. He had written the soprano part for the Swedish soloist, Jenny Lind, who was devastated by his premature death and could not bring herself to perform it again for a year.

Elijah was a success from its first performance and has remained a popular part of the repertoire of choirs and choral societies in Great Britain ever since. Some critics have noted its conservative style. George Bernard Shaw referred to its 'exquisite prettiness', damning it with faint praise. But maybe Shaw's usual partiality (he preferred Wagner) can be considered a compliment.

With elements from drought and famine, storms, earthquakes and floods, fire and a final divine passage to heaven on the whirlwind of a flame-engulfed chariot, there is certainly something for everyone to enjoy.

Tickets are available, costing from £30 down to just £12, and can be booked in person at the gift shop in St Albans Cathedral or by phoning 01727 890290, or online at:

www.stalbanscathedral.org/whatson/music/mendelssohn-elijah

For more information, contact Fiona Pruden: 07956 537140

HERTS 10K: SUNDAY 14 OCTOBER 2018

Runners and walkers encouraged to sign up for local hospice charity's flagship fundraiser

Rennie Grove Hospice Care is seeking participants for this year's Herts 10K, which takes place in Harpenden on Sunday 14 October 2018.

Booking your place now gives you plenty of time to train for Rennie Grove's biggest fundraising event of the year. The Herts 10K offers a great opportunity to join with thousands of others to complete the course, whilst experiencing a wonderful feeling of community in a genuinely supportive atmosphere.

The Herts 10K takes runners and walkers on a beautiful multi-terrain course through the Hertfordshire countryside, starting and finishing at Rothamsted Research, Harpenden.

The Herts 10K is open to people aged 12 and above, and full details are available at www.herts10k.com

Participants in the run will raise much-needed funds for Rennie Grove Hospice Care – the charity that provides care and support for adults and children diagnosed with cancer and other life-limiting illness and their families living in Bucks and Herts. Every year, through its 24/7 Hospice at Home service for adults, its 24/7 Children's Hospice at Home service, its Family Support services and the range of day services at Grove House, the charity gives thousands of patients the choice to stay at home, surrounded by their families and friends.

Further information

Kath Pezet, communications manager: kath.pezet@renniegrove.org or 01442 820733

Rose Child, communications officer: rose.child@renniegrove.org or 01442 507320

Website: www.renniegrove.org

Rennie Grove Hospice Care

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If you have an article or notice for the *Parish News*, the deadline for production for our September edition is **Saturday 11th August 2018**

Please send contributions to the magazine's editors

Sandie North – sandrich2@btinternet.com

Kerry Wells – jkwells79@yahoo.com

with a copy to

Katherine Crowdell – parishnewscopy17@gmail.com

Or leave them for our attention at the Parish Office.

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