



St Augustine of Canterbury, Belvedere *'GUS'S GOSSIP'*

Welcome to the third edition of *Gus's Gossip*, a fortnightly newsletter to keep us all in touch with what is happening within our church family during this unprecedented time.

From the Bishop of Richborough....

To everyone at Saint Augustine's Belvedere.

I'm missing you all during the lockdown and so it was with particular pleasure that I have been able to read your parish news online and keep in weekly contact with Fr Clive. Life has certainly been different these last ten weeks or so for us all and for me personally, rather than travelling around our parishes and sharing in the joy of confirmation services and patronal festivals, I've been largely relying on the phone and 'zooming'. I've certainly had lots more time for gardening and enjoyed the good weather but I think we would all agree it's not the same as being with people, especially those we usually see regularly.

Once we are back in church and can resume a more normal routine and rhythm in our lives I hope we can learn some positive things from our shared experiences of this necessary time of isolation and social distancing. My post 'covid' resolution is to try to be a better listener and to enjoy the moment rather than always being in a rush and thinking and planning for the next thing.

'Gus News' is a really special example of how we benefit positively from discovering more about each other and sharing our lives and stories.

Be assured of my prayers for you all and let's hope it's not too long before we can meet up again. With blessings,

+ Norman
Richborough

From Fr Clive....

Gilbert Rd Service Station (opposite church) has re-opened for servicing and MoTs....they sponsor our mass sheet so do support them. They service my car and have always proved efficient and reliable.

Fr Neil sends his prayers - he is now looking after ST John Erith.

As part of his mental health chaplaincy he commends Bexley Crisis Café in Devonshire Rd Bexleyheath is still open 6pm-10pm Monday to Sunday. The Oxleas Advice line is 0800 330 8590

The Bookstore Café in Erith is now offering a delivery service, a home cooked nutritious meal for £5 including delivery and are freezable. 01322 341144 or via deliveroo.

Ian Fitzgibbon invites you to a scheduled Zoom meeting at 5pm on every Saturday until 27th June

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88100211914?pwd=bVpIc2JnZ292NmFaYmg1K2NBTEQydz09>

Meeting ID: 881 0021 1914

Password: 7jXcaF

From Fr Richard, Vicar of St George's Bickley....

I am very grateful to Fr Clive for the invitation to introduce myself properly via this newsletter, although I fear that - of the four mission partnership incumbents - I will probably prove the least interesting!

I grew up in Croydon, and went to grammar school at Wallington Boys. My journey to faith began at a large evangelical church (Emmanuel, South Croydon), whose youth club I attended with friends, with whom I also went away during the school summer holidays on activity camps: the formative importance of this sort of ministry, which continues today, for example, in the annual Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage, cannot be underestimated!

I had also shared primary school music lessons with the daughter of the Vicar of the parish in which we lived (St Peter, South Croydon) - and by means of that connection I began to learn more about the breadth of churchmanship within the Church of England. It was an enormous pleasure when the priest in question (Fr Knowers) subsequently agreed to preach at my first Mass, all those years later - again, the simple significance of sowing seeds...

My exploration of the various traditions of churchmanship finally brought me to St Michael, Croydon (during the incumbency of the unforgettable Fr Minchew): from my very first experience of Evensong and Benediction, I was captivated by the beauty of the worship offered there. This introduction stood me in good stead to find a church when I went up to university, to read Philosophy & Theology at Christ Church, Oxford: I worshipped at Pusey House, the Anglo-Catholic chaplaincy, where subsequently I became Sacristan in my final year.

Unlike many priests, I have no "road to Damascus" story of the first moment of a sense of vocation: rather, that sense came upon me quietly, but persistently - and because of this persistence, I realised I had to take it seriously. I was recommended for training, which I undertook at The College of the Resurrection, Mirfield in West Yorkshire, alongside the Community of the Resurrection, an Anglican religious community, whose life of prayer again impressed itself upon me deeply. They say that no-one has a vocation to be an student at theological college, and my time at college had its ups and downs, but what I remember most was an explanation of the fundamental task of priesthood, 'to love people into holiness'.

The Director of Ordinands in Southwark Diocese had suggested I might take a year out between university and theological college: in the end, I negotiated him down to a six-week placement, at All Saints, New Cross, with Fr Beament. This was good, old-fashioned Anglo-Catholic parish ministry, and I am so pleased and humbled that, in retirement, Fr Beament has chosen to worship here in Bickley.

I was made deacon in 2011, and priested in 2012, and served my title curacy at St Mary, Rotherhithe, with Fr Nicholls. Each priest I have known has taught me something different, and Fr Nicholls' lesson was the importance of hospitality! I enjoyed myself immensely in Rotherhithe: it was an exciting place in which to minister, to a community combining traditional working-class families with more recent immigrants and even more-recently arrived young professionals.

Then, in 2015 I became the Vicar of St George, Bickley, at the tender age of 27 (then, the youngest beneficed incumbent in the Church of England!) Again, I have been so blessed over the past five years by the privilege of ministering in this community, where I am also chaplain to the local Air Cadet squadron. It is a real encouragement to think of the four parishes of Belvedere, Bickley, Chislehurst and Swanley working more closely in partnership, and I look forward to seeing you all again soon. *Fr Richard*

From Moses....

I recall very well Fr Clive's visit. Well, our Parish is one of the biggest church in the Diocese of Harare, situated 25km away from the main capital city Harare, in a Satellite town- Chitungwiza. Our congregants are mainly Zimbabwean citizens by birth of native tribes of Zimbabwe. Our Parish encompasses 500-800 Congregants with two outstations namely St Faith Nyatsime and Emmanuel Muda. Also the Church is part of a Mission school - St Mary's High and Primary school and cemetery established in 1911.

However, due to current Lock down our church services are suspended (23/03/2020) till the lift of lock down ban and normalization of the COVID -19 Pandemic focusing on the safety of mankind. Our efforts as a parish are in a quest to encourage prayer and worship though in the comfort of our homes. The Parish of St Augustine's remains in our thoughts and prayers especially during trying time lock down time. I shall be sharing more updates and information pertaining our parish and current developments.

In Christ Service

Moses (Churchwarden)

From Rev Ian Finn, Chaplain of Huggens College, Northfleet....

The lockdown restrictions are starting to be a strain here on many of our elderly (all over 70) and more vulnerable Collegians. However, we are trying to keep spirits up by organising some socially distanced activities during the week in the open air. But all are keeping well physically.

Prayer is taking place in Chapel daily, Mass offered for and on behalf of Collegians, all be it alone. I'm distributing weekly prayers and Sunday readings and I know some are using internet to follow services.

Care workers continue to visit the more vulnerable, fully masked of course, and deliveries continue of provisions and medication. I'm ok but tired, working 7 days a week, as living on site, and on constant call. But there is also a permanently resident lodge keeper with whom Practical duties around college are shared. It's not how I thought a post-retirement post was going to be, however I can see why God called me to this place to oversee this period at least (the last Chaplain was older and with health issues would have had to self- isolate and stay clear of Collegians!!).

Like all brethren, I look forward to having a congregation again in Chapel, and also being able to leave College for a short while, to see family, children and grandchildren again.

The bungalows here are almshouses and vacancies occur every year at modest rent. Your people are welcome to view them if they are of more limited means.

God bless, *Ian*

The Foxy Gardener of Bexleyheath aka Mary Pocock

Little did I know whilst planting my foxgloves this Spring, that I would have guests of another foxy kind - mum, dad and 4 cubs! Early morning and late evening mum and cubs appear. They play, play-fight, and chase each other in and out of my precious flower beds! They will be gone soon, but I must say that I have enjoyed my foxy experience very much.

Tips for your garden this year, I think are let nature take its course.

1. Let your grass grow longer
2. Only water in the evenings.
3. Encourage wildlife.
4. Plant flowers for bees, lavender, cosmos, cornflowers, petunias and of course foxgloves!

One huge bonus for gardeners this dry weather, fewer slugs and snails. But be careful - they are waiting in the wings! Take Care. *Mary*

Church Music - Listening, Singing, Playing by Margaret Withers

I have always loved music. My father died when I was six so we didn't have much money for 'extras,' but we had a piano and my grandmother paid for my first lessons as a very large birthday present. My mother encouraged and supported me, but my most significant musical influence was Great Uncle Albert.

Great Uncle Albert was an organ builder. He built, restored and maintained organs all over Britain, a few in France and was in charge of the organ at Rochester cathedral for over thirty years. He recognised my interest in music and, when I was eight, he took me there. I recall going through a little wooden door in this huge, ancient building, climbing up a steep ladder to the organ gallery, and his playing it to me. He fired my enthusiasm and started me on the road to becoming a professional organist.

I liked, 'Church' - the stained-glass windows, the poetry of the psalms, the processions and, most of all, the music. When I was sixteen, I started having organ lessons and was eventually accepted for a place at the Royal College of Music, with organ as my first study.

Then the real decision-making started!

I needed to practice the organ for 2-3 hours every day, sing in Choral Class, have tutorials in Composition, Score-reading, History, and lots more. I could pay a church to let me practise for a few set hours, or find a church that would pay me to play for every service, train the choir, choose the music, and have unlimited practice. It was a case of, 'sink or swim'.

I decided to swim. Another student was becoming the pianist for, 'Cats,' so I took over his work as the organist and choir director at, St Philip's, Lambeth. I learned to take rehearsals, choose anthems, encourage nervous singers, and train a gang of South London choristers.

It was hard work, and every organist is tired on Christmas Morning, and exhausted by Easter, but, over fifty years and several churches later, I am still playing for services every month at a church near home and singing with friends when somebody needs an extra voice. I 'retired' three years ago, but it didn't last.

Church music is not just something I do. It is part of what I am as a Christian, and as a human being.

When I was working in central London, I could go to a Sung Mass at lunchtime, or sit in Westminster Abbey after an exhausting day to hear the choristers sing Choral Evensong as they have done for generations.

One of the precious gifts we have in the Church of England is that it has produced great musicians for over 500 years and we still sing their music - in churches, in schools, with friends, and visitors who've paused to listen and stayed to worship. Our Anglican Choral tradition is the finest in the world and anyone can take part in it. *Margaret Withers*

From Wendy Castle (Fr Clive's sister)

It is time to tell you about the next stage in my life which was when I went off to work on the Hovercraft. My adventure took me down to Dover where I signed up as a "Purserette" (stewardess) and had a delightful three years working there.

I could not believe the size of the Hovercrafts when I first saw them. These huge beasts carried 400 passengers and nearly 100 cars. The noise that came from their vast engines was so loud it was deafening. When the "skirt" around them was inflated, the enormity of their size would just stop people in their tracks. It was fascinating to watch these craft from the seafront, going in and out of the Dover sea walls on their journeys to and from France.

Predominately the crew were there for the passenger's safety but we were also required to sell drinks and duty free goods on each of the flights. Every day, we would be checked that we had perfect makeup and ruby red lipstick, pressed uniform, polished high heeled shoes and bright white gloves. The duty free goods made a lot of money for the company and no end of people would go to France on days out and then buy their duty free goods from us on the way home. They would all run excitedly onto the craft and take their seats nearest the front for the best view..... If the sea was rough, which it often was, we would watch the people turn white and then a pale shade of green before showing them where the sick bags were...

In a nutshell, it was the best experience ever to travel on the Hovercraft across the channel if the weather was good. The sun would shine upon the water that looked like a millpond - if you were lucky. The craft would glide across the water and we would be in France within half an hour and it would be the best experience ever. However, with just the slightest bit of wind, that sea would become rough and angry. We would be tossed from side to side and up and down so vigorously that the passengers couldn't wait to get off at the other end!

A very young Father Clive had the pleasure of travelling on the Hovercraft whilst I was working. I am sure that he will enjoy telling you about his day out from Dover to Calais...

In 1979 I was lucky enough to be on board the Hovercraft that we took up the River Thames. This was to celebrate the newly extended crafts called the Princess Anne and the Princess Margaret. Recently, I was involved in making a TV programme called Inside Out for Southern TV. They were looking at the Hovercrafts and talking to myself and some of my old crew. We had fun reminiscing about old times.

Earlier this year, the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Hovercraft took place at the Southport museum near Portsmouth. Princess Anne came to visit and met some of us.

Sadly, the routes from Dover and Ramsgate to France finally ceased in 2000. This was mainly due to people preferring to travel via the Channel Tunnel as it is not restricted by the weather and therefore

much more reliable. The sale of duty free goods had also come to an end. It was a very sad day when the Hovercraft service came to an end.

My best wishes to you all. Stay safe. Wendy Castle

One of Win's favourite poems:

'Grandma, Grandma, how's you head
Do you want to stay in bed?'
'No dear, no dear, I'm ok
Let's just get some things and play.'

'Grandma - you be Mrs Brown,
I'll be doctor in the town.
Is your baby due today?
If so, you must breathe this way!'

'Grandma, I would like to cook
Shall I get the recipe book?'
'Do you know just what to make?'
'It must be a Christmas cake!'

'Grandma, is there time to draw?
On the table - on the floor?'
Wherever dear, you can choose -
Just don't kick me with those shoes!'

'Grandma, shall we catch the post -
Write to those we love the most?
I think that I'll send you a letter,
Grandma, is your headache better?'

'Grandma, did you want to play?
Has your headache gone away?'
I'm glad I didn't go to bed -
We've done such lovely things instead! '

This was written by Donna & Jeremy's niece, Sian, a TA at our school, on the day that school finished for lockdown.

to year 4

i stand in front of you
only eight pairs of eyes look back at me.
i cannot speak.
god how I miss counting thirty.
you sit in rows
with an empty chair in-between you.
i try to say *good morning*
but it comes out like
i am so sorry.
you have never known
confusion like this.
you ask me when
we will be able to finish
the book we have been reading.
i am so sorry.
we say a prayer at the end
of the day. we wash our hands.
you touch elbows. you stand.
you are ready to go home.
for how long? you do not know.
before you walk away, you say
we will miss you -
but how lucky we are to have
a school to come back to.
/ srw poetry

It would be really nice to hear how you are coping with the present situation, have you learnt any new skills, rediscovered an old hobby, become more adept at modern technology? We'd love to hear from you so that we can read about your lockdown musings or if you would like to contribute a longer article, maybe your memories of St Augustine's or a profile of yourself? Please email Fr Clive at frclive@tiscali.co.uk or Donna at staugustineofcanterburypa@gmail.com and we will do our best to include it in the next newsletter.

05/06/20