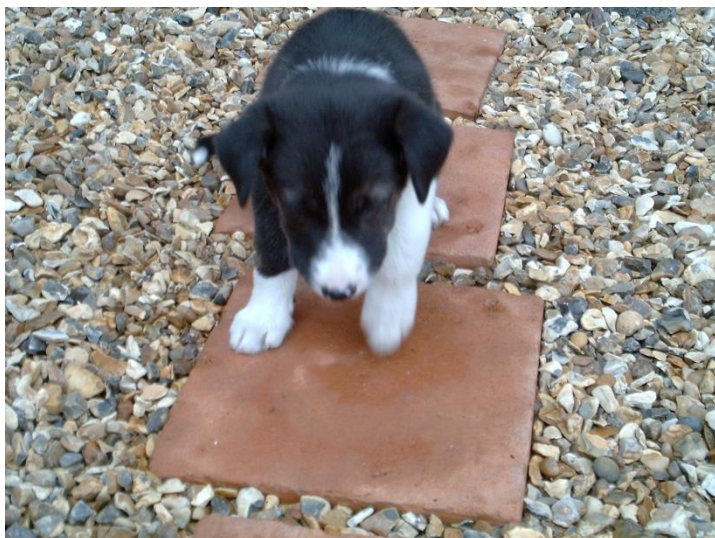


Chaplain's Blog - Star date 06-07-2018



Arlo, our lurcher as a puppy
– probably in trouble.

The blog begins with a bitter-sweet reflection as on my mind and in my prayers have been a group of our number who are undergoing treatment for serious conditions and for the family and friends of readers Peter Waterfield, Jane Osborne, John Shapter and John Allen whose funerals have taken place in recent times. Several of the readers have moved on through retirement, moving out of the area or to different ministry so our numbers have taken something of a hit this year. The blessing in the 'bitter-sweet thoughts' has been the annual readers in training selection day with Canon Jane and Bishop Chris where those who have traversed the tricky hurdles of talks with their incumbents, votes by PCCs, interviews with a Vocation Adviser and a one to one talk with Canon Paul the deputy Warden, come to the final fence at Lis Escop. It is a delight, a privilege and a blessing to be able to listen to their journeys as they examine their calling and discern their future paths. It is amazing (but not surprising) that they are all so different! This year four new Readers in Training will begin the three years of study and I am sure I speak for all of you when we bid them welcome. More on each in future blogs.

That cycle of life of losing readers and the training of new is certainly food for thought and prayer and the cycle of life is really brought to the fore for those of us with beloved family pets. Our nutty lurcher Arlo was 14 this week and in the last couple of months has really begun to show his great age, needing help to get up the stairs and not wanting to go for a walk unless it is the beach. Regular trips to the vet are a feature of life at the moment and the grandchildren are full of questions about illness and death. Prayers please for all pet owners who know that shortly a decision will have to be made about that final trip to the vet.

The End of Term

In the school where I am Chair of Governors I give all staff half a day to write reports and I go and take their classes for story-telling and singing. I enjoy it immensely because it means I get to see all the children (from 2 to 11), experience the challenges of the different personalities and age groups and get to know them. When I take a visitor around the school all the children know who I am and give a friendly greeting which makes a big difference to those inspecting or

thinking of enrolling their offspring! June also has our, now annual, week long church arts festival driven by the force of nature that is my lovely wife! As support act I put up a stage, ran a clay workshop, did meet and greet for the Children's concert, made sure a local school had a video of their dance production on the water cycle running each day, made up playlists of background music to name a few examples. But there were 1600 visits to the church and though it was not designed as a fund raiser, the raffles, commission on sales and tickets and bar profits from the poetry night and barn dance did contribute well to church funds! Of course, grandparent duties, preaching and other meetings run alongside that..... how did I ever have time to hold down a paid job?

All this also means I arrive at the end of June with as much energy as a sloth! When I was still teaching the end of the year was a strange time; I always felt that I was running on empty, kept going on adrenaline as I faced deadlines for writing reports (about 15-30 hours at home or work for the average primary school class), school camps, sports days, a production and other events and evenings not to mention the end of term disco. (I think the videos of the dances for the Time Warp and YMCA are permanently etched on the back of my eyeballs!) My classes were always at their best after a year of work and yet I was looking forward (sometimes with slight trepidation) to the next year's bunch of bright eyed children who might be wary or worried about having me too!

Sometimes, very kindly, I would be given a gift at the end of term to say thank you and I had quite a collection of mugs, cuddly toys and books of jokes about teachers. I was not sure what to make of the gift of aftershave- I have nearly always had a beard! What I loved most was when parents and children had taken the time to write a personal note or card telling me something they had loved during the year, something they were proud of or something they would treasure as a memory. Gifts are nice but memories are very special! There are a lot of readers who have also been teachers so you will recognise the feeling!

As I have spent time in all the classes and around the school I recognise that 'empty-tank running on adrenaline' look in the staff and know just how much of themselves they have poured out this year. The children too, especially in nursery, have that 'end of year' feeling when the heat can make them 'teasy!' so I speak from the heart and from personal experience of many years when I thank the staff in all schools for their work and ask those of us they have worked for to pass on a word of encouragement- (and say a few prayers) it makes all the difference!

Requests:

- On the Saturday 29th September we are looking for Readers who have a specific ministry in different chaplaincies, funeral ministry, care homes etc to come and talk to the Readers in Training..... anyone interested and available?
- My planned quiet day leader for late November can no longer lead the session, anyone got any brilliant ideas for an alternative?
- We want to show some videos of sermons from readers to the readers in training to analyse before their preaching practice day. Would anyone be prepared to be filmed – it does not have to be a good sermon and any media will not be used outside of the training session. I will bring a camera and travel to the church where you are preaching.

Food For Thought

Some suggestions for tickling your thought processes from reader Sarah Angier

Reader in Training Martin Adams and I have some good discussions none more entertaining than our opinions about empathy. The thought got Sarah to send in this link....

https://www.wordonthestreets.net/Articles/518700/Empathy_not.aspx

The second article she found is from Church Action on Poverty....

<https://blog.church-poverty.org.uk/2018/06/14/bringing-our-neighbourhoods-into-church/>

And finally from an e-book by Send Institute

"The myth of a Christian culture continues to set the mind of the Western church at ease. This myth assumes that the West is, or once was, a Christian culture. If the culture is Christian, there is no need to analyze its assumptions or develop a counter-cultural instinct." Michael Goheen

<https://www.wordonthestreets.net/Articles/521726/ReThink.aspx>

IMAGINE

My think piece was something I was reminded of whilst training worship leaders! Bill Stewart-White whilst archdeacon led a day at which he introduced a book by Francis Spufford, "Unapologetic." Following a reminder of the lyrics of John Lennon's song imagine, there is Spufford's riposte...

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky

Imagine all the people living for today
Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace.....

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one

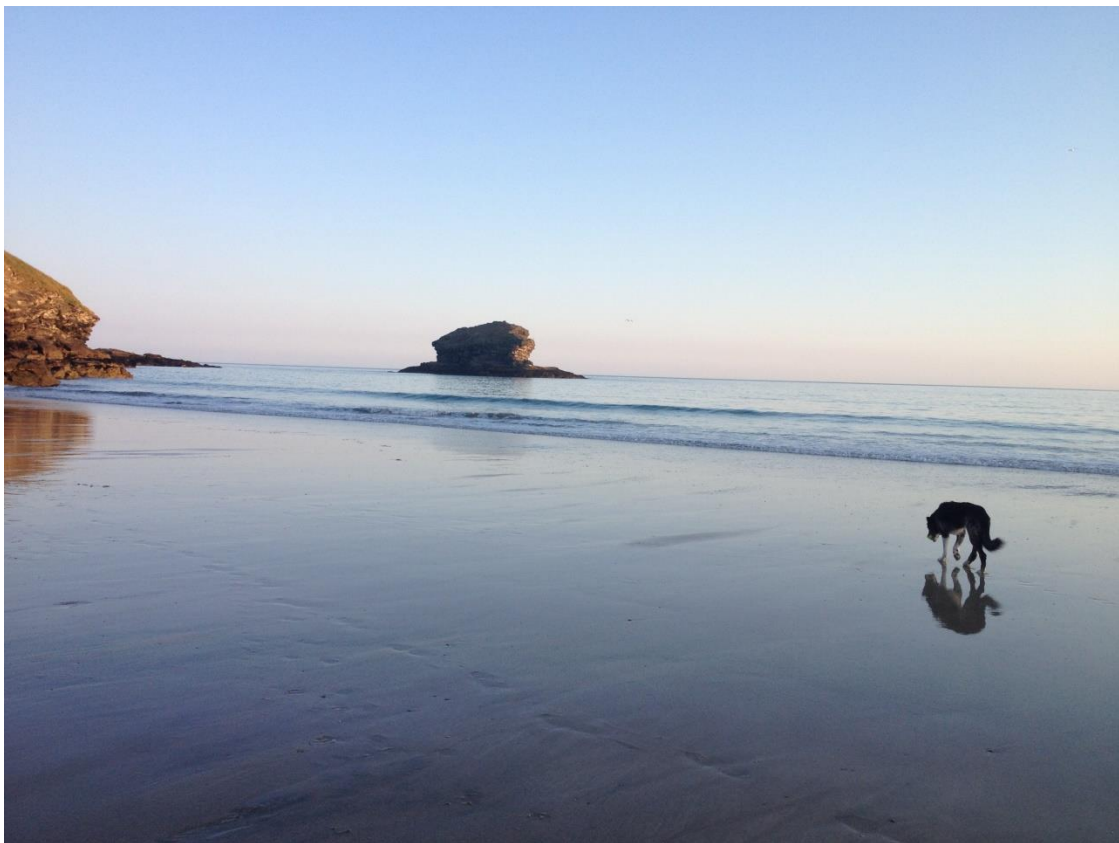
Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world,

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one

“...for a piece of famous fluffiness that doesn't just pretend about what real lives can be like, but moves on into one of the world's least convincing pretences about what people themselves are like, consider the teased and coiffed nylon monument that is 'Imagine': surely the My Little Pony of philosophical statements. John and Yoko all in white, John at the white piano, John drifting through the white rooms of a white mansion, and all the while the sweet drivel flowing. Imagine there's no heaven. Imagine there's no hell. Imagine all the people, living life in - hello? Excuse me? Take religion out of the picture, and everybody spontaneously starts living life in peace? I don't know about you, but in my experience peace is not the default state of human beings, any more than having an apartment the size of Joey and Chandler's is. Peace is not the state of being we return to, like water running downhill, whenever there's nothing external to perturb us. Peace between people is an achievement, a state of affairs we put together effortfully in the face of competing interests, and primate dominance dynamics, and our evolved tendency to cease our sympathies at the boundaries of our tribe.”

— **Francis Spufford**

More in the next blog about his take on the “Atheist Bus!”



Arlo at the beach early in the morning this week dreaming of the days when he could leap the waves