

In this Chaplain's blog – Stardate Late October 2018

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Musing on Thin Places- reflecting on the Annual Reader Service

Links to Annette's Prayers, and Helen's sermon are on the blog webpage.

Helen, in her sermon, touched upon pilgrimage and the seeking of thin places which seem to be where heaven is more easily glimpsed. On my recent holiday via Lindisfarne, my hopes were to glimpse these thin places and in part, I did – but mostly it served as an appetiser for future journeys but I was not really thinking about bus journeys.

On Saturday I travelled by bus to Truro, a return journey and a chance to read Nigel Tranter's novel about Columba and Iona. It was not much of a pilgrimage but thin places were there a plenty. As I walked around greeting folks gathered for the annual service, trying to recall names, I felt the huge outpouring of love and care that is the fellowship within the community of Readers, the light of Christ shining in so many eyes, each person evoking a thin place in which to meet the love of Christ.

The group of Readers in Training were all there to support Esther and pondering on their own licensing twelve months hence: Their commitment and enthusiasm is hugely positive for the future of Reader ministry.

As it happens, I did not finish the Tranter novel until Sunday and found the ending very emotional partly because of lack of sleep from Arlo dog's terrible cough – something about the cycle of life and endings after a lifetime of commitment to one's calling.



Arlo the ancient lurcher had a last paddle in the sea on Tuesday morning before his final trip to Martin, his favourite vet who helped us say goodbye and Arlo finish his task with us and end his journey. He could not lie down for coughing for his last couple of nights and the look in his eyes said it was time to rest so now he joins the three other dogs in the back garden who have seen us through continual dog ownership since 1978. (We may have to do a burial

plot map if we ever move!) Arlo and I have walked around ten thousand miles together and he's seen me through some tough times. When I breathe my own last breath I will know I'm in heaven if I'm greeted by my dogs!

Reader Martin Smith sent me a quote from Kipling's poem which I have included in full because it captures the essence of being a dog-owner saying goodbye to a beloved friend.

The Power of the Dog (Kipling)

*THERE is sorrow enough in the natural way
From men and women to fill our day;
And when we are certain of sorrow in store,
Why do we always arrange for more?
Brothers and sisters, I bid you beware
Of giving your heart to a dog to tear.*

*Buy a pup and your money will buy
Love unflinching that cannot lie
Perfect passion and worship fed
By a kick in the ribs or a pat on the head.
Nevertheless it is hardly fair
To risk your heart for a dog to tear.*

*When the fourteen years which Nature permits
Are closing in asthma, or tumour, or fits,
And the vet's unspoken prescription runs
To lethal chambers or loaded guns,
Then you will find - it's your own affair, -
But ... you've given your heart to a dog to tear.*

*When the body that lived at your single will,
With its whimper of welcome, is stilled (how still!),
When the spirit that answered your every mood
Is gone - wherever it goes - for good,
You will discover how much you care,
And will give your heart to a dog to tear!*

*We've sorrow enough in the natural way,
When it comes to burying Christian clay.
Our loves are not given, but only lent,
At compound interest of cent per cent,
Though it is not always the case, I believe,
That the longer we've kept 'em, the more do we grieve;
For, when debts are payable, right or wrong,
A short-time loan is as bad as a long -
So why in - Heaven (before we are there)
Should we give our hearts to a dog to tear?*

I had not noticed that I had missed writing about a couple of titles in the last blog – ooops! They are in this one!

Methodist Church services

I have always done a few services a year in the Methodist Church at Carn Brea, but since it has closed and the congregation joined with St Euny I have found my way onto the Methodist Plan and a monthly engagement in different Methodist Churches across the circuit. I even did a harvest evening service in Stithians in the neighbouring circuit. I always find these services a great blessing because I can experiment a bit and the congregations have been universally grateful and forgiving! I can thoroughly recommend doing a bit of ecumenical work.

Chaplaincy Outposts:

Cornwall is a strange place to travel around with Readers situated in Sennen in the West to Looe in the South East and Bude in the North East. I often describe my own location as being four miles from the north coast, eight miles from the south coast, 45 minutes to Land's End and six hours drive to the east coast!

When Readers are ill or having a tricky time caring for someone, a visit from a fellow Reader might be appreciated. It would be great to have a few names in geographically diverse places who feel that visiting is part of their ministry. Let me know your thoughts!

Thought provocation:

There has been much debate of the church's attitude toward same sex marriage. Readers are as diverse on this issue as any other group but below I put three links beginning with a letter from 11 Bishops printed on the Church of England Evangelical Council website followed by the article in the Church Times and a response to it. Makes interesting and thought provoking reading. I am not adding any personal comment!

[http://www.ceec.info/uploads/4/4/2/7/44274161/3.letter to lf - 16 october 2018.pdf](http://www.ceec.info/uploads/4/4/2/7/44274161/3.letter_to_lf_-_16_october_2018.pdf)

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/19-october/news/uk/evangelical-bishops-hint-at-split-if-marriage-teaching-is-changed>

<http://survivingchurch.org/2018/10/16/eleven-english-bishops-teaching-about-sex-and-marriage/>

The Advent Quiet Day Saturday November 24th

Liz German, Wendy Barritt, Helen Purchase, Geoff Cox and Sheri Sturgess have booked for the day so far. There is room for about 20 and I think we need a dozen folk to make it viable. It will be Led by the excellent Rev Jane Horton who is the Discipleship co-ordinator for the diocese. Her faith story can be found here:

<https://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/faith-stories/janes-story/>

Please do consider taking a break, refreshments from 9:30 – we finish at 4pm. Please bring a packed lunch and we ask a donation of about £10 towards the cost of booking Epiphany house and for the tea & coffee.

Please let me know by the end of October if you would like to come.

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Goodbye old fellow and thank you! The house is not the same.