



# Chaplains Blog January 2017

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## **Proposed Quiet Day**

I have tentatively booked Epiphany House for another Quiet Day for Readers on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June hoping that a Saturday will be helpful to all those of you who work on week days and also that it is far enough after Easter not to be too busy!

Before I confirm the booking and arrange someone to lead it, it would be really helpful to know that there is enough support to make it worthwhile. Please would you check your diaries and let me know as soon as possible whether you would like to attend.

## **Committees**

I seem to have slipped seamlessly from school committees when working to even more committees now I have (in theory) retired!

Quite apart from the benefice committees and the Governors' committees in the School where I am chair there's a variety of diocesan ones: the Readers' Steering Committee, the Readers' Committee, the Readers in Training Management Group, the Diocesan safeguarding committee, the liturgy committee and the lay ministry review committee.

Unfortunately the next steering group clashes with the lay ministry review and I think the latter needs some Reader presence so I shall attend and let you know the results next month! If anyone fancies being the Reader Rep on the Liturgical Committee I would be delighted to let someone else take my place if it is their passion! Next meeting is Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at 10am at Church House. Let me know!

## **Thoughts on Egg Hurling**

Once upon time well over three decades ago we purchased a little tome entitled 'Debret's Games for House Parties'. Under the heading 'Irresponsible Games' we discovered the ancient art of Egg Hurling. The book claimed that a fresh egg could be hurled over the house and that providing it landed on the grass or something similar it would arrive whole. This was too much of a temptation *not* to have a go and so it was put on our list of activities for the annual New Year's Eve fancy dress party. So after the singing of 'Auld Lang Syne' at midnight, those with a strong throwing arm, and those who *thought* they had a strong throwing arm, headed for the front of the house with a carton of eggs.



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Some of the rest of the party donned hard hats, carried torches and became spotters in the back. They have been aided by various family dogs over the decades who have enjoyed the broken eggs in particular. The most memorable spotter had to be a trainee Methodist minister called Susan who at over six feet tall was an imposing figure dressed as Tinkerbell with a tutu and a bright yellow builders hat as she scanned the roof with a torch powerful enough to have graced a prison camp compound!

Upstairs the children, when small, ran from the front windows to the back windows to follow the trajectory and any remaining adults were in the house downstairs to relay when another egg was being launched. My son when aged 10 got his first egg over the house and landed it intact on the other side, having practised with a squash ball! He has had a whole egg land every year since and is now in his mid thirties.

The tradition is now so embedded in the culture of the family, those who have attended the functions and those who now follow the event on social media that tales of hurling exploits have travelled the globe.

Why bother to write about this in the Chaplain's Blog? Perhaps, like all traditions, secular and otherwise, they remind us of times past and the people that are connected through them. There is also the feeling that if at least one egg does not land whole on the lawn that it bodes ill for the following year.

Nonsense of course but that is how superstitions and *rites* grow isn't it?



## **Post Christmas darkness** (also see the added article at the end of the blog)

I love the build up to Christmas and the decorations, fairy lights, the advent Hope and the expectation of the coming saviour. I loath the aftermath, the packing away of the decorative things that brighten our lives for a week or two and the slow grinding into routines of the newly turned year – no one else seems to want to leave it all up till Candlemas. Although we have passed the solstice and in theory the days are getting longer and warmer, January and February can be the darkest, coldest, wettest and



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altogether most depressing months. Those dark patches match some/most of our spiritual journeys too, the times when we are low and even desolate, St. John of the Cross and his 'long dark night of the soul'. Spiritual Direction or accompaniment or a 'soul friend' can be helpful then! Readers wanting a spiritual director can contact Rev'd Hilary Spong directly at [hilaryspong@sent.com](mailto:hilaryspong@sent.com); others should go through the Epiphany Network – details online!

## **Readers in Training**

We have a wonderful group of trainee Readers and this Saturday they all gathered at the same time at St Michael's in Newquay for a day on worship. I feel much blessed to be part of the team and very much enjoyed the input by Bishop Chris and Rev'd Chris McQuillen-Wright which was thought provoking and full of ideas. In the afternoon we looked at some technical stuff such as how to download from Youtube and also what individual trainee readers needed in the way of support/help for preparing and leading worship. As one might imagine, the needs were quite diverse: from leading a school assembly through worship in Care Home to BCP sung matins etc., etc. It would be helpful to have Readers in all parts of the county who have a particular ministry who would be prepared to mentor and help our aspiring Readers, Please let me know if you would like to be on the list of folks they can call on and also the thing that you can offer.

## **Reading**

I seem to have gathered a small pile of books to read since the last blog, one given, several recommended and one just because I fancy reading it. I carry some of them around never really finding those gaps to open them. The waiting room always seems to have someone who needs conversation, the bus comes on time and so on. I live in hope that maybe if I carry them close enough their words will seem through the covers and into me like osmosis! Now where did I put 'Landmarks'?

## **Everything happens for the best! What? Really?**

Lez's hip replacement was postponed until late March after she has a tooth drilled and crowned. Unfortunately the dentist cancelled that appointment, twice, once for illness and the second because the lab would be closed until early January. As it turns out we both have had horrible colds and connected coughs to add to our other medical woes so that would have made both procedures even more unpleasant! The older we get it seems the more we arrange our lives around the NHS.

It is easy to slip in that glib phrase, 'everything happens for the best!' which I think is utter nonsense and yet I hear it said so often by all sorts of folks both in church and elsewhere.



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That bad things happen is a fact of life. Margaret Silf in her book 'Landmarks on the Ignatian Journey' likens life to the earth, and things happening to weather patterns which can be unpredictable, violent or benevolent – they just happen. It is our response to them in which we find God.

So my prayers are much with those wrestling with the infirmity of their own bodies or those caring for family members with difficult times, be they health or otherwise. For us preachers and teachers, however we are feeling spiritually, mood-wise or family-wise we are called to preach the positive Gospel message and that can be a burden as well as a blessing all depending on the 'weather.' So I pray for warm sunshine on your ministry refreshed by gentle rains and that any storms do not cause lasting damage!

## **Addendum! Brain food.... on darkness!**

A stanza about darkness from "East Coker" TS Eliot and an article from the Guardian from 2007

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/apr/06/comment.poetry>

III.

O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,  
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,  
The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,  
The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,  
Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,  
Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark,  
And dark the Sun and Moon, and the Almanach de Gotha  
And the Stock Exchange Gazette, the Directory of Directors,  
And cold the sense and lost the motive of action.  
And we all go with them, into the silent funeral,  
Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury.

I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you  
Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,  
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed  
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness,  
And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama  
And the bold imposing facade are all being rolled away—  
Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long between stations  
And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence  
And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen



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Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about;  
Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing—  
I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love  
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.  
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:  
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.  
Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.  
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,  
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy  
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony  
Of death and birth.

You say I am repeating  
Something I have said before. I shall say it again,  
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,  
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,  
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.  
In order to arrive at what you do not know  
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.  
In order to possess what you do not possess  
You must go by the way of dispossession.  
In order to arrive at what you are not  
You must go through the way in which you are not.  
And what you do not know is the only thing you know  
And what you own is what you do not own  
And where you are is where you are not