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## Neighbours

### Refrain:

**Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve  
the neighbours we have from you.**

Kneels at the feet of his friends,  
silently washes their feet,  
master who acts as a slave to them. **(Refrain)**

Neighbours are rich and poor,  
varied in colour and race, *(This line used to be black, brown and white!!)*  
neighbours are near and far away. **(Refrain)**

These are the ones we should serve,  
these are the ones we should love;  
all these are neighbours to us and you. **(Refrain)**

Loving puts us on our knees,  
serving as though we are slaves;  
this is the way we should live with you. **(Refrain)**

Kneel at the feet of our friends,  
silently washing their feet;  
this is the way we should live with you. **(Refrain)**

*Paraphrase of John 13:3-5*

*Words: Tom Colvin (1969)*

*Music: Chereponi, Ghana folk song, adapt. Tom Colvin (1969)*

I think this month's theme is mainly about prayer. I seem to need more time for it as I grow older but life seems to throw spanners in the works of my routines. The caring for the wife with a new hip means that feeding the birds and fish, drying of feet, the application of E45 to heels and the skilful (now) unfurling of surgical stockings without creases has knocked Morning Prayer back into dog walking. At least one person commented on the dog walking Lord's Prayer with additions from last time. Lez is back to see the surgeon on the 4<sup>th</sup> July so hopefully there will be news that the stockings and aspirin are no longer needed.

So.... that brings me to the drunken plastic flamingos.

**We have interesting neighbours**



# Chaplain's Blog July 2017



They love entertaining and held a fund raiser for various charities last weekend.... including the rugby club. They assured us that the live singer would not go on too late..... but they omitted to mention that the invited youngsters would put a large loudspeaker outside the fire house at the end of the garden (for year round barbecuing) and dance the night away in the hot tub.

I gave up on sleep at around 4am on Sunday morning with the "Drum and Bass' music throbbing distortedly though the closed double glazing and took the dog for a walk around the mine stacks.

Dog walking is a time of prayer for me as readers of previous blogs will have gathered and today's prayers, after the, "Well here we are again Lord," introduction went something like this....



"Ok Lord so what am I supposed to be praying about – the lads in the hot tub next door, the booming drum and bass concoction and the pink flamingos?"

**"so.... how do you feel about it?"**

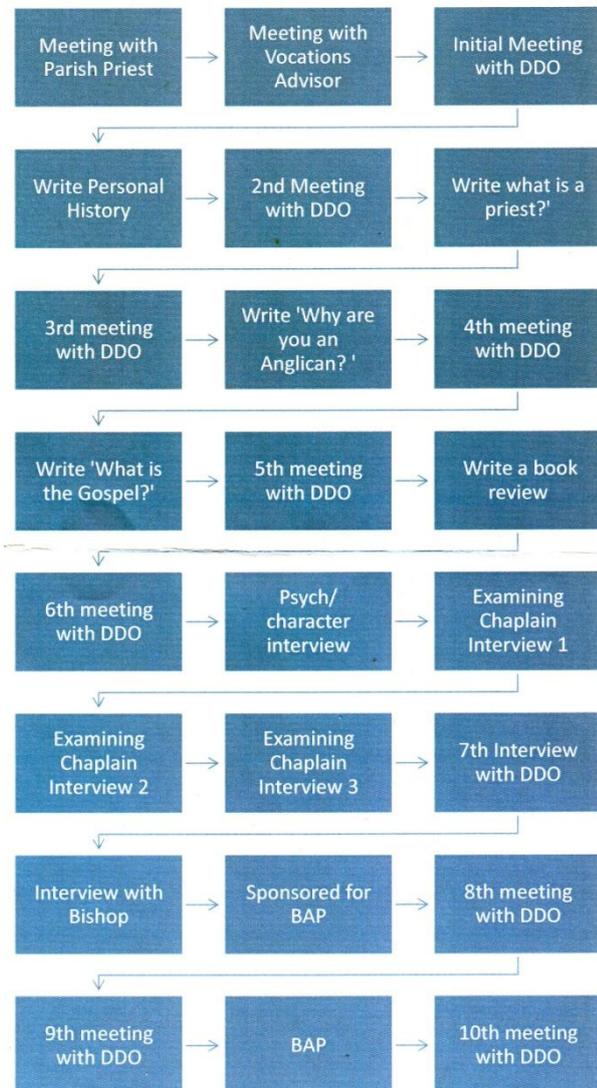
"Actually fairly chilled, it's a nice morning, if early, the dog is happily sniffing, my joints don't hurt.... I have a lot to be thankful for!"

**"Then pray for your neighbours who are angry right now, for the hangovers that will appear next door later and in general for those folks who find it hard or even impossible to forgive..."**

"thanks Lord.... I will start there...."

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## Vocations: Exploring 'why Anglicanism?' through my own story



Last month I had the wonderful privilege once more of being part of the discernment panel for the potential Readers in Training for September and each year I leave lifted and enthusiastic about Reader Ministry and those who would seek to fulfil their vocation through it. This past week has seen the Bishop's CMED day on Vocations at St Michael's Newquay which was a good venue apart from the £10 parking charge in the car park across the road! Each participant was given a Paper Carrier containing a pencil, a packet of seeds and a variety of leaflets on different vocations within the Church of England. The diagram/flow chart below was part of the pack but I felt it worth sharing on the blog even though it shows the path to possible selection to ordained ministry training.

As Readers we are hopefully looking out for the calling of those around us and fostering their vocation whatever it is.

My first reaction on glancing at the diagram, was, 'thank you God that I already have a vocation!' All those interviews!

But the essay titles did set the grey cells sparking, starting with, "Why are you an Anglican?" rather than "what is a priest?" the latter question throws up all sorts of issues to be dealt with in another blog!

➤ **Hmmm, so why am I an Anglican?**



# Chaplain's Blog July 2017



- Do I think of myself as being Anglican?
- How do I describe myself?
- Does it matter?
- Does being Anglican make a difference?



I began with a look at the brief description one has to put on Twitter by way of a profile. No mention of Anglican there – though I do mention the diocese so it might be implied I guess!

My Facebook profile, it turns out is even more scant though there is a mention of the word Benefice which might imply something – but not much!



I don't even mention Anglicanism or the Church of England on the introduction to my website as [www.Readers-Chaplain.org.uk](http://www.Readers-Chaplain.org.uk)

I wonder why? At the time I obviously did not think the words were going to add much of importance, I am not sure I felt or even feel that I need to specifically mention the branch of Christianity in which I have found my home. Perhaps I should, though I think a little reflection is required. But first my gut-reaction answer.

## Here goes:

I am an Anglican because I love the mess and I love the people! I love the inclusiveness or at least the desire to be inclusive, the squabbles, the reality, the worthy attempts, the fact that the box of Anglicanism is not closed and seemingly changes shape to fit the occupants, that I have been able to grow within it and that it feels like home. I love it that it does not claim to have the answers; that it makes mistakes; that it apologises and strives to do better. I love the pomp and circumstance, the bells and smells, the tyrannical organists, the perfunctory bell-ringers, the pontificating sermons and the humble servants who make tea but don't see their ministry as important. I love the Readers in Training breadth of theology from the evangelical to the liberal and that we can worship together; the disputes and discussions and the life long quest to find out more in an evolving and developing faith rather than something imposed by a set of rules. I love the cafe-church, the informal worship, the messy church and the Rock Mass, the sheer variety of people and that all comers are welcome to share at the feast at Christ's table in the sacrament of communion.

I love the broken and that as someone broken I am wanted and used, and granted the gift of a vocation.

I could have been in the Church of Scotland, had there been a branch in Birmingham where I grew up, as my father had been an elder and my great grandfather Minister of Dallas Church in Morayshire for over 30 years. I was even baptised by a Church of Scotland Minister in the back garden of my grandparents' house in Birmingham. I could have been United Reformed Church where my Aunt Joan (also my Godmother) was a Minister and from which stance she spent countless hours trying to convert me in teenage years to no avail.

In my late teens and early twenties in the 1970s I tried desperately to be an atheist as a student and while I taught in a Church of England primary school as a young and invincible know-it-all teacher.

I failed; eventually, relentlessly drawn across the park by Sunday evening bells to evensong where I could sit at the back, anonymous and introspective and admit defeat. I had met Christ in those *Anglican* teachers in that Church of England school and offered an invitation into their lives and His that I could not refuse – though I did not know how to receive it, accept it or what to do with it!



# Chaplain's Blog July 2017



For a while it was not much more than dabbling in church and in faith but on moving to Cornwall we held a memorial service for my mother-in-law at St Euny church in Redruth where the sermon was given by the curate and I was 'called'. It was not 'out loud', it was not specific nor was it overt and there were no voices but there was no other way of describing it. During that sermon which was really all about my mother-in-law I felt God poking me and saying, "go and see that curate – you *need* to talk to him!"

"Oh blimey!" I thought, "This is going to be awkward!"

So on the way out at the door of the packed church I thanked him and said words to the effect of, "and erm.... I feel I need to speak to you but I have no idea what about." He smiled, took my phone number and we met.

"Well," said Father Mike, musing over our conversation, "seems you are the answer to my prayer – come and run the Sunday School!"

Now that's a big jump but it certainly committed me to turning up every week, studying to provide good material and in turn leading me to confirmation in the Cathedral before the 1970s ticked into another decade.

In the 1980s as a relatively new Christian I was hungry to try everything. I dabbled in the delights of the Charismatic, I sang worship songs with great passion, I consumed Bible notes by the ton, hosted an ecumenical house group and formed a Worship Workshop to plan services during a period of interregnum. I travelled to see the Fisherfolk in St Ives, went on parish retreat and moved between the churches in the Benefice in response to need. It cemented in my mind the riches and variety of Anglicanism and the room for growth provided by the very thing that many other denominations hate about it, the woolly, messy interpretation of law and rule. As for churchmanship, on Sundays it was high church Anglo-Catholic and in house group utterly experimental! I read David Watson, Thomas a Kempis, and Michael Green. I even purchased a Greek pocket interlinear New Testament. Note the word purchased..... not read! I found some limits, learning Greek was one as was waving my hands in the air to choruses – thank the Lord I had learned to play the guitar!

These days I love my sojourns at the Methodist Church at Carn Brea Village where I receive respite care; they are always pleased to see me, I can preach and teach for longer and it makes for the variety that is the spice of life – but for me it lacks something and I head for home and the mess with a smile.

That house group I mentioned – we called it 'Solomon's Porch' and it ran for a decade. These things have a natural cycle. In that time however it nurtured and released into the community two Readers, one of which to my surprise was me, four priests, three church wardens, several Sunday School leaders, a sacristan and a number of church musicians, not to mention a couple of Methodist local preachers and a Methodist Minister!

Eventually, toward the end of Reader training, I went to a vocations conference – now a Bishop's Advisory Panel in the late 1980s to test a calling for ordination and was bemused (but in the end pleased) to be told by Bishop James Jones, "we think you are prophet rather than priest." Emotionally and spiritually drained, I was, within a few weeks, happy to decline an offer from my home Bishop to accept me for training anyway. I had accepted the decision and my vocation was first and foremost teaching – and preaching. It seemed to fit the role of 'prophet' quite well. Did they have prophets in the church of England? I will look at what is a prophet alongside what is a priest in another blog- .....er ..... perhaps!

At this point some input from elsewhere: By way of a little research there are some good articles worth reading. The first is from the *Church Times*. The second was sent to me by Reader in Training Martin Adams as part of an ongoing discussion. The links are below to the originals but I will put them both in a pdf file on the Readers-Chaplain blog web page in case the links do not work.

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/30-june/comment/opinion/an-age-of-instability-not-cosy-consensus>

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/what-catholics-must-understand-about-anglicanism>



In that second article, written from the point of view of an American Roman Catholic, the writer asserts that, that Englishness is 'written in and through the Anglican religion.' I have to say that I am not an Anglican because I feel English! If pressed I have to admit that I feel more Scottish (by ancestry), or even Celtic and living in Cornwall it has been instilled for decades that calling someone 'English' is an insult.

So my being Anglican, and an Anglican Reader (Licensed Lay Minister) is because within that there is room for debate and disagreement, doubt and uncertainty and yet security. As a group, we Readers all made a promise at our licensing:

## **The Declarations**

*Before the service the candidates for admission and licensing as Readers make the declarations in the form prescribed by Canons E 5 and E 6.*

*The bishop reads the Preface to the Declaration of Assent*

The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. In the declaration you are about to make, will you affirm your loyalty to this inheritance of faith as your inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making Him known to those in your care?

*Candidates I, A B, do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.*

*I, A B, will give due obedience to the Bishop of N and his successors in all things lawful and honest.*

*I, A B, about to be licensed to exercise the office of Reader in the Diocese [Parish] of N, do hereby promise to endeavour, as far as in me lies, to promote peace and unity, and to conduct myself as becomes a worker for Christ, for the good of his Church, and for the spiritual welfare of all people. I will give due obedience to the minister in whose cure I may serve, in all things lawful and honest.*

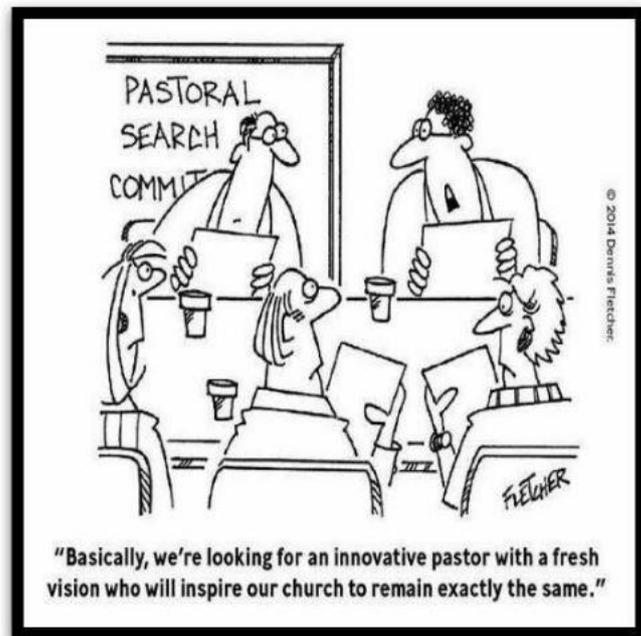
The older and more experienced I get, the more sense the declarations make.

Your thoughts?

I will put a link to the following documents on the webpage.

- The Admission of Readers (Common Worship)
- Canons of The Church of England
- The Historic Formularies of the Church of England
- Thirty-Nine articles of Religion.

Or you could take the internet quiz: what kind of Anglican are you? <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/quiz>



## Vocations Part 2

So we had the Bishop's CMED day in Newquay and we had a few Readers there to learn about vocations in the Church of England. Canon Jane Vaughan-Wilson was there looking absolutely shattered having taken a break from the ordinands residential retreat week where seven women were preparing themselves.



As a group, we Readers have a wide range of opinions about ordination, the priesthood, the selection process and so on just as we have in the differences in the way that ordinands are commissioned and Readers are licensed.

This picture, shamelessly grabbed from Twitter sums up the difference for me. *Eddie, being blessed, has been part of one of my Bible study groups.* I think the picture shows the utter joy and intensity of imparting the love of Christ in a blessing as priest. Are our blessings – or rather the blessings we ask for in our prayers for people any less valid or efficacious? Probably not! ☺ But the rules of the church which separate off the ordained ministry to bless, consecrate and absolve do make for some interesting thoughts. More of that another time, the issues around communion by extension etc loom large! I can hear the rumble of email heading my way even now!

So following the CMED day I went with JV\_W Diocesan Director of Ordinands to Radio Cornwall on Sunday morning to be interviewed by the irrepressibly jolly Donna Birrel about the upcoming day in the Cathedral and vocations in general.

That interview can be heard for the next couple of weeks by following this link and listening from 2hrs 27min <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p055yk6y#play>



# Chaplain's Blog July 2017



My main thought about vocation is that it is rarely static; it evolves as God uses the way we are if we are open enough and let the Spirit work within us. One has to be brave enough to open one's mouth and talk about it for it is only by setting good role models and practising what we preach that new generations will take up the challenge.

Having said that, I have made a nice Reader-shaped box all around me by defining my vocation as praying for and speaking on behalf of Readers, assisting in the training of Readers and helping Carrie with the administration of all things Reader. So God.... nothing else just at the moment please but where is that information about the Benedictine rule.....?



## Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> of July Vocations Day in the Cathedral

I have been covering a display board with Reader type pictures and brochures and will be there all day including speaking on The Panel.... I am sure that sounds more exciting than it will prove to be!

### Update: Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>!

Well the vocations day was a great success and will be repeated next year and on the reader's stand we had a number of queries from folk considering Reader vocation. The panel was

actually good fun and followed a young ordinand currently in full time training who spoke very enthusiastically which I have to admit sparked off a bit of almost competitive desire to be even more enthusiastic about Reader ministry! As I spoke, as so often happens when one gets in front of a microphone in church, I felt very much at home and settled in my vocation. Having said that, I am really looking forward to year two of the spiritual director's course and exploring aspects of spirituality.



## Prayers for those who suffer with back pain.....



I discovered an old blog piece from 2007.

I have never known pain like it. I have inflicted various injuries on my back in the past – one of them keeping me off work for a week but this was the mother of them all!

All I did was adjust a box containing the remnants of my school mining display in the boot of my car when I heard the smallest click of cartilage, followed by a pain only centimetres away from making it a pain in the backside!

I straightened myself up and gingerly tottered back across the road to lock up the school and set the alarm before lowering myself into the driver's seat while hanging on the roof of the car! The driver's seat gave some support which led to a false sense of security about what was to happen once I had backed into my drive. The car door opened with ease but then I tried moving my feet away from the pedals! Every movement sent waves of pain screaming through the muscles in my lower back. Eventually, by hauling on my trouser legs I managed to get my legs out off the car and sat there breathing heavily as if I had just run to the corner shop and back!

The plan was to use the roof to haul myself to a standing position. When that failed I found myself kneeling on the tarmac as if in prayer – actually by then I was in prayer but not worshipping my vehicle as it probably appeared to pedestrians wandering down the road and glancing my way without trying to stare! I did not have to crawl to the house because I did manage to get to a standing position by inching my fingers up the side of the car.

Being greeted by the dogs was pure hell and they met with a barrage of orders punctuated with my most ferocious expletives. Holly, the collie, decided that discretion was the better part of valour and slunk off to her favourite place of safety next to the freezer in the utility room. Arlo, our mad lurcher, by contrast, lay on his back wagging his tail and wriggling in an effort to make me feel better. When it didn't get the response he wanted he got up wandered nearer and threw himself to the floor this time landing on my foot thereby incurring another expletive steam. I read the note from my wife about hanging the washing and worked myself to the utility room by clawing my way along the kitchen.....

I am sure you get the idea. I often say that only someone who has known back pain understands the plight of those going through it, everyone else laughs! I suspect some readers will have winced during the last few paragraphs and others may well have chuckled.

If you experience a bad back then I am praying for you and if you chuckled I pray that you never do!



*Arlo is convinced that his place is a lap dog!*



## 'The Shack'

After last month's piece on the Shack I had several responses from others including the following from Wendy (Printed with her permission!)

Hi Jim,

*Thank you for your blog. I found the comment re The Shack interesting. Richard Grey, an acquaintance of mine from Stephen's Open to Question persuaded a manager at the Plaza Truro to put on a private showing on condition that he would guarantee X number of seats filled. That was about four weeks ago. The manager was originally not keen as it was a Christian film and therefore of presumably very limited interest. Let alone not PC... let's face it Christian!!*

*The seats were filled, sold out etc. Now it is showing to the general public in Truro next week I think.*

*I had to miss it as I had a bad fall and was hospitalised for three days!*

*About eight years ago I read The Shack and it left an impression....*

*I passed it onto my father who, despite being in the early stages of vascular dementia read it and commented that it was a wonderfully simple explanation of the Trinity and he wondered why people always made such a fuss about it!*

*When I saw it was showing in Redruth I decided to risk seeing it.*

*I am very glad I did. It was great to be watching a Christian film with a presumably Christian audience for starters. I knew two other people there at the same showing, one an extreme liberal, another a conservative evangelical, plus me liberal with the odd slightly conservative sprinkle! Afterwards I found that all three of us had been surprised and impressed on the whole and enjoyed it!*

*It is after all an absolutely impossible topic: a back female for God plus trying to give substance and gender to the Holy Spirit, Jesus was relatively easy... a Jew in jeans. Then there is the huge problem of wrestling with omnipotent, omnipresent omnieverythingelshness of the divine and suffering, intolerable pain, grief etc. Forgiveness and what that means... it's way too big to squash into a mere film. Yet I thought it had integrity. There were bits I wasn't that happy about... for me it was over iced at the end... like a sermon which goes on and on making the point instead of allowing people to arrive using their own understanding. So reduce and or cut off about the last ten or fifteen minutes. It was too American but that's my prejudice.*

*But it did not skip, hide or avoid the nitty gritty, there was one exceptional scene near the end involving Judgement and Wisdom. The main character acted well, the person sitting in the seat next to my husband was having a good cry!*

*I think it well worth seeing if only to support a Christian film and to have a good discussion afterwards!*

Kind Regards

Wendy

*Redruth are giving it another week! Wow!*



(Joy Gunter)

**A way to solve the problem of hospital bed blocking?**

And showing that the church is willing and able to serve in the community.



# Chaplain's Blog July 2017



- ✓ Everyone in England lives in a C of E parish.
- ✓ Many parishes have pastoral teams, people being DBS checked.
- ✓ Many hospitals have all beds full [and waiting in corridors] because people cannot be discharged due to lack of appropriate support at home.
- ✓ Social Service departments need time to set up appropriate care packages.
- ✓ Could the C of E fill the gap between discharge from hospital and a care package being put in place?
- ✓ This would require close liaison between ward staff, social services and the vicar and pastoral teams. It could involve a pastoral team member getting in milk and essential supplies, welcoming someone home and possibly making tea and visiting the next day until a care package is in place.

This would need discussion between RCHT, CC Social Services department and the church [who?]

Joy Gunter

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29<sup>th</sup> June 2017



In case anyone was wondering how Lez was doing 7 weeks after her hip replacement, here she is in church yesterday putting out chairs for Worship for All!

I think the prayers worked!



## Reader's Day 2018 and the next quiet day

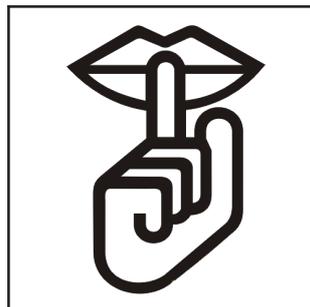
Carrie and I went up to Bodmin recently to visit St Petroc's church to consider it as a venue for the Reader's day next May (19/05/2018).



The move was prompted by the Shire House putting up its prices to about £800 and removing any discount and both Carrie and I actually felt that they had done us a favour!

St Petroc's was open, peaceful and welcoming and we happened upon a bell ringer who had popped in to do a job in the tower. He chatted very enthusiastically and explained how they organised things for the big hand bell festival they hold there.

The theme for the day will be prayer, originally suggested by Bishop Chris and we have a lot of ideas! As Bishop Chris will be rather busy in coming months there will be a panel of Readers to plan the day. More news of this soon.



**The next quiet day** is November 30<sup>th</sup>, which is a Thursday at Epiphany house.

We have invested in Colin Brown, a fantastic facilitator. He is a professional artist and is a Church Army member.

Numbers will be strictly limited so early booking is advisable because the Advent Quiet Day is usually very popular!