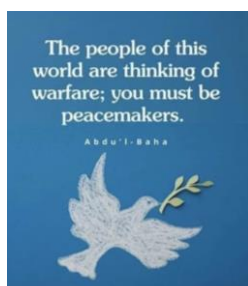


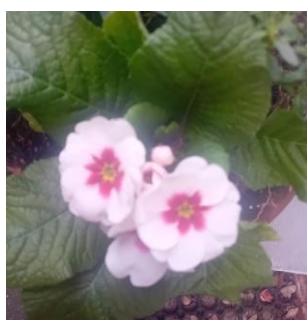
NEWSLETTER

23rd January 2025



Dear Everyone.

Unity, Peace and Love: This week of prayer for Unity among our churches could be seen as an appropriate time to help us learn from all denominations. We are so aware that divisions have impaired our relationships at all levels. Perhaps we could come to realise that Unity is the greatest gift Christ has given us - Unity and love. Not just among ourselves but to those of other Faiths too that we may put aside those differences that prevent understanding – difficult though it may be. After so many months of death and warfare, that we see daily, and has caused so much grief and horror to so many, we continue to pray unceasingly for all those who are suffering unimaginable pain, mentally and physically, that will last for so long. The return of the of the hostages on both sides is a cause of rejoicing, so is an end to conflict, if it really happens, and will bring great relief to the war-torn nations; especially the thousands of innocent children and their families. We remember too that in the Holy Land there are many Christians who come under the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, who have been involved in the conflict, especially supporting and working in the hospitals. Below is a Statement from, “The Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East” on the cease fire. It is appealing to the regions leaders to invest in peace. It was sent by, Canon Richard Sewell, Dean of St Georges College Jerusalem. I thought you might like to read it and pray for all those involved in this conflict on all sides, remembering that we are called to be “Instruments of peace” and to hold onto Jesus’s words, “Blessed are the Peacemakers”



Epiphany: This week we heard the story of Jesus’s first miracle (John 2:1-11) in which the transformation of water into wine at the wedding at Cana took place. Many people have written about the symbolism of this

act, none more so than Malcolm Guite, who, as usual, has some profound insights into the miracle. He points out that John calls this a “Sign”, rather than a miracle which shows the abundant generosity of Jesus in more than meeting our needs in the midst of everyday life, and his concern for the people he is with. Below are his comments and a sonnet about the happening at Cana.



The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: A Service was held at All Saint’s Church, Childs Hill that enabled us to pray together for Unity among ourselves, our churches and across the world which is so badly needed. It was so good that we met up with friends from different denominations and heard the Revd Aled Jones, Minister of the Hampstead Garden Free Church, preach.

Request re World Day of Prayer Committee: While we were talking after the service, a representative from the Free Church, asked if we have anyone from our congregation who would like to join “The World Day Of Prayer Committee”, in place of Sheila, who has represented us faithfully for so long but is unable to carry on due to illness. `Being on the committee is not arduous. It means meeting a couple of times to prepare for the service, which this year will be taking place at St Edwards RC Church, Temple Fortune on Friday 7th March at 2.00pm. The Service has been written by the women of the Cook Islands. If you are interested, please would you speak to me after the service on Sunday.

The Revd Canon Dr Catherine Okoronkwo, Canon Steward at St Paul's Cathedral, reflects on the great question many of us have been asking while we pray for unity and peace, of “Where is God in all the suffering and struggle of humanity?”. She makes an interesting response by comparing our own conflicts amid all the angst of a world in disorder and our wondering about the greater meaning of our existence. She makes a comparison with that of Esther (Esther 4.14), who, in her own conflict hears the message, “...*Perhaps you have come for just such a time as this*”. Canon Okoronkwo asks us, “might this apply to us? “what is the meaning of life for us”? “What difference can we make, are we making? What do you think about her thoughts on this subject? What are yours?

In Memory of Ann: Part of the Service last Sunday was dedicated to the memory of Ann, who died after Christmas. To give everyone a chance to remember and grieve for her it was thought right we should do this together. Her son Ugo, older brother to Ije and Amaka, represented the family and gave a Eulogy, speaking of her as a kind, loving and gentle mother, who gave her life to them all, especially caring for Gideon in his illness. Rose, a very long term friend, spoke of her warm and compassionate heart. Our memories of Ann, who was a faithful member of this church, who sung in the choir for many years and attended until Gideon’s illness made it difficult for her, will be remembered with much love. Choruses were sung and many prayers said. We pray that she is now in peace in the Love of God. Rest well Good and Faithful Servant.



Birthday Greetings: Happy Birthday was sung to Anita and prayers given for her in the hope of a good year ahead.



Food Bank: This is just to remind you that we contribute provisions to All Saint's Food Bank. Please put contributions on the table in church and they will be taken to All Saints during the week. With many thanks.

Wednesday Morning Coffee: from 10.30am-12noon; coffee, cake and a chat. Do come and join in.

Listening and Learning, Bible Study: This session will take place on Thursday, 23rd January at 6.30pm.

Toddler Group: This group is in church every Tuesday from 9.30 – 11.30am. We are very grateful to all those who help and keep the group going. If anyone would like to volunteer to help during his time we would be very grateful to hear from you. Please talk to ifey or Kamran.

With love and good wishes for a coming Spring that is hopeful and peace-filled - Sally



*The Episcopal Church
in Jerusalem and the Middle East
The Diocese of Jerusalem*



الكنيسة الأسقفية
في القدس والشرق الأوسط
مُطَرَّانِيَّةُ الْقُدْسِ

Statement on the Recently Announced Ceasefire between Israel and Hamas

January 19, 2025

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

This past Wednesday evening, the Prime Minister of Qatar, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, announced that, after more than a year of unproductive deliberations, negotiations between the Israeli government and Hamas had finally reached an agreement for a ceasefire between the two warring parties.

The first phase of the ceasefire, lasting 42 days, was agreed to begin today.

During this time, hostilities are to cease and armed forces withdraw in order to facilitate the release of an agreed number of hostages and prisoners, a surge in humanitarian relief, and the return of all displaced Gazans to what remains of their neighborhoods and homes.

Concurrently, negotiations are to continue in order to work out the details of two additional phases. These would ultimately result in the release of all remaining hostages, the liberation of many additional Palestinian prisoners, the withdrawal of occupying forces, and the cessation of all hostilities. If successful, these envisioned phases would essentially bring the devastating 15-month-long war to an end.

Having repeatedly called for such a negotiated outcome, the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem welcomes this ceasefire. Moreover, we appeal to fellow Christians and all those of goodwill to continue to advocate and pray not only for the adoption of the full agreement, but also for the region's leaders and people to invest as much of their political and financial capital towards *peacebuilding* as they tragically have in *waging warfare* over these past many months—and in the decades preceding. Only through such a transformative change of hearts, we believe, can there emerge a just and lasting peace between the peoples of the Holy Land, as well as among all those living throughout the Middle East.

At this time, we would like to commend the courageous staff and volunteers of our Ahli Arab Hospital and its clinics in Gaza, who have endured unbearable hardships in extending Christ's healing ministry to the thousands of wounded patients they have treated throughout the course of the war. They are the true heroes of this disastrous chapter in our region's history.

We would also like to thank our many partners and donors around the world: Without your generous support, we could not have kept our hospital supplied and running amid the many adversities it has faced. In the weeks and months ahead, there will be more opportunities to contribute towards expanding the work of our hospital in order to meet the increasingly desperate needs of the battered Gazan community in the face of a largely demolished healthcare system.

Finally, we would like to call attention to Christ's words from the Sermon on the Mount, quoted above: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." These are one of the eight *Beatitudes* or *blessed sayings* of our Lord, so-called because those who embody them will not only be blessed by God, but also become a blessing to countless others.

May it be our prayer that, in the days and weeks to come, the Almighty might indeed grant us the blessings of peace in our troubled region—and that those blessings might begin within each one of us.

An Epiphany at Cana - Malcolm Guite

The readings for this Sunday in Epiphany tell the story of 'the first of the signs that Jesus did and manifested forth his glory'; the transformation of water into wine at the wedding at Cana. (John 2:1-11). I love this miracle, though John doesn't call it a miracle, he rightly calls it a sign. It is a sign that points to so many profound and liberating things about the God whom Jesus reveals to us; His delight in and concern for our own personal life and loves, attested by His presence at the wedding feast, His abundant generosity in more than meeting our needs in the midst of everyday life, His call to us to move from the mere outward purity, symbolised by the water for ritual washing, to a transformation of inward joy, symbolised by the wine. But most importantly, this sign points to the gift of His very self, His own heart's blood, given once for all on the cross and received by us in communion.

Epiphany at Cana

Here's an epiphany to have and hold,
A truth that you can taste upon the tongue,
No distant shrines and canopies of gold
Or ladders to be clambered rung by rung,
But here and now, amidst your daily living,
Where you can taste and touch and feel and see,
The spring of love, the fount of all forgiving,
Flows when you need it, rich, abundant, free.

Better than waters of some outer weeping,
That leave you still with all your hidden sin,
Here is a vintage richer for the keeping
That works its transformation from within.
'What price?' you ask me, as we raise the glass,
'It cost our Saviour everything he has.'
It cost our Saviour everything he has



Painting by Emma Major

*Emma is a poet, artist, wheelchair user, pioneer and author.
The symbolism in her paintings reach out to many people.*

Reflections for the New Year from Catherine Okoronkwo Esther

“...Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” Esther 4.14

Many of us find ourselves at a crossroad at some point in our lives. Should we take the road less travelled or the more familiar route? It is often with the start of the new year people spend time reevaluating their life. Have I made good choices? Where is my life headed? What is the purpose of all this? And amid all the angst of a world in disorder, many wonder about the greater meaning of our existence.

In churches up and down the country, we pray for unity and peace. Where is God in all the suffering and struggle of humanity? Like Esther, all of us have a purpose – to fulfil God’s plans for our lives. It might not be to rescue a nation, but perhaps, we are called to reflect the goodness of God in our households, with our neighbours and in our communities.

In my recent move to London, I have been taken aback by the rise in tent cities in Central London (having lived in London twenty years ago). Research by the charity Shelter states that there is a “14% increase in homelessness in the UK” caused by factors such as skyrocketing rents and lack of affordable housing. Not surprisingly, the Trussell Trust reports that food poverty is on the rise. I find these realities hard-hitting, having just enjoyed a bountiful Christmas and knowing that I have the blessing and security of food and shelter.

What stirs your soul as you notice the broken parts of our world and listen to the spirit of God? Because this stirring might signal what God is asking of you, having prepared you for “such a time as this”. And thankfully, following Esther’s example, we can lean into God as we embrace those God appointments to witness, serve and love.



***The Revd Canon Dr Catherine Okoronkwo
is Canon Steward at St Paul’s Cathedral,***



Medieval Stonemasonry

The sheer artistry and craft of the medieval stonemasons can be found in so many of our ancient churches in the UK and Europe. The stone effigies and images of so many bible stories and of the people in the Towns and Cities where they are working showing the life they lived, are often humorous as well as serious depictions of stories. Wells Cathedral is full of them and it always pays a visitor to look up to the columns so not to miss them. As it is the season of Epiphany, there are two carvings that show their particular skill and detail. One is of three wise men on their way to find Jesus that show them resting on their journey, three in a bed, with an angel guarding them or perhaps warning them not to go back to Herod.



The other, below, is showing the **Adoration of the Magi**, and is from the West face of Muiredach's High Cross, Monasterboice, in Co. Louth, Ireland. In the carving there are four wise men/Magi. Writing about this carving the author says, *"There are also 4 Magi depicted, The Bible doesn't say how many there were. It is just tradition that there were 3 since there were 3 presents!"*

The photo of this carving was taken from a blog by Dr. Louise Nugent writing about medieval carvings. The Link to original photographer no longer exists.



We give thanks for the beautiful skilled work by masons who lived so long ago and have left a heritage for us to admire in our Cathedrals and Churches in so many countries.

Unmaking Mary

Chine McDonald

At St Paul's Cathedral

Tuesday 11th February, 6.30-8pm

Admission Free, All Welcome

For two thousand years, the Virgin Mary has been depicted throughout art, literature and culture as symbolising the perfect mother: chaste, beautiful, meek, mild and white. These supposed virtues and symbols have penetrated not just Christianity but wider popular culture; and contributed to harmful views about motherhood and what it is to be a woman

Chine McDonald will deconstruct the myth of perfect motherhood and reflect on its theological, social and personal impact, proposing a more authentic, grace-filled way forward.

Chine McDonald is the Director of Theos, the religion and society think tank. Previously she headed community fundraising and public engagement at Christian Aid. The author of the best-selling *God is Not a White Man (and other revelations)*, her latest book is *Unmaking Mary: Shattering the Myth of Perfect Motherhood*.

Reserve free places

How We Are

We send all those who are sick our love. Please continue to pray for them that they gain in strength and good health. We pray that God's healing hands may be upon them. Pray also for those who are grieving because of the loss of a loved one.

Pray for Myfanwy Khan, who is not at all well. She is home now from the Royal Free and being well looked after by Florence her carer. Pray for Diana Turvie, who is still unwell from a stomach ailment, for Anita Houghton, Tony Nwanodi, Chuba Agbim, Eunice Adiele, Gideon Onwutalu, Sir Edmund Onochie, Rose Ochwada, and Sheila Grodzinsky. Anita has asked us to pray for her good friend, Angela Dhillon, who is about to go into hospital for an operation.

We hold all the above in our hearts that they may be filled with God's healing love.

We remember Ann Onwutalu with love and sadness and pray for Gideon and their children at this time.

Please continue to let us know of family members and friends who are sick and would welcome our prayers, either by WhatsApp, email, Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk or by phone, 020 8455 1873

Topic: Church Wardens' Personal Meeting Room

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/8585545365?pwd=em85aDF5ZmJ5ZkVlb0xDaDhY2paUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 554 5365

Passcode: J4FbKf

Reader:

Intercession:

Hospitality:

Eucharist Minister:

AV Desk:

Contact details:

Parish Priest: Revd Kamran Bhatti Office Tel: 020 8455 1873 Website: www.gg-pc.co.uk

Jan - Feb 2025

Date	Bible Passage	Readers	Intercessor	Refreshments	Eucharistic Minister	AV Desk	Duty Managers	Service leader
26/01/25	Psalms 19:1-6	Elizabeth	Nehar	Cynthia / Chinwe	Daniel/Ezim	Ruth	Synthia	Jenny
	I Corinthians 12:12-31a	Dozie						
	Luke 4:14-21							
02/02/25	Psalms 71:1-6	Guy	Alexis	Nora	Ifeyinwe/Onyeka	Onyeka	Shaniv	
	I Corinthians 13:1-13	Keith						
	Luke 4:21-30							
09/02/25	Psalms 138	Khan	Simon	Silvia	Nehar/Nwadi	Shaniv	Chinwe	Nehar
	I Corinthians 15:1-11	Cynthia						
	Luke 5:1-11							