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EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE TO LIVE GOD'S WORD

Revive us again!

Lee Gatiss finds encouragement to pray for revival in the Church of England from Psalms 83–85.

It's hard not to be sombre about the state of the Church of England at the moment. At a national level, there has been a massive failure of due process and good leadership, and there is a gigantic deficit of good theology, healthy church discipline, and acceptable safeguarding practice. Instead of 'Repent and believe the good news!', as Jesus preached (Mark 1:15), the corporate messaging nowadays seems to be that one can believe in anything and need repent of nothing – all with God's blessing.

Doomed, defeated, and depressed?

It puts me in mind of Psalm 83, written when it seemed that God's people were doomed, defeated, and depressed. An alliance of enemies from all around had conspired with cunning to plot against them. Early church fathers such as Jerome (342–420) saw these crafty adversaries as a prophetic picture of false teachers abusing the church, while Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) saw them as insolent external foes such as persecution and unbelief. John Calvin (1509–1564) commented on this psalm: 'But it is, as it were, the destiny of the Church, not only to be assailed by external enemies, but to suffer far greater trouble at the hands of false brethren. At the present day, none are more furiously mad against us than counterfeit Christians.'

And the psalmist cries out in the midst of this assault: 'O God, do not remain silent; do not turn a deaf ear, do not stand aloft, O God …'

I often find myself praying along just such lines at this time. I want the Church of England nationally to know that God is God, and to honour his word, when it seems that it has been sidelined and ignored and attacked. And when church attendances have understandably plummeted across the country, 'Come on, God – please do something about it!' It is disheartening and exhausting to be constantly on the defensive against all kinds of pressures, and it is natural for a Christian to turn to God, and ask for divine relief.

Last year I visited the Alamo, the historic Spanish mission and fortress in the charming city of San Antonio (USA). It's the scene of a famous battle in 1836. It is there that Davy Crockett and other American heroes – joined by defenders from several other countries, including England I discovered – were besieged by a far superior Spanish force which sought to take over the land. They were surrounded, but fought on. 'We have only begun to fight; this is not the end,' they said. Colonel William Travis, commander of the Alamo defence forces, literally drew a line in the

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sand with his sword. 'The Lord is on our side,' he asserted. Yet they all (about one hundred and eighty of them) died, for the cause of freedom and the Protestant faith under threat of prohibition. No relief came that day; there was no cavalry coming over the hill to save them. Yet their cause was ultimately triumphant, and today the Alamo museum and gift shop is in Texas, not in Mexico.

It's common in those parts to hear people say, with determination, 'Remember the Alamo.' And here in England I often want to pray like the psalmist: 'Lord, remember the Church of England! Do not remain silent when it's your cause that is under threat in General Synod, and in our nation as a whole. May those who oppose you be dismayed and put to shame, and know that you are God.'

God's dwelling-place

In the next psalm (Psalm 84), the psalmist turns to reflect on something far more positive: his experience of praising God with others in the Temple. 'My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God… Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere,' he says (Psalm 84:2, 10). In the midst of many assaults and difficulties, we long for an end to it all, and for a transforming encounter with the true presence of God.

This is the experience of many when they come across the Church of England at a local level: in our parish churches we are near to God, feed on his word, praise his name, and love his people. God is not absent; he has not abandoned us. Despite the negativity emanating from our national church institutions,

Prayer Diary: April

Please pray every day that God's blessing will be on Church Society to sustain it and guide its ministry.

1 Pray that the bishops and clergy in the Church of England would uphold biblical teaching on human sexuality.

2 Pray for a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, and for many to turn to the Lord in these times of distress and upheaval.

3 Airmyn* (Sheffield) – Vicar, Philip Ball.

4 Pray for Ros Clarke, Associate Director, for rest, refreshment, and reset during her sabbatical (until 1st July).

5 Pray for Lee Gatiss speaking to all the clergy in the Anglican Province of Chile, from 5th–13th April. For safe travels and fruitful speaking opportunities.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you.
1 Peter 5:2

6 Akeley* (Oxford) – Rector, Hans Taling. We are still in the process of looking for funding for our new church building. So far £170k of the £450k needed has been raised. Please pray for the remaining funds to be provided.

7 Pray for Parliament and Government, especially for the witness of Christians.

8 Anchorsholme, All Saints (Blackburn) – Vicar, Anthony Barnshaw.

9 Pray for aged and infirm Christians with limited opportunities for Christian fellowship, and those who care for them.

10 Pray for more evangelical archdeacons and bishops. Particularly pray that complementarian evangelicals will be appointed to these senior positions.

11 Audley, St James the Great (Lichfield) – Vacancy.

12 Babcary*, Holy Cross (Bath & Wells) – Vacancy.

13 Pray for clergy who face opposition and difficulty in their parish, and from the wider church, to remain faithful to Christ.

While the gospel continues to be preached and believed in so many of our churches, there is still hope and a future.

here in many parishes there is real gospel joy.

At congregational level, there is so much to give thanks for in the Church of England. Many evangelical churches are thriving; children are being brought up in the faith; new churches are being planted; old ones are being slowly revitalised. So even while we lament what is going on in the House of Bishops and in General Synod, it is simply not true that the Church of England is lifeless, dead, and over. While the gospel continues to be preached and believed in so many of our churches, there is still hope and a future, however bleak some of the headlines may seem. We continue to seek God's face in the midst of all the fog.

Revival

Psalms 83 and 84 are important context for Psalm 85, which helps to guide and inform our prayers for the national church right now. The psalmist begins by remembering what God had done in the past for his people when they were at a low ebb. 'You, LORD, showed favour to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob' (Psalm 85:1). He recalls the way in which God had revived his people previously when things had not been going well; how he had turned from his fierce anger in disciplining them, and restored their fortunes and his favour.

Such revivals can be seen in the pages of the Bible itself. God rescued his people from many hostile adversaries in the era of the judges; he revived them in the days of Josiah; he brought them back from exile in Babylon; he protected and strengthened them in the time of Nehemiah. It's not clear if the psalmist has one of these moments particularly in mind, so we can surely repurpose the general idea.

We have also seen revivals in England too. The Lord restored our spiritual fortunes through the work of men such as Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer during the Reformation. He showed favour to us in the Evangelical Revivals of the eighteenth century through the preaching of George Whitefield and the labours of Selina of Huntingdon. And he poured out his blessings upon our nation and the world through the evangelical endeavours of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury in the nineteenth century, and the evangelistic campaigns of the twentieth. There is a church building in every village, town, and city of this land, as a testimony to how he has been at work amongst us over the last two millennia.

But this is not simply nostalgia for a bygone era. The psalm quickly shifts to lament and yearning. Verses 4-6 express a preceptive sense of God's present displeasure and a desire for restored favour and joy: 'Restore us again, God our Saviour, and put away your displeasure towards us. Will you be angry with us for ever?' This echoes with concerns within the Church of England about declining attendance, changing demographics, political paralysis, and perceived cultural irrelevance. The cry, 'Will you not revive us again?' becomes a prayer for a reawakening of faith and purpose, in the nation and in its established church.

This plea for revival resonates with the longing of many within the Church of England for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a revitalisation of spiritual life, and a renewal of authentic faith. What we need above all is not political victories in the arena of General Synod, which is so often just a polemical pantomime performance. Such victories would be welcome, but what we really need is a rejuvenated relationship with God, a rekindled passion for his word, and a revivified mission to the confused and lost people of this broken and polarised island. 'Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down!', as Isaiah 64:1 so poignantly puts it. We need God himself to act.

Rebuilding after judgment

While our generation is seeking clarity on crucial

moral and spiritual issues, we are going through a time of judgment. Quite apart from the recent pandemic and the current challenges to our nation's economy and health, we have moral confusion, poor leadership, false teaching, no sense of direction, and a famine of the word of the Lord (Amos 8:11). These are tell-tale signs of a nation and a church under the heavy hand of God, who threatens to curse our blessings (Malachi 2:1–9). Antisemitism tolerated on our streets, creeping censorship in our schools, and indulgent lethargy encouraged on our sofas while we scroll through endless superficialities – all are indicators of a profound generational malaise.

Judgment begins with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17), so even the evangelical world has been rocked by various exposés and scandals of late, that we too might be purified as part of this divine refining. We are not immune, because we are not as sanctified and special as we may comfortingly have asserted ourselves to be. Let us hope that there emerges from these ashes, a deep personal and corporate repentance, so we are ready to rebuild after the earthquake and fire. 'The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.' But, 'Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.' (Psalm 85:12–13). Revival may follow the judgment, if God in his sovereign mercy so chooses. But perhaps only as we seek to amend the mistakes of the past and somehow put our own house in order.

For the glory of God and the good of England, please join me in praying for this kind of revival.

Lee Gatiss is the Director of Church Society.

Prayer Diary: April

14 Bacup* (Manchester) – Vacancy.

15 Pray for wisdom for all those who are considering full-time ministry in the Church of England, and for those whose job it is to discern vocations nationally and within each diocese.

16 Barton Seagrave, St Botolph (Peterborough) – Rector, Mark Lucas.

17 Pray that evangelical Anglican theological colleges would not be discriminated against when candidates are advised on training.

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:12

18 Bebington, St Andrew (Chester) – Rector, David Vestergaard. Give thanks and pray for our growing staff team (Children & Families worker and Curate, both working across our two churches, and a retired vicar joining us soon). Thank God for newer members of the congregation, and pray for integration, discipleship and fellowship.

19 Pray for the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

20 Beeby, All Saints* (Leicester) – Vacancy.

21 Pray for the ministry of readers and the responsibilities of churchwardens and members of PCCs.

22 Beeston next Mileham* (Norwich) – Vacancy.

23 Pray that evangelical leaders in the Church of England will work well across networks for the sake of a common witness and common goals, especially in responding to Living in Love and Faith.

24 Bispham, All Hallows (Blackburn) – Rector, Jonny Lee. Please pray that we would reach more families with the gospel, grow in prayer, and develop leaders as we seek to make Jesus known in Bispham and beyond. Pray for Mark, our recently appointed associate minister for community outreach, to settle in well and make a great start.

How to be revived

Aled Seago reports on the recent Fellowship of Word and Spirit (FWS) conference on revival.

'My name is Aled and I am a pessimist.'

I begin with this slightly odd admission on purpose. When I hear the word 'revival,' I automatically switch off into a sceptical sphere of desolation. Surely these days are over; especially just at the moment?

Yet, I am beyond thankful to God for FWS 2024. Disclaimer: I serve as a trustee for the conference, but even if I didn't, I'd say what I'm going to say now.

FWS is the only conference I go to. It's reformed theology, applied in stimulating and real ways, and involves *conferring*. In other words, we talk to each other. We invite discussion and debate in the context of fostering warm and encouraging relationships. It's a chilled, faithful gathering.

This year the conference was on the theme of revival, which on first glance may feel like a tone-deaf choice: how can we possibly think of revival with the Church of England's present trajectory? Surely we need to consolidate, lament, and express our hurt. There's room of course for those things. However, I have found that this kind of pattern has become a be-all-and-end-all in evangelical gatherings. After all, we do believe, as Article-abiding Anglicans, in the sovereignty and grace of God.

Rob Munro encouraged us as under-shepherds to do as Jesus directs us: love sheep. Love, and care for those under our care. Love them, by providing for them, and protecting them.

Looking at the context of revival

It turns out, as a bruised, battered, pessimist, that this conference, on this theme, is exactly where I needed to be. Simon Vibert's three Bible readings really helped us anchor the context of revival in Scripture and recent church history: it starts with lament. Repentance, and crying out to God in sorrow for our sin, *yearning* for him in prayer, is the heart of revival.

For revival, biblically speaking, is renewal, restoration, returning, repenting, converting, under the sovereign work of God. And goodness me, perhaps the times we are in are encouraging us to pray these prayers. We were encouraged to pray for unction: that is, those moments where the preaching of God's word particularly resonates within our hearts, minds and bodies, as the power of God by his Spirit accompanies the preaching of his word.

We were also treated to a veritable feast of historical dives into earlier revivals. We looked at the way in which God worked through Constantine and Charlemagne in the first millennium, and how a big view of God, with a

serious view of sin and Scripture, transformed whole societies. Fast-forwarding to more modern figures such as J.C. Ryle and Jonathan Edwards reinforced the principle: we do not create revival, yet revival happens when we start praying. When we long for God, earnestly confessing our sins, and asking for the Spirit to move, revival occurs.

Loving the sheep under our care

The final session was a very helpful, clear and inspiring pastoral charge from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet, Rt Rev Rob Munro. He took us back to the negative portrait of Israel's shepherds in Ezekiel 34, and encouraged us as under-shepherds to do as Jesus directs us: love sheep. Love, and care for those under our care. Love them, by providing for them, and protecting them. By pursuing the lost with passion; let us not let the Prayers of Love and Faith process in Synod distract us from evangelism, and in doing so, let us prioritise the powerless. Finally, persevere through the pain. One message that rang through the whole conference that I particularly appreciated was the older generation of faithful gospel ministers spurring on my generation, that face different challenges in the future.

Hungering for God

For me, this conference was incredibly providential. Fresh(ish) from a battering failed revitalisation ministry, I needed personal revival. Not a conversion, but a repenting: a turning back to God from relying on myself to fix the church. We may see revival in our parched land once again, perhaps even in my lifetime. Hence why I began this article by admitting to a pessimistic worldview. If *I* can say that, as a result of this conference, then it will encourage your hearts, stir your souls, stretch your minds, and we pray that we will be hungering for God in our churches. Let us pray that our Lord will 'rend the heavens and come down' (Isaiah 64:1), in this land, this denomination, this post-Christian time.

Aled Seago is the Minister of Emmanuel Church Cheadle Hulme in the Diocese of Chester, a trustee of FWS, and author of In Search of a Perfect Father*, part of Latimer Trust's new series introducing Anglican Doctrine.*

Renewal ministry in the CofE

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Phillip Young writes about a new wave of revitalisation ministries.

What do the churches of Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea, mentioned in the Apostle John's Revelation, have in common? They don't exist today. There may be a few believers in one or two of those places, but the historic Christian presence in those geographies died out centuries, if not more than a millennium, ago. So what happened? How could places where people had received the gospel – even from those who were eye-witnesses of the Lord Jesus, the Apostles – become spiritual wastelands? Well, at least part of the answer to that question is that some believers moved away, some struggled to hand down the gospel from one generation to another, and some gave up under pressure – or even persecution – from a non-Christian culture.

What happens in the Church of England when a parish is reduced to a handful of elderly people, or moved into a larger grouping of churches because it cannot afford even a part-time minister, or when a parish is known for the misdeeds of a former minister? The prospects are not great. But God is great – and the mission he gave his people, the Church, is to 'make disciples of all nations, …teaching them to obey everything [he] commanded [his apostles]' (Matthew 28:19–20). That's true as much for a parish struggling in any number of ways as it is for a 'strong' or 'vibrant' parish or a 'Resource Church' in the Church of England today. The outlook might be different, but if God is going to maintain a Christian presence in a place the *modus operandi* is the same: making disciples and teaching them to keep the commandments of Jesus.

We are investing in villages and communities with a historic Christian presence in the belief that God is not finished working in these places yet.

The ministry of revitalisation

So what hope is there for a declining parish? Some choose to plan, pray and gather a semi-local group of mature Christians to 'graft' into that parish, investing in the place and starting new ministries and outreach with the gospel firmly front and centre of their life and witness. Others, having received much from larger, thriving parishes in their formative days of Christian discipleship, decide to go and minister in such a parish (or parishes), bringing with their ministry, their families and prayerful hopes to a people looking for a way to maintain a Christian witness in that place. This is the ministry of revitalisation. It is possible because of the nature of the Church of England – parish fortunes rise and fall with each generation and, as an institution, the Church of England

is hesitant to close 'unviable' parishes – and therein lies the opportunity.

I belong to a network of ministers who have been called to parishes that have seen better days. Parishes that may be low on attendance and/or scant on finances, but have a wonderful (if small) community of people who are looking for some leadership. As those with deep convictions about the authority of God's word, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of prayer in establishing any enduring work for God, and the belief that he can do 'immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine' (Ephesians 3:20), we are investing in villages and communities with a historic Christian presence in the belief that God is not finished working in these places yet. We don't have big staff teams, we may not be in 'attractive' places (although I am personally based in the heart of Constable Country!), but we do have the word of God, which 'is alive and active' (Hebrews 4:12), and we have one another with whom we can share prayer concerns, from whom we can seek counsel, and with whom we can rejoice when we see clear signs of God's Spirit at work in revitalising communities, one soul at a time.

I must confess to being a fairly regular sharer in this network – mainly because what I am hoping and praying the Lord might do in the places and among the people I serve, is not always understood in evangelical circles. Nevertheless, it is a vision that is beginning to take root more broadly.

George Crowder, one of the founders of this network, now has a group of around 150

Prayer Diary: April–May

25 Pray for the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE), the Anglican Network in Europe (ANiE), and the Anglican Convocation in Europe (ACE), that God's kingdom may grow through their work.

26 Blackpool, St John (Blackburn) – Vicar, Andy Dykes. Give thanks for the thriving midweek youth group, and growing social transformation outreach work. Please pray for those in both groups so that we'd see more people coming to know Jesus. Please also thank God for our well-attended Alpha course.

27 Pray for those who are considering full-time ministry in the Church of England, and for those whose job it is to discern vocations nationally and within each diocese. Pray for wisdom and faithfulness.

The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD *establishes his steps.* Proverbs 16:9

28 Pray for Lee Gatiss's writing ministry, that his books and articles would be edifying and useful to the church.

29 Bournemouth (Throop), St Paul (Winchester) – P-in-C, James Findlay.

30 Pray for the Network of Revitalisation Ministries (NoRM) run by our regional directors. Pray it will encourage ministers in revitalisation work to have perseverance, faithfulness, patience and grace. Pray for fellow-workers to join them, and for many hearts to be rekindled in love for the Lord.

May

1 Bovingdon, St Lawrence (St Albans) – Vicar, Charles Burch.

2 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Tunbridge Wells today, with input from Church Society.

3 Bradfield & Stanford Dingley (Oxford) – P-in-C, Stephen Newbold.

4 Pray for Regional Directors, Tony Cannon and Chris Moore, to be effective in supporting gospel ministry across the country, and to work well with local and regional networks.

Despite all the toing and froing around the issues of the day, the backbone of the Church of England is clear and orthodox and gives us much with which to work in seeking to lead our parishes into healthier, more encouraging days.

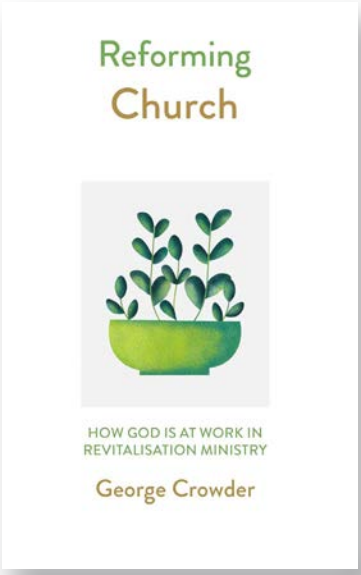
ministers labouring in the Lord's strength, serving once-declining parishes and praying for revitalisation. We catch up online (because of our dispersed geographies) regularly for fellowship, teaching and prayer, as well as in an ongoing WhatsApp group for sharing some of the ups and downs. This network has encouraged (and equipped) me greatly for the task of revitalisation where I am.

A spreading vision

As part of this vision that is beginning to spread, I read with interest George Crowder's *Reforming Church: How God Is at Work in Revitalisation Ministry*. The reader can hardly go a few pages without realising that George's vision, and his own experience of this ministry, has been soaked in Scripture. He uses well-known passages from both testaments to explore the why and the how of revitalisation ministry. He covers not just theological and ecclesiological considerations, but also administrative ones, crafting it all into a comprehensive vision for this particular ministry. He comes back, time and again, to his prayerful aim that 'local churches [become] roadworthy mission vehicles' (pp. 28, 29) – that is, confident in the gospel, mature in their discipleship and connected with their communities.

I found the breadth of experience and anecdotes George uses throughout the book incredibly helpful. There was no sense of 'do this and everything will be great', but rather an honesty that, even when things were going (or went) well, we are not immune to unforeseen discouragements. At one point, when describing the rather makeshift technological musical accompaniment to hymns in his own parish, he explains: 'Hymns were selected using a lectionary guide, and if the number of verses written didn't equate to the number of verses played, then the congregation accordingly sang *a capella* or listened to the organ recording in silence' (p. 24) – I chuckled because I have been there!

George also shares why *he* believes revitalisation should be a priority for evangelicals: 'Church revitalisation may be the best way to bring the gospel to a community. In some places, like rural parishes in South West England, it may be the only way.' (p. 10) He highlights that '…much of the rationale for investing in revitalisation ministry in the Church of England is based on the conviction that this is a legacy worth retrieving, renewing, and reviving' (p. 10). And that, if we're honest, is part of the reason why many of us are committed to this ministry. Despite all the toing and froing around the issues of the day, the backbone of the Church of England is clear and orthodox and gives us much with which to work in seeking to lead our parishes into healthier, more encouraging days.



Of course, George applies much of the wisdom in his book to his setting as a parish in the Church of England, but it is equally applicable to other mainline denominations with orthodox foundations that have seen better days. In a recent podcast on The Aaron Renn Show, Gen Z Youtuber Redeemed Zoomer discussed his case for why Christians should not abandon mainline denominations. It seems that in our cultural moment with so much reflection on negative legacies from the past, many are also seeing positive legacies from the past – and yearning for a return to them. Maybe that is because our God is in the business of revitalisation. As St. Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*: 'You are never new, never old, and yet all things have new life from You' (I.4). May our Lord grant new life to many through the patient, faithful witness of those involved in revitalisation ministry. *Soli Deo gloria.*

Phillip Young is Rural Missioner to the Harwich Deanery.

Prayer Diary: May

5 Pray for evangelicals to be engaged in the synods and committees of the Church of England, for the sake of the gospel. Pray especially for those serving on General Synod.

6 Brixton St Matthew with St Jude (Southwark) – Vicar, Stephen Sichel.

7 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Yeovil today, with input from Church Society.

8 Brixton, St Paul w St Saviour (Southwark) – P-in-C, Heather Peters.

9 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in London today, with input from Church Society.

Stir up one another to love and good works.
Hebrews 10:24

10 Brunswick, Christ Church (Manchester) – Rector, Simon Gatenby. Praise God for the provision of funds for building works to refurbish our community hub, enabling continued outreach and service to our multicultural community. Pray for wisdom and discernment as to how we best celebrate our 50th anniversary in the summer, looking ahead with hope for the future.

11 Pray for our publishing ministry to be clear and faithful in equipping the church: *The Global Anglican*, *Crossway*, books, podcast, and online.

12 Burlingham (North)* (Norwich) – Rector, Kevin Billson.

13 Pray for the work of the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) as it seeks to contend for the gospel in the Church of England. Particularly pray for their work in encouraging churches and ministers to hold fast to biblical teaching on sexuality in the ongoing LLF discussions.

14 Burlingham (South)* with Lingwood (Norwich) – Vacancy.

15 Burton-on-Trent, All Saints w Christ Church (Lichfield) – P-in-C, David Collier.

The blessing and goal of unity

Jake Eggertsen looks at the issue of Church unity, in the context of a prayer of Jesus.

'Unity' has become a catchword in the Church of England in recent times. At the February meeting of the Church of England's General Synod, the Bishop of Leicester – the lead Bishop for the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) process – proposed a reset shaped around '10 commitments'. This reset, focussed on 'reconciliation and bridge-building' and aimed at 'cultivating unity as far as possible,' offered greater transparency and sought to re-establish the trust lost through the LLF process. Yet, the proposal did not make it to a vote, indicating a struggle to agree even the framework for future conversations designed to unite our divided Church.

Unity also holds a significant place within evangelicalism. It's part of the Church of England Evangelical Council's (CEEC) vision to 'promote and pursue unity amongst evangelicals' so that mission and evangelism can flourish. At a time of crisis in the Church, this is a welcome ambition. As a member of the CEEC's council, I have found the sense of cohesion and togetherness across the spectrum of evangelicals within the council personally inspiring. Still, the response to the General Synod's approval of blessings for same-sex couples has revealed differing reactions among evangelicals across various contexts, parishes, and dioceses within the Church of England.

In this short article, I want to explore how Christ's prayer for unity informs our understanding of unity within the Church of England, as well as its implications for navigating divergent paths within the evangelical constituency.

The staggering assertion in Jesus' prayer is that our unity with one another is an external manifestation of the covenant of redemption and an indication of the perfect oneness of the Godhead.

Christ's prayer for unity

In John 17:20–23, Jesus prays for all his disciples. Specifically, he prays for their unity with one another. However, it's crucial to grasp the nature of this unity. It is a unity devised and defined by divine agency and action. Not merely a human construct, the unity of the church originates in God. In fact, the staggering assertion in Jesus' prayer is that our unity with one another is an external manifestation of the covenant of redemption and an indication of the perfect oneness of the Godhead. What's more, the prayer highlights how the unity of the church is attained through the mediatorship of Christ, given so that we share in Christ's glory, and used as an instrument to display the eternal love of God before a watching world. Insert 'mind blown' emoji here.

'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.'

John 17:20–23

Unity and disunity in the Church of England

The nub of the issue around the blessing of same-sex relationships continues to be disagreement about whether it constitutes a 'first-order' salvation issue. For many of us, it does. Marriage, according to the Church of England's prayer book, is an honourable and holy estate between a man and a woman, instituted in the beginning by God himself, which signifies the mystical union between Christ and his bride, the church. As such, the union of two persons takes us to the heart of creation and the heart of the gospel. Accordingly, nearly half of General Synod voted for an amendment to the Bishop of Leicester's proposal seeking to acknowledge that these 'are not matters on which [we] can simply agree to disagree'. Unfortunately, this was voted down, with many arguing that the Church's unity is a first-order issue, even if human sexuality and marriage is not.

So, given Christ's prayer in John 17, we should ask: is the unity of the Church a so-called first-order issue? Well, yes! Inasmuch as the basis for our unity falls within the boundaries of the Christian faith (as enshrined in the Church of England's historic formularies). Christ's prayer underscores the imperative of restoring and unifying the entire Church of England. This perhaps presents a challenge to those inclined towards isolationism or separatism. Engaging in dialogue with those we perceive to be outside the bounds of orthodoxy is necessary if unity is ever to be restored in the future.

Prayer Diary: May

16 Pray for Rob Munro to be faithful and godly in all his responsibilities as Bishop of Ebbsfleet. Pray for complementarian ministers and churches to be well-supported by his work.

17 Pray for wise administration and use of the funds and properties entrusted to Church Society for gospel work.

18 Pray for the continuing witness of the 39 Articles. For the Church of England to uphold them and ensure that they are taught and valued.

19 Camborne (Truro) – P-in-C, Rosheen Browning. Please pray that our Strategic Development Fund, funded project Transforming Mission continues to bear fruit among the poor and marginalised of parishes in the Camborne Cluster of Churches.

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. John 8:12

20 Pray for Luckley House School for which Church Society appoints Trustees, for wisdom and boldness for the senior team and governors to uphold a biblical Christian ethos through all aspects of school life.

21 Pray for the ministry of Church Society Trust, our patronage board meeting today, for wise appointments in all our Trust parishes. For Paul Darlington as Chairman. Pray also for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Stafford today, with input from Church Society.

22 Chadderton, Christ Church & St Saviour's (Manchester) – Vicar, Ben Wilkinson. Pray for the many people from Hong Kong who hear about Jesus whilst learning English here each week. Pray for people who joined us for Hope Explored and Christianity Explored in recent months to be established in the faith.

23 Pray for the Church Society Council meeting today, for useful discussions and wise decisions. For Andrew Towner as Chairman.

We foster unity by participating in communion with the God who reconciles us to himself and by joining in with Jesus' prayer for one another.

But can we 'move forward together', expressing present unity with those we sincerely believe are treating essential doctrines as things indifferent? Decidedly, no. Superficial unity, devoid of a shared confession and understanding of Christ's word, is unsustainable and unstable. Evangelicals must continue to uphold the Church's received doctrine of marriage, not to sow division but to pursue genuine unity through a call to a shared vision of and obedience to Christ.

Unity and disunity in evangelicalism

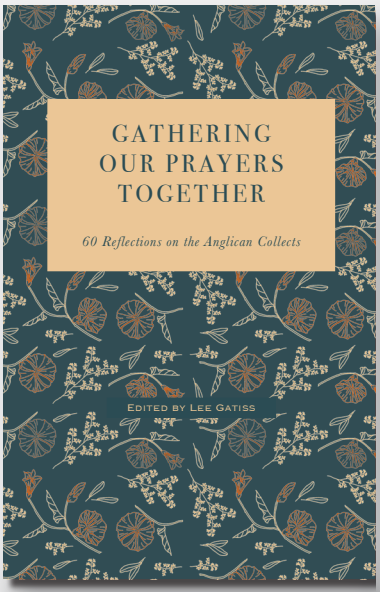
I believe one of the (heaven-sent) by-products of the Church of England's divisions over LLF is the unifying effect it's had on Anglican evangelicals committed to orthodox Christian teaching. The labels 'complementarian', 'egalitarian', 'charismatic', 'conservative', though important, are not the barriers to fellowship they once were. Despite the deep divisions in the Church of England at large, evangelicals are standing together for the sake of their shared faith. The growth of Diocesan Evangelical Fellowships (DEFs), the shared leadership of the CEEC, and the launch of the Alliance are all testimony to this.

That said, given the size, diversity, and breadth of the evangelical constituency, disagreements on strategies and decisions when it comes to 'contending to reform and renew the Church of England in biblical faith' are inevitable. What seems courageous to some is perceived as reckless by others. What is cowardly to one is wise to another. So, how can unity be fostered under these circumstances? Not by managerialism or force or peer pressure. Binding one another's consciences to particular actions will only serve to reinforce old barriers. Rather, we foster unity by participating in communion with the God who reconciles us to himself and by joining in with Jesus' prayer for one another. Only by this Godward focus will our unity be empowered and renewed, even as we disagree and differ in our expression of fidelity to Christ within our varied contexts.

Conclusion

John 17:20–23, says John Calvin, 'is a calm haven, and whoever retreats into it is safe from all dangers of shipwreck.' Christ's prayer for unity serves as a guide for navigating the complexities of unity within the Church of England. As we grapple with divergent paths and differing responses to the challenges posed by LLF, we must remember that true unity is not merely a superficial agreement but a deep, participatory sharing in the love and truth of Christ. Upholding the essential doctrines of our faith while fostering genuine dialogue and understanding – with one another and with others in the Church of England – is both possible and paramount to our pursuit of unity. May we continually seek communion with God and embody Christ's prayer for one another in our shared commitment to the gospel.

Jake Eggertsen is the Rector of St James' Trowbridge and St Leonard's Keevil in the Diocese of Salisbury.



Gathering Our Prayers Together: 60 Reflections on the Anglican Collects brings together reflections by Anglican clergy and laypeople on the Collects, the short prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer*. Each collect is printed in full in updated language, with explanation, application, and suggestions for your own personal prayer times.

The Prayer Book collects are an underappreciated treasure store of devotion. They focus our thoughts on the essentials of the Christian life and guide us through the changing seasons of the year. This collection of meditations on them displays their riches and will help us to apply them in our prayer lives as we seek to draw closer to God and to dedicate our lives more fully to him.

Gerald Bray, Research Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School.

Hardback (256pp) £14.99 from the Church Society website

Digital or Kindle version £9.99

Prayer Diary: May–June

24 Chadwell St Mary (Chelmsford) – Vacancy.

25 Chatham, St Philip & St James (Rochester) – Vicar, Martyn Saunders.

26 Pray for Lee Gatiss preaching at Holy Trinity, Oswestry today.

27 Cheadle, St Mary (Chester) – Rector, George Crowder.

28 Pray for Kirsten Birkett's work as Publications Manager, and Editor of *The Global Anglican* and *Crossway*, to be prayerful and biblical.

29 Chilton* (St Eds & Ips) – Rector, Andrew Doarks.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. James 1:17

30 Pray for churches with close links to schools, that they may be faithful and effective in presenting the Christian faith clearly.

31 Great Chishill* (Chelmsford) – Vacancy.

June

1 Pray that ministers would teach their congregations clearly and faithfully what the Bible says about issues of the day.

2 Compton Chamberlayne* (Salisbury) – Team Rector, Graham Southgate.

3 Corley (Coventry) – P-in-C, Gail Phillip.

4 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Oxford today, with input from Church Society.

5 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Tooting today, with input from Church Society.

6 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Hull today, with input from Church Society.

7 Cowden, St Mary Magdalene (Chichester) – Vacancy.

8 Cudham, St Peter & St Paul (Rochester) – Vicar, John Musson.

9 Pray for clergy (both unemployed and employed) looking for posts.

The value of confirmation

Nic Deane writes about this valuable Anglican step in faith.

Today, it seems to me, confirmation is the Cinderella service among younger Anglicans, especially evangelical Anglicans. Many evangelicals look on this service as superfluous since, more and more, we hear that baptism is the gateway to receiving Holy Communion as a full member of the church in line with ecumenical interests – and in our day, there seems little interest among many Christians in exploring Christian doctrine beyond a very superficial level. But is this in line with our founding fathers?

Baptism is only the beginning

Perhaps the only mention in the New Testament of 'the laying on of hands' as part of the initiation rites among Christians is found in Hebrews 6:1, 2. In one sense this is not surprising, as the New Testament, for the most part, represents to us a first-generation Christian church. However, while baptism is indeed the initiation into Christian fellowship, it is just that. It tells us that the recipient of baptism has turned to God in repentance and believed that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead and confessed him as their Lord and Saviour (Romans 10:9,10). We can rejoice with them over their salvation but it tells us nothing more about their understanding of the faith and their further growth in it. Confirmation is, by its nature, often a secondary or a second-generational rite.

As our good old Prayer Book reminds us, candidates for confirmation are required to be able to learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments 'as well as all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health; and that they may (be brought up to) lead a godly and Christian life; remembering that baptism represents our profession to follow our Saviour Christ and be made like him.' This should tell us a lot more about a 'confirmed' Christian. In fact, sadly, how many of today's new Christians are being brought up in churches where the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and, especially, the Ten Commandments are even *heard* in public worship, let alone learned and understood? Seen in this light, I wish a renewed concern for confirmation could be awakened in many of our congregations. Confirmation could be seen as a very natural secondary course after our now very familiar Alpha, Christianity Explored or Hope courses.

In my experience as a minister in three very different benefices over twenty-five years, I have found confirmation to be a very fruitful evangelistic aid within our parishes.

Furthermore, looking at the evangelistic ministry of the apostles, especially Paul, it is noteworthy that they were concerned to revisit their converts to see how they were really getting on. (If Paul couldn't revisit them, he wrote them letters cf. Thessalonians). It seems that the apostles wanted to ground them more fully in the faith. In Acts 13 and 14, on their first missionary journey, when they reached Derbe and made many disciples there, Paul and Barnabas could much more easily have continued on the Via Sebaste through to Tarsus and then back to Syrian Antioch. However, they didn't! They went back to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, (vv 22, 23) 'strengthening (confirming!) the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in "the faith", and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.' In this way, with prayer and fasting they committed their now strengthened disciples to the Lord. Could this not have been a primitive form of confirmation?

Fruitful for evangelism

After missionary service in South Korea, in my experience as a minister in three very different benefices over twenty-five years, I have found confirmation to be a very fruitful evangelistic aid within our parishes. Ministering in multi-parish benefices meant that we did not have Holy Communion every week. This meant that new attenders could be welcomed into the congregations without constantly being 'put off' with Holy Communion being the main service they attended. Around a third of our

Prayer Diary: June

10 Dagenham, St Peter & St Paul (Chelmsford) – Vicar, Joel Edwards. We thank God for an enduring core congregation, Sunday school team, and that our youth continue to attend church and the monthly youth lunch. We ask for godly wisdom as we react to the bishops' push for PLF. Pray that our assistant minister Joel Madur would be equipped for his future ministry, hopefully in South East Asia.

11 Pray for the work of Affinity in connecting evangelicals across denominations in the UK. For Anglican evangelicals to have good relationships with non-Anglicans. For Lee Gatiss on their Advisory Council.

12 Danehill, All Saints (Chichester) – Vicar, Paddy MacBain. Please pray that we will walk closely with the Lord and that we will know and share the love of Christ. Pray for wise and holy leadership in all areas of church life.

… stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.
Philippians 4:1

13 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Knutsford today, with input from Church Society.

14 Dolton* (Exeter) – P-in-C, Susan Oldham.

15 Pray for the King and the Royal Family.

16 Doncaster, St Mary (Sheffield) – Vicar, Andy Thomas. Give thanks for a recently completed number of sermon series through Matthew, and pray for steady faith and the fruit of righteousness. Please pray for God's help in evangelising and discipling international families who join us.

17 Great Dunham* (Norwich) – Vacancy.

18 Pray for the ministry of Church Society Trust, our patronage board meeting today, for wise appointments in all our Trust parishes. For Paul Darlington as Chairman. Pray also for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Carlisle today, with input from Church Society.

19 Pray for the Latimer Trust and its publications ministry.

The laying on of hands by a good bishop symbolises the connection with the wider, one holy catholic church.

congregations were made up of people who had come in new in these years, with little or no Christian experience. So, they came in under regular expositional services of the word and would hopefully hear how God's gospel grace applied to them. Then, when we held a Holy Communion service, they would hear that receiving this was for those who really knew and understood what the Lord Jesus had done for them. Yes, outsiders and friends were warmly welcomed for a prayer of blessing but, this in itself, while often touching people's lives, would often awaken a desire to enter into a still deeper relationship with God. So, after some months of attending church, it was natural to ask newcomers if they wanted to move on into confirmation. Almost every year we would have half a dozen or more folk going through this confirmation course. Going through the Creed in this course, in itself, reinforced the evangelism and so, even if a candidate was unsure of their faith at the beginning they would almost certainly be an assured Christian by the end!

There was a still more profound fruitfulness that I discovered over these years. The deeper times of fellowship and study this course gives, together with the public personal rededication of their lives in the confirmation service with the bishop, often led to a deep desire to serve in the church's life and ministry. As I think back over those who have served as leaders in our young people's work, hospitality ministries, as welcomers, PCC members and even church wardens, I am blessed to see folk who have had their lives enriched by this confirmation course. Do I see confirmation as a 'passing out' kind of rite of passage? Not at all! I have come to see it much more as a 'passing on' of 'the faith once received' to a next generation of faithful followers who, themselves, have tasted the riches of 'the inheritance of the saints' and become aware of the value of the gospel that they have now so freely received and long to share.

Connecting with the wider Church

Finally, listening to the testimonies of those who went through this confirmation course I found there was one more common thread – the blessing they experienced through the confirmation service. The laying on of hands by a good bishop symbolises the connection with the wider, one holy catholic church. In the Creed we confess this and whenever we hold a confirmation service it strengthens this link with the wider Church and our confirmands certainly seemed to appreciate this.

In our present complicated circumstances some of us may have experienced concerns as we have prepared how the service would be taken by our local bishop (this was certainly my experience in one of my parishes!), but this only highlights how much we should value and support faithful bishops wherever we find them, especially our beloved Bishop of Ebbsfleet! If only bishops were as they once were in the days of the early church – missionary bishops, itinerating and caring for their flock as the apostles did long ago – what a true picture of the church outsiders might see.

Nic Deane is a retired Anglican minister. He has written a confirmation course which is available for Partner Churches on the Church Society website. Perhaps it's time your church became a Partner Church?

Church Society

EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE TO LIVE GOD'S WORD

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More information is on the Church Society website: **churchsociety.org**

New Partner Church
St Peter and St Paul, Cudham, Diocese of Rochester

Prayer Diary: June

20 Pray for *The Global Anglican* editorial Board meeting in Cambridge today, for Lee Gatiss as Chairman and Peter Jensen as Editor. Pray also for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Tooting today, with input from Church Society.

21 Duffield, St Alkmund (Derby) – Vicar, James Hughes. Give thanks for the gospel opportunities we have in schools. Pray for Duffield as we plan for the future in the light of more flooding, and for Little Eaton as we move forward on our reordering project.

22 Düsseldorf, Christ Church (Germany) – Chaplain, Stephen Walton.

23 Pray for leaders and young people as preparations are made for Christian camps this summer.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Romans 8:35

24 Eastbourne, All Souls (Chichester) – Vicar, Mark Redhouse. Please pray for All Souls as they begin an interregnum in May. Pray that in God's kindness he will provide the right man for the job: a man who can in God's grace continue to develop and grow the ministry at All Souls.

25 Pray for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's regional conference in Harold Wood today, with input from Church Society.

26 Pray for Lee Gatiss speaking in Belfast on John Owen at an international conference.

27 Eastbourne, Holy Trinity (Chichester) – Vicar, Philip Coekin. Give thanks for several recent conversions among those attending our evangelism courses. Please pray for their ongoing discipleship and our work amongst children and their families. Please pray as we seek to raise funds and consider an Associate Lay Minister to help grow the church among the 25–55-year age range.

Skipping Sunday School

Chris Moore provocatively asks why we run Sunday Schools – is there a better way to serve our children?

On the 19th March 1845, in New York, the then pastor of Duane Street Church began writing to Dr John Hall, his friend. J.W. Alexander would go on to become Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government at Princeton Theological Seminary, but for now he was the minister of this church and he had an axe to grind. A few days later, as Hall opened the envelope and looked at the contents, he would have read Alexander writing of infant baptism:

> But O how we neglect that ordinance! treating children, in the church, just as if they were out of it. Ought we not daily to say (in its spirit) to our children, 'You are Christian children, you are Christ's, you ought to think and feel and act as such!" And, on this plan, carried out, might we not expect more early fruit of grace, than by keeping them always looking forward to a point of time at which they shall have new hearts and *join the church*?

His point is an interesting one. How *do* we treat our children? Do we raise them as members of the church, or do we hold back until they are in their late teens and can make up their own minds? Do we fully involve them in all we do, or are they treated as an appendage to the body of Christ? Sort of Christians in waiting? Not yets. Hangers on.

Subcontracting out children's spirituality

The answer we often give, of course, is: Sunday School (or Junior Church, or some name or other). Send the children out, and someone else will deal with them. Or, perhaps, send them on a camp over the summer. There some gifted evangelist will bring them to a decision. How often we subcontract out children's spirituality to another and imply to our little people, maybe subtly, that church isn't good enough. It's boring. Go off and have fun somewhere else. We'll still be here when you've finished.

Yet for all this, we baptise children as infants. Yes, we might wish to stress that these should be children of believing parents, but they are baptised nonetheless. And children of families where even only one parent is a Christian are not unclean, but holy (1 Corinthians 7:14). Calvin comments on this passage: 'As to the Apostle's assigning here a peculiar privilege to the children of believers, this flows from the blessing of the covenant, by the intervention of which the curse of nature is removed; and those who were by nature unholy are consecrated to God by grace.'

The ministry of Richard Baxter (1615–1691) – that great pastor of Kidderminster who turned down the bishopric of Hereford – was an extraordinary one. We might marvel at the five galleries which had to be added to the parish church to fit all the congregation in. We might gaze off into the middle distance as we consider the six hundred people added as full communicants under his ministry, and his comment that of those six hundred, 'There was

I will make a bold suggestion which will annoy many: don't send your children to Sunday school. Keep them in the body, lead them through the service, raise them to engage with the worship of the whole family of God.

not twelve that I had not good hopes of, as to their sincerity.'

Home – the nursery of faith

Yet we should not simply dwell on the fruit, but look to the seed. On the Sabbath, Baxter wrote, 'you might hear an hundred families singing Psalms and repeating sermons, as you passed through the streets.' Here is the engine of his ministry: the home. The harvest was reaped in the church but it was sown in the home. Baxter knew this better than anyone. 'Holy families,' he wrote, 'are the seminaries of Christ's church on earth.'

In the end, the responsibility for raising children in the faith lies squarely with the parents. It is the home that is the nursery of faith. It is here that children spend long hours observing their parents, and picking up the regular habits of faith: prayer; the reading of scripture; the living out of all Christ taught. It is here that God is praised and his paths followed. Do we give thanks to God as we gather around our lunches? Do we pray with children as they heave their backpacks onto their shoulders and rush off to the school bus? Do we take problems at school to the foot of the cross, and offer up praise for results (good or bad)? In short: does the heart of faith beat strongly at home?

Baxter laid a great stress on all this. Families were urged to pray together and read the Scriptures together. As he visited them, Baxter would enquire as to their practices and make suggestions. Faith was not to be left to Sundays, or to church. It was to permeate the whole week. He would have nodded if he ever sung Herbert's hymn: 'Sev'n whole days, not one in sev'n, I will praise Thee.'

But the 'one in sev'n' does come around once a week, and the family does find itself in church. Here the nuclear family briefly gathers with the wider family of God, and we all as one offer our praises. And here I will make a bold suggestion which will annoy many: don't send your children to Sunday school. Keep them in the body, lead them through the service, raise them to engage with the worship of the whole family of God. I acknowledge that this will be a sacrifice and you may be embarrassed by so many fidgets. I accept that there is a cost to your own engagement with the service, and you are sacrificing some of your own quiet time with God. But are not your own children worth this effort? Look at their little faces!

Over the years I have heard many church members concerned that the children raised in their churches don't attend church when they go to university. They may have faithfully attended whilst growing up, but once they leave home they leave the church. When discussing the issues it often emerges that the children's and youth work in their church is impressive. There are groups running from all ages, up to eighteen. Often the older children help in the younger groups. Yet the programmes all run during the Sunday service, such that the children are never actually present in the main service throughout. The problem, it seems, is not that they stopped attending church when they left home. It is that they were not given the opportunity to attend church

Might children not fully play their role within the service so that they grow up in church? And not in the church hall?

when they were at home. The Sunday Schools, once running on Sunday afternoons to educate people so they could read their Bibles, now run on a Sunday morning and remove the children from church.

Rearing children within the main service?

Allow me to continue in my boldness. Might we, as a church, seek to rear children *within* the main service. Might we encourage parents to explain to their children what is taking place with soft mutters and quiet whispers? Perhaps we could greet a crying child as a hopeful sound, a future generation to be nurtured in Christ. Maybe children hand out the notice sheets and take in the collection. Or read. Or lead the prayer. Might they not fully play their role *within* the service so that they grow up *in* church? And not in the church hall. What forming memories are cast in the mind of a daughter spending a service snugged on her father's shoulder, dimly aware of the sermon proceeding forth? What sense of belonging is created in the son who plays along with the music group? What attachment to church is created when children are given the opportunity?

Ah, says one, but we don't want attachment to the church. We want attachment to Christ! Yes, but where are children to hear of Christ once they outgrow Sunday School? We want those making their way off to university to find a church as natural a place to be as their school.

But, another might object, how can we treat them as Christians when we don't know if they will grow up to make their own profession? The answer is that we have long distinguished between the visible and invisible church. God alone knows the heart and can distinguish between those who are regenerated and those who are not. In our churches, all adults have their place, but we do not assume their faith on the basis of their attendance or their place on the reading rota. It is no different for children. We should teach them in the same way as we treat all adults within the church. They receive the gospel, they hear of the faith, the sermon is preached.

But, yet another says, shouldn't they make up their own mind about going to church? Do you allow them to make up their own mind about school. Or the dentist? Is church less important? I hope you see my point.

And let me finish with a word or two to those with no children, who have nonetheless read this far. If children are to be part of the church, perhaps you might engage with them. I recall a childless man who made it his business to speak to our five sons, and so made them welcome. Perhaps your children have grown, and grandchildren now totter around as they visit your home. Then speak to them of church, and relate the sermon to them. Show them it's a place they'd like to be. Perhaps you have godchildren? Perhaps ask if they'd like you to take them to church, and make it a special time.

Friends, we baptise children. Let's do more than make them wet, and bring them up in the heart of the church. Let's allow them to play their role in the family of faith. Let them be valued members of the church visible. And then pray for them.

Chris Moore is the Director for Public Engagement for Church Society.

Vacancies & appointments

Church Society Trust holds the rights of patronage for a number of benefices in the Church of England. To find out more about the current vacancies, or to apply, please see churchsociety.org/vacancies.

Appointments

Stephen Newbold, P-in-C, St Andrew, Bradfield and St Denys, Stanford Dingley, Diocese of Oxford.

James Webster, Rector, St Swithun, Chishill, Diocese of Chelmsford (pictured).

Carol Edleston, Interim Assistant Curate, St Fimbarrus, Fowey, Diocese of Truro.

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Church Society members are clergy and lay people, young and old, from around the UK and beyond, who are committed to contending to reform and renew the Church of England in biblical faith.

Visit **churchsociety.org** to download a brochure and application form.

Prayer Diary: June

28 Egham, St John the Baptist (Guildford) – Vicar, Esther Prior. Please pray for fruit from our recent Mission Week in May. For God to build on the momentum from the last two years, with more people confident in sharing their faith and more people added to our number who are being saved.

29 Low Elswick (Newcastle) – Vicar, George Curry. Give thanks for the encouragements following Rob Munro's visit, and for visitors seeking Christian fellowship. Pray for God to grow the church numerically and spiritually. For our new Head Teacher at our parish-based Voluntary Aided school. For wisdom in our relationship with LLF/PLF revisionists.

30 Pray for Lee Gatiss preaching at St Botolph's, Barton Seagrave today.

Thank you for praying with us.

* Indicates that the Trust's parish is part of a larger benefice.

The prayer diary items above are also accessible via the PrayerMate app: http://praynow4.org/churchsociety.

We also produce a prayer list sheet of all the parishes we are patron of. If you would like to be sent this, please contact the office.

Crossway

Spring 2024/171
Editor: Kirsten Birkett

Crossway is the quarterly magazine of Church Society and is available free to members of the Society. For details of how to become a member, please check our website or contact us using the details listed below.

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THE Global Anglican

Established in 1879 as *The Churchman*

The Global Anglican

The March 2024 issue of *The Global Anglican*, an international theological journal produced quarterly by Church Society, is now out:

- Editorial – 'A Change of Subject'
  Peter Jensen
- 'In Communion with the See of Canterbury?'
  Andrew Atherstone
- 'There is No Health in Us: Towards an Anglican Diagnosis of Humanity's Sin-Sickness'
  Sam Ashton
- 'The Soul's Looking-Glass: William Fenner on Conscience'
  Andrew Towner
- 'More Than an Ethical Maxim: Jesus' use of "I Desire Mercy and Not Sacrifice"'
  Daniel M. I. Cole

Making a bequest to Church Society

Here is a convenient form of words which can be used to make a bequest to Church Society in your Will:
'I GIVE the residue of my estate / the sum of _____ pounds (£) to CHURCH SOCIETY of Ground Floor, Centre Block, Hille Business Park, 132 St Albans Road, Watford WD24 4AE and I DIRECT that the receipt of the Administrator or other proper officer of Church Society shall be good and sufficient discharge to my Executor.'

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