

Next Wednesday we celebrate the Conversion of St Paul on the Road to Damascus which is thought to have happened in AD36

Dear Friends,

As you may have already heard, last week the House of Bishops of the Church of England issued a press release in which they proposed prayers for services of blessing on same-sex civil marriages. Under the proposals, same-sex couples would still not be able to get married in a Church of England church, but they would be able to have a service in which there would be prayers of dedication, thanksgiving and God's blessing on the couple in church following a civil marriage or partnership. These prayers would be discretionary for clergy to use. This would represent a significant change in how the Church formally recognises and affirms people in same-sex relationships. While the Bishops have stressed that the proposal does not change the Church's teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman, it does nonetheless shift fundamentally how the Church views committed same-sex relationships. The Bishops' proposal follows a six-year period of listening, learning and discernment known as *Living in Love and Faith*. It will be put to a vote at the Church's General Synod next month where to pass it would need a simple majority in each of the houses of the bishops, clergy and laity.

The Bishops have also issued an apology to LGBTQI+ people for the "rejection, exclusion and hostility" they have faced in churches and the impact this has had on their lives. "For the times we have rejected or excluded you, and those you love, we are deeply sorry. The occasions on which you have received a hostile and homophobic response in our churches are shameful and for this we repent.

We have not loved you as God loves you, and that is profoundly wrong. We affirm, publicly and unequivocally, that LGBTQI+ people are welcome and valued: we are all children of God." The Bishops urge all congregations to welcome same-sex couples "unreservedly and joyfully" as they reaffirm their commitment to a "radical new Christian inclusion founded in scripture, in reason, in tradition, in theology and the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it – based on good, healthy, flourishing relationships, and in a proper 21st Century understanding of being human and of being sexual".

Commenting on the proposals, the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "[W]e have been confronted time and time again with examples of the rejection, exclusion, and hostility that many LGBTQI+ people have received in churches. Both personally and on behalf of my fellow bishops I would like to express our deep sorrow and grief at the way LGBTQI+ people and those they love have been treated by the Church which, most of all, ought to recognise everyone as precious and created in the image of God. We are deeply sorry and ashamed and want to take this opportunity to begin again in the spirit of repentance which our faith teaches us. This is not the end of that journey but we have reached a milestone and I hope that these prayers of love and faith can provide a way for us all to celebrate and affirm same-sex relationships."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "This response reflects the diversity of views in the Church of England on questions of sexuality, relationships and marriage – I rejoice in that diversity and I welcome this way of reflecting it in the life of our church. I am under no illusions that what we are proposing today will appear to go too far for some and not nearly far enough for others, but it is my hope that what we have agreed will be received in a spirit of generosity, seeking the common good. Most of all I hope it can offer a way for the Church of England, publicly and unequivocally, to say to all Christians and especially LGBTQI+ people that you are welcome and a valued and precious part of the body of Christ."

With my prayers and blessings,
Fr Angus

Friday is my day of rest unless the matter is very urgent.

This Week's Diary - January

Monday 23rd - St George's Tots in the Centre – 10:30am to 12:00pm
PCC meeting 7.30pm preceded by Said Mass 7.00pm

Tuesday 24th – WRAP Community Choir in the Centre @ 7.30pm

Wednesday 25th - Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 11.30am

Thursday 26th - Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 9.30am

Sunday 29th – Parish Mass - 10.00am

It is now possible to donate to St George's using your smartphone by scanning the QR Code shown on the right. If you are unsure on how to use it, please seek advice from our Treasurer, Alison Davis, or Fr Angus.



Fishbourne Literary Festival - Saturday 25th March, 9.30am - 4.30pm.

Speakers - Phil Hewitt, Claire Fuller, William Shaw, Deborah Moggach and Tom Holland.

Tickets £25 for the day, booking is advisable as the church is small. A book stall, refreshments and other stalls will be available within the Hall. Proceeds to be shared between Fishbourne Church and the Sussex Snowdrop Trust. To book please visit www.fishbourneliteraryfestival.co.uk or ring 07718 512860

Next PCC Meeting – A reminder to members that the next PCC Meeting will be taking place tomorrow evening, Monday 23rd January at 7.30pm The meeting will be preceded by Mass in the Lady Chapel at 7pm, all are welcome to attend the service.

The next **WRAP-CHAT** meeting is on Wednesday 1st February, 3pm in the Centre, £2 at the door. Refreshments available at the start of the meeting.

This month we look forward to receiving Claudia Deamer from Digital Ambassadors, Digital, Safety & Wellbeing, part of West Sussex County Council. Claudia will be bringing us up to date on how to protect ourselves online, password security, scam prevention and any other issue relating to protecting ourselves. There will be an opportunity of asking questions at the end.

Please do put this date in your diaries, we hope to get a good attendance for this informative event.

Transition Chichester invite you to assist at the Pruning Days **Saturdays January 21 and February 11 from 10.00 - 12.00** in the Community Orchard behind the Festival Theatre. The session will be led by Peter May of the Brighton Permaculture Trust, Peter will give instruction in how to prune fruit trees and supervise volunteers. We need as much help as we can get as the trees are now very large. You are all welcome, even if you can only spare a little time. Bring your own secateurs if you have them, otherwise we have a few pairs we can lend out. Dress warmly!

Holy Dusters - We are looking for someone to assist with the cleaning of the church. This worthwhile volunteer role entails being on a rota to work alongside two other ladies on a Monday at 1.30pm, once every five weeks. If you are able to help please have a word with Geraldine, Margaret Kennard, Margaret Guise or Pam Johnston.

Year of the Old Testament Reading Group We got off to a good start with our online afternoon and evening reading groups in Genesis and Exodus on 11th but it's not too late to join us. Following on from our introductory session, we're looking at Genesis 1 and 2 on Wednesday 25th January. We're asking people just to read the Bible text in advance of the group meeting. We hope that both those with no specialist knowledge and those who have taught these passages many times will benefit from the sessions. Everyone's welcome.

For the Zoom link, please email the Revd Marc Lloyd: marc_lloyd@hotmail.com

Why are the Christmas Trees still in Church?

Many people believe that we should remove Christmas decorations on twelfth night, Epiphany, however this is a modern innovation, and can obscure the truth that we celebrate the joys of Christmas for forty days.

In the Middle Ages houses would be decorated with greenery for the Christmas season on Christmas Eve and feasting would continue until the Epiphany on 6 January.

The Christmas season then actually continues right through to Candlemas on February 2nd, the tradition that it is bad luck to keep decorations up after Twelfth Night may derive from the medieval notion that, if left up after Candlemas Eve they would become possessed by goblins.

After the year we've all had, we certainly deserve to keep the Christmas cheer going a little longer.

Re-opening of the Cloisters café – There is a notice on the door announcing that it will be re-opening on Thursday 23rd March, this year! We look forward to popping in for morning coffee, lunch or afternoon tea.

Contact details:

Parish Office: Tel. 01243 782885 Email: stgeorges@whyke.info

Rector: Revd. Fr. Angus Reid Tel. 01243 533112 Email: frangusreid@outlook.com

Newsletter Editors: Ken Green – kaagreen@talktalk.net – 01243 789869

Geraldine Burrows – gmburrows@hotmail.co.uk – 01243 539620

It is now possible to donate to St George's using your smartphone by scanning the QR Code shown on the right. If you are unsure on how to use it, please seek advice from our Treasurer, Alison Davis, or Fr Angus.

