

the arena Weekly

Issue 89 2021-7

newsletter

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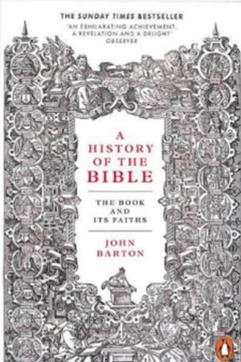
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FEBRUARY 12
2021

Dear All,

With just a bit of snow in the back garden as I look out of my study window, I am probably not the only one keeping indoors wherever possible. Each morning I am in Church at 10am to say Morning Prayer and open up the Church (Isabel kindly closes up at 6pm) but after that I am largely confined to the desk - zooming, texting and emailing as I go!

So thanks for all the messages this week - some reflecting positively on Sunday's sermon, some signing in after being away in the Caribbean for a month (!), some commenting on the availability of the Sunday School craft packs and yet more from the webcam engineers and the on-going saga of getting Broadband installed in Church. Some have wanted to talk about issues at home and at school - and some have been preparing for funerals and baptisms, using zoom because home visits aren't possible. And everyone seems to be talking about vaccines..!



LENT STUDY As yet we haven't had any comments about a possible Lent study on the Bible and my mention in the last Sunday's Weekly News about the suggested book, John Barton's History of the Bible. My copy (from Book Depository, £10.50) has now arrived and I have had a preliminary flip through it. We certainly won't be able to tackle the whole book but there may be topics there that would appeal. Please let me know.

The suggestion was that we had three zoom discussions, with a fortnight in between, during the weeks beginning 22nd February, March 8th and March 22nd. Suggestions about a good day/time to zoom-meet very welcome.

BAPTISMS Nothing is quite the same at the moment: our friends at Grace Church Alvin in Texas sent news this week of the way their Diocesan Bishop, Andy Doyle, had come to confirm two of their members - in a ceremony that took just ten minutes! All outside.

So hats off to the Wilson family who have been waiting since October for the baptisms of Ava, Ivy and Bella. On the basis of recent guidelines we have now agreed that their baptism will go ahead at 10am on Sunday 14th March.

OPENING CHURCH AGAIN Depending on government announcements about the re-opening of schools on March 8th, we may be able to open St James' to everyone on the 14th. That is very much our hope.

But because we will, by then, have the webcams operational we have agreed that the three Baptisms will go ahead, with or without a congregation. This also fits in with Adam's need to return to full time working from the second week of March.

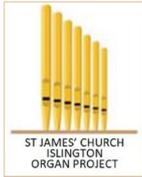
THIS WEEK

Sun *ST VALENTINE* Streamed 'Service of the Word' at 10am.
Tues 10am Proms Committee meets. Basic Christianity course session 2.
Wed 6pm *Grace Church, Alvin, Texas: zoom prayers.*
Thurs 6pm Evening Prayer. 6.15-7pm Office session in Church.
Sun 21 *LENT 1/ASHING SUNDAY* Streamed 'Service of the Word' at 10am.

Calendar and Daily Prayer themes

Sun 14 *St VALENTINE* Ken and Margaret Thompson; Fr Victor de Waal
Mon 15 *DEL Wk 5* Belle Williams, Tom, Poppy, Pearl and Bow Wheatley
Tues 16 *Feria* Tim Willis; Lucy McAllister, Jay, Ava, Ivy and Bella Wilson
Wed 17 *ASH WEDNESDAY* Chris and Chrissie Wright; Kate Yeats
Thurs 18 *Feria* Shannon Adams, Arabella and Rocco Macdonald
Fri 19 *Feria* Lisa, Darren, Max and Oscar Ahmet Baker; Louise, Vinney and Benji
Sat 20 *Feria* Martin, Kerri, Rebecca and Joseph Allen; Beatrice Awoonor-Renner
Sun 21 2 *b LENT* Vicky Bellamy, Holly, Josh Campbell; Albert and Annie Bryan

You do not need to have your own Facebook account to be able to access our streamed services on the St James' Islington Facebook page.



ORGAN UPDATE For the last three years we have staged, in January, informal meetings for the whole congregation, dedicated to the Organ Project. This is such a huge undertaking that we have wanted to make sure everyone had the opportunity to hear what was being proposed and to ask whatever questions they liked. These have been supplemented by the usual Q+A sessions as part of the parish AGMs in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

We are now in the last month before the Diocesan Chancellor convenes a full Consistory Court (by zoom) on Thursday 4th March to make a final ruling. Since Christmas, Isabel and I have been doing all we can to identify all the issues in this debate and to make sure they are as clear as possible so that we don't get sidetracked by things which are not important like 'who said what to whom' in the heat of an argument! To help I thought it might be useful to sketch out the main themes which have emerged in the course of this very long process, first begun with an informal visit to a small organ workshop in Norfolk - in 2010! Bearing in mind that any work to an organ is very expensive, here is a brief summary of the issues:

- Since 2012 this lively and diverse community has spent over £350,000 upgrading its facilities to make them suitable for a whole range of activities appropriate to a Church in the 21st century.
- As part of that vision for the future of St James' and alongside work to broaden our worship experience, to reach out to young families and to the street community (Pack-Up), the parish has been committed to making St James' a centre for music and the arts, eg Islington Proms.
- That programme is flourishing: the Church is currently hired by three singing groups, the St James' Orchestra and scores of individuals and groups. Income from Church hire exceeds £9,000pa.
- The only element yet to be tackled is the 1877 Gray and Davison organ which, at the most basic level, needs substantial mechanical and electrical upgrading. It hasn't been touched for 30 years.
- A first class builder quoted £125,000 but experts agreed that this would still not tackle the acoustic problems with the organ, only placed in the current chamber when there was not enough money to build a west end gallery. The organ had also been badly adapted in 1937 and again in 1989.
- On advice from Dr Christopher Batchelor our Organ Adviser, the PCC was invited to consider a scheme to rotate the organ by 90degrees to enable the sound to travel more easily into the body of the Church. That meant that it could be revoiced to sound more like it did in 1877. Additional stops would greatly improve its ability to accompany both the congregation and choirs using the Church.
- The cost of a thorough rebuild would be twice as expensive as the first quote, at £250,000, but would provide a much better organ. (One builder suggested changes that would cost £400,000!)
- In order to get best value for money we sought an alternative hybrid route: the repairs to the pipework and console would be comprehensive, the pipework would be rotated but any additional stops would be provided digitally at much less cost. The quotation from MPOS was £207,000, fixed.
- To pay for it, the scheme would use £150,000 from a largely unknown bequest (the William Lambe Trust). The proposers have also secured a grant from the Richard Cloudesley Foundation of £50,000, but only available if the scheme is completed in full. In addition we need to add the savings of clerk of works fees for past projects completed 'in house' and some monies now available from the renting of the refurbished Vicarage flat (together worth at least £50,000). Our Church reserves (not including WLT funds) still stand at approximately £475,000.
- The proposers contend that the scheme is therefore visionary, opportune, good value for money and affordable. It has also been democratically approved at every stage in the parish and by the Diocese.

The Objectors reject most of this narrative:

- This Gray and Davison is no longer an historic instrument and it is perfectly loud enough for the small congregation at St James' and for big weddings and funerals when required.
- There is nothing wrong with the current quality of sound and rotation would make no appreciable difference. If people wish to hear organ music they can go to neighbouring churches.
- Errors have been made throughout the process and the congregation has not only not been kept fully informed they have been seriously misled. The PCC has not discussed key issues.
- A simple repair of the most obvious faults is all that is required. A proposal by Tarquin Wiggins to provide this, at £65,000, has not been taken seriously.

PRAYER BOARD/NOTICES Requests for prayer welcome

BIRTHDAYS Many Happy Returns on Monday to Fr Stephen Taylor and on Friday to Freddie Jenkins who will be 3.

SICK Christopher Browne, Mariolina and Peter Freeth, Emily Grainger, Alastair and Diane Hume, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Kingsley Lewis, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Vera Taggart, Lyn Thompson and Melanie Toogood.

DEPARTED We pray for the soul of Jackie Karas (Clock Tower Mews), of Margaret Hodges who died on the 1st February and of Michael Flinter who died suddenly in New York.

ANNIVERSARIES 17th: Lily Goddard; 20th: Barbara Elsworth-Jones (2012).

INTERNATIONAL CHURCH LINKS In the US: Suzanne Smith, Rector of Grace Church, Alvin, Texas. Suzanne's husband Travis is Rector of Holy Comforter, Angleton, 14 miles away. Japan: Fr Sebastian and Yuki Naniwa serving in Ehime near Hiroshima.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE Our prayers continue for **Nazanin Zaghari Radcliffe** in the hope that some kind of formula can allow her to return to the UK as soon as possible.

- Digital enhancement is not an acceptable solution.
- Spending at this level on an organ is wholly unreasonable whatever the result.

Donation to St James



May God bless every £1 we give so that St James' will be here, not just for today and for tomorrow, but for the future he wants to create.