

Sunday Services across the Team

All events in our Team are currently cancelled in line with the national guidelines for all churches across the country issued by the Church of England.

St. Bartholomew's Church will be open for a service each Sunday at 11:00am and St. George's & St. Thomas' churches at 9:15 am every Sunday. Guidelines about face coverings / distancing / signing in etc. will all still apply.

OFFICE HOUR HAS BEEN SUSPENDED IN LINE WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES. For all enquiries relating to baptism and weddings, and for other routine matters, please contact the Rector, details below.

DIRECTORY

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Items for inclusion in future newsletters should be sent to the parish office:
westhoughtonparish@outlook.com
or given to Edward McHale, churchwarden and Director of Music

www.westhoughtonchurches.org.uk



Parish of St Bartholomew
Westhoughton
St Bartholomew St Thomas
St George



NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2021

Hi all,

It's been a long time coming, but we're gradually re-starting on the road to a new but different normality. We've kept the hand gel and some of the distancing and face coverings but we are starting to reintroduce hymn singing back into the churches which, I'm pleased to say, is one of the things that people have missed the most. Although each church will be different, we should be bringing back hymn books and service books, and with those the sung parts of the Communion Service at St. Bartholomew's. We're also looking at how to reintroduce refreshments after services safely. Do bear with us as we work through the necessary risk assessments to ensure the safety of all. It's going to feel very slow for some and too fast for others but we are aware of everyone's feelings views as we move ahead.

It's been great that we've been able to celebrate some much-postponed weddings and we're hoping that our baptism ministry can continue soon.

We're also looking at the best ways to restart the Young People's groups in September and will be looking for leaders to take this on.

Although it's usually a quieter month, there's still a lot of planning going on and we'll find a way to mark St. Bartholomew's day this month.

We've got the usual "Hymn of the Month" and in contrast the Archbishop of York on the future for the church plus some more cartoons. Hopefully, we'll soon have some social events and concerts to publicise again.

Keep safe & well and do enjoy any holidays whether in this country or abroad.

Ed

Hymn of the Month – August

Last month we looked at Bolton MP Sir John Bowring, author of some 88 hymns. This month we're looking at G K Chesterton [29 May 1874 – 14 June 1936] who managed a grand total of one hymn.



You'll have come across Gilbert Keith Chesterton as the author of the "Father Brown" books either in the current TV version starring Mark Williams, the 1970s

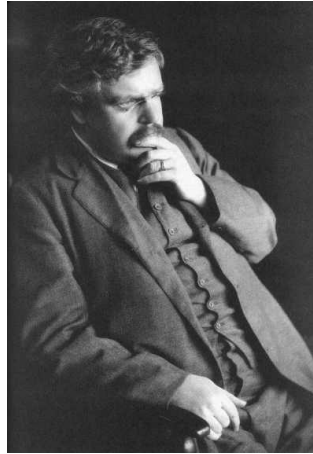


version with Kenneth More or for the "more ancient of days" like myself, films with Sir Alec Guinness.

It always amuses me in these stories that they happen in the one recusant village in England where the reformation never happened, the Church of England doesn't exist and the

Roman Catholic church holds sway over all.

Chesterton was born in Campden Hill in Kensington, London, the son of Marie Louise, née Grosjean, and Edward Chesterton (1841–1922). Chesterton was baptised at the age of one month into the Church of England, though his family themselves were irregularly practising Unitarians but became a Roman Catholic later in life. Chesterton was a large man, standing 6 feet 4 inches (1.93 m) and weighing around 20 stone 6 pounds. He wrote this hymn in this style as he knew little about hymns and thought that they all had 3 verses of eight lines in this metre. It was written for The English Hymnal which was published in 1906, as a 'Prayer for the Nation.' It alternates a double rhyme with a single rhyme and the vocabulary is direct yet simple.



1 O God of earth and altar,
bow down and hear our cry,
our earthly rulers falter,
our people drift and die;
the walls of gold entomb us,
the swords of scorn divide,
take not thy thunder from us,
but take away our pride.

2 From all that terror teaches,
from lies of tongue and pen,
from all the easy speeches
that comfort cruel men,
from sale and profanation
of honour and the sword,
from sleep and from damnation,
deliver us, good Lord!

3 Tie in a living tether
the prince and priest and thrall,
bind all our lives together,
smite us and save us all;
in ire and exultation
aflame with faith, and free,
lift up a living nation,
a single sword to thee.

So, what's it about? Verse 1 is a direct appeal to God for help, echoed in many psalms. There is an argument that we've been singing the wrong first line since 1906. Rather than "O God of earth and altar" [i.e. earth and heaven] it should be "hearth and altar" [God of private home life and public church life]. It's unlikely that Chesterton would have used the word earthly again in line 3 and his handwriting was notoriously awful [*he even wrote a poem about how bad it was, if anyone can read it*]. He's not blaming the rulers for the problems but the pride and divisions between people.

Verse 2 is inspired by the Litany [for those who remember that service from the Book of Common Prayer]. It's a long menu of troubles broken up by the congregation praying "Good Lord, deliver us".

In verse 3, Chesterton recognises the value of community asking that all are joined together – earthly rulers [the prince], spiritual powers [the priest] and those in the world [the old English word, "Thrall."]

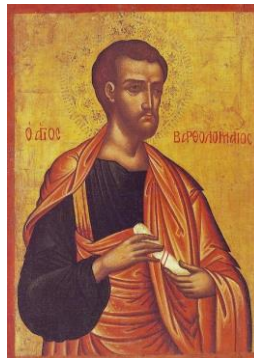
It's one of several hymns of this time trying to deal with the politics of the time as sin, wickedness and confession such as "Judge Eternal, throned in splendour" [Henry Scott Holland 1902], "Son of God, eternal Saviour" [Somerset Corry Lowry 1893] and "Father eternal, ruler of creation" [Laurence Housman 1919].

The tune: Chesterton only knew one hymn tune and wrote this with Aurelia by Samuel Sebastian Wesley in mind. It's the tune we use for "The Church's one foundation." We never sing it to that tune today using generally instead "Kings Lynn" a traditional English tune by Ralph Vaughan Williams [1872-1958] who arranged it for this hymn for the English Hymnal.

To receive these pewsheets, newsletters or special events leaflets electronically, please e-mail westhoughtonparish@outlook.com

St Bartholomew's Day

We're marking this in our services on **Sunday 22nd August** this year [two days before the day itself]. As we ease out of restrictions, we're not sure how we'll mark it but we will be doing something.



The Archbishop of York addressed York Diocesan Synod on 17th July who were meeting online due to ongoing COVID restrictions. The address follows in full and applies to the church in general, not just in York



Earlier this week I was interviewed by Petroc Trelawny for the Radio 3 breakfast programme. They were in York, recording a series of broadcasts about the River Ouse. Some of you may have heard them.

I have to confess that I'm someone who usually gets up with Radio 4 and the cut, thrust, parry, counter punch and political obfuscations of the Today Programme. I say to myself that it keeps me up-to-date with current affairs. But I'm not sure how

healthy it is to wake up to this each day.

On Thursday I turned the dial. Not only did I hear some beautiful music, they had also done some recordings of the water running over the weir at Naburn. I think it was better for my mental health. And certainly better preparation for going down to the chapel to say my prayers.



But, if you did happen to listen to the programme, I also made the point that sometimes – and especially in this fine weather – I don't go to the chapel to say my prayers, but sit by the river and say them there. Because I believe there is so much we can learn from a river. Indeed, the reason I was on the programme wasn't just because I happened to live next door to the Ouse, but because I was being asked to read a poem about the wisdom of rivers. I'll come onto the poem in a moment, but first let us wade out a little from the bank and see what we can learn from a river, especially for the challenges we face as a diocese, as a nation and as a world today.

As the opening line of the poem you will hear in a moment declares: the river is not a straight line. It does not run from A to B. The river follows the contours of the land. It goes at its own pace.

We find ourselves in the middle of a vitally important series of consultations about how we are called to live out our Christian faith in the diocese of York. An important part of this is to so transform our finances and structures that we will discover sustainable ways of continuing our ministry and supporting worshipping communities of all types and sizes in all the communities we serve, rural as well as urban, wealthy as well as poor: indeed, through mustard seed and multiply projects, to grow new ones. I think we will best achieve this by following the contours of the land. What I mean by this, is that we will go with the flow of the energy and resources we already have.

What does this mean in practice?

Well, of course, I don't really know. I still don't know the communities of our diocese well enough.

But you do. You are the experts with intimate knowledge, commitment and love for your own communities. Therefore, if we commit ourselves to working together then there is every possibility that we can find the right ways of being the church in and for each locality. But it might mean letting go of certain presuppositions about what a church is.

Don't misunderstand me, I love and cherish the built heritage of our parish churches. But the church is not a building.

Don't misunderstand me, I absolutely value and cherish the clergy (I'm one of them after all!). But the church is not the priest.

Don't misunderstand me, I value the history of parish and place upon which the Church of England's ministry has been built for centuries. But the church is not the parish.

If we carry on holding onto only one model of what it is to be a church, then we might fail to see that if we just allowed the river of our life in Christ to meander off in this apparently counter intuitively strange direction – not going from A to B at all, but actually, for the moment, appearing to go backwards – we would find a way forwards.

This way of being the church will be based on several vital principles.

First, that ministry belongs to everyone, to the whole people of God because of our baptism. We are the Church: the people of God in all our communities of faith.

Secondly, that the diocese is us, not someone else, not head office, wherever that is, not bishop or archdeacon, not even Incumbent. But us. And we have a commitment to each other and to every community, not just our own.

Thirdly, we need the oversight of bishop and priest. And we need the resourcing for training and housing and safeguarding and communications that comes from the so called centre. But as I said to the General Synod last Monday, the centre is Christ, and our becoming like Christ is the centre of our vision to tell Christ's story; and the primary task of those of us who are called to lead and oversee the Church is to encourage and facilitate the ministry of everyone.

This might – please underline the word might – mean fewer stipendiary clergy in some places. It might not. That really depends on how much money we can raise. But it must mean more self-supporting clergy and lay ministry. It might lead to some lay led congregations. It might lead to some churches reimagining themselves as very successful house groups, rather than failed cathedrals.

In fact, we will probably worry about numbers less, because we will care about people more. We will want to serve everyone. And we will definitely want there to be more expressions of church life. But it will be a mixed ecology church, where under the oversight of bishop and Incumbent (and of course still governed by Canon law, and of course still arising from our parish system) churches working together will find new ways of doing things. Mustard seeds will sprout and flourish. Good things will multiply. And, of course, there will be some failures along the way, and times when the river doesn't seem to be flowing at all.

This is daunting. But we needn't be fearful. The challenges we face are large, but we have faced similar things before. Actually, we are only really a few turns in the river away from the rushing water that will speed us along. With only a little more generosity, most of our financial

challenges would be solved as a stroke. With only a little more vision, and a little more courage, I think we can find ways of sustaining and transforming our life.

But it won't be like a graph that is steadily going in one direction. Nor a Roman road crossing the terrain in a straight line and sweeping away everything in its path.

It will be like a river, which bends this way and that, but eventually, steadily, opens into a wide, wide estuary and then into the sea itself.

And the heart of our vision to live Christ's story is of course the invitation that we become more like Christ ourselves. He is the one who climbs into our boat, as he did with Peter, and invites us to push out from the shore and prepare our nets for a catch.

Yesterday morning, I was back with Radio 4. And to my surprise I was again waking up to the sound of water. But this time it was terrifying. In the Rhineland and surrounding regions three months-worth of rain had fallen in a single day. Small streams had become raging torrents. Rivers had burst their banks. Houses swept away. Power supplies cut off. Many people were missing. We still don't know how many have died.

There is little doubt that the cause of this is global warming.

Unless we are able to learn the lessons of what's happening around us and see that our straight lines and graphs that only go upwards are destroying the planet, these are events we may have to get used to. And their devastating consequences.

We are going to have to change. And I believe the church of Jesus Christ is called to lead the way. We are going to have to learn to live with less and to be satisfied with enough. Our insatiable desire for everything, will leave us with nothing.

We need to see what's happening and change direction. We need to follow the contours of the land, living with our creation, not against it. Again, the river can teach us, and we must respect its place in the complex ecology of the planet.



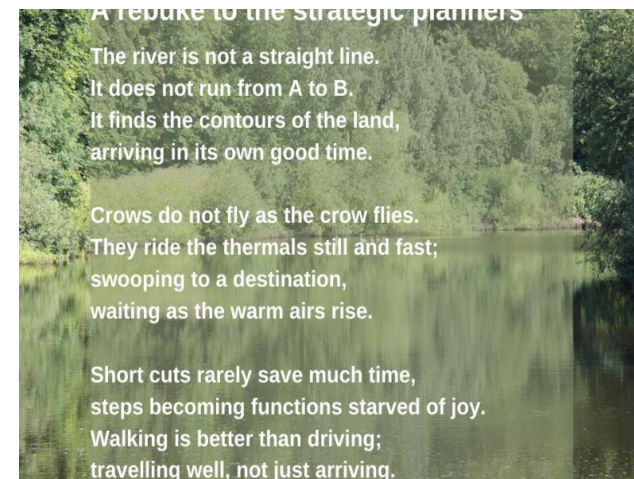
If you come to Bishopthorpe Palace and stand by the Ouse there are various small plaques on the walls marking where the river rose during some of the great floods of the last few hundred years.

I've still lived there less than a year, but already the river has flooded twice and

on both occasions the water level was higher than the marks on the wall a century ago. But we no longer put up plaques. What was a 'once every century or so' occurrence is now commonplace.

Our diocesan vision calls us to grow a church of missionary disciples. This means living out the five marks of mission. All of them. Mindful again this week of the shocking racism aimed at three young black footballers, we must work to transform the unjust structures of our society. And, of course, we must strive to safeguard the integrity of the creation. Discussions this morning on the environment and racial justice will be signs of how we, the diocese of York, will live out Christ story in the world today, telling the story of Christ, but also living it.

And so, at last, to the poem. It is my prayer for our diocese, that we will have the imagination and the vision to do things differently, but also the grace and love to travel well, and most of all to know Christ who travels with us, who loves us and believes in us, and entrusts his mission to us.



Believe in Bolton 2021

The Great Invitation

with **J. John**

Victoria Hall, Bolton

17th & 18th September 2021

Following last year's successful 'Believe in Bolton' event; we are delighted to announce that J. John, a world-renowned evangelist, author and speaker, is coming to Bolton for what will be two amazing evenings. Each evening will be 90 minutes packed full of stories, music and a message from J. John about the greatest invitation we can ever receive.



A message from Rt Revd Mark Ashcroft, Bishop of Bolton

I am thrilled that Canon J John is coming to Bolton for our Believe in Bolton 2021 mission. As we all work towards the new normal after the horrendous last 15 months of the pandemic, it is really important to place the Gospel at the heart of this

new normal, to be outward looking in our mindset and conscious of the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

J John is one of the clearest communicators of the Gospel in the UK and so I do encourage you to partner with us in prayer and service and encouragement to invite others to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Thank you and may God bless you.

Bishop Mark (Believe in Bolton Steering Group Member)

The event is ticket only which are available on line from the Victoria Hall Booking Office, price £2 each.

the Believe in Bolton prayer



Father, we know you are the God of immeasurably more.

As we look forward to the Believe in Bolton mission weekend, would You increase our faith to believe that You can and will do more than we could ever imagine.

Holy Spirit would You place people on our hearts who we could invite along and give us boldness and courage to do so.

Jesus, we ask for salvation to spring up across our town as the churches here dedicate a whole weekend to sharing Your gospel.

Where there is unity, You command a blessing.

We pray for unity amongst churches in Bolton. Father, we ask that You would bless the people from various churches who are organising this weekend and we pray for all the practicalities and ask that You would provide all that we need.

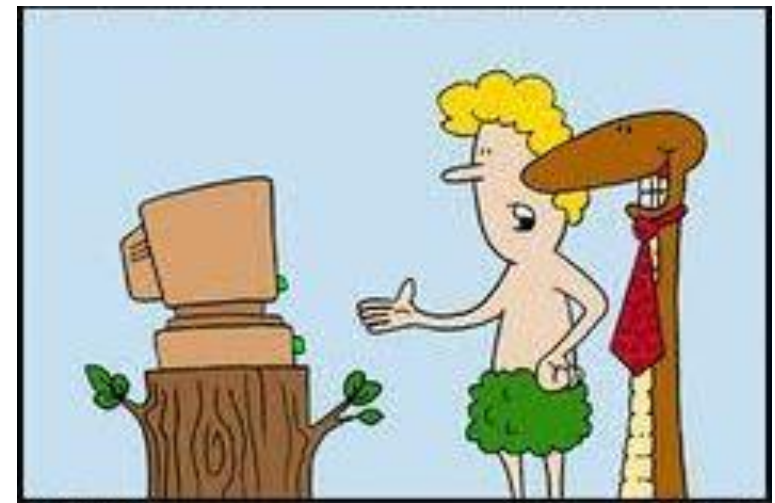
Lord, by Your spirit we ask for ripple effects across our churches and our town as a result of the unity formed through this event, that lives would be changed and for Your kingdom to come.

We ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus. **Amen.**

Further details at [Believe in Bolton](#)



Suddenly, Father Schober was not sure whether he really should have bought the new crucifix at Ikea.



WELL MISTER, IT'S A NIFTY COMPUTER AND ALL, BUT I'VE GOT THIS NAGGING FEELING THAT I SHOULD REALLY AVOID APPLES

