

ALCUIN NEWS

Number 36
March 2023

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM SAINT ALCUIN OF YORK
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND CHAPLAINCY IN TOURAIN

The Heart of our Faith



24th March PALM SUNDAY BLESSING OF PALMS AND SUNG EUCHARIST

We start this service with great joy as we join with those who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with palm branches. The mood then changes to one of ominous foreboding as we hear the Passion according to Saint Mark

31st March EASTER DAY BLESSING OF THE EASTER CANDLE AND SUNG EUCHARIST

“Christ is risen” is our cry as we celebrate that death has no power over the Saviour of the World. Alleluia, alleluia!

ON OTHER PAGES

Heroes of the Faith
Council Meeting
Unity Celebrations
Singing Together

2
3
3
4

Getting Ready for Easter
For Younger Readers
Happy Christmas

6
7
8

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AT THE HEART OF OUR LIFE



SUNG EUCHARIST with Junior Church

11.00 am
on the 4th Sunday of the Month
in the Parish Church of St Michel
Le Bourg,
Savigny-en-Véron

HEROES OF THE FAITH

John Calvin Reformer

The French reformer John Calvin was born at Noyon in Picardy in 1509 and, since he was intended for an ecclesiastical career, he received the tonsure and his first benefice at the age of twelve, not untypical at this time. It proved to be the only 'order' he ever received. Two years later he began studying theology at Paris but for some reason changed to law and moved to Orléans where he came under his first Protestant influences. He broke with the Roman Church in 1533, having had a religious experience which he believed commissioned him to purify and restore the Church of Christ. The first edition of his *Institutes* appeared in 1536, being basically a justification of Reformation principles. Calvin accepted a position in Geneva which involved organising the Reformation in that city and, with a few absences, spent most of the the rest of his life there, becoming the undisputed master of the moral and ecclesial lives of the citizenry. His pre-eminence could be seen in that he wrote to the Protector Somerset in England indicating to him what changes he felt should be made and corresponded similarly with other nations' leaders. During all this, his literary output never wavered. His immense reputation and influence have continued in the churches of the Reform to the present day. He died on 26th May 1564.



FR JOHN WRITES



THE PAST SIXTY YEARS HAVE BEEN A TIME OF INTENSE REFORM IN THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH. Indeed, it is not just the change in the services themselves, but of the whole approach to worshipping together.

it is hard from our perspective to realise just how much has altered. The Book of Common Prayer, with its theology firmly stuck in the sixteenth century, had held sway for over four centuries. But theology had left this far behind. In the Church of England, as in other denominations, hard work was needed to bring worship in line with current insights.

Christians have always gathered together to pray and praise God and chiefly to obey our Lord's command to "Do this" by celebrating the Eucharist together. Indeed, the New Testament knows nothing of Christians apart from the Church. But the prevailing atmosphere was that we were doing this as a fellowship of individuals. "Making my communion" was a common expression.

There was the feeling of coming to receive something for ourselves rather than being there to celebrate an event together as Church.

Central to the change in liturgical theology is the realisation that we ourselves can be transformed by the liturgy: it is only after hearing and responding to the word of God and giving thanks over and sharing bread and wine that we are fit to "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord".

Perhaps a more neglected part of the Eucharist is The Gathering. This does not just start our worship but is about transforming our individual selves, with our personal concerns, hopes and fears, into the community which God uses for his mission in the world, the Church.

Fr John

THE ST ALCUIN CALENDAR

Our worship in the coming months

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE A EUCHARIST IN TOURS,
PLEASE CONTACT FR JOHN**

March	24th	<i>Palm Sunday</i>	11.00 am	Blessing of Palms & Sung Eucharist
	31st	<i>Easter Day</i>	11.00 am	Blessing of the Easter Candle & Sung Eucharist
April	28th	<i>Easter 5</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist
May	26th	<i>Trinity Sunday</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist
June	23rd	<i>Trinity 4</i>	11.00 am	All age Eucharist

Chaplaincy Council Meeting

OUR MEETING IN DECEMBER WAS HELD IN THE SACRISTY IN THE CHURCH, A SMALL COMFORTABLE ROOM, ALTHOUGH THE ELECTRICITY SEEMED NOT TO BE WORKING. Luckily it was light enough and not too cold, so we were still able to have a productive time together.



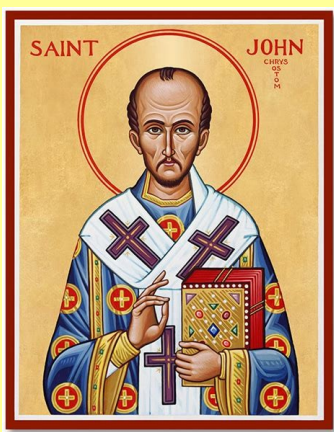
Services featured prominently in our discussion: first the two successful celebrations in October, then our forthcoming Carol Service. We agreed that the Carol Service on 24th December would be eucharistic and that there would be no celebration on

Christmas Day itself.

The new organ was declared a great success and we were delighted at how much the Organ Fund had raised (over 600€) in a very short space of time.

Safeguarding is always on our agenda, but this time we had the task of formally appointing Gilly Bromilow as the Safeguarding Officer of the Chaplaincy.

Over the past year we have had, in the person of Charlotte Field, contact with the Ecumenical Group in the Chinonais. This consists of the Roman Catholic parish, the Eglise reformée in Saumur, the Evangelical Church in Chinon and ourselves. They are in the process of finalising plans for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This is likely to commence with a celebration of Church of England Morning Prayer at Savigny, to be followed by either a bring and share lunch or an "apéro". Further progress was to be made at a lunch following our meeting, which Fr John and Charlotte would attend.



"Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness

has risen from the grave."

S. John Chrysostom

Churches Together

FOR MOST OF THE YEAR CHRISTIANS ARE HIDDEN BEHIND THE FOUR WALLS OF THEIR OWN CHURCHES. So it is refreshing that, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, each January we have the particular opportunity to get to know those of other traditions.

In previous years, as in so many places, the week was marked simply by a single united service. This year, under the energetic leadership of Jean Pouzet, the ecumenical group in Chinon—linking Christians from the Catholic parish of Sainte Jeanne d'Arc en Chinonais, the Eglise reformée in Saumur, the Eglise Evangelique in Chinon and ourselves—produced an ambitious and varied programme.



The week started and ended with worship. On Thursday 18th people gathered together at Savigny for Church of England Morning Prayer, with clergy of all traditions participating in its leadership. It concluded the following Thursday with an evening Celebration of Praise at the priory of Saint Louans at Chinon.

As well as worship the group had planned two debates. On Saturday morning the Eglise Evangelique hosted a conference on what it means to be Christians together in the Chinon area. This was primed by Richard Gelin, former Professor of New Testament at the faculty of theology at Vaux sur Seine.

The other debate was of a more technical nature and had as its subject the advances in ecumenism since the Second Vatican Council. This was animated by Père Miguel Desjardins, a priest charged with ecumenism at the Roman Catholic national service for Christian Unity.

It has also a delight to us that, over recent months, Christians of other traditions have shared in the Eucharist at St Alcuin's, in spite of the challenges of language.

We look forward to working together more in the future.



Local clergy leading Morning Prayer at Savigny

In Quires and Places

A Singing Church

IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY SOMETHING QUITE UNREMARKABLE HAPPENED. A small parish, North Cray, in the South East of England diocese of Rochester, published a hymn book for use in worship at its Church. It was only one of many parishes to do this, for at that time there was a lot of renewed interest in hymn singing in the Church of England.

A few years later, in 1861, another village parish, Chislehurst, less than five miles away, also published a hymn book. But this one was revolutionary, because it was not prepared just for themselves. It was compiled for use in the whole Church of England. Called *Hymns Ancient and Modern* it drew together hundreds of compositions written over many centuries.

But why was there such an interest in hymn singing and new hymn books at that time?

A CHURCH WITHOUT HYMNS

You may be surprised to learn that, until the end of the nineteenth century, hymns were technically illegal in the Church of England, except in one specific case: *Veni creator* (*Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire*) was sung at the ordination of priests and bishops.

Not that you would have been unable to sing other things at services, such as the Gloria at Holy Communion (*Then shall be said or sung, Glory be to God on high*), to the setting by John Merbecke, and many parts of Morning and Evening Prayer: the responses, psalms and canticles as well as an anthem (*In Quires and Places where they sing, here followeth the Anthem*).

SINGING SCRIPTURE

There was other singing, too. One of the

products of the Reformation, both in the British Isles and in the mainland of Europe, was metrical versions of the psalms and other parts of the bible. For puritans it was improper to sing anything other than scripture during worship.

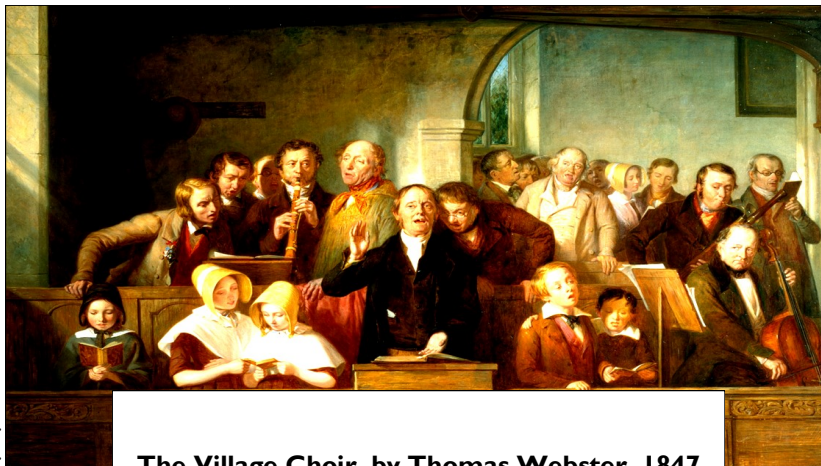
Calvin's reformed Church in Geneva was best known for this, along with its theological ally, the Church of Scotland.

Another version of metrical psalms appeared on the scene at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the work of Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady.

We still enjoy singing some of their compositions, such as their version of Psalm 42, *As pants the hart for cooling streams* and a paraphrase of part of the nativity story in St Luke's gospel, *While shepherds watched their flocks by night*.

A FREE CHURCH WAKE UP CALL

If we wanted to sing more joyfully, we would have needed to turn to the Free Churches. Methodists praised God in the words of Charles Wesley, who is reckoned to have written no fewer than 6,500 hymns, including *Hark, the herald angels sing* and *Love divine, all loves excelling* (written for Purcell's tune to the song *Fairest Isle*).



The Village Choir, by Thomas Webster, 1847

But nor was the Church of England a laggard in this. Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins paraphrased the whole Psalter. With one exception, they were all of the same metre, so they offered hardly any variety.

These days we only sing one of their collection, the paraphrase of Psalm 100, *All people that on earth do dwell*. Ironically this is very likely not theirs at all, but by William Kethe, who had lived for a time in Geneva.

This was a heyday for "pietistic" hymns, too. These usually had as their theme personal salvation and were written in the first person singular.

A lot of these have not stood the test of time, but we still have some of the best of them, such as *O, for a thousand tongues to sing* and *Amazing grace*.

They were often sung to florid tunes which involved repeating some of the lines, such as those for *O for a thousand tongues* and another favourite *And can it*



At the end of the eighteenth century worship in the Church of England can only be described as very dry indeed. Cranmer's vision of Holy Communion as the main service each Sunday had not materialised: people just did not want to receive communion every week.

Instead they were fed a three-hour long service consisting of Morning Prayer, the Litany and Ante-Communion (the service up to the Offertory) - not forgetting a sermon of about 45 minutes.

As far as singing went, the parish clerk, in his place at the bottom of a three decker pulpit, might often 'line out' the words of metrical psalms after which they would be duly sung at a very slow speed by everyone. This would be repeated, a line at a time, until the whole psalm was finished.

If there were any liveliness at all in the singing it would be provided by a choir in a specially constructed west gallery, accompanied by a string band

be. A similar tune, named after the village of Cranbrook in Kent, is now better known for its secular use in the song, *On Ilkley moor baht 'at*.

NINETEENTH CENTURY REVIVAL

The dryness of eighteenth century Church of England worship was fertile ground for revival.

The first, the Evangelical Revival, was largely the product of Charles Simeon's work in his Cambridge parish where he drew great crowds by his preaching.

He inaugurated weekly Holy Communion in his church, although it was at 8 o'clock in the morning and not a main service. This went some way to fulfil Cranmer's reformation wish, rather than the quarterly celebrations which had become normal.

He also established a trust for acquiring church patronages, so that his influence could spread more widely.

At another great English academic centre, Oxford, revival was started in 1833 by a sermon inaugurating the city's assizes, giving birth to the Oxford movement.

These movements were the catalyst for worship to burst out of its straightjacket and come alive again. No more would the boring 'lining out' of metrical psalms suit. Other words were needed to worship God in song.

There was renewed reverence in worship—no longer were men permitted to use the altar as a place to leave their hats—and this was reflected in the way churches were furnished. West end gal-

lery choirs were supplanted by robed choirs in the chancel. Inevitably this caused upset to traditionalists, as you can read in Thomas Hardy's novel of village life, *Under the Greenwood Tree*.

ANCIENT AND MODERN TO THE RESCUE

These revivals caused a flurry of hymn writing. Not only of new compositions (Modern) but also translations from earlier days of the Church (Ancient). Parish hymn books sprang up, more or less selective in what they contained.

The compilers of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* sought to produce a book with wide appeal, so provided a large and comprehensive collection.

The book included many translations from Greek and Latin (the name of John

century Bishop of Orléans, and St Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres in the 11th century.

On the other hand, it was the modern that was the problem. It was not feasible to keep publishing updated versions. So modern became synonymous with high Victorian, in spite of two supplements over the next forty years.

Nearly a century later an answer came with the publication of *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised*. But in the spirit of the age the brief given to the compilers was to be conservative in their choices.

It had made its appearance a little too early. Within a few years a new generation of writers was creating contemporary words for the common praise of God. Prominent among them were the Methodist Fred Pratt Green, the Congregationalist Brian Wren, the Church of Scotland's John Bell and, from the Church of England, Timothy Dudley-Smith and Christopher Idle. Revisions of hymn books have lost no opportunity to take advantage of their work.

As new forms of worship arise, so new editions of hymn books show greater diversity. The renaissance of psalm singing in the Eucharist has led to some beautiful simple chants by the Benedictine, Dom Gregory Murray. Chants from the Taizé community make for meditative responses in the intercessions.

We are now very well served to be able to fulfil the assertion of a fifth century bishop of Hippo in north Africa, Saint Augustine, "He who sings prays twice;"



A twenty-first century parish church choir

Mason Neale features strongly in these) and much has been of lasting value. Two which we sing at this time of year, *All glory laud and honour* and *Ye choirs of new Jerusalem*, come from the pens of French bishops—St Theodulph, an 8th

A HUMBLE COMPANION TO THE CHURCH'S COMMON PRAYER

If the original edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* was a consequence of early nineteenth century revival, the three versions of the *English Hymnal* have all been specifically tied to liturgical development in the Church of England.

The first edition appeared in 1906, a year after a Royal Commission decided that liturgical provision in the Church of England needed to be revised. Its successor, the *New English Hymnal*, 1986, was seen as a companion to the *Alternative Service Book* and the recently published *Revised English Hymnal* has been produced to accompany *Common Worship*.

The editors have always been at pains to

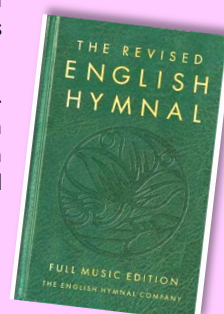
ensure the highest standards. Authors' original words have almost always been used - J M Neale complained that *Hymns Ancient and Modern* had only left one line of a hymn of his totally unaltered. The first musical editor was none other than the composer Vaughan Williams, who included a number of tunes based on English folk songs.

The *Revised English Hymnal*, published in November 2023, like the previous editions, describes itself as "a humble companion to the Church's common prayer" and reflects the style of *Common Worship*. To achieve this it has

- a greater emphasis on the seasons and sacraments

- many more Christmas carols
- reflective chants, mostly from Taizé
- a number of spirituals
- a large selection of settings of the Eucharist including, for the first time, versions of the Lord's Prayer.

Nor is all in English: now we can praise God in Welsh, Latin and French too!



Getting ready for Easter

*This article is based on a meditation by Vinita Hampton Wright,
a spiritual writer from Arkansas in the United States of America*

EASTER IS EARLY THIS YEAR (31ST MARCH), JUST A FEW DAYS AFTER THE EARLIEST DATE IT CAN POSSIBLY BE. That means Lent is already upon us: Ash Wednesday was 14th February. Lent is the time when we prepare ourselves to be ready in heart and mind for the great events of Holy Week and Easter.

But preparation doesn't just naturally fall into place. It is most effective if we have a plan. Perhaps a place to start is by thinking about what *should* happen in Lent.

Traditionally the three specifics of Lent are prayer, fasting and charitable giving. So, we pray more than usual, or we pray with different emphases. We eat smaller or fewer meals or give up a favourite food or drink. We give away more of our resources or give them specifically to special works of mercy. At St Alcuin's we have the tradition of collecting for a local food bank.

Indeed, prayer, fasting, and charitable giving are good practices at any time.

But, you might think, what needs to happen inside so that I can practice with more integrity and intention whatever I'm doing on the outside? There are plenty of ideas for actions and practices during Lent; coming up with ideas usually is not the problem. But we don't want to do anything simply to be doing it, even if it is a good thing. We don't want to make a list of merciful works so that we can place a tick beside each one as we accomplish it.

It is good to have a plan for *doing*. It is also good to have a plan for *being*.

How do I want to *be* during Lent this



year? More quiet and thoughtful? More open to God's desires? Better able to sit with people who need me? More attentive to sacred readings, whether in church or in private? Do I need to be more compassionate toward my own fears and failings? Do I need to become more courageous about using the gifts God has given me?

Why not try one or more of these suggestions?

- Ask God, every day, "What does my soul need?" Just ask, and wait quietly. Because we're very good at fooling ourselves about how we're doing, it might take several days of praying this question before we're truly open and humble enough to know the answer.
- Ask God, every day, "What about my life makes you happy?" Yes, when God looks at your life,

some parts of it—perhaps many aspects of it—bring joy to God's heart. Think of how your children or grandchildren or other people close to you make you happy. God is in relationship with you, which means that your sins grieve God's heart, but also that your growth and love and freedom and kindness bring joy to God of the universe. Again, you will probably need to pray this a few times before you are willing to consider that you give God pleasure, that you make God happy in any way. Stick with this little prayer and keep listening.

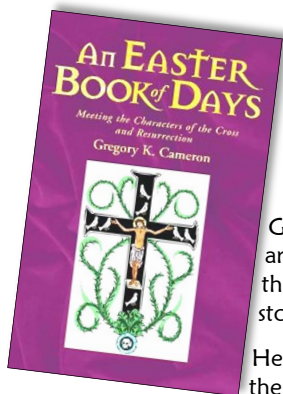
• Tell God, and yourself, every day, "I want to be open to the graces of this Lenten season." Maybe you're not open at the moment, or you're not as open and willing as you'd like to be or think you should be. What else is new? We can always open our lives a bit more, let go of more stuff, listen better, and do more quickly and passionately what we know helps nurture God's kingdom on earth.

This is a beginning: three short and simple prayer starters to ready yourself for Easter.

A suggestion for your reading this Lent

An Easter Book of Days

by Gregory K. Cameron



Gregory Cameron uses his artistic, literary and pastoral skills to introduce us to the characters who populate the Easter story.

He explores twenty-five characters from the stories of Lent, Holy Week and Easter from the perspectives of scripture, history and legend and asks how they can enrich our practice of faith today.

As well as the familiar figures - Christ himself, Mary his mother, Mary Magdalene, the disciples, Pilate, the soldiers, and the

thieves crucified with Jesus, he explores aspects of the story not found in scripture, such as Veronica wiping the face of Jesus as he carried his cross.

Considering biblical accounts alongside folk legends, he also explores the rich traditions that have built up around the cross and the crown of thorns, as well as tales of how the robin got its red breast, or what happened to the disciples after the ascension, creating a richly textured guide to the Easter season.

This and other books for your Lenten reading are available online from Church House Bookshop

FOR OUR YOUNGER READERS

It is not very long since we celebrated Christmas, when we remembered Jesus being born in a stable. Now we start thinking about the most important event in history—when Jesus was killed on a cross and then rose from the dead. We get ready for this in the season we call Lent. Here is a word search which will help you think what Lent is all about.

Find the following words hidden in the puzzle.

Lent	remember	season	love	ashes
cross	prepare	follow	pray	Jesus

WE BELIEVE
CHAPTER
20
GRADE 2

S	Y	P	G	D	P	S	Q	L	A
L	E	G	R	H	W	U	R	E	S
O	O	A	T	A	W	S	E	N	H
V	K	G	S	O	Y	E	B	T	E
E	O	E	L	O	Y	J	M	F	S
I	C	L	O	L	N	N	E	G	I
R	O	S	S	O	R	C	M	M	T
F	Y	Q	M	A	H	K	E	B	B
P	R	E	P	A	R	E	R	J	V
C	E	H	I	Y	X	S	X	C	Z

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Christ, the Light of the World



IN NOVEMBER, AS PART OF THEIR PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS, our young worshippers made Christingles and learned what they signify, before sharing them with us all.



All ye Faithful Came

WITH SO MANY REGULAR WORSHIPPERS AWAY FOR THE HOLIDAYS, HOW WOULD OUR CHRISTMAS EUCHARIST TURN OUT? It had been widely publicised and we had received a few enquiries about it. Beyond that, we had no idea. And how would a Carol Service in the context of the Eucharist work?

We need not have worried. When Fr John arrived, he met a lady at the church door, showing our publicity on her phone and asking if she had come to the right place.

And people just came and came. Most were those we had not met before. Some had come a great distance to be with us, even a couple from Melbourne, Australia. We had printed extra service sheets, but many had to share.

It was not to be all plain sailing. The electrics started making a hideous buzzing noise. After much trial and error, we were able to keep the lights on and have power for the organ, but no heating or sound system. We kept ourselves warm with our lusty singing.

Being unable to benefit from microphone and speakers, the liturgy of the word was celebrated from the middle of the nave, in the capable hands of Louise Taylor and her family: Emily and Olivia reading from scripture, James doing the intercessions and Louise herself reading John Betjeman's poem, "Christmas".

But were we right to have our celebration in the context of the Eucharist, with so many new faces? We needn't have worried. Such a great number came forward to receive the Blessed Sacrament, many with great smiles of joy on their faces.

Coming from various Christian traditions, some were unsure whether they were entitled to receive

Holy Communion with us: they were quickly reassured.

Proof that the service had been a great success was the number who stayed for the Christmas fare afterwards: a varied table with not only traditional mince pies and a chocolate Christmas pudding, but also including the international dimension of Panettone and Stollen. We are most grateful to everyone for helping to make this such a wonderful celebration.

