

## The Chaplain writes...*about the passage of time*

For a number of reasons recently, my thoughts have been occupied with *time* and its *significance*. There was, of course, the matter of the church *clock* and its restoration. That was one factor in the complex equation! I have also explored different *kinds* of time in a number of recent homilies. Including the way in which 'ordinary' time (*chronos* in the Greek New Testament) becomes transparent to 'God's Kingdom time' (*kairos*) particularly when we celebrate the Eucharist.

And then, last month I wrote in this spot about the use of time, in the shape of the nine days between Ascension Day and Pentecost, as an opportunity to pray in a more focussed way. In the event, our daily Eucharist was attended by a small but faithful number of people, and we prayed together in the morning before our different days' work began. I was delighted that some were able to share in this time. In my own life as an Anglican, one of the most influential things that I treasured from my late teens was the experience of worshipping at the Eucharist with other people early in the morning each day before I began my daily work or study. There was and there remains something extremely powerful about such moments of *kairos* before the rush and frequently diminishing moments of *chronos*. And knowing that a new day brings a renewed opportunity of blessing – both through the *kairos* moment and the *chronos* moments of our days.

Then there is another passage of time that has come to my thoughts this year. The forty years since I was ordained priest. I have already mentioned elsewhere the plans for a celebration on 1 July this year, and Geraldine and I very much hope that as many of you as possible will be able to join us, both in the Eucharist at Holy Trinity Church and the lunch following – details of which are elsewhere in this Newsletter.

It may seem perhaps a strange anniversary to celebrate – 40 years. When I was younger, priests regularly celebrated 50 years, and sometimes 60 years. Not particularly 40 years. But, as they say, times have changed. Nowadays, priests tend to be ordained later in

life – though I was in my twenties when I was ordained, I think that my generation was the last in which that particular pattern was the *norm*. Though it may yet return, one hopes.

The reason why I felt that it was a good moment to offer thanks is really because ordained ministry is, of course, not something that exists independently of the rest of the Church, the Body of Christ. Those of us who share the privilege of ministerial ordination are only invited to do so by the rest of the Church. The ministry of deacons, priests and bishops is not one that is exercised in isolation, but in service of the whole Body. So if one is, as I hope that I am, offering thanks to God for this particular privilege of service, then it is right and fitting that it be done in the context of a continuing active ministry. In other words, in my case in 2018, *here in Geneva with this congregation* which is the latest I have been called to serve.

Initially when I thought about this celebration, I contacted all my fellow students who were ordained at the same time as me from their training at Mirfield, including Fr Bill Knight – who of course came from Holy Trinity Geneva as an Ordinand! Alas, in the event, none of them for various reasons are able to be present – some are keeping this anniversary, others have long-standing commitments. Most of our cohort are already retired – which goes to prove what Bishop Rowan Williams said on his recent visit to Geneva, and incidentally to Holy Trinity, that such events as a fortieth anniversary of ordination are becoming rarer within the life of the Church. He and I share the same dates of ordination to diaconate and priesthood and unlike most of that previously mentioned cohort, we are both still working!

No doubt you will hear more reflections on the passage of time when 1 July comes around! But more important, I hope that you will be there! Such an anniversary, at the very least, offers me an opportunity to say *thank you*. Yes, thank you to God for the calling, of course. But thank you also to those over that period of time, now most lately here in Geneva, who have been the ones amongst whom I have been privileged to minister. Thank you for all that you have taught me about faith, about love, about hope, and about service, and for the formation and guidance that so many people have given over these years, for

*Alec Gordon*

encouragement *and* for correction. I am certainly conscious in these forty years of how very much more I have received than has been given.

***Also about time and times!***

For some years, every Tuesday at 14h in Holy Trinity Church, the Prayer Group has met. But the numbers of those who meet together have contracted somewhat and whilst occasionally others come, largely there are three members and often they are not all available at the same time. It frequently falls upon one person to be present in prayer.

I have discussed with Christine Damary about what might happen, and we wondered about the possibility of having a Eucharist on Tuesday lunchtime instead, which might encourage both more people to come (and pray for the sick and those in need of other forms of healing) as well as giving an opportunity for ministry to people in the centre of Geneva at that time of day during the lunch period. The possibility of sacramental anointing of the sick within this act of worship could also be offered.

We do, however, have a regular Bible Study group meeting in church on Tuesday lunchtimes, though there is nothing to prevent us doing both things. Or alternatively, we could have another early morning celebration.

Please give this some thought and let me know what you think about this matter.

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**SUNDAY 1 JULY:** As mentioned above, on **Sunday 1 July** this year, Canon Alex will be celebrating the fortieth anniversary of his ordination to the Priesthood. On that day, there will be a **single celebration of the Eucharist at Holy Trinity Church in the morning at 10h30** and it will be followed by a **celebration buffet lunch** to which he and Geraldine are inviting **everyone**. It is, however, **very important** on this occasion for us to know numbers and so please accept this as a **formal invitation** and e-mail or phone to let us know if you are coming and how many you will be!

The reception is at the Centre de Quartier de Poussy, Chemin de Poussy 33, 1214 Vernier (opposite IKEA). There is a bus stop very close by and one takes the bus 6 from the Mont Blanc bus stop at our church. Also there is plenty of parking. Again, if you can share transport this will help! Cards, with details of the venue for the lunch, will be available in church.