

# Holy Trinity Geneva Magazine



## The Chaplain writes

### What kind of legacy do we wish to leave?

At Holy Trinity Church, we are well endowed with monuments, from grand marble memorial plaques to more modest brass squares commemorating the great and the good - and perhaps the not so good - who were once linked to our church. Usually erected by their families although sometimes by subscription, they give us the person's name, family and sometimes a brief description of their role and occasionally the manner of their death. But they are also intriguing, leading us to ask, 'what was their real legacy to their family and to the world?'

One of the exercises which those seeking ordination are asked to do is to write their own obituary. It seems on the surface, a strange, even slightly grim request. Yet, in fact it is a profound spiritual discipline which challenges those undertaking it to think deeply about their own lives in the light of their faith and to

consider what their legacy will be.

We start Lent, as the ashes are imposed on our foreheads at the Ash Wednesday service with the words, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return". As we reflect on our mortality during this holy season, it's also a good time for us to think of how we are living now, what we hope to do in the time that is left to us and what we would like to leave both for those who will follow us and also in terms of giving an account of our life before God.

In earlier centuries, when human life expectancy was far shorter and death was often unexpected or came quickly with illness, preparing well for death whilst you were still in good health was seen as both spiritually and practically vital. Two of the most famous works to help people do just this were by the 17<sup>th</sup> century theologian Jeremy Taylor whose 'The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living' was written in 1650 closely followed by 'The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying' in 1651.

Nowadays, talk about death has become almost as taboo a subject as Victorian talk about sex. Partly this is driven by fear – a concern that if we talk about it then somehow it will

happen tomorrow; and partly by an illusion that as human life expectancy at least in the West is now far longer than for our 17<sup>th</sup> century forebears, we can put off thinking about death for a long time.

Yet this is a mistake because, if we fail to acknowledge our mortality, to plan and make proper preparations, we risk leaving a messy and difficult situation for our families and friends who may have no idea what our wishes are. It is a mistake for each one of us too, because we need to keep the reality of our mortality before us so that we live the life that God has given us fully and richly – conscious of its fragility and determined to make the most of every moment.

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That is why this Lent at Holy Trinity we are holding a four-part course on Wednesday afternoons entitled ‘*Life, Death and Eternity*’ to help us look at all aspects of death within a Christian context. I hope that, through exploring this together, we will be enabled to share our questions, fears and hopes and to come to see how, paradoxically, by preparing for a good death, we open the way for us to live life well and fully in our present context and to lay the foundations of the legacy we wish to leave.

Part of the legacy we will leave will be those things we physically own, including our money and possessions. We need to think carefully what we want to happen to these as part of our good stewardship of what has been entrusted to us by God and to ensure we have this clearly recorded. How do we wish to see lives enhanced and opportunities given through what we leave to our families, friends, charities and churches?

Another aspect of our legacy will be those things we have created which will live on through the lives of others. In February this year, at Holy Trinity, we celebrated the life of Eglantyne Jebb who spent the last ten years of her life here in Geneva and whose funeral was held in our church in 1928. Before that, in 1919 and along with her sister Dorothy Buxton, Eglantyne founded the charity ‘Save the Children’ in response to the terrible starvation which children were suffering in Europe following the First World War. She came to Geneva afterwards and worked

with the Red Cross and other bodies to campaign for the rights of children everywhere. This resulted in the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child being formally adopted by the League of Nations in 1924. Our celebration held on 6<sup>th</sup> February marked the centenary of that Declaration with a special service of Choral Evensong attended by members of Eglantyne’s family. The Ville de Genève also honoured her through the translation of her remains to the Cimetière des Rois alongside other famous citizens of Geneva. Through Eglantyne’s selfless dedication, she changed the lives of children worldwide and her legacy continues today through the work of the United Nations and Save the Children and will do so in the future.

Most of us will not leave legacies on anything like this scale. However, in the choices we make each day, in the ways we use our time, our resources, our skills, and our freedom to speak out, we all have the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of those who will follow us.

Part of our legacy will be the quality of our relationships and this is something for us to think about during Lent – particularly those relationships where there may be tensions and difficulties at this time - praying to God to help us transform them in a good and healing way. I am struck by the words of Rosemary and Victor Zorza writing about their daughter Jane who died from cancer when she was twenty-five:

*‘When we went back to Washington at the end of the summer, we became aware of a change in ourselves. We were thinking far more than ever before about what really matters in life, about feelings, about the core abiding values, about people – about individuals. Jane talked of all these matters in her last weeks, and made them more real to us than they had been. .... ‘I don’t need a “thing” to remember Jane by’, said one of her friends. ‘Jane taught me how to make bread. Whenever I make bread I think of her’. Before she died, we had talked of how people live on in what they do, in their actions, in the memories of those who they have influenced. That is how Jane hoped she would live on. And she will’*

*(‘A Way to Die’ – quoted in ‘All in the End is Harvest’ edited by Agnes Whitaker).*

So I would encourage you this Lent to have a go at writing your own obituary. Think, as we follow the footsteps of Jesus during this season and pray about what we would hope our legacy to be. Join with us if you can to discuss these matters in our ‘*Life, Death and Eternity*’ course on Wednesday afternoons. And pray that God will help us to turn these hopes into a reality.

Have a very blessed Lent

*Daphne*



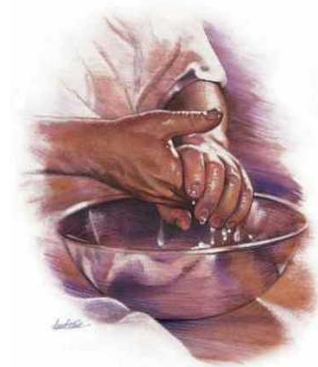
## The Enigma of Pontius Pilate

Pilate said to him 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?'  
St John's Gospel chapter 18 v.33/34

For someone whose name has been well known in most Christian households all over the world for more than two thousand years and is, in fact, the only Gentile mentioned in the creed, relatively little is known of the life and character of Pontius Pilate. Reliable sources of information are few, the main ones being of course, the four Gospels that constitute the New Testament. There are also the apocryphal Gospels of Peter and Nicodemus (a portion of which is called the Acts of Pilate) that were written considerably later, in the second and fourth centuries, and also the writings of contemporary (first and second century) Jewish historians.

One historian in particular, Flavius Josephus, has detailed information on the events leading up to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus and has attempted to assess the character of Pontius Pilate. He does not paint a sympathetic picture of the man, accuses Pilate of harshness in dealing with the Jewish subjects under his rule, of pride, violence, greed and cruelty, of continual executions without trial. One cannot help questioning the wisdom of his appointment as Caesar's representative in what was recognised, even then, as a political hot spot.

Pilate was appointed Roman procurator of Judea in A.D. 26 and remained in that uncomfortable position for ten years. Almost immediately on appointment he ran foul of the Jewish authorities, with whom he was supposed to co-operate in governing the province and whose culture he had been instructed to respect. Not getting satisfaction from Pilate over the removal from the temple of banners and standards considered to be idolatrous, the Jews finally appealed to the Emperor Tiberius who instructed Pilate to remove them. On another occasion Josephus relates that Pilate used some of the sacred treasure of the Temple to pay for the construction of an aqueduct to bring water to Jerusalem. Other areas of conflict with the Jews arose frequently. Pilate became wary of the zealous behaviour of the Jewish authorities, but the latter no doubt recognised Pilate's precarious position as procurator and were quite ready to take advantage of it and appeal to Rome over his head.



But apart from these various incidents, and the final drama of the arrest, trial and condemnation of Jesus, little verifiable factual material is available. It is therefore not altogether surprising that a comparatively recent biography of Pontius Pilate should bear

the title '*Pilate: The Biography of an Invented Man*'. The authoress, Ann Wroe, the American editor of *The Economist*, points out that apart from his name not much is known of Pilate's family or background. To be appointed Governor of a Roman province Pilate must have been a Roman citizen, reasonably wellborn and also well off. According to some versions of his life he originally came from Spain, or again he was said to have been born in Germany, but this is all myth or speculation.

In reviewing Wroe's book when it first came out Dr Robert Runcie (Archbishop of Canterbury 1980/91) pointed out that it is neither history nor fiction. It has been well researched but remains fragmentary; it does pass judgement on the shadowy Roman who has for centuries been reviled by many but raised to sainthood in the Ethiopian Coptic Church. It is up to the individual reader of the biography, and of the Bible, to come to a conclusion on the character of the man. He was probably a good soldier, who wanted to do his job well but seems to have lacked the necessary qualities of imagination and humanity. He undoubtedly wanted to do good, had good impulses; he was convinced, for instance, that Jesus was innocent, but he felt too insecure to act upon his good impulses.

He had probably not been adequately prepared to cope with the endemic rebellious spirit of the local populations. Though he could see where the mob was trying to lead him, corner him, he was not quick-witted enough to find a viable

alternative. His attempts to get out of having to condemn Jesus, by turning the whole case over to Herod and, finally as a last resort, by having the decision taken by the Jewish authorities, were unsuccessful. His efforts to demonstrate, by publicly washing his hands of the whole affair, that he did not approve of the verdict and was innocent of its consequences, were to no avail and did not convince anyone.

The situation as it unfolds in contemporary writings shows a territory inhabited by many races and tribes, each subject to distinct fears and needs. The Romans wanted to be able to rely on the revenues from Judea; the Jews needed the Roman soldiers to keep order in times of stress (as during the Passover); the followers of Christ did not want to make an enemy of Rome, which is probably why they agreed to the demands of the mob. A situation that is all too familiar in occupied territories today. One is tempted to write it off as yet another example of a good man – a soldier - promoted beyond his capabilities.

In his review of Wroe's biography Dr Runcie surmises that it *'might have been better for the moral health of Christianity if the blame had stayed with Pilate'*. Perhaps he was right.

And after the crucifixion? Again it is all legend and speculation. Pilate was said to have repented and become a believer; he was condemned by Rome and executed; he committed suicide. But nobody really knows. Information may yet come to light. After all, it was only in 1961 that a

dedicatory stone was unearthed by Italian archaeologists in an ancient amphitheatre near Caesarea on the Sea (Maritima) proving that Pontius Pilate was indeed the Roman Governor in Judea at the time of the fateful Passover leading to the crucifixion of Jesus.

The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, 'Do not write *'The King of the Jews'* but *'This man said I am King of the Jews'*. Pilate answered, *'What I have written I have written'*.

St John's Gospel chapter 19 v 21/22

*Written by Angela Butler from research by Valerie Offord in 2005*

#### Sources

Reviews by Robert Runcie in the *Sunday Times* 21 March 1999 and Fiona Shaw in the *Times* of 25 March 1999 of A. Wroe *Pilate: The Biography of an Invented Man*.

www. news.bbc.co.uk *Pontius Pilate; the Man behind the Myth* 13 April 2001.

www. bible-history.com/pontius\_pilate



#### **Beginning over again: a new creation**

When I studied theology at university a favourite question which used to appear regularly in examination papers was, 'What Old Testament book was most influential for the writing and development of the New Testament?' It was a question to which there probably wasn't

intended to be only one 'right' answer. The examiners were interested rather in how we justified whatever choice of Old Testament book we made.

Possible answers might include, for example, Psalms, which is directly quoted most frequently in the New Testament; Isaiah, also frequently quoted, and whose depiction of 'the suffering servant' profoundly influenced the New Testament reflection on the role of Jesus as 'the servant' (in fact some of the Church Fathers referred to Isaiah as 'the Fifth Gospel'); Deuteronomy, whose model of Israel as a journeying community of faith probably underlies the structure of the Gospel of Luke. But if I were answering the question, certainly these days, I would make out a case for the importance of Genesis. I really don't think that you can understand the New Testament properly without being aware of how Genesis, its themes and its characters, has played a formative role in the shaping of the New Testament, not only the Gospels, but also the letters of Paul, as well as the Epistle to the Hebrews, and certainly the book of Revelation.

Now, having written a commentary on Genesis, I could possibly be said to be a bit biased on the subject, but in fact it was writing that commentary which made me aware of just how pervasive the influence of Genesis is in the New Testament. At the invitation of my publisher, a year or so after the first edition of my commentary appeared I wrote a small Lent book, *In the Beginning: Genesis and the Gospels*, in which I explored how each of the different



sections of Genesis makes a direct or indirect appearance within one or more of the Gospels. That Lent book led to my (to date) greatest moment of literary glory: appearing in the Church Times best-sellers book list for a few weeks!

Like many Lent books, it had five chapters, reflecting the five weeks of Lent (up to Holy Week) That fitted very well with the way that I (like many other students of Genesis) believe that this biblical book falls into five sections: those sections ‘divided’ by the appearance of the Hebrew word *toledot* (variously translated into English, but with a basic meaning of ‘story’ or ‘genealogy’). The five sections of Genesis are:

Creation (Gen 1.1-6.8)

The Flood and its aftermath (Gen 6.9-11.32)

The story of Abraham (Gen 12.1-25.18)

The story of Jacob (Gen 25.19-36.43)

The story of Joseph and his brothers (Gen 37.1-50.26)

Let me give you some examples of how each of these sections makes its influence felt within the pages of the New Testament. I deliberately begin with the end of Genesis – the story of Joseph. That story is recalled in the Gospels, by the ‘pieces of silver’ for which Jesus, as well as Joseph, is sold (Gen 37.28; Matt 26.15), by the link to dreams – both in Genesis, and in the account of the dreams experienced by Joseph, the putative father of Jesus – and by the ‘Pit’ in which Joseph is imprisoned in Gen. 37.24 and which Christians eventually associated with the prison in which Jesus

was held overnight at the house of the High Priest. Later Christian tradition saw Jesus as ‘a new Joseph’, a comparison which perhaps culminates in the profound novel by Thomas Mann, *Joseph and his Brothers*.

As regards the story of Jacob, we are, I think, intended by Luke to read the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-32) with the tale of the ‘prodigal’ Jacob in mind. And there is a wonderful, even humorous, ‘play of words’ in Jesus’ conversation with Nathanael (John 1.45-51) which connects both Nathanael and Jesus himself to the experiences of the Old Testament patriarch.

The fact that the story of Abraham comes at the mid-point of Genesis calls attention, in the conventions of ancient literature, to the importance this figure plays within the biblical book. And this is echoed in the New Testament, not only in the Gospels, but also in the letters of Paul, especially Romans and Galatians. Within the Gospels Abraham provides the starting-point for Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew 1.1; is referred to in Luke in the context of Jesus’ compassion for the ‘daughter of Abraham’ (Luke 13.16), and ‘son of Abraham’ (Luke 19.9) and acts as a dominating motif in John 8. Taking these references over all, Abraham seems to appear in the New Testament in the context of wrestling with the question of universality and particularity – God’s love for all people, over against God’s special care for a particular group – which was an issue that the writers of the New Testament found themselves struggling with, not least linked to the relationship

of the early Church and Judaism.

Moving back within Genesis, the section of the book that recounts the story of the flood and its aftermath finds its echo in several of the Gospel accounts which refer to the crossing of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus’ actions in stilling the storm or walking on the water are recounted to us in the awareness that in biblical idiom the sea is a dangerous force untameable by humanity, which God alone can control – a message also offered by Genesis’ flood account.



And so we eventually arrive back at the creation stories of Genesis 1.1-6.8. We cannot read the New Testament, the Gospels and other books, without being very aware of how they are influenced by these foundational chapters of Genesis. The creation story is echoed in the final chapters of the New Testament, when the Tree of Life, first mentioned in Genesis 2, makes its re-appearance in the Revelation 22.2, and flourishes in the city with its fruits offered, ‘for the healing of the nations’.

Although allusions to ‘creation’ appear in all four Gospels, they are most apparent in the Gospel of John, of which it can truly be said that the Gospel-writer presents the life and ministry of Jesus as ‘a new Genesis’. This is obvious even from the first words of John’s Gospel, with its clear echoes of Genesis 1. It appears too, I believe, in the importance of ‘light’ (the primal starting-point of creation) throughout this Gospel. For me, it is powerfully present also in the re-working of the relationship between men and women which is so much part of the story of the Gospel - the wedding at Cana, the Samaritan woman, Mary and Martha – a reworking which seems to be intended to rectify the imbalance suggested by Genesis 3.16. Perhaps, however, most profoundly of all, it is alluded to in the account of Jesus’ passion and resurrection – the meeting in the garden, the breathing into the disciples of the Holy Spirit; these are often spoken of. And yet there is something more which is not often realised. When Jesus appears before Pilate, as a bound and vulnerable prisoner, Pilate proclaims, ‘Behold the Man’ (John 19.5). Later, the final words of Jesus during his crucifixion will be, ‘It is finished’ (John 19.30). These events, taking place on the sixth day of the week, the day when, according to Genesis 1.26-28, human beings were made and creation was finished, seem to recall, in a profound way, the vocation of Jesus to be, as the true image of God, the first-born of God’s new human creation. Jesus offers to us a pattern for humanity as God would have it be. There are many implications of this, but I

close by simply drawing your attention to one that is absolutely central. To understand the ministry of Jesus as inaugurating a renewed creation is an implicit reminder that our faith is physical as well as spiritual. The well-being of the world in which we live matters. In the original acts of creation God saw that they were ‘good’. That ‘goodness’, God’s vision for the context in which he has set us, is reiterated on the mount of transfiguration when the disciples acknowledge, ‘It is good to be here’ (Mark 9.5). There are many reasons for Christians today to care deeply for creation. But the presentation of the life and work of Jesus as ‘a new creation’ offers us a fundamental starting-point and lays on us a fundamental responsibility.

### Canon Dr Clare Amos



### More about St Methodius

**Where we left off: AD 870**  
Methodius has been captured and imprisoned “somewhere in Germany” – but where is he?

Back to the present day: Professor Rupert Schaab (Leitender Bibliotheksdirector der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart) who is a monk in St Gallen, born in 1962, has been doing some sleuthing and has come to the conclusion that this “place” could well have been the St.

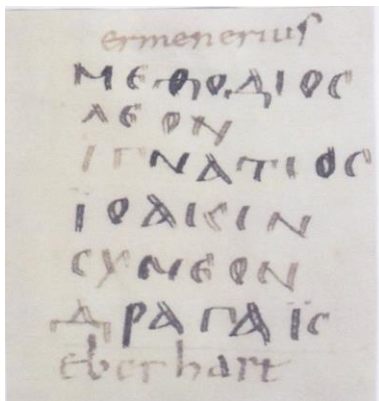
Gallen Abbey (Switzerland, of course, did not yet exist as a separate country). Spending months poring over ancient manuscripts and comparing bilingual texts in Latin and Greek, Dr Schaab believes that Methodius and his companions, Brother Lazarus and Brother Cymeon, might indeed have been imprisoned there and perhaps, during their time there, have contributed bilingual manuscripts to the abbey’s already extensive collection.

Dr Schaab’s paper is very detailed but, as far as I could discover, has not yet been translated into English or digitalised, so this is just a general idea of some of his evidence:

*At the end of a letter to another monastery concerning the meaning of letters of the alphabet in musical notation, the monk Notker Balbulus of St. Gallen writes “The Greek brothers send you their greetings” (without actually naming them).*

*Two examples of bilingual documents (Latin and Greek): St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 48, page 376, St. John’s Gospel chapter 15, mid 9th century and especially Codex 17, page 335 which shows a psalm in both languages.*

*Furthermore, a document which goes by the name of the Codex of Fraternization contains the names of monks to be prayed for on a daily basis. Here is a reproduction of a page where we can see Methodius’ and Cymeon’s names on the list.”*



*Codex of Fraternization:*  
Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Ms. Rh.  
Hist. 27, fol 40r.  
(This document can be freely  
consulted on e-codices.ch.)

**Once again, drama strikes!**  
These are turbulent times which in themselves already place a considerable burden on the monastic community of St. Gallen, when the news breaks of the seizure of Methodius, with all its theories, rumours and speculation. On top of this, Brother Lazarus suddenly meets a violent and untimely death. Even back in those days, this is so scandalous that Pope John VIII (872-882) orders an enquiry but, in accordance with the monastery's tradition, this only meets with stony silence. Furthermore, the disappearance of Methodius just won't be forgotten and causes uproar. In 873, Pope John VIII strongly condemns this treatment of Methodius and asks King Louis the German to order his reinstatement, with the proviso, however, that he stop using the Slavonic liturgy. (A few years later, he rescinds that proviso, allowing the use of Slavonic again. This, however, signs his death warrant and, in AD 882, Pope John VIII is murdered - yes, really! The full reasons are hidden in the murky past – was

he a martyr or did he kowtow to the Franks? Debate still rages.)

**The curse of the bishops – or just a coincidence?**

Dr Schaab says that we don't really know why such secrecy surrounds the Greeks' stay in St. Gallen, but we can read in the "Life of Methodius" that the bishops concerned die shortly afterwards because of their involvement in this unlawful imprisonment. In fact, Adalwin of Salzburg dies on 14 May 873; Ermenrich of Passau dies on 26 December 874; Anno of Freising dies on 9 October 875 and Abbot Grimald of St.Gallen had also recently died, on 13 June 872. Furthermore, in 873 and 874, people become alarmed when a plague of locusts destroys crops. Conspiracy theories are rife, or as they say here in Geneva, "it's a basketful of crabs"!

After his release, the later years are more or less calm for Methodius. The new ruler of Greater Moravia throws the Frankish clergy out but the new Pope, Stephen V, is particularly hostile and once again prohibits the use of Slavonic. But Methodius doggedly continues with his work until his death in 885.

Dr Schaab concludes: *"Without new sources, it is hardly possible to clarify with certainty whether these really are the Slavonic missionaries Methodius and Lazarus. However, thanks to a better understanding of Greek and a more up-to-date reading of Codex 17, along with entries in the Codex of Fraternization, Notker Balbulus's letter, various texts by Irish monks who were present in St. Gallen*

*at the same time, and so forth, the final conclusion is: "It is very likely"*

My Orthodox friends know all about Cyril and Methodius and, in their church, celebrate these two translators of the Gospels each year on 11 May. Throughout the ages and right up to the present day, being a translator can be a very dangerous job!

**Dorinda**



*Portrait of an Eastern church monk, ca. AD870*  
This sketch appears on page 154 of the St.-Gallen Codex 17

Notes:  
In 1880 Pope Leo XIII introduced the feast day of Cyril and Methodius (14<sup>th</sup> February) into the Roman Catholic calendar; 14<sup>th</sup> February is also the day the Anglican Church celebrates these two brothers;  
In 1980 Pope John-Paul II declared the brothers to be co-patron saints of Europe, together with St. Benedict of Nursia.  
The new ruler of Great Moravia mentioned in the article was Prince Ratislav's son who usurped the throne. Prince Ratislav himself died in captivity and is now a saint of the Orthodox Church – but that is a whole new story!



Sources:

Conference, April 2023: "Wer waren die Ellenici fratres im Kloster St.-Gallen?" by Dr Rupert Schaab. ("Who were the Greek brothers in the St.-Gallen Abbey?")

Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters, 74.Jahrgang, Heft 2, pp449. (Available for consulting at the Bibliothèque de Genève.) Various Internet commentaries.

Codex of Fraternalization:

Zentralbibliothek Zürich, M s. Rh. Hist. 27, fol 40r.



### Ha! Ha! How mirth and levity have been sobered up over the centuries

This is a post scriptum to Canon Alan Amos' interesting article in our Winter issue (Serve God with mirth or with fear?) and in substance brings you his enlightening answers to some questions I asked about that article.

First, the simplest point. Canon Alan tells me that the Hebrew word translated as 'mirth' by William Kethe is 'Shimchah' – gladness; so Kethe was closer to the original than his successors the English Puritans who used the word 'fear', meaning 'awe', because to them 'mirth' sounded like unbecoming levity – having too much fun in the presence of God. It is good that in our times we are encouraged to be more joyful in our worship.

Then I asked why it was considered a sin that Sara laughed when she learnt she was pregnant in her old age. This was not Canon Alan's judgement, but a reference to how it was commonly understood in Reformed circles, and more widely in Judaism, and is still understood in conservative (non-feminist) Christian circles today. This listing of her laughter as "a sin" is the result of putting the story of the announcement of Isaac's birth to Sara alongside other similar stories of an announced "wonder birth."

A foundational example of the story of such a birth is that of Samuel (1 Samuel 1). Here there is competition between two wives, Peninah and Hannah: Hannah is loved by her husband but she is barren. Through the visit to the sanctuary of Bethel, and through prayer, she receives the assurance of a birth, which then follows. In humility she offers the child to God to serve him as a dedicated one throughout his life. In contrast, Sara who is the legal wife but has to contend with the "fruitful" concubine Hagar, is not a humble character who knows her place. In other words, she does not fit into the Semitic idea of what a good wife should be! - nor that of the more conservative Jews since then, and certainly not of the Puritan Protestants. She does not have a heart "submissive, meek, her great Redeemer's throne." No, not Sara. She is self-centred and a schemer, as her grandson Jacob/ Israel will be. But she is also a realist with her feet firmly on the ground. Standing, listening at the entrance to the tent to the message the "three visitors" had brought Abram

(Abraham) of a son for Sara, she cannot believe her ears and she laughs, the equivalent of saying, "divine news no doubt, but what a load of old cobblers!" That is why she lies and denies laughing when the Lord (the three now shrink into a divine one) challenges Abraham as to why Sara has laughed, showing doubt of the divine power over the whole of life and creation, the God to whom nothing is out of bounds or too wonderful to happen. Mind you, Abraham has already laughed at the same news a chapter earlier, and got away without a rebuke.

Anyway, in general, biblical interpretation has seen this laughter at the divine message as a rebuke to Sara for a lack of faith. The irony was to be that her own son Isaac was to be called by that name, meaning "he laughs" or "he will laugh" which Canon Alan feels carries the concept of laughter forward into a more positive position in scripture. Perhaps Isaac's name should really be "Yes, but the last laugh is on me."

In the New Testament we have Zechariah's doubting of Elizabeth's expectations and his consequent dumbness until the birth of his son, John the Baptist. Then of course we have the Annunciation, and Mary's obedience, while at the same time she asks, "how can this thing be?" But Mary is a polite young girl, unlike the hard-bitten Sara.

So Sara tended to become a reference point for those who saw laughter as contemptuous, mocking, and by its nature irreligious. Of course, we do not need to look at Sara like that today, but at the time when



William Kethe was writing, she fitted a certain paradigm of the woman of improper levity and an example of why Knox was to refer to the "monstrous regiment of women", which no doubt began with the self-assertive Eve and the suffering she inflicted on Adam, and continued with the sceptical reaction of the equally self-assertive Sara to God's promises.

Some of these reformers truly had it in for women! As for Sara, she refused to be wrapped up or shut up, like brave women in Iran today.

*Jane Brooks*



### A Strange Encounter

At our Wednesday online eucharists with spiritual communion we remember those who are commemorated in our Church of England calendar. So, on 10 January, I found myself preparing a short homily for Archbishop William Laud. At least I happened to know something about him, partly due to a strange encounter at Lambeth Palace, that I describe in the poem below. To explain this, it has to be said that the Archbishop was given to "winding up his enemies," who happened to be the Puritans during the reign of Charles I. He insisted that churches should be ordered with dignity, that holy tables (altars) should be restored to the East end of churches, and be dressed with a

fine cloth, and that clergy should vest in surplices. Those who refused his instructions (those who followed the Calvinists of Geneva with their black gowns) were severely punished. Regardless of his severity, it has to be said that with his Oxford Movement successors of the 19th century he shares responsibility for much that we take for granted in Holy Trinity Geneva today. During the Civil War, the Archbishop's many enemies took their revenge, and after four years of imprisonment in the Tower of London, he was beheaded on Tower Hill on 10 January 1645.

Sometimes on the rare occasions when I go to Lambeth Palace, I pause to pay my regards to an old friend in the guard room, very old, actually 500 years old, for he is a tortoise who belonged to Archbishop Laud, now stuffed and well-preserved. As I was about to leave on one occasion, I heard a faint croak, and it was clear that the tortoise had something to communicate ... even if it was a message that was long out of date.

#### *To Master William Laud from his Tortoise*

*Dear Master, much have I been moved and troubled by thy care of me, thy humble servant, when I know most keenly of my silly uselessness. How tenderly thou bendest thyself to minister to me a leaf of lettuce – muttering under thy breath the while, imprecations against thy enemies! Let it be said that I provide thee with a slight diversion; for of late, thy enemies be many. "Tuck thy head in, dear Master!" is my plea, not just the once but on our*

*several happenings. And yet thou wouldst not. For yet thou persistest in thy ways as pedagogue, reproving this man for want of surplice, that clerk for an undressed altar. I live in fright for thee, dear Master! Dost thou not see: sometime to halt, consider and retire, is better than to advance i'the fray? For such is the secret of my longevity, which I much fear will surely exceed thine own, unless thou turnest from thy way... Such turns are not in harmony with thy nature; slight of stature thou mayest be but most firm is thy disposition; thou bendest to no man, yet only to a tortoise. God bless thee, dear my Master! In the quietness of my shell, I will pray for thee!*

#### Postscript

*A note about the Archbishop's tortoise is provided by the Lambeth Garden Museum, next to Lambeth Palace:*

"Little is known about the tortoise before it was bought by an ambitious cleric named William Laud in 1628. Later that year, Laud was promoted to Bishop of London and the tortoise lived in Fulham Palace, the home of the Bishop of London, for five years. When Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, the tortoise is believed to have been packed up with the rest of Laud's possessions to move to Lambeth Palace. Archbishop Laud wrote in his diary in 1633 following the disastrous move, "My coach, horses,

and men sank to the bottom of the Thames in a ferry-boat, which was overladen". The tortoise was believed to be rescued, and didn't seem to have any lasting damage from his dip into the Thames. In fact, the tortoise far outlived its original owner, who was beheaded in 1645. In 1753, the tortoise was reportedly dug up "for a trifling wager" by a gardener in winter and sadly perished."

*Alan Amos*



**Council Report**

*from November 2023 to January 2024.*

Council met twice during this period, on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024. On 18<sup>th</sup> December Council came together for a social evening at our Chaplain's flat, which gave the opportunity for more informal exchanges between Council members. We all enjoyed Daphne's warm and generous hospitality and it was a wonderful way to celebrate the year's work together.

**Review of Council priorities 2023**

At our January meeting, led by Daphne we reviewed our progress against the four priority areas which we had identified at the beginning of 2023, Building Tomorrow, Vision & Strategy, Building Congregational Capacity and

Strengthening our Ministry with Young People. We have much to celebrate. We can see the results of the Phase 1 renovation of the church all around us as we worship and visitors have expressed their admiration. There are still some issues needing resolution (see below under Building Tomorrow) which Council and the Building Tomorrow Committee will endeavour to bring to a speedy conclusion.

We now have a Vision & Strategy for the next three years (2024, 2025 and 2026), which focuses on four strategic areas; Worship, Building Congregational Capacity, Community and Social Outreach and the Environment. Objectives for each of these areas have been defined and will form the basis of our Council priorities for 2024 and the next couple of years. The Vision & Strategy was shared with you in October and I would encourage you to re-read, consider and pray about the Strategy prior to attending our AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> April. You can find our Vision & Strategy at the following link: ([Policy Documents – Holy Trinity Church Geneva \(holytrinitygeneva.org\)](https://www.holytrinitygeneva.org)).

In terms of Building Congregational Capacity some progress has been made and we rejoice in the six young people prepared for first communion and the nine adults and three young people confirmed by Bishop Robert in November. However, we still have a lot to do in nurturing Christian vocation and involving a wider range of people in supporting our worship and other areas of church life. At present there is pressure in supporting worship

(finding sidespeople, readers, chalice bearers and intercessors) and our young people's ministry because of a lack of volunteers and leaders. Again an area where we encourage you to think prayerfully of where you can help. Any member of Council would be happy to have a chat with you to explore where you could perhaps contribute.

**Council priorities for 2024**

Following on our review of our progress in 2023, we focused on our priorities for 2024. Our four priority areas will be; Worship, Building Congregational Capacity, Community and Social Outreach and the Environment. In each case our objectives align with our vision to "make God visible" here in Geneva, in our church. Achieving these objectives will entail commitment of time and skills, but also some investment in areas such as lay development, youth work and outreach. Council is working with our Treasurer, Michael Gunton, to ensure that our 2024 budget, as it will be presented to you at our AGM, reflects the resources we need to achieve our 2024 objectives. You can find the specific 2024 objectives in the Vision & Strategy document referenced above.

You may remember that in 2023, Council decided to focus on one of the priority areas at each Council meeting. Since then our experience has shown that it can be difficult to combine an in-depth consideration of a medium- to long-term project with getting through business items and regular reports. We often ended up with meetings which

overran and some business items getting rather short shrift late in the evening! We thus decided, at our November meeting, to experiment with a changed format for Council meetings. In 2024 we will have four meetings in the year that will be dedicated to our four priority areas. Business will be limited to quick urgent matters only at these meetings and there will be no regular reports. The remaining meetings will be business meetings with regular reports. Our first meeting in January was a business meeting and our February meeting will be dedicated to developing the richness of our Anglican worship (both liturgy and music) to serve as wide a community as possible.

We are hoping that this change will enable us both to run the church more effectively on a day-to-day basis and to enhance our spiritual mission here in Geneva.

### **Building Tomorrow**

Those of you who read the previous Council report, will know that we had planned on Phase 1 work being completed by the end of December. Unfortunately there are still issues with both functionality and quality in the vestry and office. We have asked for a redesign of the vestry sink and handles for the cupboards. Anyone who has tried either to use the vestry sink or to open the cupboards will know exactly why this is necessary! There are also significant problems with the front door which is out of operation at the time of writing this report. On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January, the Council had a special session with the members of the

Building Tomorrow Committee to review the Phase 1 building project and document the lessons learnt. You may rest assured that under Mark Charles's leadership, we will all work hard to iron out the outstanding issues. The "lessons learnt" document will be a precious support when we move into Phase 2 of the building plan.

During 2024, Council expects to start working on developing Phase 2 of our building plan.

We now have building permission to renovate the current hall, including a second outside access and digging down to provide a second basement area. However, given the length of time since the first cost estimates were made, our architects have up-dated the estimates. These were received in mid-January and are now being reviewed and analysed by our Building Tomorrow Committee. Council will then convene for a special session to consider the costing and funding options of Phase 2. We expect this to occur in spring and will keep you informed of progress and plans. It is now pretty certain that there will be no Phase 2 building activity in 2024, so we can fully enjoy our beautiful church and use our hall in its present configuration for at least the rest of this year.

### **Finance**

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Treasurer, Michael Gunton who keeps Council well informed of our financial situation. Building Tomorrow has significantly complicated his work, as in addition to our operational accounts he has to account for Building Tomorrow expenses

and income (funding). At our November meeting, Michael presented the end of October 2023 accounts in a new format, which in addition to the monthly general fund/operating accounts gives a complete overview of the movements of church funds, including Building Tomorrow and the Development Fund. This has helped Council understand the full picture and will inform our financial decision making going forward.

At our January meeting, he presented the provisional 2023 accounts, which at the time of writing this report need to be finalized and then audited. It looks as though there may be a small surplus on the year. Our thanks go to you, the congregation, whose generosity has made this possible. This final result was helped by many of you remembering the church on your Christmas present list during the month of December. The excellent results of the Christmas Fair (around ten thousand francs) also made a big difference, as did the collection at the Cathedral (Nine Lessons and Carols Service) which at over six thousand francs (before costs), for the first time approached pre-covid levels.

### **Chaplain's reports**

Council receives regular reports from Daphne on the life of our chaplaincy. This period saw the integration of our Curate, Glen Ruffle, into our church life. He dedicates 3 days of his week to Holy Trinity and about the same amount of time to his role as the Anglican Communion's representative to the United Nations Organization in Geneva. These two aspects of



his work came together meaningfully on 10<sup>th</sup> December when he organized a special service to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at Holy Trinity, followed by a candle-lit vigil on the forecourt with speakers from the UN, WCC and other international agencies.

We also had a rich programme of worship and activities over Advent and Christmas, including a full programme for our children, with a nativity play, Christingle and crib service. The Christmas Trinity Tea was greatly enjoyed by the not quite so young. Those less fortunate than ourselves were not forgotten. Three hundred Christmas “goodie bags” were prepared and delivered to the Jardin de Montbrillant on 21<sup>st</sup> December.

### **Churchwardens’ report**

Our Churchwardens, Mary and Aylwin work very hard to keep our church operating safely and dealing with the myriad of practical problems which arise with any building and community. As mentioned in the last report, the problems caused by rough sleepers and the lack of lavatory facilities at the bus station have continued to be of concern. At our January meeting Council voted unanimously in favour of going ahead with a plan to erect a temporary fence around our garden at a cost of CHF 7’700. This will not be a thing of beauty but will protect our garden and the church façade from misuse. In future years a more permanent solution will be found. We have also received a response from Madame Frédérique Perler to

our letter of complaint concerning the state of the Place Dorcière (the bus station) and the problems this causes us. She confirmed to us that work will be undertaken, starting this spring, to renovate the bus station itself and to provide adequate lavatory facilities on the site. Much the same information was provided by a letter to the Tribune de Genève from Madame Perler that appeared in early January in response to an article on the sad state of the Place Dorcière. So, we are hopeful that with the measures we are taking to erect a temporary fence, and the actions of the “Ville de Genève”, the situation will improve in 2024.

Improving our sound system remains a priority for Council and our Churchwardens. There have been some delays over the Christmas period but we hope that the independent expert chosen to assess our current system, Lemavisio, will be visiting our church soon to advise us on the best course of action to make sure our sound system is fit for purpose.

### **Safeguarding**

Amanda Dawson attended the November Council meeting to bring Council up to date with her work as our Safeguarding Officer. Sadly, she also informed us that she and her husband would be returning to the United Kingdom in the New Year, so she would have to resign from her position as Safeguarding Officer. Council expressed their gratitude to Amanda for the sterling work she has done in the short time she has been in office. At our January meeting, Council was glad to hear that Carol Brown

has come forward to replace Amanda. Carol is already well versed in Safeguarding practices from her work as a Junior Church leader and we are most grateful to her for taking on this additional responsibility. Rawsette Whyte remains as the Assistant Safeguarding Officer. Rawsette is currently completing all the risk assessments which need to be done for all our activities that involve the young and vulnerable.

Council will be busy over the next couple of months preparing for our AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> April. We hope many of you will be able to attend.

Please feel free to tell me whether this quarterly report gives you useful information on the Council’s work and any suggestions for improvement. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have on its contents.

*Ursula McGregor*

### **Tailpiece**

Here’s a handy jingle in case you are ever in need of the names of the twelve apostles!

Peter and Andrew  
James and John,  
Philip, Bartholomew  
Matthew, Tom,  
Simon, Thaddeus,  
Judas, James.  
These are the Apostles’  
names!

Composed and submitted by  
Frances Favre



## Church officers

**Chaplain:** Canon Daphne Green  
[chaplain@holytrinitygeneva.org](mailto:chaplain@holytrinitygeneva.org)  
 022 734 3817  
 079 945 0605

**Assistant Curate:** Glen Ruffle  
[curate@holytrinitygeneva.org](mailto:curate@holytrinitygeneva.org)

**Music Director:** Mark Charles  
 079 944 5175

**Junior Choir Director:** Claire Charles

**Church Wardens:** Mary Talbot  
 079 632 4012  
 Aylwin Zabula  
[zabulap@hotmail.com](mailto:zabulap@hotmail.com)

**Verger:** Christine Damary  
 022 774 2320

**Sacristan:** Gill Howie  
 022 733 83 72

**Council Members:** Clare Amos, Emily Banzet, Nicolas Dériaz, Mike Gunton (Treasurer), Nicholas Hacking, Gill Howie, Aidan Liddle, Ursula McGregor Paul Mondoa Ngomba, Rawsette Whyte

**Archdeaconry Synod Representatives:**  
 Carol Brown, Humberto Henderson, Pierre Ludo Claude

**Youth Ministry Coordinator:** Armel Ayegnon  
[ayearmel@yahoo.fr](mailto:ayearmel@yahoo.fr)

**Safeguarding Officer:** Carol Brown  
[safeguarding@holytrinitygeneva.org](mailto:safeguarding@holytrinitygeneva.org)  
 \*\*\*\*\*

**Church Office:** Michèle Walker, Secretary  
 022 731 5155  
[admin@holytrinitygeneva.org](mailto:admin@holytrinitygeneva.org)  
 Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri. 8h30 - 12h30

## Church activities

Please contact group leaders for any alternative arrangements

**Holy Trinity choir:** practice Thursdays at 20h00  
 Mark Charles 079 944 5175

**Junior choir:** practice Sundays after the 10h30 service Claire Charles

**Young people:** (11-13 year-olds) contact Innocent Mugabe  
[mugabeinnocent@yahoo.com](mailto:mugabeinnocent@yahoo.com)

**Junior Church:** Sundays 1, 2 and 3 contact Anitha Beulah 022 731 4211 / 078 323 8184

**Pastoral care:** Canon Daphne 022 734 3817  
 079 945 0605

**Bible Study:** Tuesdays 12h30-13h30 in church Elizabeth Brown 022 778 40 10

**Social group:** Gill Howie 022 733 8372  
 Beryl Allardyce 022 776 1479

**Church archives:** Valerie Offord 022 777 1858

**Development project:** Mark Charles 079 944 5175

**Pledge fund:** Ursula McGregor  
 022 342 3227

### Editorial committee:

Jane Brooks, Jenny Buffle, Margaret Jacquard, Elizabeth Laravoire, Brenda Stewart

Please send letters or articles for inclusion in the Magazine to The Editor, either by regular post to Jenny Buffle, 12 chemin La Parisaz, 1291 Commugny

or by email - [jjbuffle@gmail.com](mailto:jjbuffle@gmail.com)

Please note - deadline for articles for the summer issue is 11 May 2024