

St Peter's Church

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Priest-in-charge: Revd Paul Nicholson

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Churchwardens: Dwayne Engh and Ken Robbie

Music Director: Dwayne Engh

Pastoral Network Officer: Alfonso Vonscheidt

stpetersbp@yahoo.co.uk

Children's Minister: Romeo dela Cruz (07563 154739)

Sunday Services: 11.15am Parish Eucharist and Sunday School
[Children start in church, returning at
Communion to receive a blessing]
6 - 7pm PrayerSpace

Weekday Services:

Monday-Friday : 5.00pm Evening Prayer

Thursday: 10.30am Holy Communion

Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals by arrangement with Father Paul.

Magazine material to be sent to judy.east@blueyonder.co.uk or given to
Father Paul, please



October and November 2012

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DIARY FOR OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER

Thu 4th 10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 7th - Trinity 18

11.15am Parish Eucharist
 6 – 7pm PrayerSpace

Thu 11th 10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 14th – Trinity 19

11.15am Parish Eucharist
 4.00pm Belsize Music Academy Family Concert:
Chopin and his Idols
 7 - 8pm PrayerSpace

Tue 16th 7.30 for 8pm Hampstead Christian Study Centre. *What became of Vatican II?* Speaker Sister Patricia Harriss * in St Peter's Church

Thu 18th St Luke the Evangelist

10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Fri 19th 7.30pm Belsize Community Choir Concert –
with

London Revelation Rock-Gospel Choir and Hannah Gill - piano

Sunday 21st – Trinity 20

11.15am Parish Eucharist
 6 – 7pm PrayerSpace



Tue 23rd 7.30 for 8pm Hampstead Christian Study Centre. *Two Communities before God : Christians and Muslims in Britain.* Speaker Dr Chris Hewer * in St Peter's Church

Thu 25th 10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sat 27th BST ends - clocks go back an hour



Sunday 28th - Ss. Simon and Jude

11.15am Parish Eucharist *Celebrant & Preacher Fr. Mark Speaks*
 6 -7pm PrayerSpace

Tue 30th 7.30 for 8pm Hampstead Christian Study Centre. *We shall overcome: Christianity and the American Civil Rights Movement.* Speaker Revd Marjorie Brown * in St Peter's Church

NOVEMBER

Thu 1st All Saints' Day

10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Fri 2nd All Souls' Day

Sat 3rd 7.30pm Belsize Music Academy - Violin & Piano Recital (Ravel & Prokofiev) – *Litsa Tunnah & Peter Limonov*

Sunday 4th - 4th before Advent

11.15am Parish Eucharist
 4.00pm All Souls Service *with names of departed read, and candles lit*
 6 – 7 pm PrayerSpace

Tue 6th 7.30 for 8pm Hampstead Christian Study Centre. *I have called you by name – you are mine: the story of WATCH (Women and the Church).*
 Speaker Mrs Sally Barnes **in St Peter's Church*

Thu 8th 10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sat 10th – St Peter's Autumn Fair 10.30-12.30 in the Church

Sunday 11th -Remembrance & 3rd before Advent

11.15am Parish Eucharist
 6 – 7pm PrayerSpace

Tue 13th 7.30 for 8pm Hampstead Christian Study Centre. *The changing face of God – what place Honesty?*
 Speaker Dr Peter Vardy ** in St Peter's Church*

Thu 15th 10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 18th - 2 before Advent

11.15am Parish Eucharist
 6 – 7pm PrayerSpace

Tue 20th 7.30 for 8pm Hampstead Christian Study Centre. *The Science Delusion: New possibilities of*
 Speaker Dr Rupert Sheldrake **in St Peter's Church*

Thu 22nd 10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sat 24th 7.30pm Belsize Music Academy Concert – Schubert and Mozart *Gagliano Ensemble and Belsize Chamber Orchestra*

Sunday 25th -next before Advent

11.15am Parish Eucharist
 6 – 7pm PrayerSpace

Thu 29th 10.30am Holy Communion
 11.15am Coffee and Croissants
 3.30pm Junior Youth Club
 6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Fri 30th 8.00pm PCC Meeting *St Peter's Studios*

Sunday 2nd December – Advent 1

11.15am Parish Eucharist
 6 – 7pm PrayerSpace



*Full Study Centre details, including cost, can be found on page.....

Wednesdays: Wizzkids meets at 9.30am and Classical Babies at 2.00pm

Vicar's letter

HELP!! As you look through the Calendar of this Magazine Issue you will see a regular flow of events from the Belsize Music Academy – Concerts for children and Evening Concerts, along with our own Belsize Community Choir Concert on October 19th. You will also see, elsewhere, notice of regular weekly art classes for Mothers and Toddlers, and weekly 'Classical Babies' recitals. Added to that, a stimulating series of lectures at Hampstead Christian Studies Centre – also being held this term in St Peter's Church, and all this alongside the on-going use by St Gabriel's Ethiopian Orthodox Church, not to mention St Peter's own worshipping community!

I rejoice in all this diversity, and the fact that St Peter's is developing constantly into a place of hospitality for the whole Community, but it will possibly not surprise you that as the sole paid member of staff – working with two wonderful volunteers who already give much towards the musical life and children's ministry at my two churches – it currently falls to me to set out, arrange and manage the smooth running of these many enterprises in one space. The current trend is that I could end up simply as an Administrator and Manager instead of a Pastor and Priest, and this is not what I was ordained for.

As you read this, if you know of anyone who might be willing to offer help with the task of co-ordinating the use of our space – or feel you may be able to yourself, please let me know! The church is a voluntary organisation, and St Peter's is not wealthy enough to employ an Administrator, but help would be greatly valued – whether from inside or outside of church membership!

Moving on from my particular workload, two articles in this issue give a wonderfully encouraging picture of God moving in individuals' lives, leading them into work that itself has brought blessing to others. Fr. Mark Speeks, our Assistant Priest, has just returned from a 6 month tour of duty with the Army in Nicosia, and Julia Robson – a member of our

congregation who is a Fashion Writer – describes a rich new dimension of work that has recently unfolded for her. Do read these pieces, and be inspired!

To me, their experiences echo that of St Francis (I write this on his Commemoration – 4th October) who developed a life of increasing simplicity, having heard a call from God: "re-build my church". This 're-building' can take many forms; the important thing is that the re-building should be continuous, and life-giving – to ourselves and to others.

May we all, like St Francis, learn to live simply, that others may simply live.

Father Paul

Sermon

Preached by Father Paul for Trinity 12 2012

[Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18]; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69

*No Love that in a family dwells
No carolling in frosty air
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this truth compare-
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine*

The last lines of John Betcheman's poem, 'Christmas'. When read separately like that, they come over in a very affirming, confident manner. But the tone of his poem as a whole is best represented by the question it asks more than once: 'And is it true – this most tremendous tale of all?' This is the question that hangs before the listener even after those closing lines. It's not a confrontational question; we feel that the poet senses the wonder of the Incarnation, and wants to believe in it, but can only present it in that provisional way.

From the passage I just read in John's Gospel it would seem that at some point in his ministry, Jesus experienced a falling-off in the disciples who were prepared to continue following him, and who could go along with his claims. The nature of *their* uncertainty would perhaps be of a different kind than that of 'unbelievers' now. As faithful Jews they were perhaps more offended at what seemed to them his blasphemous claims of being, himself, the Bread of Life, whom his followers can feed from and live for ever, and comparing himself with the Manna the Lord had provided the Israelites in the wilderness, which had only given temporary nourishment. But their general reaction to what Jesus was claiming has a very contemporary ring: 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?'

The difficulty of allowing that Jesus may be more than just a good man and a charismatic teacher of 2,000 years ago has increased in recent times. It's not that anything has changed in human nature or human needs, nor is there any difference in the known evidence about Jesus' life, the claims of his resurrection or the experience of those who have accepted and followed him in faith up to the present day. But there is, I think, a sneaky feeling in an increasing number of people that if they so much as look into Christianity, and spend time in church, that they may suffer loss of face – loss of 'street cred.', that somehow they'll be 'selling-out' intellectually and flying in the face of reason and rational thought. 'Who *can* accept it?' is indeed the prevailing assumption of our present day culture, which is far less tolerant to consideration of Faith, and sometimes actually hostile and ridiculing.

This quite palpable wall of resistance against living by faith really seems to be a present day expression of what St Paul referred to in his letter to the Ephesians:

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh,
but against the rulers, against the authorities,
against the cosmic powers of this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places

Despite the heady, cosmic language that came natural to Paul, whose particular view of the ordering of the universe was inevitably shaped by his own times, the reality he describes is no less actual. There are times, as when we watched the unfolding Leveson enquiry, that it seems we can come close to actually naming the sinister rulers and powers of evil Paul refers to – whether as corrupt political leaders, or media dynasties, but even then we get the feeling that as soon as these are dealt with, others will only come along in their place, that something bigger is afoot. It's perhaps simplest to give it its old-fashioned name: 'sin'.

In the face of such obstacles placed in the way of simply following Jesus' words, and that spirit which as he says 'gives life', it's understandable and very encouraging that Paul offers invaluable advice in *counter*-resistance. He couches this advice in terms of spiritual warfare, to help the Ephesians to, as he says, 'be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power', putting on 'the whole armour of God'. Central to this armour is, of course, 'the **shield of faith**, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.' After describing the various other parts of this armour – and note the pride of place given in these to truth, steadfastness, righteousness, and the spreading of peace – he stresses the importance of **prayer**. This prayer 'in the spirit' we can take to mean our private prayer, as we nurture our individual spiritual lives, but also mutual prayer, as we pray with others as we will do here shortly, and for each other – *covering* one another (as its sometimes called) in prayer, which is a strong protective defence in itself. It's a reminder of the armour that naturally comes from gathering together with others in worship and prayer, and which can keep us from being swallowed-up and seduced by that Godlessness which is generally assumed as the default position in the world we live in.

Faced as we are with creeping disbelief, that corrosive attitude – that in this day and age nobody can accept Jesus' 'difficult' teachings, that question to his core disciples as many others were turning back, 'Do you also wish to go away?', rings out to us today challengingly. Peter's response is movingly realistic. 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the

words of eternal life'. Peter, as we know, was no paragon of faith, and was eventually to deny that he even knew Jesus in the moment of his arrest and trial. Maybe this can encourage us that John Betcheman's allowance for questioning in that poem, 'And is it true, this most tremendous tale of all?' is actually part and parcel of living the life of faith, and taking the risk of placing our trust in the Mystery of the incarnation.

Paul Nicholson

From The Reverend Mark Speeks
29 Regiment Group, RLC,
Buffer Zone,
Nicosia

Last Summer I was holidaying in Greece when I received an email from the Adjutant of the regiment I am currently posted to as padre. He wanted to know if I would like to put my name in the hat for an operational tour the following Summer with the British unit assigned to the UN Peacekeeping force in Nicosia. Perhaps it was the idea of spending six months in the heat of a Greek summer, but in a moment of madness I emailed back to say yes. I say madness as I am no longer, obviously, a Spring Chicken and committing myself to an operational tour meant effectively putting my life on hold for nine months once pre-deployment training is put into the mix.

Yet, here I am with less than a week to go before returning to the UK and I can truly say, while glad it is coming to an end, that the past six months have been wonderful. It is difficult to describe exactly what a padre does other than be present and available to whatever and whenever something happens and a soldier or a commander needs him. It is as if all the members of St Saviour's and St Peter's were to spend six months living and working together with hardly a break. That of course *could* be a

great joy but it would almost certainly be a challenge as well.

In an operational tour, living jowl by jowl, there is nowhere to hide – and so some soldiers, particularly if it is their first tour and they have not been in the army for long, have found it difficult as inevitably they find a way to "fit in" – or don't. Soldiers can be unforgiving, often latching on to the peculiarity of a colleague and mercilessly mocking an individual. Most often it is done affectionately; sometimes it isn't.

Combined with the loss of individual space comes being away from loved ones and friends. The pain of separation from wives, husbands, partners and children can't be underestimated. The frustration of not being there when bad things happen, as inevitably they do, is real, as is the guilt. Luckily most relationships survive, but many don't. The space opened by being away allows doubt and temptation to creep in. That is the case both for those at home and those away; and the temptations for young soldiers (most of the regiment being under 25 years old) are enormous when the nearby fleshpot of Agia Napa and the availability of alcohol are taken into account. Temptation of course is also found at home base as the regimental group comprises both men and women in their most fertile years.

The tour has been constantly busy then, sometimes listening to the ordinary gripes and grumbles of soldiers fumbling their way through a tour, sometimes listening to the more serious dilemmas that confront soldiers far from home, often supporting those who find themselves bereaved either from the death of a beloved grandparent or the breakdown of a relationship; or trying to cheer a soldier up who feels low missing a partner or their children. Most weeks I was also visiting soldiers in hospital. Fortunately for the vast number it was a case of rehydrating either due to the intensity of the heat, the PT sessions required most mornings or, in a minority of cases, the super abundance of alcohol imbibed the night before.

There have been more structured elements to the tour. I presided at the early morning ANZAC remembrance service for the Australians and conducted countless Acts of Remembrance at the graves of servicemen buried in the military cemetery of Wayne's Keep. I also ran St Columba's Church in the retained British area of the United Nations Protected Area with its regular Sunday worship.

I arrived in Nicosia as one of nearly 300 soldiers. I leave as padre of 300 family members whose names I know, whose histories and aspirations I am familiar with, and with whom I have been vastly privileged to serve in Cyprus. It is not Afghanistan but, despite the absence of immediate danger, I can vouch for the very real sacrifice made by soldiers who accept deprivations and work practices that most of their fellow countrymen would find unacceptable.

Mark Speeks

Faith behind bars: a fashion project like no other

'What *am* I doing?' I thought as I sat on that train hurtling towards Woking on a misty morning last April. Opposite me, three students aged around 18 or 19, my wards, looked out of the window, occasionally glancing my way. I'm not sure who was more scared. Them or me?

I can remember we travelled down to HMP Send, a closed category women's prison, capacity 282 inmates, in silence. Having lost my main newspaper client several days earlier and journalism commissions thin on the ground (I'm a journalist whose specialist subject is fashion), teaching became a welcome stopgap.

A colleague from a college I occasionally lecture at, had told me about the project: fashion students collaborating with women prisoners on a magazine. I would mentor both. Initially this would take the form of brainstorming sessions every Friday morning within the prison walls.

Ultimately, the ideas would lead to written features in a prison magazine that I would edit.

If I'm really honest, the fact a payment was being offered was mostly why I took it up. That and my father, a retired journalist who had spent his working life on *The Daily Express*, told me it would professionally be good for me.

Until now, my career has been spent in rarified capitals, reporting on pretty clothes sweeping down a catwalk. Realistically, the hardest part, besides brutal competition was confidence. I could have done with some that day.

Every Friday the prison minibus met us at the station. This would then wend its way through extraordinarily luscious green, Surrey countryside; past posh houses and grand tennis courts, before passing through fields of Hockney-ish yellow rape, and finally into the prison fortress.

HMP Send looks exactly like you'd expect a prison to be; with spectacularly high walls topped with curls of barbed wire. After the gatehouse, you pass through a series of doors, which are locked then unlocked as you go further into the core of the prison. At every click I felt claustrophobia closing in.

Send was originally built to be an isolation hospital before expanding into a young offenders' institution then a women's prison. It consists of a series of blocks standing within a well-manicured garden.

Reaching C wing - where our meetings would take place - I felt queasy. It didn't help the wing was newly painted and airless. Up clinical stairs and into a long, dark corridor and we were finally shown into a room with a low ceiling and one long table.

Bunched around the end of this sat twenty or so inmates wearing an assortment of jeans, knits, tops. What struck me was their normality.

Later on, I learned they had all dressed up for the occasion choosing to leave optional prison uniform in their cells.

The students huddled at the other end and initially I went to sit with them but something stopped me. Feigning confidence I went and sat amongst the prisoners. The room fell silent.

That first morning my role was to drum up enthusiasm for the project. And get everyone talking. One of the things you learn in my profession, (which has helped me overcome shyness), is that you must develop the hide of a rhinoceros if you are going to succeed. Getting (any sort of) people to talk becomes second nature. Words or attitudes fail to hurt you.

When I asked if anyone had any questions, one pink-haired woman muttered. "Yeah. I'd like to know why *you* are here?" It demanded a quick reply. "Honestly?" I said. "I'm here because as a journalist I'm interested in meeting you. You would be here if you were me." First rule of interviewing: always twist a situation around. However, this clearly wasn't enough.

"I also have never edited a magazine and I've always wanted to. But I do need your help. This is going to be a bit of a first for all of us." And then I added. "Believe me, I *really* need this to work." It was true. I *did* need this to work. After a tough few years freelancing, I needed to succeed.

The first brainstorming session worked only because it was an icebreaker. After that several inmates stopped coming. I felt momentum slipping.

One Sunday at St Peter's we were all asked to name our passion during a PCC meeting after the Eucharist. I used the same method at Send the next Friday session. How surprised was I to find 'God' the overwhelming passion?

Many of the women, almost all actually, having time on their hands thought about spirituality A LOT. Perhaps they were processing emotions, reasons, accessing bad choices... whatever. When we divided into groups, religion frequently came up as a subject.

After one particularly faith-inspired discussion I got a lift to the station with a warden and my project manager. The conversation not only led to us telling each other we attended church but also how our faith was being strengthened by, of all of people, the women at Send themselves. Next week on the train the students also 'fessed up' to having a strong faith. Something...was starting to make sense...

We took over the chapel at Send for a photographic shoot for the magazine. Although this was no more than a bare room with plastic flowers in a vase, a few chairs and the Stations of the Cross pinned to walls, I can't recall being in a more reverential space filled with a presence of God. It was cathedral-like in its calm.

The list of contents for the magazine was the hardest part to get right in terms of balance. Articles included 'what religion means to me', what help you could get within prison to educate yourself or get off drugs, and some thought-provoking writing about visiting days.

Two prisoners were fluent, natural writers. I told them so but saw them wince. Had I upset them? I later heard they had never been told they were any good. Not just at writing.

This is the crux of prison. Without reciting that song from West Side Story, *Officer Krupke* ("Our mothers all are junkies, our fathers all are drunks") there is a common thread running through a lot (not all) prisoners. It's not the case that some made the wrong choice or had taken bad decisions. *Some had had no choice.*

The weeks before the magazine was printed were the worst. Late nights spent editing was tough but affirmed the aim of the project: to build self-

esteem and develop self-confidence in each of the participants. To build on work that already goes on within prisons to work towards the very real possibility of gaining higher education qualifications upon release and ultimately finding work in the wide world. Reoffending rates within women can be as high as 50%. Many women reoffend to return to the safety of prison rather than returning to dysfunctional lifestyles/backgrounds.

We tramped down to Woking for the final time in August. On the day of the Olympics opening ceremony as it happened. Governors from the Sir John Cass's foundation, who had assisted in funding, came along to hand out certificates to the prisoners.

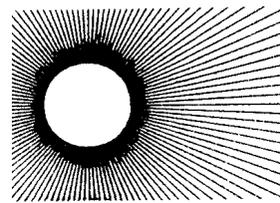
One of the wardens turned up in a Hawaiian shirt. It was his day off. I barely recognized him not in uniform. "You don't know how much this has helped the women," he told me and the funders. I felt humbled. I'd never felt much use to anyone before.

What I have learnt from the experience is overwhelmingly that prisons and prisoners stir strong feelings. The silence of some friends and colleagues has been telling. I also had to ask myself a lot of questions about prejudice and preconceptions.

A government re-shuffle ousting 'softie' Kenneth Clarke and funding initiatives may halt a second project in November. The new Minister for Justice, Chris Grayling, has told *The Daily Mail* he does not want inmates to 'enjoy' prison. What ideas will he come up with to end 'enforced idleness' behind bars I wonder?

Hopefully, I will be able to report this to you first hand.

Julia Robson



the Hampstead Christian Study Centre

**On Tuesdays at St Peter's Church. Belsize
Park From 8 – 9.30 pm (coffee served from 7.30pm)
Lectures : £5 per session or £25 for all 6**

AUTUMN TERM 2012

When the Sparks Flew

Winds of Change in the Life of the Modern Church

- 16 October : Sr Patricia Harriss: **What became of Vatican II?**
- 23 October : Dr Chris Hewer: **Two Communities Before God: Christians and Muslims in Britain.**
- 30 October: Revd Marjorie Brown, **We Shall Overcome: Christianity and the American Civil Rights Movement.**
- 6 November: Mrs Sally Barnes, **'I have called you by name - you are mine': the story of WATCH (Women and the Church).**
- 13 November : Dr Peter Vardy, former Vice-Principal of Heythrop College, **The Changing Face of God – what place 'Honesty?'** (The Challenge of Bishop John Robinson's 'Honest to God'.)
- 20 November: Dr Rupert Sheldrake, **The Science Delusion: New Possibilities of Dialogue between Science and Spirituality.**

Belsize Community Choir

Benefit Concert in aid of St Christopher's Fellowship

Friday 19th October at 7.30pm at
St Peter's Church, Belsize Square

With special guests:

London Revelation Rock Gospel Choir
Hannah Gill, piano

Entrance by donation

www.belsizecommunitychoir.org.uk

In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of emergency, notify:' I put 'DOCTOR.'

You know you're old if you can remember when bacon, eggs and sunshine were good for you.

God isn't looking for perfect people. He is looking to perfect people.

A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory