



## St Augustine of Canterbury, Belvedere

### 'GUS'S GOSSIP'

Welcome to the first edition of Gus's Gossip, a fortnightly newsletter to keep us all in touch with what is happening within our church family while we are still in lockdown.

#### *From Fr Clive....*

We congratulate Gloria on receiving the Royal Maundy from HM the Queen and Win for been awarded the Bexley Civic Award for church service within the community. Sue our Group Scout Leader has also received an additional bar to her medal of merit for long service. Well done!

Our Fan the Flame Missioners are on the move! Fr Michael currently in Bexhill is to be the next Vicar of St Stephen Lewisham (just up the tracks!) and Fr Graham is to be received into the RC Church. We pray for them as they continue their Christian journeys in different directions. Sister Carol SSM remains in Walsingham living her life of prayer and hospitality when the pilgrims return.

Fr Wisdom is in regular contact via WhatsApp. Zimbabwe is in a form of lockdown although cases have been quite thin. We pray for our brothers and sisters in our link diocese of Harare and especially the people of St Mary's Chitungwiza.

Our Lent Collection for Evergreen was rather halted when public worship ended after Lent 3. Thanks to those who have contributed. Evergreen have been offering support to the elderly in Bexley during the lockdown.

#### *VE Day memories from Fr Michael....*

On VE Day I was approaching my fifth birthday. We - that is my parents, my eighteen-month-old brother Chris and I - had recently moved into a new home. It had been requisitioned by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, and we were there because our bungalow had been destroyed by an enemy bomb the year before. Fortunately we weren't there at the time, our mother having decided to take Chris and me to stay in Luton with her parents, while my father was away in the Air Force.

In Ewell Chris and I shared a bedroom facing more or less north - that is towards London. One night - I later learned it was 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945 - my mother woke me up and - leaving Chris fast asleep - took me to the window and opened the curtains. There, above the trees at the bottom of our garden, I could see what I'd never seen before. The sky was full of light: on the horizon search lights were weaving in and out in what I've come to see as a victory dance. The war was over. Daddy would soon be home from the Air Force.

You can understand why I've never forgotten that night.

#### *From Jo, Deputy Head of our church school....*

St Augustine school remains open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Staff are working hard to support all children and their families during these challenging times. We can't wait for the day when it is safe for us all to come together as one big family again!

#### *From Lauren, Francis & Reuben....*

Francis and I are trying to keep Reuben engaged with pre-school activities whilst we are working from home! This week Reuben has learned about insects we have found in the garden and he is enjoying reading the Tiger Who Came to Tea. We are pleased that Reuben has had confirmation of his Reception place to start in September.

*From Jo....*

Usually once a week, I teach at a residential care home for people who have physical disabilities. It has been a blessing that I have been able to keep in contact with everyone by sharing activities (quizzes, crosswords, bingo, card games etc.) via Skype - thank goodness for computer technology!! It would be great if people would pray for the residents and staff.

*From Glenys (Fr Clive's sister)...*

For me I have really enjoyed being active in the garden and have time to sow seeds and watch them mature. The other advantage is having time to do lots more cooking not just for me but for other people as a thank you to those who have done my shopping for me.

Have also donated lots of pillowcases to those people who are making bags for the Nurses to place their uniforms in and place in the washing machine each day.

*From Ian....*

For me lockdown has been mentally challenging initially with struggling with all the information that was available in the press and social media... I distanced myself as I found it to be causing issues with my anxiety.

As I was still working I found this to a help as it took my mind off things as well as helping Molly and Emily during their day to day activities from PE to home schooling .

Prayer was a big help for me as well as music ...such as the album Strings of Light by Anthony Philips and also early Genesis Albums too.

*From Carol...*

I think during these last weeks I have had more access to church services etc than the last few years so some good has come out of it. But it is not the same. One needs to see people. It is a very strange way of living. I just long to go to the sea. I do not see what harm it would do. I can stay in the car. Having self-isolated for so long it is best to sit it out for a while longer.

*From Divine, one of our Junior Church members...*

At home I have been doing my school work online, exercise indoor and outside and resting. Even though I miss everyone, I need to understand how dangerous the virus is. I pray that everyone is safe.

*It would be really nice to hear how you are coping with lockdown, have you learnt any new skills, rediscovered an old hobby, become more adept at modern technology? We'd love to hear from you so that we can read about your lockdown musings. Please email Fr Clive at [frclive@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:frclive@tiscali.co.uk) or Donna at [staugustineofcanterburypa@gmail.com](mailto:staugustineofcanterburypa@gmail.com) and we will do our best to include it in the next newsletter.*

*Now for the second part of this edition there are some slightly longer articles. We're hoping that 'Policing the Virus' becomes a regular article! If you would like to contribute a longer article, maybe your memories of St Augustine's or a profile of yourself please send them to the above email addresses or pop a paper copy through Fr Clive's door.*

*From Bishop Farai...,*

To our dear Brothers and Sisters in the Parish of St Augustine of Canterbury Belvedere and the entire Diocese of Rochester. First and foremost, we send you warm greetings from all the faithful members of the Anglican Diocese of Harare, special now as we all have been affected, one way or the other by this Covid-19 pandemic.

We strongly feel that this is the time we should be 'a brother's keeper', though it might not be easy but by constantly reminding each other of the great giant whom we serve. A giant who is mightier than this pandemic, mightier than worldly calamities that may be-fall us. In this Covid-19 pandemic season we are bound to be struggling with questions, where is God in all this? Doesn't He care anymore? Or even going to the extremes of questioning His existence. I am reminded here, of the blind-man narrative in John 9.1ff, as Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple and passing through the streets of the city and they came across a beggar, who, "to move the people's compassion", told them he was born in that miserable condition. This prompted the disciples to ask their master whether it was the man's sin that he was in that sorry situation, or that of his parents. I don't want to get into a Theological discourse here, serve to say, we maybe in that situation of asking ourselves the source of our misery. Who created this Virus, where? How? When? And what have we done to deserve such kind remonstrance and vindication of God anger on His Creation?

It is the response of Jesus which I want to share with you, "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in Him." John 9:3. I pray for that time we all shall celebrate the sovereignty of God, when He shall calm the current storm in the World (Covid-19) and various storms in our hearts. In the meantime, let us all take comfort from the wise words of St Paul to the Galatians, "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" Gal 6:9.

May God's blessing be upon you and all your loved ones.

+Farai Harare

Bishop of Anglican Diocese of Harare

*From Edward - Policing the Virus.*

As some of you know, I work within The Met Police as a Roads Policing Officer. Like my colleagues who work on borough, we too are trying to police the lockdown during the Coronavirus outbreak. Unlike our colleagues in the NHS, we have been sent out on patrol with a bottle of disinfectant, a larger bottle of alco gel, two paper masks (for the scallywags) and a razor-sharp wit. No doubt on listening to the news, you would be aware of the effect having no traffic on the roads has had on some drivers. We are still out enforcing the speed limits and finding some truly astonishing speeds where they are wholly inappropriate. We are dealing with those drivers accordingly.

The most worrying side of the outbreak however seems to be the members of public who put others needlessly at risk by not following simple guidance that has been put out by HM Government. The message is simple, please, unless you have a real reason to travel, stay at home. It is your safety and your health that is being at risk if you travel on the streets. In the last week I have had reason to deal with two members of the public who did not think the rules applied to them.

The first was out on the streets, with Covid-19, shopping with his wife, without wearing any facemask. He was quite happy to visit one of our local stores and care not a jot about other people around him. He was dealt with and was reported for his speed under existing regulations.

The second driver had travelled all the way from Purfleet to Belvedere, just to take his girlfriend shopping, and then he met me. He ended up walking home and now has an appointment with the local Magistrates to explain why he was driving without insurance x 2.

Rest assured, my colleagues and I are working hard to keep the streets safe. Having just completed a week of nights, the Covid 19 regulations making the job a lot easier, we were kept busy by the usual suspects.

Stay home, Stay safe, Protect the NHS.

### **PROFILE OF A PARISHIONER**

My name is Manda and I am a member of the congregation at St Augustine's, Belvedere since 1981. So, a little bit about me!

My secondary education was in a lovely Church of England Convent school in Hastings where I learned many more aspects of Christian life and enjoyed the privilege of singing in the Chapel Choir, a coveted position! Sadly, the school closed in the 1990s, inevitable due to the demise of the order of the Community of the Holy Family.

I have been a nurse all my life since the tender age of 17! I began as a student nurse at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital Stanmore where I trained as an Orthopaedic Nurse. The teaching was traditional and at a standard I am proud to have been part of. I then went on to my SRN general training at Greenwich District Hospital and qualified in 1980. (We became the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in 2001). I have enjoyed my nursing career more than I can say, I was truly vocational and feel fortunate to have been so happy in it.

All my intentions were to return to Stanmore but instead, due to an unexpected opportunity, I went to the theatre department where I found my love of anaesthetic nursing completing the appropriate training at King's College hospital in 1982. This speciality opened many doors during my long career in the NHS for which I am forever grateful. I later became the Chair of the British Anaesthetic and Recovery Association and am still the UK representative for the International Federation for Nurse Anaesthetists which had taken me to many parts of the world. I have been very fortunate to learn about anaesthetic nursing around the world and have great respect for the work done by nurses less fortunate than us in the UK. This part of my career was voluntary but made a fantastic enhancement to my role as an anaesthetic nurse. Recently retired after 44 years in the NHS my career is taking me in different directions, but still in anaesthetic nursing and teaching Advanced Life Support.

My husband and I have three lovely children, a beautiful granddaughter and quite a few pets to keep us busy. I still maintain my love for horses and try to ride on Dartmoor whenever I am in that part of the world, arthritis permitting! Having inherited my mother's piano I am attempting to play again but as a child, practice is still my down fall - must try harder!

When I first moved to Belvedere (although not there now) I was looking for a church to attend, and having been brought up 'high church' I knew that St Augustine's was perfect as soon as I put my foot in the door, the smells and bells familiar and embracing enveloping me in the security of holiness. Even better, the church was just at the end of my road. Discovering St Augustine's also led me to Heron Hill dog training club in the green corrugated iron church hall as it was then, where I met Val and Keith who were running this fine club.

My church life at St Augustine's is very important to me and has played a large part in my life. My marriage was blessed by Fr Ken, my children baptised by Fr Len and Fr Featherstone and my marriage vows renewed by Fr Clive on my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which quite frankly turned out to be the beautiful wedding I didn't have for various reasons in 1981. The memories from that day are with me always. Fr Clive has since married my son and daughter and baptised my granddaughter which was wonderful.

My father often said that 'church gives you another dimension in your life' which I find is so true. I didn't realise how much more there was to church life other than just attending on a Sunday, until I joined the PCC during Fr Peter's tenure.

I became the PCC secretary and electoral roll officer when Fr Clive joined us and I get great enjoyment from this! I have always said, as with my nursing career too, 'you get out what you put in' so immersing yourself into something is so much more fun than looking in from the edge. I feel very fortunate to be part of St Augustine's family and all that goes with it, pilgrimages to Walsingham, the wonderful worship, fun at the various socials/fundraisers like the quiz nights and Christmas fayre in particular. A caring forward-thinking priest is also of great benefit - thank you Fr Clive.

I am sure everyone is coping with the lockdown in different ways, some sadly experiencing loneliness and some being thrown into home tutoring and some feeling trapped in an unprecedented situation we never thought possible.

For me the two more upsetting aspects are not being able to see or hug my children or grandchild and not being able to attend church especially on Sunday. I worry daily about my family in particular as they are all at work, and then of course my extended family and friends.

The up side is that I have been able to spend quality time with my husband, Andy, as he is currently furloughed. Not having to worry about him out at work and at risk is comforting. We have helped each other massively and even though I worry generally about the future recovery from the Covid epidemic, I value everyday even more and cherish every moment we spend together.



### *From Wendy Castle - Fr Clive's sister*

Dear all, my dear brother Father Clive has given me the unenviable task of telling you about my chequered career throughout my lifetime. I am one of those busy people and always like to have something to do. So, it's usually difficult to pin me down. Currently I am furloughed from my job and so I have already completely spring cleaned my house and most of my cupboards. In fact, my house has never been so clean! I am due to start on the garden soon and now there are no excuses to do those jobs that I never have time to get round to... In the meantime, I am writing to you with some of my memoirs....

So, when I was in my teens, I decided that I wanted to become a famous actress or singer. The question was, how on earth was I going to become famous without any formal training? In those days, Butlin's was a very popular holiday resort to go to. It was popular with all sorts of families and quite upmarket in the 70's. So, as I knew that several famous people on the television had been "discovered" at Butlins I decided to apply to be a Redcoat - and was successful! So off I went to Butlins Skegness, with my guitar on my back and butterflies in my tummy, ready to start my new adventure.

Well true to their word, they had me singing and dancing on stage, entertaining the families all day every day. I would organise the weekly donkey derby and spend each day entertaining loads of children. By night the Redcoats would organise evening entertainment, cabarets and competitions. We had to chat in the bar to complete strangers (good training for the future) and call Bingo to many people who took the whole game extremely seriously. The bar would be a "pea souper" of cigarette smoke but it was all great fun.

The midnight cabaret was the mid-week big event and I got to meet the visiting stars - such as Jim Davidson, Mike Reid (comedian), Paul Daniels (magician) and several others. I was star struck!

The build-up and biggest show of the week was the Redcoat Show. This happened each Friday evening before everyone went home on a Saturday morning. Each Redcoat would show off their skills as we were aware that there would be recording producers in the audience looking for potential. We tried our hardest to give our best performance - in the hope that we would get an offer at the end of the show. Well needless to say, nobody offered me a recording contract. (It was their loss not mine.) So at the end of a wonderful season in September 1976 I travelled back to Kent, with my guitar on my back and my pride in my pocket, realising that I was not going to be discovered after all.

After licking my wounds and deciding on what to do next. I applied to work on the Hovercraft that travelled each day from Dover to France - and was successful. Oh great delight, another adventure to tell you about next time.

To be continued..... God Bless and stay safe

### *Coming Up in Next Edition...*

*Memories from Monica Stapleton (Fr Len's wife)*

*The Walsingham Way by Sheelagh Gudgeon*

*Lockdown at the Priory by Sister Carol*

*Our Lady of Fatima by Fr Andrew*

*Profile of Fr Paul Farthing*

*A special Patronal Festival message from Ven Dr Paul Wright, Archdeacon of Bromley & Bexley.*