



St Augustine of Canterbury, Belvedere 'GUS'S GOSSIP'

Welcome to the second 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....

Gilbert Rd Service Station (opposite church) has re-opened this week for servicing and MoTs....they sponsor our mass sheet so do support them. They service my car and have always proved efficient and reliable.

Beware - if you are in the vicinity of Val's home; Val now has a mobility scooter and is racing at high speeds around lower Belvedere!

Fr Neil sends his prayers - he is now looking after ST John Erith.

As part of his mental health chaplaincy he commends Bexley Crisis Café in Devonshire Rd Bexleyheath is still open 6pm-10pm Monday to Sunday. The Oxleas Advice line is 0800 330 8590

The Bookstore Café in Erith is now offering a delivery service, a home cooked nutritious meal for 5 including delivery and are freezable. 01322 341144 or via deliveroo.

Ian Fitzgibbon is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting at 5pm on every Saturday until 27th June
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88100211914?pwd=bVpIc2JnZ292NmFaYmq1K2NBTEQydz09>

Meeting ID: 881 0021 1914

Password: 7jXcaF

From The Archdeacon of Bromley & Bexley....

This week the Church will be remembering St Augustine, Patron Saint of the local church at Belvedere but also at Slade Green where I was Priest-in-Charge for three years. I was always impressed with having Augustine as the Patron Saint of the church I led a couple for of reasons:

Firstly, he showed his human frailty by wanting to turn back from the task of bringing Christianity to England. I think sometimes we need to recognise our frailty and fear, even though compared to Augustine we are in a much more comfortable place!

Secondly, thanks to him Christianity came to our country and we now have that faith very much ingrained into our culture, even in these more secular times.

As an Archbishop he would have had many challenges and opportunities, and we need to remember our present Archbishops, not least ++Justin, in these difficult and complex times. Augustine died at the beginning of the 7th Century, but his example and his humanity speak volumes to the Church in the 21st Century.

I hope that at some point we will all be able to get together to remember and celebrate this wonderful Saint. In the meantime, do look after yourselves and stay safe.

God bless,

Fr Paul

The Ven Dr Paul Wright, FRSA

From Ella....

Battersea Dogs and Cats Home has been under pressure since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak. With the amount of dogs, cats and staff onsite it was almost impossible to social distance and still effectively do our jobs. In the run up to lockdown, the rehoming team did a fantastic job rehoming most of our animals while we could keep our centres open.

Once the country went into lockdown we had to close our centres to the public but of course we still had animals to look after. We then looked to getting our animals out in temporary foster homes. We managed to get over 150 animals into foster homes before and during lockdown. Because of this fantastic effort, we only had 8 dogs onsite so most of the staff were furloughed. We had to stop rehoming and we're only taking in emergency cases such as strays, animals whose owners were too ill to care for them and animals at risk of neglect if we didn't take them.

During lockdown, our directors and CEO have been in talks with other animal charities and DEFRA, coming up with a procedure to start rehoming again during lockdown. These plans have now been implemented and the rehoming team are now back up and running and starting to rehome one animal a day whilst following government regulations and maintaining social distancing measures. We are unsure of what our next steps will be.

It's hard to judge when staff will start to be unfurloughed and we can start taking in more animals in the same way we used to. For now, we will continue to carry on as we are, all the while following government guidelines.

From Sue Vidler....

Our scout groups have been doing stuff online! I had a district poster come through for beavers to create a cookie flavour. Three Beavers posted a photo of their creations. This will go towards their cook's badge. All sections are working towards Their 'pet lover' & 'gardener' badges during lockdown.

From Monica Stapleton...

My husband was Collated and Inducted to the benefice of St Augustine, Belvedere on 1st June 1983. So, we all moved from Blackfen, Sidcup - that is myself, Len and our children, Mark and Catherine to start the next stage of our parish life. The next six years were mostly joyous times, of course there were a few ups and downs - that's part of life and a learning curve. Now 'Memories' well, let's start with the Old Parish Hall! A large wooden and corrugated iron building, one push and it would fall down. But parties were held in there, pretty lights were put up, coloured flags dressed the walls and hung from wooden beams, benches with white cloths on and laden with all sorts of good food transformed the inside. By the way one toilet served all. All the children's uniformed organisations used the hall. And a Gun Club and Dog Training Club. The parish had been raising money for a new hall for many years so we continued to do so and had a merry time. Mavis Stagg in particular baking many cakes and pies and selling them at various Summer Fairs around the district with a team of helpers. Also, we managed to claim donations from various Trust Funds who helped poor parishes. Eventually enough money was raised and the New Hall foundation stone was laid. When eventually built my husband made the front page of the local newspaper 'Vicar bans Gun Club and Dog Club from using the New Hall'. We gave our reasons and weathered the storm. And soon after started a Playgroup for 3 - 5 year-olds which was much needed in the area

THE WALSINGHAM WAY

I was in my early teens when I first became aware of Our Lady of Walsingham when in 1961 my brother (Father Michael) gave me a present of a china trinket box to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the founding of the Shrine. It has a replica of the seal of Our Lady and still has pride of place on my dressing table. Since then I have been a regular pilgrim to Walsingham, and I regard it as my spiritual "home". Over the years there have been many changes especially in accommodation and catering arrangements. When I first went, I stayed in a house in the village, and cooked breakfast was a separate charge. Now there is room for pilgrims to stay on site, and even in some cases to have en suite facilities. However, there has not been so much change in the services and ministries of healing and reconciliation which are such an essential part of one's pilgrimage.

My pilgrimages to the Shrine give me a chance to reflect on Mary's yes to God and my own response to his message. I also appreciate the opportunity to join in Shrine Prayers which happen daily, and are still being live streamed every day at 6pm. We are joined in continuous prayer with Our Lady, whose powerful intercession we invoke especially at this time of crisis.

May Our Lady of Walsingham, Our Mother, intercede for us.

Sheelagh

LOCKDOWN AT THE PRIORY

Less has probably changed for us here at the Priory than for most people. The basis of our life is our prayer life which continues with the 5 fold Offices and Exposition each day in our chapel. The main thing which is different at the moment is that there are no Pilgrims in Walsingham. However, the Sisters of St Margaret are called to do whatever work needs to be done at the time, wherever they are, rather than having one specific ministry. The result of this means that our ministry is varied depending on the conditions, so when the Shrine is open and people can meet in the village, much of our ministry is praying with and being a 'listening ear' to pilgrims and villagers. With the change in circumstances this has not really changed, just the way we do it; being there for Associates and friends via email, letter, phone call, facebook and twitter or chatting to villagers while out for our daily walk, just being present for those who want to chat and praying for those who need our prayers.

I find keeping our daily rhythm of life is always important but especially at this time and also to live in the present moment, to give thanks to God for today, rather than dwelling on what we can't do and haven't got at the moment. There is so much that we can be thankful for even in these days of lockdown.

Sister Carol

AYLESFORD PRIORY

I have had a long affection for the Carmelite Shrine at Aylesford. The Carmelite Order is perhaps not as well-known as the Franciscans or Dominicans, but it is an ancient mendicant order which has had notable saints, such as St Teresa of Avila, St Thérèse of Lisieux and St John of the Cross. Aylesford was originally founded by St Simon Stock who introduced the Order to England in 1254. He had probably joined the Carmelites in the Holy Land where it had its origins on Mount Carmel.

Aylesford suffered the same fate as most religious houses under Henry VIII, and was only restored in the 1950s when a Friary was established using part of the ruined buildings from the 13th century. When the Friary was completed a major relic of St Simon Stock was brought from Bordeaux where he had been buried in 1265.

Aylesford is now major centre of pilgrimage run by a small community of friars who welcome pilgrims from many different Christian denominations, as well as non-Christians. The main altar at Aylesford is in the open air and dedicated to Our Lady's Assumption, but there are three other main chapels as well as a charming cloister chapel. The substantial buildings have greatly benefitted from the skill of two artists in particular, Adam Kossowski and Philip Lindsay Clark. They have created beautiful statues and pottery plaques in the chapels, and also in the Rosary Garden which has depictions of the 15 original mysteries of the rosary.

The Priory is open all the time for private visits and visitors can also share in Divine Office and Mass at the appointed hours. As it is a Roman Catholic Shrine, we need to respect their rules about receiving Holy Communion, but they warmly welcome all visitors. You might also be welcomed by the numerous water fowl who have set up residence alongside the friars!

The bookshop is a little disappointing, but if you like religious "tat" you should find something as a souvenir. Next to the bookshop is a small cafeteria which offers hot drinks and light refreshments. There is also a restaurant occupying the old refectory which serves lunches, although the range of dishes can be limited. Aylesford of course is a small village close to Maidstone and is perhaps best visited by car, although there is a railway station in the village about one and half miles from the Priory. Do go sometime and give it a try. It's definitely worth the visit.

Fr David Herbert

OUR LADY OF FATIMA

Our Lady of Fatima Located in Central Portugal, the sanctuary of Our Lady of Fátima has become, throughout the years, the fourth biggest pilgrimage site in the world, commemorating the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three little shepherds in 1917.

On the 13th May 1917, Lúcia and her cousins Jacinta and Francisco, aged 12, 9 and 7 years old, were herding sheep at Cova da Iria - Fátima, when they saw a bright light. First, they thought it was lightning but soon after they saw next to a small holm oak tree a lady that shone more brightly than the sun. The lady asked the three little shepherds to go to Cova da Iria on the 13th day of each month, at the same time for 6 months. She promised to reveal her identity as well as the purpose of her presence. During the apparitions, this lady foretold some revelations like the end of the First World War and that Francisco and Jacinta would soon go to heaven, Francisco died in 1919 and Jacinta in 1920, victims of the Spanish flu.

As months went by, more and more people would appear to witness the apparitions. By the time of the second apparition, about 50 people were present but on 13th October, during the sixth apparition, there were 50,000 people present to witness the miracle promised by this lady. It was then that the three little shepherds knew that this lady was Our Lady of the Rosary.

Apart from the three little shepherds, no one saw Our Lady of the Rosary, so on the 13th October 1917 a miracle happened so that everyone could witness and believe in the apparition of the Virgin Mary. That day was cloudy and rainy but suddenly the clouds disappeared giving place to a bright sun and a clear blue sky. This phenomenon of light is known as the "Miracle of the Sun".

Fr Andrew, Vicar of St Nicholas, Plumstead.

RURAL MINISTRY IN LOCKDOWN

Sunday morning. Usually I am packing the car with the various items I need for 3 out of the 7 churches I journey alongside. Many of the villages have countryside cathedrals which seat about 200, but more usually 20. Some have a church in the middle of a field only accessible during the summer months. But every church is unique and different, hence the careful car-loading.

But not today. Today I will attempt an online service with 30 people many of whom (including myself) have been dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st Century in a rather unceremonial fashion. I will send emails out to those who have an email address asking them if they know of anyone who needs help, alongside a copy of the morning worship for those who dislike, and I quote 'having my nasal hair on display via the World Wide Web'.

The village communities support one another. The farmers have no choice but to carry on farming. The vulnerable rely on supermarket delivery services to provide for them or their neighbours. I drive around the parishes - some 10 miles apart in places, or walk the dog from a 2 metre distance: 'How's it going?' Wave through a window, the kind of stuff which feels completely ineffective.

This week I was asked to source vegetable seeds for a gentleman who is reliant on growing his own food. A few 'phone calls and some kindly gardeners pulled together two sacks of compost and enough seeds to keep him going. I also received a 'phone call from someone 200 miles away: 'Can someone check on my friend: she's housebound and won't ask if she needs anything'.

We live, to quote the Chinese proverb, in interesting times. The miles separating neighbour from neighbour seem to have grown, but the sense of community has also grown. I wonder if this may be the opportunity to eventually bring all 7 churches into one once restrictions are lifted. I also wonder if I might get lynched for suggesting such a thing. Best stick to walking the dog for now.....

Rev Jennifer Lane, Vicar of the Lower Swale Benefice, North Yorkshire

FR MICHAEL'S MEMOIRS 2 - I GO TO SCHOOL

In the Autumn after VE Day 1945 I started at 'Miss Dodd's School' - the local infant school some twenty minutes' walk away- to which my mother took me, with my little brother, Chris, in his pushchair. I can't remember much about it - but I do remember that it was there that I made my first appearance on the stage. I played a herald in *The Wedding of the Painted Doll*. My role was to come on at the beginning of each scene, blow my trumpet (made out of a cardboard tube wrapped round with gold coloured cake-frill) and announce what was about to happen. And I had a splendid costume, made of parts of Granny's fur wrap, a dyed shirt and crepe paper.

Our house was part of a development which had stopped because of the war. There were just six houses on our side of the road, and six bungalows opposite. We knew most of the people who lived in them. Most of the children were much younger than me, but there was one boy, Robin, a little older, who belonged to the Scouts attached to Saint Francis' church, which was next to the school. Encouraged by him I put my name down to join.

Then, having learned that scouts had to go to church parade, I decided to go to Saint Francis' church anyway. I started by going to Junior Sunday School on Sunday afternoons. Then I was invited to join the King's Messengers - a children's organization run by UMCA (Universities Mission to Central Africa, later to be part of USPG) - which met after school on Mondays. They also had a church parade once a month. So, one Sunday morning I went along to the Sung Eucharist at 11am - and I was hooked. God had drawn me into the life of his Church.

But I never heard back from the Scouts!

FROM FR PAUL FARTHING, VICAR OF THE ANNUNCIATION CHISLEHURST

Thank-you to Father Clive for inviting me to write something about myself for your newsletter. You know me as vicar of The Annunciation, Chislehurst, but how I got there is a long story ...

Born in West London, I grew up in Cheam, attending Saint Dunstan's church and school, until my father, who worked in the shipping industry, took a job in Montreal, Canada, where we emigrated as a family in 1970. Finishing my secondary education there, I initially studied music before feeling a call to ordination, doing undergraduate and post-graduate studies in theology at McGill University, and being ordained deacon in 1983 and priest in 1984 in the Anglican Diocese of Montreal. During my last year of studies I met my wife-to-be, Darquise, who despite being French-speaking had signed up to the university Gilbert & Sullivan group, playing Elise Maynard to my Jack Point in *Yeoman of the Guard*.

Following ordination I served my title and two parishes in Montreal before making the move back across the Atlantic in 1999 and finding myself in Burton upon Trent in the diocese of Lichfield, thanks in part to the then Dean of Lichfield, Tom Wright (later Bishop of Durham), who had been my New Testament tutor at McGill. There I was responsible for the two town centre churches, Saint Modwen, the historic parish church, and Saint Paul, built by the Bass brewing family next to the Town Hall ... which they also built!

My time in Burton was a happy one, but the time came to move on, and I came to Chislehurst in 2013, despite swearing I would never live inside the M25. Although Chislehurst is very different from Burton, I am now closer to where I grew up than at any point since leaving Cheam. My love of music has not left me, and I am a keen opera buff (Darquise is a professional singer and voice teacher herself). I also enjoy history and rail travel; and in addition to having learned French in Montreal, I have been studying Italian for several years. And we have three adult children, Olivia (the oldest), working for the Playhouse Theatre in Nottingham; Simon, also in Nottingham and working for an engineering firm; and Laura, a doctor at the Sunderland Royal Infirmary.

The Annunciation, Chislehurst is one of our Mission Partner Parishes.

LOCKDOWN IN AUSTRALIA

My name is Sheila Weaver (née Jones) and I am Fr Clive's second cousin. I have been asked to tell you a bit about our family. My grandparents and Clive's great grandparents were Salvation Army officers both being commissioned (ordained) in the 1880's when the Salvation Army was in it's infancy. They had seven children, six boys and one girl (one of the boys died at the age of 2). Ernest was the second son who is Clive's grandfather, Herbert was the youngest son who is my father. In retirement my grandparents moved to Brighton and most of the family lived in the vicinity. My grandfather died before I was born but my grandmother lived to 87 and I remember her well. Clive's father Ken was 12 years older than me so as a child I didn't have much to do with him but once I became an adult and after I was married our families had many happy times together. My parents attended the Salvation Army in Brighton and that is where I grew up. I feel so fortunate that I was brought up in a loving Christian home where from a young age I was taught the truths of the Gospel.

I trained to be a nurse at the Royal London Hospital after which I completed more study to become a health visitor. I was employed by Reading Corporation and this took me to the Salvation Army in Reading where I met my husband, Bernard. We were married in 1971 and had two boys David and Andrew. In 1999 Andrew went to Australia on a young person's travel visa where he met and married Lisa and had two sons, and so made his home in Australia. We were going back and forth every year to visit them so in 2007 we emigrated so that we could be part of our grandsons' lives. In 2009 our eldest son arrived in Australia, he has since married and produced two more grandsons for us to love and enjoy. It truly is amazing how life works out! We still worship at the Salvation Army here in Sydney and eighteen months ago Bernard and I moved in to an Anglican run retirement village where we frequently worship with the other residents at the 5pm service on a Sunday.

I have also been asked to tell you how the lockdown has affected us. We have been very fortunate that here in Australia there have only been approx. 7000 cases of infection with 98 deaths. The borders were closed with China before the WHO declared it a pandemic. All people coming in to the country have had to isolate themselves for 14 days and in the last few weeks incomers have been met at the airport and taken to a hotel to be isolated. As we are in the older age group, we were told to stay at home but we could go out to shop for food or medicines. I have been going to the supermarket between 7 & 8 am when there are only a few shoppers. Although all the activities at the retirement village have been cancelled a sing-song has been started every morning at 11am for about 10 minutes. People come out on to their balconies or stand on the terrace and join in the singing. On Sunday mornings we sing hymns and prayer is offered by the chaplain. This means that we can see each other and talk to each other even though it is at a distance. We are looking forward to the time when life gets back to normal and we can socialise with our friends and family and return to church.

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 or if you would like to contribute a longer article, maybe your memories of St Augustine's or a profile of yourself? Please email Fr Clive at frclive@tiscali.co.uk or Donna at staugustineofcanterburypa@gmail.com and we will do our best to include it in the next newsletter.

