



CROSSWAYS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR ST PAUL'S AND WHITWORTH

Treasuring what God treasures

By Revd Lee Earl

I DON'T know about you, but I am loving this long-overdue sunshine of spring. Isn't it amazing how just a little bit of sunshine can lift the spirits? I especially love the way sunlight seems to enhance the canvas of colours all around us - colours that lay slightly veiled behind the lingering shadows of winter, until now.

As the light of spring unfolds, I find myself becoming more and more conscious of creation, and increasingly thankful to God for the splendour of the natural world. Even a simple morning walk with the dog becomes an invitation to prayerful gratitude.

However, just as the new light of spring reveals the beauty of the natural world, so too does the light of Christ's

resurrection illuminate its sacredness. For instance, I am continually struck by the truth that when Christ was raised to life, He did not leave behind His physical humanity, but carried it through death and into eternity. You see, in Christ's resurrection and later ascension, we glimpse not an attempt to escape the so-called prison of the material world (a key feature of the ancient error of Gnosticism), but rather a powerful affirmation of its value - and a wonderful foretaste of its renewal. In fact, Paul the Apostle describes Christ's resurrection as the "firstfruits" of what is to come (1 Corinthians 15:20). And elsewhere, he speaks of creation itself longing to be set free and brought into that same freedom and glory - which one day it will



The Millennium window by Adam O'Grady at Guestwick Church in Norfolk
Photo: Paul Hodge

(Romans 8:19–21). It's hard to imagine a clearer affirmation that God values and treasures this material world than that.

But why should any of this surprise us? Matter has always mattered to God.

From the very beginning, in Genesis, we hear that resounding declaration over His creation: "God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:31).

The word good here carries a sense not only of moral rightness, but

of beauty and delight. This is also seen in the way God created human beings to live within creation - to depend upon it, to steward it, and against its wonderful backdrop to grow in love with God and one another.

But of course, this is ultimately enshrined in the Incarnation, and it is also demonstrated in the way that Jesus Himself related to the natural world. Time and again, Jesus draws our attention

continued on page 2

PARISH

CHURCH

SERVICES

ST PAUL'S CHURCH

Sundays: 10.30am Holy Communion ('All Together' non-communion on first Sunday)
(*live-streamed at www.facebook.com/stpaulsspennymoor*)

Wednesdays: 9.30am Holy Communion **Fridays: 10am** Play Church (term-time only)

WHITWORTH CHURCH

Sundays: 9am Holy Communion

CLERGY

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Treasuring what God treasures

continued from front page

to nature in order to illuminate the deep truths of God and His kingdom. He speaks of the One whose eye is on every sparrow that falls, and of the lilies of the field, clothed in a beauty that surpasses even Solomon's splendour, to encourage a deeper trust in God's tender care for us - His image-bearers (Matthew 6:26-29; 10:29).

In doing so, Jesus does not treat creation as incidental or merely illustrative, but as something deeply woven into the way God reveals Himself. But perhaps nowhere is this more profound than in Christ instituting Holy Communion. For here, Jesus takes the ordinary materials of bread and wine—and uses them to communicate the incredible riches of His grace. In this simple yet sacred act, we

look back to His selfless love on the cross, we are reminded of our ongoing dependence upon Him as the bread of life, and we look ahead to the day when we will share in that heavenly banquet, when all things are made new. All of which powerfully communicates the sacred nature of the physical world and the fundamental truth that: **Matter matters to God.** But the question is: **How much does it matter to us?**

Perhaps part of the challenge is that the scale of the environmental issues facing our world today can feel overwhelming.

And at times, we may feel disheartened and helpless by the reality that not everyone on the international stage shares the same urgency or commitment to safeguard our planet. But let's not

forget: the great garden of our planet—vast and complex as it is - is made up of many smaller gardens: the places we inhabit each day—our streets, our green spaces, our local wildlife, and the corners of creation entrusted to our care. And it may be that it is here, closer to home, that we are best placed to respond. And that might look like us becoming more aware of the challenges facing our local wildlife, and taking time to pray into those things. It might take shape in simple, practical ways -

perhaps joining in with a local litter pick, or getting involved with a local conservation group, or even our Eco Church group. But perhaps it begins simply by noticing what God notices... giving thanks for the sacredness of this world in which we live... and learning to treasure it as God does. Because creation matters to our Creator, it should matter to us - for we are His image-bearers, called to reflect His love and care in the way we relate to one another and to all creation. Amen.

**SPENNYMOOR TOWN
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Attending the installation of the Archbishop of Canterbury

THE Revd Dr Nick Moore, a member of the St Paul's Church family recently attended the installation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and has written this special article for Crossways.

I HAD the privilege of representing Cranmer Hall at the installation of Sarah Mullaly as Archbishop of Canterbury in March. It was a grand occasion, as you might imagine. Ticket, ID, bag and security checks on the way in. A long procession of a lot of people: bishops, cathedral deans, the chapter and canons of Canterbury Cathedral, the area deans and deanery lay chairs of Canterbury Diocese, and many ecumenical representatives (at this point it really did feel like a fashion show – the various Eastern Orthodox churches were most impressive, with their hats or hoods, beards, and staffs). There were legal and civic representatives including mayors, and finally (just before the service started) the Prince and Princess of Wales walked in, representing the King and accompanied by the Lord and Lady Lieutenant.

The Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition were there too, though I didn't see them arrive or leave.

Canterbury Cathedral is a building of two halves, with the nave and west end cut off from the quire and east end by a huge ornamental screen. The service took account of this by having different elements in each. The event is a mix of many things: a legal ceremony (a mandate from the King was read out near the start), a welcome (Sarah had already been elected and confirmed as archbishop, but this is her official welcome to her diocese and cathedral church), an 'installation' (or traditionally 'enthronement') where she is placed in the seat of the bishop of Canterbury and then in the seat of St Augustine (the seat is not as old as the sixth century, when Augustine first arrived in Britain, but still about



Supplied photograph of the Revd Dr Nick Moore at Canterbury Cathedral in March

700 years old), representing the teaching ministry of the church. Above all, the occasion is a service of prayer and worship.

The highlights for me were the Norfolk African choir singing and dancing before and after the Gospel reading; the reading itself, read in Spanish by the Bishop of Mexico; and the signing of the ecumenical covenant of Churches Together, after which Archbishop Sarah hugged two of the leaders representing other churches. But above all, the most striking bit of the whole service was the start. Sarah began outside the cathedral, and came and knocked on the west door three times with her staff. The door was opened and local school-children asked her ques-

tions: 'Who are you and why do you request entry?' to which she replied 'I am Sarah, a servant of Jesus Christ, and I come as one seeking the grace of God, to travel with you in his service together'. Then 'How do you come among us and with what confidence?' and she answered 'I come knowing nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified, and in weakness and fear and in much trembling.' This is the heart of discipleship, and these are words which every Christian can and should say, however God calls us to serve him.

The installation service was broadcast on the BBC and is still available on catch up on the iPlayer until March 2027.

<p>CLEMS SPENNYMOOR</p> <p>16 Clyde Tce Spennymoor 815451</p>	<p>ADVERTISE IN THIS SPACE FOR JUST £10 PER YEAR!</p> <p>Email us at: office@stpaulsspennymoor.co.uk</p>	<p>Derek Taylor and Son Est. 1972 Corgi Reg. Gas Services</p> <p>Tel. 814982</p>	<p>Wedding/Family Celebrations at the Town Hall in Spennymoor "for Ramside quality at Town Hall prices"</p> <p>01388 815276</p> <p>www.parishes.durham.gov.uk/spennymoor enquiries@spennymoortowncouncil.gov.uk</p>
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FOR YOUR PRAYERS

For our newly elected church officers, PCC members and Deanery Synod representatives as they begin their new terms in office.



For our clergy, the Revd Canon Matt Tarling and the Revd Lee Earl as they serve our parishes.

For the Rt Revd Rick Simpson following his consecration as Bishop of Durham.

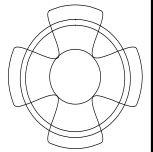
For the Spennymoor Churches Holiday Club preparations ahead of the event in July.

PRAYER FOR MAY

Feed us, Lord, at your table. Give us the bread of salvation to free us from our sin, and mana to sustain us on our journey, that we may travel in faith to our home in your kingdom. Amen.

Source: Redemptorist Productions

Parish Registers



HOLY BAPTISM

St Paul's

12th April Gracie Ann Rodda
26th April Jenson Murdoch

CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

St Paul's

8th April Mary Grainger
23rd April Lawrence Pratt

Bishop Auckland Cemetery

24th April Barbara Wilson

News from Annual Meetings

OUR annual church meetings took place in April and were a chance to look back and give thanks to God for all the opportunities to serve our communities. In updates from Whitworth Church, Chris Rhodes and Vivienne Lowe were re-elected to the Parochial Church Council and Wayne Rhodes was newly elected. June Wilson and Kath Hall were both re-elected to serve as Deanery Synod representatives and Kath Hall was re-elected as churchwarden.

The Revd Canon Matt Tarling said: "My thanks go to Wayne Rhodes who completed his time as Churchwarden this year. In fact, Wayne kindly extended his time as warden during the last year as he has enjoyed serving in Whitworth church in this way. So a big thank you to Wayne as he stands down for the time being. Wayne is still keen to serve and so has been elected to the PCC so that he can continue with some of his administrative tasks. Everything Wayne has been doing has been a great gift to the church and we're very grateful that he will continue to offer service in this way!"

At St Paul's, we thank to Emma Blagburn (former PCC secretary) and Lesley Parratt (PCC member) for their service as they step down. Deborah Humphreys was re-elected to the PCC and we thank her for serving on Deanery Synod as she steps down from that role. Wiederick Becker was newly elected to the PCC. Christopher Luke and Samuel Thumaty were re-elected as churchwardens and Kate Tarling and Matt Killen were elected as Deanery Synod reps.

Easter thanks



Just some of the volunteers at St Paul's Church

THANK you to everyone who served both our churches during Holy Week and Easter in many different ways. It was wonderful to welcome people to a range of services and events, and our thanks to those who worked behind the scenes to make it all happen.

MOTHERS' Union members are reminded that the next monthly meeting will take place on Monday 11th May at 2pm in St Paul's Church.

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