



Revd Alan Sykes, RIP

Alan's Ministry

by Ruth Martin, Reader, Richmond Team Ministry



Alan at the Parish Weekend in 2017

Magdalene team with dedication. It is a beautiful ministry, being by the Lords table, observing the sacraments at close hand, carrying the candles of Light and the cross of Redemption. Alan ensured that it was a ministry, not just a task. It was calming, reflective, careful, watchful, humble, prayerful. It was and is a service to others and to God. It was Alan's approach to that long and fruitful service, the qualities and prayerful presence, that he took with him when he became ordained as priest. He led pastoral care for St Mary Magdalene including the pastoral care groups well before we had WhatsApp or smart phones to stay connected! He organised them, sustained them, ensured we all met and sought to ensure we supported each other.

What is priestly ministry? For Alan it was primarily being the servant, the pastor, the shepherd, the friend, the supporter. Alan's pastoral care for people was extraordinary, visiting and caring whatever challenges people faced, and his quiet but fearless integrity and authenticity was the basis of trust which we all had in him. He relaxed into priesthood when it came to children. Sue Eastaugh worked with him leading the ABC Group, and I noticed so many of that group from previous years mourning Alan at his recent funeral. He had such a dry sense of humour that in examining a child's work of art at the front of church after junior church he only had to smile and pause, and the child would explain it all to great love and joy from adult worshippers.

I remember the first Maundy Thursday after Alan became a priest. He kept watch through the entire night, honouring Jesus' call to His disciples to stay awake, to pray, as Jesus prepared for the terrible death that He knew would precede His return to the Father. That was typical of Alan, wanting to learn, to explore faith, to enquire, to reflect. To live the life of being a disciple, and then a priest. Then, on Good Friday Alan walked the witness to Christ crucified through Richmond as if he had had a marvellous sleep all night.

Alan started his ministry as a Server and that became his defining approach to ministry. Alan was a Server for many years across the Richmond team and led the St Mary

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Alan's Funeral Service

Alan's funeral took place on Friday 12 November at 11.30am in St Mary Magdalene attended by a large congregation. At 4.30pm the previous day his body had been brought to St Mary's to spend one last night in the church that he loved so much and which remained open until 6.30pm so people could pay their respects. Fee, Alan's wife had requested that those attending the funeral consider wearing red and also a red or white poppy. This was because of Remembrance Sunday two days later and in memory of Thomas Gaskell who had died at Tobruk in 1942 and had been the first husband of Alan's mother Betty. The floral displays of red roses and poppies reflected love and remembrance and Alan's coffin was decorated with large paper poppies.

Alan had chosen all the hymns and readings and the opening hymn was 'Love Divine All Loves Excelling'. There were readings by Sue Eastaugh of Psalm 139 and Ruth Martin of George Herbert's poem 'Love III' which begins 'Love bade me welcome' and which Simone

Weil, (1909-1943) French philosopher and mystic, once described as the most beautiful poem in the world. Canon Julian Reindorp, our former rector, gave his own tribute to Alan before reading out at her request Fee's tribute to Alan. Canon Robert Titley, Rector until 2016, read from the Letter to the Romans. Canon Wilma Roest gave a short address and Vincent Fean, a close friend of Alan from university days, reflected on their friendship, describing Alan as a deep well of love whose first thought was of others. The Revd Neil Summers led the prayers on Alan's many qualities and his interests. After the final hymn 'Jerusalem', the Bishop of Kingston, the Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham gave the Commendation and Alan left St Mary's for the last time, accompanied by the ringing of the bells, to celebrate his life. A short service at Mortlake Crematorium followed. It was good to see Julian and Robert again, together with the Revd Rachel Carnegie, who was in the congregation, but with great sadness because of the occasion.

Science and Environment Group

A particular interest of Alan's was the relationship, often thought by some to be problematic, between Science and Religion. Alan was a founder member and leading light of the RTM Science and Environment Group which arose out of the 2012 Parish Weekend, at a session run by Professor Jane Plant, a member of the congregation of St Mary Magdalene. Jane was Chief Scientist at the British Geological Survey and Professor of Geochemistry at Imperial College London. She had a huge range of contacts so the group were able to enjoy a rich variety of monthly meetings (8 or 9 a year) with many eminent scientist

speakers and experts. Topics covered ranged from life on the planet Mars to the trial of Galileo. The venture of the Science and Environment Group was very much supported by the Bishop of Kingston, the Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham who, before he became a priest, had taught science at secondary school level. Sadly, Professor Plant died in 2016 and the Group no longer had the contacts to arrange speakers for talks. An example of Alan's writing on the relationship between science and religion is to be found in the Winter 2018 edition of TeamTalk and can be [viewed on the TeamTalk page of our website](#).

Alan's Ministry - continued



Alan helping with the lighting of the Advent Candle
Sara Christie

And yet... Alan's teaching was demanding and challenging from the pulpit. He read and researched widely, he brought the past into the present with wit, poetry, and self-effacing stories about himself but there was always something to take away and ponder. Non-judgemental, always seeking God and the good in others.

Christian leadership at its best is Servant leadership, and in this we know he excelled. During two interregnums he held us, led us, loved us and ensured that church continued to reach out into community, Christ centred and outward focussed. Priestly ministry is of course also leadership and as Assistant Curate and a self-supporting priest Alan drew no stipend. A remarkable priest, a dedicated servant to the Living God. May he Rest in Peace and rise in Glory.

Memories of Alan Sykes

I remember our RTM Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2019 in which we were privileged to have Alan with us on such a spiritual trip. During the 10 days Alan was an important person not just for me but for the whole group. He was always ready and happy to answer my questions in a way that I was able to understand and later make my own decisions. He was kind, ready to help everyone without showing that he was helping. He had this way about him that he was there but not taking over. On our walks (and there were lots) I saw how caring Alan was. In the group there were a few members who were a bit slower during the walks (the heat and humidity didn't help) and Alan was there making sure that they were looked after.

In the mornings on the coach when the time came to counting heads, everyone would ask where is Alan – he had forgotten his hat and had gone back to his room to get it. What a nice way to start the day. I remember him coming back apologising with that beautiful smile on his face. He always made sure to sit during meal times with different members of the group and so be able to talk to everyone. It was important for him and I really appreciated it.

Today after his funeral I looked at all my photos from the trip. It brought a smile to my face and I have to say a tear to my eyes. It's hard to believe that we won't be able to share his wisdom, his caring and all he stood for. Alan - you will be missed by all those who had the privilege to know you. May you Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory

Cidalia Araujo

Alan was the best of colleagues. He had a love of the Lord that issued in a love of the people in his care. As wise pastors often do, Alan had a wry but compassionate eye for the quirks of humanity. This came through in his homilies for the Wednesday Holy Communion at St Mary's, as did his love of language. Mind you, he used that to make us laugh as well as help us know God, as in this masterpiece of a limerick from the 2010 parish weekend:

There once was a bold young mosquito
Who went on vacation to Quito
But then bit the niece
Of the chief of police
And had to fly out incognito

Canon Robert Titley

Alan was the person who got me into serving. At a Nine Lessons and Carols service, in the time when Alan was in charge of the servers, one of my sons was an acolyte. The other acolyte was not going to be able to make the service so Alan asked me at the last minute if I would take their place. It was just a question of processing in at the beginning and processing out at the end of the service.

A very very large robe was found for me even though I wasn't exactly small myself and I was a bit concerned about tripping over in it. As we acolytes entered the nave in the darkness, my candle light shone out and I felt very moved and somehow closer to God. This was indeed something special. Afterwards Alan asked me whether I

would consider becoming a server. Although the service had been inspiring for me, I wasn't entirely sure that I was ready to become a regular server at that stage. However, Alan just kept asking me in his very low key and gentle way about this every few weeks. In the end I said 'yes', became a server, and over twenty years of serving I have never regretted that decision.

Elsbeth Fearn

Canon Wilma Roest is drawn to something Alan said in one of the last sermons he preached in October 2020 at St Mary Magdalene:

'Remember the phrase that St Paul uses countless times – in Christ. He urges us to be in Christ. It's not that we can do nothing in our own strength and with our own abilities but it will always be piecemeal and always tarnished by our own psychological inadequacies. Only if we abide in Christ can the power of those inadequacies be diminished and even, let us dare hope, overcome. Only connect, E M Forster said. That phrase is truer than he probably knew. Connect with the divine – the reality behind all reality. Connect with the divine in Christ and we – in however humble a way – will inevitably bear fruit, the fruit that will last.'

I am grateful to have known Alan for well over thirty years, benefitting from his service to the parish prior to his ordination; later, to have shared in his vocational journey; then, to have worked alongside him as a colleague during his decade or so of ordained ministry. I think we were all enriched by his ability to make meaningful connections between faith, science, and the stuff of everyday life, and his theological erudition and its unassuming, highly accessible communication through his preaching and teaching. But most of all, I - along with so many others - am thankful for his compassionate, pastoral heart and his concerns for peace, justice and a sustainable planet.

Finally, it was a great privilege for me to administer the Last Rites just a few days before Alan died. It was very hard going for him in his final months, but I'm glad there was so much love around to support him. May he now Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory

Revd Neil Summers

One morning, not long after we moved to Richmond, I decided to catch the 65 bus for a first visit to Kingston. As I waited at the bus station I was joined by Alan, who told me he was on his way home – the 65 bus stopped near the end of his road. When I told him that it was my first trip to Kingston he stayed on the bus long after his stop to make sure that I got safely to my destination. That act of thoughtful kindness was symbolic of the way Alan journeyed with people, taking time to be alongside them, his own faith gently keeping us company especially during those times when we were negotiating unfamiliar territory. Now he is at his journey's end, and we thank God for our faithful travelling companion.

Revd Anne Crawford

Our Friend, Alan Sykes

by Sue Eastaugh

Nick and I first started coming to St Mary Magdalene in August 1986, with our two small boys, Benedict and Francis. I think I must have met Alan behind a table of books after church coffee up in the Parish Rooms. There was a lot of opportunity for adult conversation as there was a cupboard full of large toys to ride on that my children loved. The church library had a good selection of spiritual and religious classics which, coming from an evangelical church with a more limited approach, I found lifegiving. Alan was a librarian, I was a book lover desperate to read and talk about reading, we got on immediately.

Alan became a friend of all the family, coming for Sunday lunch and being an honorary uncle to our children. Alice has happy memories of him swinging her round and round when she was small, and when at seven she joined the Serving Team, of Alan's kindness and patience. Alan and Nick Messum also organised much appreciated team outings of adults and children to bowling rinks and other places. Alan loved poetry and Alice particularly enjoyed being part of Alan's poetry writing and reading group one Parish Weekend. He was always so supportive and encouraging of all of us.

Two other things cemented Alan's relationship with me and the family. I had passed my Driving Test when Alice was four, but we couldn't afford a car. Sometime later, Alan generously offered to lend us his car for a holiday. After a while, we began to share the bills, and when it got beyond repair, we bought another car together. Altogether we shared a car for twenty one years. We used to swap after church; one of us would drive there and then the new driver would take the other one home. There was time for a lot of conversation and we got to know each other well. He



Alan with Father Ibrahim Nairouz of St Philip, Nablus in the West Bank, on his 2016 visit to the UK

was someone I could say exactly what I thought about anything, and that is rare and precious. I have poignant memories of driving to pick Alan up in the dark before the Dawn Service at Easter, or him coming to fetch me.

The other thing was that Alan and I were both selected for training - him for Ordination, me for SPA Ministry - at the same time, in 2005. Alan asked me to write a character reference for him. I think it must have been in November 2004. I remember it gradually getting darker as I answered searching questions about his character and his integrity. As you might imagine, I could truthfully say that both were of the highest calibre. We enjoyed telling each other how our training was going, and not long after it began I remember him telling me how he'd fallen in love with Fee, and soon after that, that they planned to get married. I was so impressed that in his early fifties Alan had the flexibility of mind and heart to completely change his life, to become a priest and to marry. It was wonderful to go to their wedding, in May 2006, with Fee in the long orange dress she'd made with her mother. They waited until May because then the churchyard was full of cow parsley in bloom. After the wedding we all piled on to an old London bus and drove up the hill to the



Playing in the Old Toy Cupboard at ABC

Sara Christie

Our Friend, Alan Sykes - continued

reception at St Matthias. I remember how moved I was by Alan's speech, full of gratitude and love for Fee, and also how he spoke so simply and powerfully of his faith in Christ.

After Alan was ordained we worked together in St Mary's baby and toddler group, ABC, along with Jenny Powell-Smith. We also prepared several groups of children for First Communion together. I loved working with Alan, he was both easy going and organised. I'd have ideas, he'd write a workable plan. He did everything he did with such commitment and reliability, very rarely flustered, always making space for other people.

Alan was such a good friend to so many people, before and after Ordination. Shirley Stark has told several of us of Alan's support of her and her son David when her father, Frank, died in Princess Alice Hospice. Alan got to know Frank and Shirley when they were all Servers,

and then shared a room with Frank on the pilgrimage to the Holy Land led by Julian Reindorp. When Frank was dying Alan drove both Shirley and then David to be with Frank at the end. After his death, Shirley says how grateful she was that Alan came to take her home from the hospice, and how much his quiet, wordless support meant to her. I'm sure that others also have stories of Alan's supportive and practical friendship, always given without fuss.

When my own father died Alan helped us plan the funeral service in St Stephen's Twickenham, and then he led the Committal at the crematorium the next day. Again, he did it as if he was honoured to be asked, not as if it was any trouble.

The last job Alan and I did together regularly was coffee after the 10 o'clock Wednesday Eucharist. He would do that even if he was presiding at the service. I'm still doing it and I miss him.

Alan's Life

Alan Sykes was born in Preston, hence his lovely Lancashire accent which he never lost. Alan read French at university and later entered the world of librarianship, working for the London Borough of Camden and then the London Borough of Richmond. He became head of the Reference Library there, and which is where he met Fee his wife. Alan worshipped at St Mary Magdalene for many years - as a member of the congregation, as server and then from 2008 when he was ordained deacon and later, priest. During two interregnums Alan gave unstinting selfless service and support at St Mary's for which the congregation was and remains truly thankful.

In his biography on the RTM website Alan referred to supporting a football team, but did not identify the team because he thought it would cause merriment in the congregations. Many of us assumed that the team must be Preston North End, but at the funeral it was revealed that Alan's team was Burnley. His comments on the website were typical of his humour.

Alan at the wedding of Keith & Tamasine Leighton-Crawford



Parish Magazines

Alan was a much valued member of the Editorial Board of Team Talk and contributed many articles and also valuable suggestions in our discussions. When a revived parish magazine in the form of Team Talk was mooted in 2013 and a call went out for volunteers to help produce the magazine, Alan was very keen to take part. He had been for several years the editor of the old Richmond Parish Paper (succeeding Betty Wainwright) so his editorial experience was very helpful as Team Talk got off the ground in the first place and also in the years since then. 2021 has been a sad year for the Team Talk Board as we have lost Alan and also Professor Richard Rondel who died earlier this year. We miss them for their wisdom and support.

ABC Club at St Mary Magdalene

by Sue Eastaugh

Julian got Alan to come along to ABC when Alan was first ordained – to give him practice with babies so that he could baptise them with confidence! He stayed on until he retired, working with Helen Williams. Jenny Powell-Smith, Jean Harris and Jo were also regular members of the team. Alan was so much appreciated at ABC, and I know he enjoyed it, especially lighting and blowing out the candle we had every week. Alan was much loved by the parents and carers who came, and as well as baptising some of the babies, took the funeral of one who died and supported the family.

Eco Day Conference on 2 October 2021 at St Matthias

by Elspeth Fearn



Martin & Margot Hodson

Elspeth Fearn

'For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. All things were created through him and for him' (Colossians 1:16).

Two years in the planning and originally due to take place in October 2020, a one day eco-conference was held on Saturday 2 October at St Matthias in partnership with the John Ray Initiative, an educational charity connecting the environment, science and Christianity by promoting responsible environmental stewardship in accordance with Christian principles. The charity's patrons include the Rt Revd Richard Chartres, former Bishop of London, and Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance FRS, past director of the Botanical Gardens at Kew. The conference was intended to mark the beginning of RTM's journey to acquire eco-church status. Eco-church is a project run by A Rocha UK, a charity which provides a framework for churches to engage with various climate and environmental issues and progress through staged awards from bronze and silver to gold. Eco-church was launched at St Paul's Cathedral in 2017 and now over 4000 churches have registered to take part in the scheme.

The structure of the conference was an opening act of worship, followed by two sessions then, after a lunch break, two further sessions and then finally, a closing act of worship. People were free to attend the whole day or just to drop in for one or two parts and there were also discussion groups. Leading the conference were the Revd Margot Hodson and her husband Martin Hodson. Margot is the John Ray Initiative's Theology and Education Director, and is also associate vicar of the Shill Valley and Broadshire Benefice in Oxfordshire, and was formerly Chaplain of Jesus College, Oxford. Martin, the Operations Director, is a plant scientist and environmental biologist, former Principal Lecturer and now Visiting Researcher at Oxford Brookes University.

The first session was led by Martin which was a guide to the most important environmental issues confronting the world. There are a myriad of problems causing concern and it was difficult not to feel depressed as Martin went through them. Issues include the burning of fossil fuels which release nitrogen oxides into the atmosphere contributing to the formation of smog and acid rain. Land systems are changing, away from natural habitats to agricultural habitats, with inorganic fertilisers being used on the latter, leading to more acidic soil and degradation of its structure. And that agricultural land is further harmed by subsequent building upon it as in the deforestation in Brazil. The natural wildlife is inevitably affected with the World Wildlife Fund's 2020 report showing that, largely due to environmental destruction, there has been a 68% decline in the wildlife animal population since 1970. Things are no better at sea. There has been a worrying rise in global temperature with 90% of global warming heat going into the oceans giving them more energy so more storms, hurricanes and flooding. Recent global years have seen some of the hottest on record.

Martin said that despite this very gloomy picture, there is still time to change things and he pointed to two previous problems in which the world had worked together with a good outcome. Firstly, the hole in the ozone layer. Following the Montreal Protocol of 1989-2000, the first and only UN environmental agreement to be ratified by every country in the world, there has been a dramatic result. Around 99% of ozone depleting substances have been phased out and the protective layer above the earth is being replenished. The second success concerns sulphur dioxide which was a part of many manufacturing



Glacier with Accelerated Ice Loss which results in reduced fresh water
NASA/John Sonntag

Eco Day Conference on 2 October 2021 at St Matthias - continued

processes but which affected people's respiratory systems and harmed the environment. Following the US Clean Air Acts of 1970 and 1990 (which have been copied by other countries), plus switching to low sulphur coal, the type of emissions that lead to acid rain have dropped significantly.

Margot presented the next session entitled Bible, Land and Creation, looking at the reading from Genesis 11:1-2:4, included in the opening act of Worship, and teasing out its meaning in the context of the Jewish people and their beliefs. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word 'eritz' means both land and earth. She reflected on the Jewish tradition that places the responsibility for the well-being of the environment on humans. Examples are the concept of rest on the Sabbath, following God's example, which meant rest for everyone including slaves, servants and animals. (There are 150 species of animals named in the Bible.) God told Moses that every 7 years the land of Israel must lay fallow and Jews were forbidden to work on it.

And in turn under the Jewish Jubilee (Yovel), after the end of seven cycles of leaving each 7th year fallow (i.e. every 49 years) there was another period of resting the land. The gifts of harvest were important as was regeneration such as in the Festival of the New Year of Trees (Tu B'Shevat) for the planting of new trees.

The first session after lunch was led by Martin on 'How we can respond to the Environmental Crisis in a practical way' which could be at individual, community, national or international level. From 2009-2019 Margot had been Rector at St Mary's Church, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire which had decided to seek eco-church status and Martin described some of St Mary's experiences. Essentially nobody could do everything but everyone could do something. The types of action included education, advocacy, changing practices in how we live as individuals and as a community and campaigning. Advocacy was particularly important because it meant approaching local and national politicians. And there were awkward issues for the Church of England itself, which still has massive investments in fossil funds. As individuals we could reduce our meat consumption, how we travel, for example sharing transport to church, how and when we use power etc. Buildings are important because of the need to insulate, the type of oil used for heating, the installation of solar panels but one must not get too hung up on buildings in case other areas get neglected. It was very valuable to hear about the experiences at Haddenham and ideas for how we could take things forward in RTM.

The final session was led by Margot and looked at hope for the future. There was, despite everything, optimistic hope that the world would work together to solve its environmental problems, that heaven and earth and its balance would be restored and that there would be harmony between God, people and nature. Our living care of the land is Christian discipleship.

The conference ended with a short service following an important day in the beginning of our journey to seek eco-status for RTM.

A useful aid to climate change and what Christians can do is Martin and Margot's book 'A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues' (Second Edition 2021) ISBN 978 1 80039 005 8 which contains chapters such as Biodiversity, Food, Soil and Energy, complemented by Biblical Reflections and Bible Study Notes.

The eco-church website is: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/> and details of the John Ray Initiative are at: <https://jri.org.uk/>



View of Africa and Antarctica from Apollo 17 Space Mission, 1972
NASA

Salisbury Cathedral and Eco-Church



Robert and solar panel on the Cloisters' Roof

Canon Robert Titley

Many churches have embarked on qualifying for the eco-church awards, but on 16 June 2021 Salisbury Cathedral became the first cathedral in the UK to achieve a gold award, having worked towards it for several years. Canon Robert Titley, our previous Rector in RTM, and now Canon Treasurer at the cathedral, has been in charge of the programme. In addition, the Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Revd Nicholas Holtham was, until his recent retirement, the Church of England's lead bishop on the environment.

The cathedral is a very good example of Early English Gothic architecture and compared to most English cathedrals was almost entirely built in a very short period of time -1220-1258 - which gives it a very special integrity. As part of the award process the cathedral has pledged to make itself carbon neutral by 2030 and it is a surprise that, despite the building consisting of some 60,000 tonnes of stone, the embedded carbon in it is low. This is attributable to the labour intensive construction methods of the 13th century masons and craftsmen. The cathedral has also looked closely at the wildlife and plants living on its land and how to preserve and nurture them. A particular success has been the reintroduction of peregrine falcons to the cathedral for the first time in 60 years, and there is a live web stream camera by the

chicks' nest box and also a blog about them. Another development concerns the South Cloisters roof which has been replaced with eco-friendly solar panels and will provide 33,708 kWh of clean energy to the cathedral, reducing its carbon footprint by 11,764 kilograms per year. As a gesture to mark the recent COP 26 conference, the tower and spire of the cathedral were illuminated in green.

Robert says 'The Eco Church Award scheme channels concern for our planet into positive action rooted in joy at God's creation. Going for gold mobilised the Cathedral's worshippers, volunteers, staff, and local residents, and drew in the energies of community partners, including our school. As we move on from COP26 this scheme is one of the best ways a church can play its part.' He wishes RTM well in the process of becoming eco-churches.

COP 26 Conference

At the Glasgow COP 26 conference, which finished on 12 November, the agreement included the following:

- Nearly 200 countries agreed to strengthen their existing emission cutting targets for 2030, by the end of 2022 in a bid to limit dangerous climate warming.
- And in the first explicit mention of fossil fuels in a UN climate agreement, the Glasgow agreement called for the 'phasing down' of use of unabated coal. (Sadly the original draft of the agreement had talked of 'phasing out' unabated coal but under pressure from India and China this was amended to 'phasing down'.)
- Richer countries will increase considerably their financial payments to poorer countries so that they can cope better with loss and damage from climate related storms, floods, rising seas and also droughts.
- Leaders from the 100 countries which have 85% of the world's forests agreed to reverse deforestation by 2030.

Registration of Marriages

On 4 May 2021, a major change to the way marriages are registered was brought into effect following the Civil Partnerships Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc) Act 2019. This legislation provides for the modernisation of marriage registration for the first time since 1837 by introducing registration in an electronic register. The intention of this change is to move away from the existing paper register to more secure systems for keeping marriage records. Couples who marry in church, their witnesses and the officiant will now sign a Marriage Document during the service, doing away with the need to complete the traditional marriage register. This document is then posted to the County Registrar after the wedding, put on the central Marriage Register database, and a certificate is issued to the couple in due course. Canon law however, provides that clergy must also continue to keep a physical register of marriage for the church's use. One of the improvements of the new system is that the certificate allows for both the mother and father of the bride and groom to be included, instead of just the father as hitherto.

The change has received a mixed reaction. Although helpful in the areas that the clergy no longer have the worry of loss of the registers or damage to them there are some regrets. As Canon Wilma Roest comments:

'Although I'm very pleased not to have to worry about making mistakes in registers any more, I do miss having signatures in a real book, which can be viewed for many years to come. Signing a piece of paper, which we send by post to the Registry Office, is not quite the same! And don't even get me started on the worries that that piece of paper may get lost in the post.'

At St John the Divine the Revd Neil Summers feels unhappy at the change:

'To my personal dismay, the Government took away from clergy and churches something that had been precious for centuries. Without proper consultation and preparation, vicars lost their status as, effectively, registrars in conducting marriages in church, including the ability to issue marriage certificates at the time of the wedding. I don't approve of the new system and can see a number of potential flaws in its implementation. Quite apart from the 'administration', though, for couples

choosing church weddings, as well as clergy, something pastorally very significant has been lost, which, for me, is a source of great regret'.

At St Matthias as Revd Anne Crawford reports 'Before our historic books were signed off and sent to the County Records Office for safekeeping, they were laid on the altar during our Eucharist on Sunday 9 May and we blessed them and remembered all whose marriages had been celebrated over the years at St Matthias offering these prayers for them:



The Old Register, Book of Certificates, Pen and Ink

Revd Anne Crawford

A Prayer of Thanksgiving for Marriages

Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of love and remember the many men and women who made their vows to one another in this place, and whose names are written in these registers and those before them. We thank you for all the joy and fruitfulness born of their marriages. We remember: those whose faithfulness was lifelong and who are now at rest; those who were widowed and bore long grief, or who found joy and re-married; those whose marriages, begun in hope did not bring them joy, or which ended in ways they had not intended. We remember also the fathers - whose names are recorded here - and the mothers, whose names are not; the friends and relations who bore witness to the marriage, and the clergy who solemnised them. Give us grace to remember all that is past with thanksgiving and with love, committing to your grace and mercy all those whose names have been recorded here in these books, and who are known and loved by you. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, the Church's bridegroom and our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Remembrance

Last year in 2020, many Remembrance services were cancelled or carried out 'virtually' due to



The Children's Poppy Wreath

Elspeth Fearn

Covid. This year, in person services were able to be held for the first time during the pandemic. It was therefore uplifting that the civic Remembrance Sunday service at 11am at the war memorial on Richmond Riverside was able to take place this year in its traditional format. There were many people attending, with the worship being led by Canon Wilma Roest accompanied by the Revd Charlie Smith and the choir of St Mary Magdalene. Acts of remembrance were also carried out at all of our three churches and in addition poppy wreaths were laid at the war memorial outside St Mary's, just after the end of the 9.30 am service. These included a paper

wreath of poppies which the children had made and which they laid at the memorial themselves. The wreath contained a sprig of rosemary for remembrance.

2021 is an important year as it marks the centenary of the founding of the Royal British Legion, which has provided so much help and care for veterans from the two world wars and other conflicts. As residents of Richmond, we all know about the Poppy Factory in the Petersham Road where disabled veterans, throughout the year, make the poppies and wreaths for Remembrance Sunday. However, 90% of the factory's work is supporting veterans with health conditions and disabilities into employment all around the country, the same core role of the Legion since 1921.



St Mary's choir, crucifer and clergy and the Mayor of Richmond, returning in procession from the service at the Riverside War Memorial

Elspeth Fearn

Service of Commemoration of the Faithful Departed for All Souls at St John the Divine

On Sunday 31 October at 6.30pm, the congregations came together for a Team Service of Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, including the Eucharist, which is held each year, at St John the Divine. The service opened with the sad news that the Revd Anne Crawford's father had died the previous day and she was, as a result, unable to be at the service.

Readings were from Lamentations 3.17-26, 31-3 and 1 Peter 1.3-9 and the Gospel reading was John 5.19-2. The Psalm was Psalm 27 'The Lord is my Light and my Salvation'. The service included the hymns 'How bright these glorious spirits shine' and 'Abide With Me' and RTM's combined choirs sang movements from Faure's Requiem including 'Pie Jesu' and the 'Agnus Dei'.

For the few weeks prior to the service, the names of loved ones who had died had been written up in the three churches. These names were brought to St John the Divine for the service and were read out slowly whilst the organ played a quiet accompaniment. If they wished to, members of the congregation could come up to light a candle in memory of loved ones and place it on the catafalque. Hearing all the names was such a moving experience. All were precious to someone and to God and were loved and remembered. The service ended with the beautiful and ethereal 'In Paradisum', the final movement of Faure's Requiem with its faith in eternal rest. The congregation then left in silence. It had been a very moving and comforting service.

Children's Services

by Revd Charlie Smith

St Mary Magdalene have embarked on a new endeavour this term: Children's Services on the first Saturday of every month.

The Children's Services are worship services which children (and, indeed adults) of all ages should be able to engage with. The services each incorporate recognisable aspects of Sunday worship; including songs, readings, psalms, prayers, sermon, and an activity of worship, with the hope that they are both accessible and fun.

For example, we share the peace by singing the song 'Peace like a river' and, together, rippling a long piece of blue fabric like a river. We read stories from Children's Bibles and use accessible adaptations of psalms with responses for everyone to join in with. The sermon slot includes a simple message in just a few minutes. The liturgy uses clear and simple language, and we all have the chance to join in with it, just like we do in Sunday morning services.

We sing kid's songs and simple hymns which are easy to learn and often have actions. And we try to incorporate some basic sign language into the service so that everyone can join in, including non-verbal folk and young ones, and so that we can use our whole bodies in worship!

During some of the services we have discussed what we have wanted to pray for and then prayed together. And we use repeated responses to help us to bring all our prayers together and we can all join with the Lord's Prayer.

Each children's service has a different theme; based on the church and secular calendars.

The September service was a Blessing of the Backpacks' Service, to coincide with the young people starting the new academic year. We talked about the story of Jesus when he was just a boy, learning from the religious leaders in the Temple, and about God's love for us and call to us whatever age we are. We took home some bag tags to decorate and to remind us that Jesus is always with us.

Following Creationtide we focused on celebrating God's glorious creation. In October we had a Pet Blessing service and the congregation included four dogs (and some lovely stuffed animals too!). We heard a story about St Francis and animals, and we thanked God for animals, and for the companion and comfort of pets. The animals and their owners each received a blessing.

In November, we heard the story of the Garden of Eden and thought about bulbs, which look so wizened and shrivelled but when they are buried and cared for, are full of glorious life! At the end of the service we went out into the garden and planted some bulbs of our own and took some home with us as well.

On 4th December, at 4.00pm, we will be celebrating St Nicholas, and all children, families and folk from Richmond Team Ministry are welcome to join us for worship.



Blessing a Dog

Revd Charlie Smith

Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love, where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen



Picture of St Francis by an unknown medieval artist



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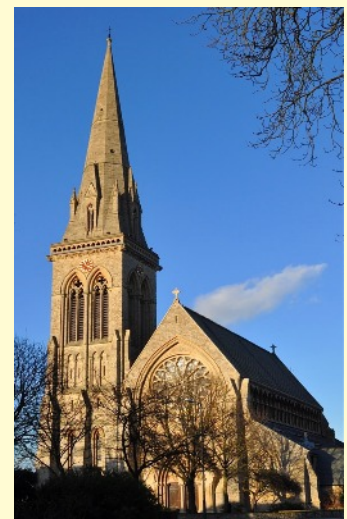
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St John the Divine



St Mary Magdalene



St Matthias

Our Churches