

The Parish of Christchurch



*The Priory Church of the Holy Trinity, Christchurch
St George, Jumpers • St John at Purewell*

for Sunday 29 August, 2021

Dear Friends,

“Where were you when ...?” It’s a familiar question, normally linked with events of major significance, such as, “Where were you when you heard President Kennedy had been shot?”; or “Where were you when you learned the Berlin Wall had come down?”

For recent generations, one of the most potent “Where were you when ...?” questions relates to September 11, 2001 and the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in Manhattan, the Pentagon in Washington, and United Flight 93, the plane that was probably headed for a Washington target but crashed a Pennsylvania field.

I remember that day vividly, for personal family reasons. In the following weeks events gathered pace swiftly. Before long Afghanistan, perceived to be the base from which the Al-Qaeda attacks had been planned, had been invaded.

Almost twenty years on, and after much loss of life, including 457 British military personnel, Afghanistan is in the news again. The images of Afghan people at Kabul airport, or at one of the land border crossings, each desperate to find a way of escape, have been heart-rending. We have seen Afghan women and girls expressing their fears that the basic human rights they have enjoyed in recent years are about to be taken away. And we have been told the airlift must finish on Tuesday.

In March 1977 the late Bernard Levin, still remembered for his columns in *The Times*, wrote about an East German family who set sail in two collapsible dinghies and risked the dangers of the Baltic, because they wanted to be free. The mother and son survived, the husband and two daughters had drowned.

Levin wrote: “I ask how vile a regime must be if its citizens are compelled to take such chances to get away from it ... the fact [is] that the regime lines its Western borders, land and sea, with guards and guns, electrified fences and lethal mines, watchtowers and dogs and pursuit vessels, all intended not to keep invaders out but to keep the regime’s citizens in.”

Something very similar is happening before our eyes in Afghanistan. For those of you who, like me, may be feeling more-than-usually helpless in the face of the suffering and fear of the Afghan people, not least after the suicide bombing on Thursday, here are two ways we can support them. First, a prayer we can use in the coming days and weeks:

Father God, lover of justice and peace,
we pray for the people of Afghanistan in these days of turmoil and fear.
Throughout that land, whose mountains and valleys, towns and villages
have known centuries of conflict, suffering and pain,
we pray that the hearts of all who would practice intolerance may be softened;
protect all who feel vulnerable or at risk;
and inspire all people of goodwill
to work for the peace that is founded on justice, righteousness,
and the well-being of all your children;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Second, we can give. For the next two Sundays we shall hold an emergency collection to support the Afghan people, including Afghan refugees now in the UK, through the British Red Cross. If you would like to donate online, you can do so via <https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/afghanistan-crisis-appeal>. Thank you.

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Our former Archdeacon, **the Venerable Dr Peter Rouch**, will be preaching at the Priory 10.00am Eucharist this Sunday. Peter has been a good friend to this parish for many years and this gives us a chance to thank him for his support, care and, when needed, challenge over the past decade. He is now the Chief Executive Officer of Church Army.

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Geoffrey Morgan, Priory Organist

A reminder that on Sunday 5 September there will be an opportunity to thank Geoffrey Morgan for his many years of service as Priory Organist, a post he has held with distinction since 2002. This will happen at Choral Evensong on Sunday 5 September, when there will also be a presentation in token of our thanks.

Let me also clarify something which may have been misunderstood: Geoffrey is standing down from the post of Priory Organist – but he is not retiring, nor is he moving away. In fact, Geoffrey will continue to play in the Priory regularly, as one of a small team of organists who will be assisting Simon Earl in the coming months.

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Choral Evensong with the Revd Jonathan Evans

A reminder that Jonathan Evans will be preaching at Choral Evensong on Sunday 12 September at 6.30pm. This will give us a longed-for opportunity – which the pandemic denied us earlier this year – to express our gratitude for all he and Alice brought to the parish. Everyone is warmly invited to this service and the post-service reception.

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Induction of the Revd Jonathan Evans, Sunday 3 October at 3.00pm

Information about travel arrangements to Jonathan's induction will be available next week. Please note the date and time in your diaries.

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Jesus said: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free ... So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8.31-32,36). This promise of true freedom – echoed so often in Paul's letters (e.g. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom", 2 Corinthians 3.17) – provides the antithesis to the repressive instincts of every totalitarian regime, including the Taleban.

The desire for freedom, both the inner freedom of which Jesus speaks and the social and political freedom which Bernard Levin described as "the most wonderful and extra-ordinary of all the attributes of man, the inextinguishable spark of freedom in his soul" – lies deep within us all, even if we are not always aware of it. May we nurture this spark always.

God bless you all, and those for whom you pray.

