

Bishop of Maidstone's Newsletter Easter 2019

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Dear Brothers and Sisters

Preaching for Conversion

When Billy Graham died, many memories were shared in the various obituaries of the great 'crusades' he held in Britain. I was staggered to read that in the three months he was at Haringey in 1954, over 2 million people attended the meetings! My own memories stem from selling song books as a 12-year old at Earl's Court in 1966. Many people have mentioned Billy Graham's famous words 'The Bible says ...', but as a 12-year old, I felt the most amazing moments came when Billy Graham said 'I want you to get up out of your seats ...' A trickle of people would start to move towards the front where the counsellors were waiting, but before long there were rivers of people responding to the call.

We don't seem to have gatherings like that any more. But perhaps even more significantly, I wonder whether we still have preaching which alerts people to make a decision about responding to the loving invitation of the Saviour. Mass evangelism may have been replaced by one-to-one and group work within local churches, but are we now so keen on 'friendship evangelism' that we've become coy about clearly inviting people to turn to Christ for their salvation? Are we losing our sense of urgency?

I was prompted to have these thoughts when reading some intriguing bible study material that had been prepared for diocesan use by one bishop. It was full of good things and there was a great emphasis on becoming, and then growing as, a disciple of Christ. But I had to search long and hard before I found even a tangential reference to evangelism. It remains a huge sadness to me that while one of the priorities of the CoE's Reform and Renewal programme is discipleship, there's no real emphasis on conversion. Of course, it's impossible to become a disciple without turning to Christ, but it would be good if this could be said plainly. My concern, however, is not so much at the quality of diocesan materials as

the possibility that as evangelicals we are starting to adopt the same muffled voice. If we believe in hell as well as heaven, if we are convinced that repentance and faith in Jesus Christ's atoning death and resurrection represent the only way of salvation, then we need to be explicit. This doesn't mean an 'altar call' with every sermon; it doesn't mean adopting a strident and hectoring tone; and it doesn't mean a negative intensity that ignores the need to encourage people. But it does at least mean inviting people to make a decision.

Text of my video about the Reform/Church Society/FWS merger (with some minor amendments!)

'If you are a Reform member I would like to ask you to send in a membership application form to the Church Society without delay. The reason is that Church Society, Reform and Fellowship of Word and Spirit are merging and we need as many people as possible to vote through that change at the next Church Society AGM.

Why are we merging? The short answer is because of the changes that have taken place in the last few years and certainly since Reform started 25 years ago. The first change is that the Church Society itself is now doing a different job; it is now much more focussed on C of E concerns than it was 25 years ago. Secondly, Reform's role has changed as various of its initiatives have borne fruit. We've always pursued a twin track approach of trying to reform the church both by action from within the C of E and outside it. One of the consequences of this is that we've seen the birth of the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) and that is now taking off on its own. A number of churches support it, not because they want to leave the C of E but, because they want to show that they are in fellowship with gospel minded congregations who value their Anglican roots. Another consequence is that ReNew has started; it has taken over the Reform Conference and increasingly is giving shape to the agenda that Reform has always advocated for multiplying congregations throughout the C of E. There is also the distinctive work that Reform has done on men's and women's ministry and that is finding an increasing focus in my own role as the Bishop of Maidstone.

However, the jobs which Reform has done of networking and, in particular, of contending for the apostolic faith within the C of E need to continue. We need to be more effective than ever because the challenges facing us in society as a whole and in the C of E in particular, are huge. We must therefore harness our resources. We need to maximise what is available to us and to focus our efforts now on the C of E. To do that we are merging, and we hope that you will support this. If your heart is still in reforming the C of E to reach the nation for Christ then let's do this together, with this new set up. There are going to be all sorts of changes in the Church Society: a majority of the members of the Council will be required to be incumbents; all Council members will have to agree to the Reform Covenant; there will also be changes in some of the official roles. Above all what we want to do is to be united in protecting the Gospel and in furthering it throughout the nation. So please do join me in this new and really encouraging endeavour.

Sabbatical

I will be taking a sabbatical from the beginning of April until the end of June next year, 2019. This will necessarily reduce my availability throughout the year for confirmations and other

engagements. If you would like to request that I take a confirmation in 2019, please bear this in mind. Please let Rachel know once you have made plans and she will work to organise things to include as many requests as possible. This will be much helped if churches in a locality have a shared confirmation service and if you can be as flexible as possible concerning dates.

GDPR

As many of you will be aware, new legislation comes into force in May regarding data protection. This requires that we obtain consent before we retain and use people's personal data including email addresses, for example, to mail out newsletters such as this one. In due course, Rachel will be contacting you with a form which you will need to complete in order to give your consent to continue to receive communications from my office. Please bear in mind that if you do not return the form, we will be unable to send you newsletters in future.

Log in area on website

We are considering adding an area to the Bishop of Maidstone website which can only be accessed by using a password. This would allow clergy to log in to an area where information could be obtained and shared about situations which have been faced by other resolution churches or those seeking to pass resolutions. The idea would be that there could be information on a range of topics such as:

- How best to express complementarian convictions when being interviewed for vacancies in non-complementarian churches
- How different dioceses have reacted to churches which don't have parish status passing resolutions (eg proprietary chapels, DCCs, BMOs)
- Examples of ministry I have undertaken which demonstrate how some dioceses have given him a lot of leeway
- Ways in which incumbents have worked with PCCs over a long period of time
- News of vacancies and curates looking for incumbencies

We would welcome any feedback as to whether you think this would be a useful facility for us to provide. Please send any thoughts to Rachel – admin@bishopofmaidstone.org

Regional Meetings

I am holding a series of these meetings, covering the whole country in two years. The first meeting was held in Leyland on 28th February for clergy and leadership teams from resolution churches in Blackburn, Chester, Cumbria, Liverpool and Manchester Dioceses. Despite the bad weather, and threat of heavy snow, 50 people came to the meeting – most of those who had signed up for it. The meeting provided a useful time to share information about local situations as well as more general questions about future ministry in the Church of England. The main meeting was followed by a session for curates who have completed at least one year of training. This covered practical issues such as applying for incumbencies. As the result of feedback from that meeting, we will probably spend less time

at future meetings explaining what is going on in individual dioceses, and more time dealing with matters such as issues around the planting of new churches, and impaired communion. I think it might also be helpful to have some good theological input on eg the teaching role of women.

The next meetings to be held are:

- Sheffield on 2nd July for those from Derby, Durham, Leeds, Lincoln, Newcastle, Sheffield, Southwell & Nottingham and York Dioceses
- Cambridge on 10th October for those from Ely, Norwich, Peterborough, St Albans, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Dioceses
- Reading on 6th November for those from Bath & Wells, Bristol, Exeter, Gloucester, Guildford, Oxford, Salisbury, Truro and Winchester Dioceses
- All other areas of the country will be covered by meetings to be held in the first few months of 2019.

Also as a result of feedback, we will extend the invitation to these meetings to conservative evangelical clergy whose churches have not passed resolutions, in addition to the original target group of clergy and leadership teams of resolution churches. If you would like to be invited and fall into the category of clergy whose church has not passed a resolution, then please let Rachel know by emailing her: admin@bishopofmaidstone.org

Survey

I will shortly be sending out a survey to incumbents of resolution parishes seeking to obtain information about the nature and range of understanding of male headship. The results of the survey will be analysed to provide a better picture of practice on the ground. The findings may be published, without identifying parishes or clergy, but first and foremost the information will also help me as I contribute to the House of Bishops workgroup examining how “mutual flourishing” is applied in practice throughout the church.

Vacancies: Please Apply!

A number of vacancies are becoming available at some terrific churches and I do hope they will have a good number of applications. I’ve recently been quite taken aback when there has been a low response to some vacancies that have arisen. We are rightly concerned when, as conservative evangelicals we seem to be marginalised in an appointment process, but when there is an open invitation to us to apply to churches which have passed resolutions under the House of Bishops’ Declaration, and then we don’t, we have only ourselves to blame.

Vacancies for incumbents now exist at:

- St John’s, Great Clacton. A lovely warm fellowship, keen to be taught the Bible and reach out to their community, with new evangelism opportunities arising. Please contact the Archdeacon of Colchester: a.colchester@chelmsford.anglican.org
- St Andrew’s, Kirk Ella. This is a significant opportunity in a large evangelical church in Hull, which also includes ministry in St Luke’s, Willerby. There are lively and enthusiastic congregations keen to be taught the Bible. Further information is available at: <https://pathways.churchofengland.org/jobs/job/Rector-of-St-Andrews-Kirk-Ella-St-Lukes-Willerby/540> or contact the Archdeacon of East Riding: ader@yorkdiocese.org

- Christ Church, Cockfosters. A major church with a history of evangelical ministry. As I understand it, they want someone who believes in male headship but is happy with women preaching to mixed congregations. Please look in the church press for contact details as this post will shortly be re-advertised.

I have also been asked to let you know that the United Benefice of Duffield and Little Eaton is looking for a trainee minister. Please contact James Hughes: james.t.hughes@btopenworld.com or see www.stalkmundsduffield.co.uk

Will Stileman has been keen to draw our attention to a vacancy at St Barnabas, Linthorpe, Middlesborough. Although this church has not passed a resolution, it is a substantial evangelical church and would be keen to interview a lively Bible teacher. More information is available at: <https://www.cofepathways.org/members/modules/job/detail.php?record=492#0>

List of Resolution Parishes

A list of the 120 conservative evangelical parishes which have passed resolutions is attached at the end of this newsletter. Please let us know if we are missing any.

With every good wish for your Gospel outreach this Easter

Rod Thomas

Resolution Parishes - resolutions passed by conservative evangelical churches, 28th March 2018 – 120 in total

Bath&Wells	St George's Wembdon		St John's Orchard Park
Birmingham	St Stephen/St Wulstan, Selly Park		St Matthew's Cambridge
	St Agnes, Moseley	Exeter	St Matthew's, Elburton
Blackburn	The Church of the Saviour Blackburn		St Leonards Exeter
	St Bartholomews, Ewood		Christ Church, Paignton
	Christ Church Blackburn	Guildford	St Andrew's Frimley Green & Mytchett
	Wellfield Church, BMO	Leicester	Enderby
	St Andrews Ashton on Ribble	Lichfield	Oswestry, Holy Trinity
	St Andrews Leyland		Audley
	All Hallows Bispham		Castle Church Stafford
	Padiham		St Thomas Kidsgrove
	All Saints Preston		St Luke's, Wolverhampton
Canterbury	St James Westgate	Liverpool	St Philemon's Toxteth, DCC
	Christ Church Ramsgate	London	St Thomas', Oakwood
	All Saints Loose		St Helen's Bishopsgate
Carlisle	St James, Burton in Kendal		St Anne's Limehouse
	Houghton and Kingmoor		St Luke's Hampstead
	St John's, London Road, Carlisle		St Botolph without Aldersgate
	St John's, Hensingham		St John with St Andrew Chelsea
	St Bridget's Moresby		Christ Church Cockfosters
Chelmsford	St George Dagenham		St Paul's Hadley Wood
	St Paul's Harold Hill and St Thomas Noak Hill		St Peter's Barge, Limehouse
	St Peter's Harold Wood		St Peter's Fulham
	Immanuel, Brentwood	Manchester	Christ Church Chadderton
	Henham, Elsenham and Ugley		St Mary's Balderstone
	Becontree St Elisabeth	Norwich	Christ Church Lowestoft
	Christ Church, Leyton	Oxford	St Ebbe's, Oxford
	St Peter and St Paul Dagenham		Arborfield
	Fordham		Barkham
	Chadwell St Mary		Christ Church Wokingham
	St Michael's Braintree		Holy Trinity Nuffield
	St John's Great Clacton		St Paul's Banbury
	Crossway Strataford		St Mary's Maidenhead
	St John's Walthamstow	Peterborough	St Peter and St Paul, Moulton
Chester	St John's Lindow	Portsmouth	St James Ryde
	St John's Church, Over	Rochester	St Nicholas, Sevenoaks
	St Mary's, Cheadle		St John's, Tunbridge Wells
	St John's, Knutsford		Christ Church, Bromley
	Toft		St Peter's Bexley Heath
	St John's Hartford		St Peter's Tunbridge Wells
	St Catherine's Tranmere	Salisbury	St Johns Wimborne
	St Mark's New Ferry	Sheffield	Christ Church, Fulwood
	Holy Trinity Poulton Lancelyn		St Andrew's, Kendray
	Christ Church, Wharton		St Thomas Kilnhurst
Chichester	Holy Trinity, Eastbourne		Christ Church Endcliffe
	All Souls Eastbourne		Gleadless Valley
	Little Common, Bexhill	Southwark	St Nicholas Tooting
	Emmanuel Hastings		Emmanuel, Wimbledon
	Bishop Hannington Hove		Dundonald
	All Saints Crowborough		St Luke's, Wimbledon
Derby	St Peter's Stapenhill		Holy Redeemer, Streatham Vale
	Little Eaton		St Stephen's, South Lambeth
	St Alkmund's, Duffield		Holy Trinity Wallington
	St Mary's Chaddesden	Southwell	St Mary's, Wollaton Park
	St Giles, Normanton	St Albans	Holy Trinity, Frogmore
	Trinity Church Buxton	Truro	Fowey
Europe	Leipzig	Winchester	Christ Church Westbourne
Ely	All Saints Little Shelford		St Mary's Basingstoke
	Christ Church Cambridge		Sherbourne St John, Basingstoke
	St Andrew the Great, Cambridge	York	St Andrew's Kirk Ella, Hull

