March 2016
Devin McLachlan writes:

Don’t Travel Alone

When I was 16, I spent a month hiking in the Talkeetna Mountains of Alaska with the National Outdoor Leadership School. It was a glorious and beautiful adventure, through mountains and tundra and in the midst of the caribou migration (and their grizzly bear followers). But it was also a crash-course in community, learning wilderness survival skills with a motley crew of individuals, some of whom had spent most of their lives outdoors while others had, quite literally, never even boiled water on their own. To wander off alone in the midst of grizzly bear country was sheer foolishness. In order to get through the wilderness safely, we had to learn to depend on one another, not only drawing on one another's strengths, but also caring for one another's weaknesses. We learned to not hike faster than our slowest members, and given that some of us were tall and others short, carrying a fair distribution of supplies was different from carrying an equal distribution of supplies.

The Desert Fathers and Mothers, the great spiritual proto-monastics of the 3rd and 4th century in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, went into the wilderness to search for God and to escape what they saw as corruption in the newly imperial Church. Though they went into the desert as hermits; they were hermits in community. They met for Eucharist, and they met for friendship and consolation, for spiritual direction and for rest. Regardless of the kind of desert life that they lead — from the eremitic life (monks who lived a primarily solitary life but who met weekly for Eucharist), to sketes (clusters of hermits, living a solitary life in cells around a common chapel for the Eucharist), and cenobitic monasteries (entirely communal groups) - their renunciation of the world and its temptations never included the renunciation of humanity and community.

The journey of Lent can tempt us into thinking that we are called to a solitary wilderness — forty days of self-examination, repentance and giving up chocolates, which we must struggle with alone. But Lent is also grizzly bear country. As we enter the second half of Lent, take a moment to look around you. Who are your travelling companions on this journey? Are you finding solace from your solitude in community prayer? Might morning prayer at GSM or a Lenten study or crafts session help give you refreshment on the journey? Is there a friend, a neighbour, a family member, with whom you're able to talk about your spiritual life—and your spiritual struggle?
Western Christianity’s history of colonialism and exploitative evangelism has made us rightfully nervous about how we share our faith. But for all the individualism and sectarianism of our time, the wilderness journey of our faith is one we should never take alone. We have strengths to share with others, and we have weaknesses to which God has sent us companions and angels for comfort. Don’t travel alone!

Rosemary Watson writes:

**Fundraising Event for Refugees in Cambridge**

The Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Committee (CRRC) and Cambridge Calais Refugee Action Group (CamCRAG) are holding a major fundraising and awareness raising event on Friday April 15th at The Guildhall, Cambridge. They are seeking sponsors to help cover the costs of running this event as well as volunteers to help plan and run the event on the night. It would be wonderful if you could help spread the word via your networks (social networks, colleagues, faith group newsletters, etc). See below link and attached document for further information.

https://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/news/cambridge-for-refugees-fundraising-event-appeal-for-sponsorship/

A list of event volunteering opportunities can be found here:

http://cambridgecalaisrefugeeaction.org.uk/guildhallevent/

John Binns writes:

**Ethiopia 2016**

It was 2am when the lights flickered on and off and the message came across the aeroplane’s PA system that there was a fault with the electrics and we would be landing at Athens airport. It wasn’t the best beginning to the Ethiopian holiday-finding ourselves spending fourteen hours in a departure lounge in Greece instead of exploring the city of Addis Ababa but we got there in the end, just a little bit late.

I was guest speaker on the first visit to Ethiopian sites organised by Wind Sand and Stars, a small travel company founded in Cambridge and specialising in visits to the Holy Land and Sinai, often with speakers for the Faculty of Divinity here. There’s not much demand now for visits to Sinai, and so the company is looking for new areas to work in and is thinking about Ethiopia. There were twelve in the group including six clergy and we had a fascinating fortnight visiting some of the main historic sites and admiring the fantastic scenery of the mountainous country of Ethiopia. We shared in the festivities in the popular Christian festival of Epiphany and finished with a marathon drive across the country to see the ancient city of Harar, one of the holiest cities of Islam.

I first visited Ethiopia in 1993 and have been going regularly ever since, supporting an Ethiopian development agency called Partners for Change and researching the religious traditions.
Ethiopia is one of the oldest Christian kingdoms in the world, with Christians arriving at the time of the apostles, and the king declaring himself Christian in 340 (approximately).

Even though it is only a short distance from Mecca and the Islamic armies expanded across the rest of the region, Ethiopia has stubbornly remained a Christian country throughout the centuries that followed. Today two thirds of the population is Christian, and its ancient Orthodox Church has 40 million members (compare this with the 80 million in the worldwide Anglican communion). In the age of fundamentalist Islam and the suffering of Christians in the Middle East, the presence of a thriving traditional church in the Horn of Africa has an added significance.

Ethiopia seem remote and irrelevant to the struggles, challenges and joys of church life in central Cambridge, but it’s important that we remember that the church is worldwide and has many forms. Getting to know a different religious culture helps us grasp new elements of what it means to believe, and to look at our own faith in a critical and broader perspective. In a multi-cultural society we need to be open to different forms of faith and fresh approaches to God. For me it’s Ethiopia – but you’ll have other things which fascinate you. Whatever these are, we need to be open and receptive to the different ways God works in his world. Our relationship with God should always push us into exploring new ways of thinking, and encountering and valuing people from different cultures and traditions.

Ruth Bridgen writes:

**Ely Diocese Mothers’ Union**

I attended a Mothers’ Union breakfast at St John's Church, Hills Road, in January. The discussion centred on setting up a Branch in Cambridge City centre and possible ways of catering to the needs of all ages.

Application forms to join the Ely Diocese Mothers’ Union can be obtained from Mrs Debbie Tye, telephone 01353 666883. I have copies of the current Newsletter and the Thursday prayer list. Prayers are usually held at Little St. Mary’s Church on the fourth Thursday of the month from 10.30-11.00am.

On Friday 12 February e-Luminate Cambridge turned Great St Mary’s Church pink to promote the Pink Week initiative. Pink Week is a student-led breast cancer fund and awareness raising campaign, that runs across UK University campuses.
**Lent Talks at Michaelhouse** (1pm)  
**Monday 7 March**  
Mothers And Children Augustine by Revd Dr Cally Hammond (Dean of Gonville and Caius College)  
**Monday 14 March**  
Into The Unknown Simone Weil by Revd Dr Stephen Plant (Dean of Trinity Hall)  
**Monday 21 March**  
Out Of Africa Bernard Mizeki by Revd Dr Jesse Zink (Centre for the Study of Christianity Worldwide)

**SERVICES IN MARCH**

**Mondays**  
9.15am (GSM) Holy Communion

**Tuesdays**  
9.15am (MH) Morning Prayer  
10.30am (MH) Ark

**Wednesdays**  
9.00am (MHFH) Morning Prayer  
11.00am (GSM) Holy Communion  
1.00pm (MHFH) Holy Communion

**Thursdays**  
9.15am (GSM) Morning Prayer  
1.05pm (MH) Holy Communion

**SUNDAYS IN MARCH**

**Sunday 6 March**  
9.30am All age Eucharist for Mothering Sunday  
5.30pm Choral Evensong: Festival of Science, with Canon Victoria Johnson (Ely Cathedral)  
**Sunday 13 March**  
5.30pm Music and Readings for Passiontide (MH)  
**Sunday 20 March Palm Sunday**  
8.00am Holy Communion  
9.30am Procession of Palms, Passion Reading and Sung Communion  
11.15am Choral Mattins  
5.30pm Choral Evensong: Reimagining Buildings and Targeting key areas, by John Binns

**Saturday 19 March 7.30 pm**  
The Academy of Great St. Mary’s present the music of Haydn; Dvořák; Beethoven and Bartók  
Tickets from [http://www.adcticketing.com](http://www.adcticketing.com), tel. 01223 300085, email: music@gsm.cam.ac.uk and from GSM shop