September 2016

The Church in the heart of the city

The Vicar writes...

We are very aware of the fact that our church is located right at the centre of a major university city. This gives us extraordinary opportunities to share in the wide ranging commitment to study, research and to reflection on our society and the world around us. Our faith comes out of that commitment to each other and to our world, as we discover what our life means. This newsletter is about faith and science. Members of Great St Mary’s describe how that research and their faith come together and support each other. We hope it will encourage all of us to look again at our lives, our faith and our actions.

It’s a time when we come back after summer holidays, schools re-start and the autumn events begin. There’s a special service on 11th September. We celebrate our Patronal Festival, since this is one of the days when the church remembers the place of Mary in our faith - to be precise, September 8 is the feast of the Birth of the Virgin Mary. The choir is back after the holidays and we will be enjoying choral music again.

We are also dedicating the magnificent sculpture given to the church by Douglas Jeal, a distinguished artist who sadly died last year. Called Maternity, it shows Mary, her child Jesus and his older cousin John who was later known as John the Baptist.

We are also on the point of launching our new website. There’s more. The same weekend of 10-11 September is Open Cambridge, with heritage events focussing on the market place and its history. A consultation on worship and plans for our church, follows on Sunday 18 September at 11 am, when we invite all GSM to share experiences of worship and ideas to develop it. There’s the GSM Quiet Day at Clare Priory and an Orchestral Concert on 24 September. Then its Harvest Festival on 2 October.

Don’t miss any of it.
David Girling writes:

As someone whose career was in medical science, I am happy to describe myself as a critical realist, as indeed do many scientists. As a realist, I believe that the concept of truth is a valid one. Science is the study of the way things really are, and I therefore question the non-realism of people like Don Cupitt who claim that ‘capital-T Truth’ is dead, on the grounds that truth claims are highly regional, human, disputed, socially-produced, historically-developed, plural and changing. Indeed, I and others had the pleasure of exploring these very issues with Don Cupitt during one of our Faith in Society meetings.

But my realism is critical. The popular view of science is that it comprises a body of established fact garnered by observation and experiment, upon numerous specific examples of which are based general statements: scientific laws. This empirical method – induction – is what guarantees, so it is claimed, the truth, legitimacy and authority of science.

Strange as it may seem, as a Christian, I am unhappy with this popular view. Science is not infallible. On the contrary, the scientific method has been memorably described by the late Arthur Peacocke, Anglican theologian and biochemist, as inference to the best explanation. As scientists, we infer what would, if true, provide the best among competing explanations of the data available to us at the time. It is knowing that we can be wrong that renders real encounters with truth all the more valuable.

Science progresses by conjecture (informed and often inspired conjecture), inference to the best explanation and, as often as not, subsequent refutation. Critical realism helps us to avoid the uncritical ‘scientism’ of those who claim that they believe only what can be scientifically proven: that only scientific questions have meaning. This view, often referred to as reductionism, asserts that the whole is never more than the sum of its parts. It is materialistic and deterministic.

As a medical scientist, I am particularly interested in the medical and biological implications of science and faith. Can mind, for example, be explained entirely in terms of neurological processes; the behaviour of living organisms – including humankind – entirely in terms of the cells of which they are composed; cells entirely in terms of organic chemicals; chemicals in terms of simpler atoms, molecules and subatomic particles? Is science the sole generator and arbiter of truth? The reductionist would answer yes to all these questions. We are no more than an assembly of sub-atomic quarks.

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Clinical Medicine and Faith

Fiona Cornish writes:

Twenty-five years of gazing into the very personal stories of patients in general practice is not only a huge privilege, but is also revealing and fascinating. It has given me an insight into the very different ways in which individuals approach and cope with medical problems, and how they interact with a doctor. I would like to explore in this short article the role that faith might play for both the patient and for me as the doctor.

Breaking bad news of a serious diagnosis, particularly cancer, is a challenging situation, and even when I feel I have done the job as sensitively as possible, I cannot predict the reaction. Sometimes I am relieved to find that the initial shock is followed by acceptance, resilience, and seeing the positive in the circumstances. On other occasions, the response is fear, anger, self pity, and blame on the medical profession for not making the diagnosis earlier. I often ask myself what determines these differences in approach. The joy of general practice is that you have a chance to get to know patients over the years, and so have a sense of their personality, their background, their family situation. They may have revealed some type of faith over the years, but this can become more evident when presented with a significant challenge, such as a cancer diagnosis. So how exactly does it make a difference?

I have been humbled by the extraordinary courage and acceptance shown by some of my patients, when coping with severe pain and other symptoms frequently affecting the end of life, such as difficulty breathing. The prospect of life after death can give courage and serenity, and a sense of gratitude for the life already lived. Some patients find huge comfort in discussing their faith, and enjoy visits from their priest, imam or rabbi. The participation of members of their faith community can make a huge difference to their experience of challenging medical problems, bringing support to both the patient and his or her close family members.

The way individuals interact with doctors when things don’t go smoothly is equally variable. Inevitably delays and mistakes can happen, as doctors are all subject to human error, and these can be met with a range of anger, dissatisfaction or understanding. I find that honesty and openness are the best approaches, and most people are accepting. On occasions the doctor can be the focus of blame, even though nothing could have been done to change the outcome. I have been impressed by the serene and forgiving approach of those who clearly have faith, and understand that medicine is not about miracles, and that the lottery of disease is far from fair.

Medicine is not an exact science, and outcomes for individuals also depend on personality and luck. My conclusion is that faith can play a part in how people respond to their conditions, with hope and acceptance; and respond to their doctor with appreciation and gratitude.
COSMOLOGY AND FAITH

Rodney Holder writes:

20th June 2016 marked the death of one of the most significant cosmologists of the twentieth century. Georges Lemaître was the “Father of the Big Bang theory.” In 1931 he solved Einstein’s equations of General Relativity (Einstein’s theory of gravity) applied to the whole universe and obtained a solution in which the universe expanded from a highly compact initial state which he called the “primeval atom.” It was dubbed the “Big Bang” by Cambridge cosmologist Fred Hoyle, who hated it and proposed instead the alternative “steady-state” theory according to which the universe has always existed and always looked the same. On his death-bed in 1966, Lemaître was told that the Big Bang had been verified by the discovery of the cosmic background radiation, a prediction of the theory and inexplicable by the steady-state.

In an age when so-called “new atheists” loudly proclaim that science and religion are in conflict, it is significant that Lemaître was not only one of the greatest cosmologists ever: he was also a Catholic priest. He once said, “There were two ways of arriving at the truth. I decided to follow them both.”

The Big Bang is well-established but it throws up some puzzles, virtually forcing us to move beyond the physics into metaphysics. One puzzle is why the universe is so apparently “fine-tuned,” seemingly in order for us to exist. “Like the porridge in the tale of Goldilocks and the three bears, the universe seems ‘just right’ for life, in so many intriguing ways,” says cosmologist Paul Davies.

There are numerous examples of this “fine-tuning,” but space permits mention of only one. The chemical elements are manufactured in the cores of stars, where temperatures of hundreds of millions of degrees trigger nuclear reactions. Unless the strong nuclear force, which binds atomic nuclei together, has the strength it does to a high degree of accuracy, either no carbon will be made or all the carbon that is made will be converted into oxygen. Either way, there would be no possibility of life. This discovery was made by none other than Sir Fred Hoyle. At a lecture in Great St Mary’s, Hoyle (an atheist!) said this: “I do not believe that any scientist who examined the evidence would fail to draw the inference that the laws of physics have been deliberately designed with regard to the consequences they produce inside the stars.”

Concluding a popular survey of his cosmology, Georges Lemaître wrote this:

“We cannot end this rapid review which we have made together of the most magnificent subject that the human mind may be tempted to explore without being proud of these splendid endeavours of Science in the

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**Hope: Where Community Begins**

**Sarah de Mas writes:**

Thirty seven days after the momentous decision to leave the European Union taken by the majority of the voting public, a special Evensong service was held in GSM as an act of worship and witness in the uncertain times we are now living. In the words of the hymn, we were invited to place our trust in God who guides us through change and chance.

“When you recognise uncertainty, you recognise that you may be able to influence the outcomes. Hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable, an alternative to the certainty of both optimists and pessimists.” Joyce Rosenstiel read from the writings of Rebecca Solnit, and later asked us to reflect on the hope that carried the anti-apartheid movement through the years of darkness and terror. A further connection with South Africa was evoked by Alan Paton’s prayer, “Give us courage, Lord, to stand up and be counted, to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves…”

Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner spoke of the nature of structures which change, collapse and are re-built, and the opportunities now arising for us all to bring about a stronger, more inclusive future.

Thanks are due to the many speakers, the organist, Ian de Massini and the clergy for the overall message of hope.

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**David Girling writes (contd)**

In marked contrast, I see the universe as a mystery – a miracle – created in such a way that it is enabled by its Creator to collaborate in creation. Molecular structures somehow produced complex organic molecules. From complex molecules, life has emerged. Living organisms have evolved into thinking, self-aware, creative, loving, communicating human beings, able to begin to know, love and worship their Creator.

Here is a source of true wonder.

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**Rodney Holder writes (contd)**

conquest of the Earth, and also without expressing our gratitude to One Who has said: I am the Truth,’ One Who gave us the mind to understand Him and to recognize a glimpse of His glory in our universe which He has so wonderfully adjusted to the mental power with which He has endowed us.”

Amen to that!

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**Monsignor George Lemaître with Albert Einstein**
Caring for Gt St Mary’s and supporting other projects:

Ride, Drive & Stride: Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust

Tom Culver writes:
This annual event will take place on Saturday 10th September. It is a sponsored ride to raise money for historic churches and Great Saint Mary’s. Half the money we collect returns to GSM and the other half, plus gift-aid, goes to the Trust. Many churches that are normally closed are open for this event. I have sponsorship forms for those wishing to participate. You can walk, cycle or drive to churches in central Cambridge or wherever you wish. It is a lot of fun, but the purpose is to raise funds for the CHCT and Great Saint Mary’s. We really need the money for the various building projects we have in hand. Like most sponsored events, the sponsorship can be by performance, so you can be sponsored for each church you visit, or the sponsor can simply give a fixed sum. It should be no trouble finding sponsors because most of us like old churches and have friends with similar tastes. Even £1 a church will add up pretty quickly. Please ask your sponsors to tick the gift aid box if they wish to do so.

I will lead a group of cyclists with sponsorship forms leaving from the front of GSM at 10:00. Ruth Bridgen will lead a group of walkers who have sponsorship forms leaving from GSM at 11:00. But there is no need to go with either of us. Anyone can join in, recording the churches visited on the sponsorship form and if possible on the sheet in the church visited. For sponsorship forms either see me after church or ring me on 01223 301903, there will be some in the church office or the resourceful can download their forms from www.camcht.uk/ride/.

GSM Roof Appeal and HOPE

Joye Rosenstiel writes:
I have been inspired to raise money for the Great St Mary’s roof appeal and Cambridge Churches Homelessness Project (Hope Cambridge) by the people who have been offered shelter in our beautiful church during cold winter nights. These men often say how they love waking up in GSM, particularly to the sight of the roof, which originally was donated by King Henry VII. On Saturday, 24th September I will be joining the London Challenge Walk, following the route of the London Monopoly board for twenty-six miles. The money I raise will be divided between the homelessness project, for which I volunteer each winter, and our appeal for the south aisle roof which is in need of urgent repair. Please help me raise the necessary funds. You can do so by visiting my crowd-funding appeal at https://crowdfunding.justgiving.com/joye-rostenstiel?utm_id=2&utm_term=xBgdvP6M4
Our concert also features Dvořák’s ninth symphony "From the New World" (Op. 95) composed in 1893 during his visit to the United States. Dvořák was interested in the Native American Music and African-American spirituals.

Upon his arrival in the US, he stated:

"I am convinced that the future music of this country must be founded on what are called Negro melodies. These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition, to be developed in the United States. These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are the folk songs of America and your composers must turn to them."

This remains one of the most important symphonies in the repertoire from the folk tunes in the first movement, the beautiful Cor Anglais solo in the slow movement and the powerful finale that successfully introduces earlier material.

Often linked with Dvořák is the music of Brahms. During the summer of 1880 Brahms composed two of his most famous works, reminiscent of the two faces of the thespian mask. The first of these was the Academic Festival Overture, a playful, rousing medley of student songs, and the other the Tragic Overture. In a letter to a friend, Brahms stated that “one laughs and the other cries.”

Tickets for the concert are £8-£18 from www.adcticketing.com, the GSM gift shop and by e-mailing music@gsm.cam.ac.uk.
LUNCHTIME RECITALS IN SEPTEMBER - 1pm
TUESDAY 6: Choral recital “singing ladies of Ferrara”
TUESDAY 20: Choral recital “Fimmadur”
TUESDAY 27: Choral recital
Trinity Singers, Johannesburg
OPEN CAMBRIDGE
SATURDAY 10: Market Stall Stories’ a celebration of the past, present and future of the market. Guided tours, children’s activities, costumed time travellers and a talk from Mike Petty at 4pm about the market’s history.

SERVICES IN SEPTEMBER
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

Thursdays
9.15am (GSM) Morning Prayer

Sunday 11 September
DEDICATION OF SCULPTURE BY DOUGLAS JEAL at Parish Communion
ALL CHIOIRS

Saturday 24 September
PARISH QUIET DAT AT CLARE PRIORY
THE ACADEMY OF GREAT ST. MARY’S CONCERT Saint-Saens’ Dvořák & Brahms

Sunday 2 October
HARVEST FESTIVAL

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The Editor reserves the right to edit submissions; if revisions required are major, they’ll be run by the author prior to publication.