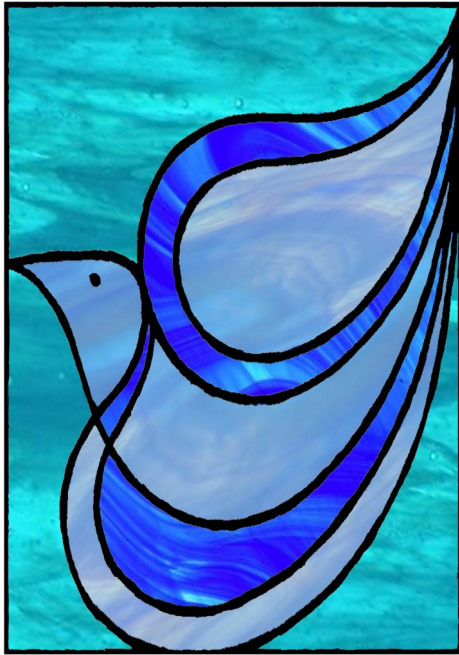


The Voice of St Paul's

February

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A Letter from Rev'd Helen Scanlan

Spring has finally lifted her head from the darkest depths of winter, all be it very quickly as it does not seem long since we dismantled Christmas. But she has arrived with an abundance of new life pushing through the now soft brown earth. Which brings with it rejoicing that the long dark nights are over and we can look forward to seeing familiar faces pottering round the gardens once again, that is—I *could* see them if I cleaned my windows! It is not one of the joys of spring that when the sun shines it shows up all the things we haven't got around to cleaning or dusting. I always find that all is well until we have a visitor to the vicarage, then the sun will beam in through the blinds like God himself pointing out the bits we have missed!

Life itself is a bit like this, isn't it? We spend our time doing the things that we must, like shopping, ironing, cooking, those every day-to-day things we do, not really taking much notice of the things we don't do, like looking after ourselves! Not in the exercise department, though this helps especially to combat stress, but in the spiritual department. That area

where we tend to think going to church once a week will sort everything out. Well, an hour a week barely touches the sides, however good it is to see you. As we approach the season of Lent we need to be reflecting on those things in our lives which we would rather not face, those little habits of ours that get us into all sorts of hot water!

It's good to look at **Psalm 139**, and reflect on our own stubbornness to appreciate that there's more to life, and to our current situation, than meets the eye. Knowing only half the story can be dangerous. Have you ever seen a picture mosaic, where hundreds of tiny photos are making up one larger one? Our individual knowledge and perspective is just one of these pictures – we have no idea of the larger plan that God has lined up for us to play a part in. Psalm 139 is an ode to God's individual knowledge of us – a poem that tries to fathom the unfathomable about God's omniscience. Sometimes we try to act if God's knowledge of us is fleeting, checking in on us before focusing elsewhere on a more worthy cause. God can't fully have an eye on our little sins while there's so much else to worry about: a military conflict across the world, or a marital conflict across the street. This psalm tells us that God is fixated on you and me as individuals. God knows our sitting down and our rising up. God knows our words before they are on our tongue. God searches and knows our hearts, including our grievous ways. God is even described as 'knitting us together' in our Mother's womb. When children are born, you are often given gifts of knitted hats, blankets, cardigans, personally and lovingly made by friends and family. No two hand knitted items are ever the same, even if they are from the same pattern. Created with love, care and attention, each one has its quirks and fascinations. We found that sometimes the ones that looked unusual, or seemed too big or too small, could be the cosiest.

We are all loved, because all were made with love. Let's see the bigger picture. Let's be fully known and fully loved for it.

Yours in Christ Helen

Current Services at St Paul's

Sunday: 10.30 am Service of the Word on Zoom

10.45am Parish Eucharist in church—please remember to wear a mask.

Wednesday: 9am Morning prayer on Zoom

Tuesday & Friday: 8.30pm Compline on Zoom For further details please contact Revd. Helen: 0161 432 1227

Ash Wednesday is on February 17th this year as Easter is early—Sunday 4th April.



No doubt many of you have enjoyed June Rolph's chutney and marmalade over the last few months. June has made two donations from the sales of her produce, at Christmas to Christian Aid and more recently to the charity Computers for Children. Thank you, June! Your hard work is much appreciated in both ways!

A Prayer for our current times:

Dear Father God, You promise to hear us when we come to you in prayer, thank you! We so need your listening ear at this time – and your help, Lord.

Winter always brings challenges, but this winter is exceptional as the effects of the pandemic continue. When we are afraid, or lonely, or grieving, or in despair, help us to trust you and to know that you are with us in the middle of it all, sustaining us. You are not social-distancing, You are very, very close, full of love and compassion.

We pray for our National Health Service and ask for your special strength and protection for all staff. Thank you for the skills you have given to scientists all over the world. Thank you for the hope which the vaccines bring. Most of all thank you for the hope which Jesus brings. Amen

(Daphne Kitching Parish Pump)



The centenary of our War Memorial has just passed—it was unveiled on January 30th 1921. I took these photographs on that day this year, 2021. (Ed.)



'Bronze statue of a soldier with steel helmet and rifle on a stone pedestal. Semicircular stone wall behind with wreathlike devices at the ends. Original inscriptions incised into stone of pedestal. WW2 plaque added on front face, and small additional names plaque on rear. Right hand WW1 plaque has trench scene in relief with helmeted troops beneath the names.' © WMR-10699

There is more information on <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/10699>

John Cassidy (1860 – 1939) was born in Ireland but after studying art in Dublin and Milan he moved to Manchester and lived there for the rest of his life. He is buried in Southern Cemetery. There are many examples of his sculpture in Manchester including in the John Rylands Library and a fine War Memorial in Eccles. A point of interest— he was the sculptor of the statue of the slave trader, Edward Colston, which was pulled down in Bristol last year, in the Black Lives Matter protests.

The Heatons War Memorial is mentioned in Pevsner. 'By John Cassidy, and up to his usual standard. Unveiled 1921. Bronze life-size soldier in battledress on a Portland stone plinth. Cassidy agreed not to use the same design within a thirty mile radius. (*There is one in Colwyn Bay. Ed.*) The layout of the space, a simple arc of stone wall set into the churchyard perimeter with the monument standing in the centre, was designed by Henry Sellers'. *Pevsner Architectural Guides: South East Lancashire & Manchester.*