

From our Minister: Rev Iain McLaren

One of the joys of attending worship in recent weeks is that congregations can now sing together (albeit masked up). I know I am not alone in having missed congregational singing. I know of people who have refrained from returning to worship in a church building because they find it hard to relate to worship without singing. It is worthwhile taking a moment to reflect why the singing of hymns together is such a valued part of our worship tradition.



In the first place, humans are naturally musical creatures. Young children start to sing as soon as they learn to vocalise. In later life some adults lose confidence in their singing ability, often after having been told by someone that they can't sing, but good singing teachers will say that virtually anyone can be taught to sing to a passable standard, especially if singing in concert with others, as Gareth Malone has shown repeatedly in his various choir TV programmes. I have personally been present when John Bell of the Iona Community, working without written music, with no musical accompaniment and with no prior preparation, has taught the words and tune for a new song to a congregation of over a hundred people in a matter of minutes.

Singing together builds community. It is a shared activity that gives people a sense of belonging together. This, of course, is not unique to churches and explains, for example, why football crowds like to sing together. In our church tradition it is often the case that, aside from the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, hymn singing is the only contribution to worship made by ordinary members of the congregation. Without congregational singing, worship can become a 'spectator sport' of watching screens while listening to soloists, readers and preachers.

Singing is an excellent way of communicating information in a memorable format. Long before humans learnt to read and write we were passing on information using rhymes and songs. Preachers should be under no illusion – people will remember the hymns they have chosen long after they have forgotten the sermon. Think about how much of a traditional Christmas nativity scene is derived, not from the Biblical texts, but from the words of our favourite carols. Good hymnwriters are able to convey complex ideas in a few memorable lines. Many people who have difficulty reciting John 3: 16 from memory or articulating a theory of atonement will nevertheless be able to sing confidently, 'To God be the glory, great things he has done! So loved he the world that he gave us his Son, who yielded his life in atonement for sin, and opened the life-gate that all may go in.'

Therefore, to borrow a quote from the Bible's songbook – the Book of Psalms, let us 'praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful' (Psalm 149: 1) – even if we may need to be singing through masks for a little longer yet.

Rev Iain McLaren can be contacted at:
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Day off on Fridays

*Yours in Christ,
Iain*

It is with sadness that we have learned of the death of Elspeth Dick, a member of St Andrew's, on Friday 6 August 2021.



Prayer Requests this week:

Andrew Sutherland, John Hutton, Eileen Attwood,
Geoff Harmsworth, Douglas MacGregor, Pat Brooks,
Fred & Mary Cummings & Family, Rev Iain and his family,
The family of Elspeth Dick



Safeguarding Training - Important for ALL

The Synod Safeguarding Officer, Donna Gordon, will be leading a **Safeguarding** training session at Warden Hill URCC on Saturday 25th September. This will be from 10.30 to 3.00 with coffee and lunch breaks. **ALL Elders and those who work with children and/or vulnerable adults are expected to attend one such Safeguarding Training.**

Please put this date in your diaries.

Contact Julie Jefferies, juliejefferies@googlemail.com or 01242-232892 to book your place, by 10th August or sooner.

"Welcome Party" for Iain. Following postponement from August due to covid restrictions we have now RESCHEDULED this event for **Saturday 4th September. 3.00-6.00pm at St Andrew's.** Please let Janet, Fiona or Brian (as appropriate) know if you want to attend.

Please could you let us know if you are willing to bake some individual cakes for this event.

Tombola and Raffle Prizes Wanted

Lyn Ricketts writes:

I am looking for tombola and raffle prizes for Sue Ryder, Maggie's and The Cobalt Unit please.

If you have anything squirreled away that you have not opened and do not want, I would be delighted to accept them.

Reading Group

The next meeting of the Reading Group will take place on 19th August at 7.30pm at 'Karinya' Swindon Lane, GL50 4PF. The novel is 'Hamnet' by Maggie O'Farrell, winner of the Woman's Prize for Fiction 2020. It is inspired by the son of one of Britain's most famous playwrights and whose name is given to one of the most celebrated plays ever written. There is still time to read the novel before the Meeting.

Anyone interested is most welcome. Phone Mary Cummings on 01242 243216 to find out more.

Heritage Open Day at St Andrew's will be on **11th September**. The Church will be open to the public from 11.00am – 2.00pm. Tony and Sandra Jeans will then be giving a talk entitled 'The House that moved' from 2.30 till 3.30pm.

Stewards are needed – I have had some offers – but would welcome more, to cover an hour at a time. Brochures are now available, printed and on-line. *Janet Kemp*

What's on this week?

- **Repair Café** at St Andrew's, 7th August. From 10.00am.
- **Prayer Time on Tuesdays**
St Andrew's will be open on Tuesday from 11.00 till 12.00 **WE WELCOME ALL**
- **Teatime on Tuesday**
Come and join us for an hour of excellent conversation, 3pm on Zoom.
<https://zoom.us/j/95570544462?pwd=QOVHQQVWuWHB1QmpBd2ZDcEZJNlIXUT09>
ID 955 7054 4462, Passcode 686988 Zoom Host: Bob/June



Happy 80th Birthday to Tony Jeans on Saturday 14th August

Coming Soon

Bible Study/Discussion Group

This group will reconvene in September on **MONDAY's**. Topic to be decided.

Wednesday Social Group meetings are planned to start on **8th September** from 2.00-4.00pm in the Warden Hill URC Centre. 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month.

Further details from Brian Miles 01242-862142.

Qi Gong are delaying reopening till **Thursday 9th September 12noon to 1pm** at St Andrew's.

Further details from Tony Jeans jeanstda@jeanstda.plus.com

Coffee, Chat and Extras



Where? Prestbury URC

When? Every Friday 10.-12am from **September 3rd** (Covid regulations permitting)

What are Extras? Could be any number of things. Come and find out!

Do you make cards/craft items? Would you like a reasonable market place.?

Please contact Julie Jefferies on 232892 or Rose West on 581165 for further details