

Rector's Letter - February 2024

The Reverend Christopher Harrison

The phenomenon of change is a fascinating concept. Are you someone who relishes change? Or do you tend to try to avoid it whenever you can? I suppose it depends on what kind of change is involved. It must be no accident that the phrases 'A change for the better' and 'A change for the worse' roll off the tongue so easily, since changes in our lives happen all the time. In fact, it's hard to imagine a world in which there is no change, since it is an inevitable part of the passage of time and of natural processes.



Certain changes are unavoidable; these are a natural consequence of the human lifecycle as we pass through childhood into adulthood and then into old age. As we look back on our lives, and the changes we have experienced, I wonder which of these are things that have just happened to us, and which are which have resulted from choices we have made? Where does the balance lie? Do we tend just to go with the flow and conform to what is going on around us? Or are we more proactive, setting targets and ambitions for ourselves, perhaps revising these as time passes?

Christian theology and spirituality have, historically, embraced both of these paths. There have been those Christians who have emphasised the spiritual value of accepting one's position in life, and of serving God in the station to which we have been called, including the patient acceptance of suffering and sacrifice. Alongside such people, there have also been those who have argued that if the Kingdom of God is to be realised on earth we need to be energetic in our resistance to evil, hatred, violence and indeed to anything that degrades human beings or God's Creation. In practice, we probably need elements of both paths, and to recognise that the Church needs both kinds of people.

Lent begins this month, with Ash Wednesday falling on 14th February. In some ways the confluence of Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday this year is no bad thing, as it is a reminder us that God's love for us and our love for our neighbour should lie at the heart of our observance of Lent. Another key concept in Lent, however, is that of 'metanoia'. This is the Greek word for repentance, and means 'a change of heart and mind'. Repentance, therefore, means much more than just saying sorry. If we truly repent of the things we have done which are wrong, we undergo a form of inner transformation which gets to the roots of our sin, and in which our hearts and minds actually change in ways that make us more like Christ.

But how does such change happen? I'm sure we are all aware that some aspects of our behaviour, and of our thinking, are harder to change than others. We may seek to be more Christlike, but this doesn't always work out. We seem to be hard wired to think, say and do certain things which we regret, but which don't always respond to our efforts to change. It may be that we find it difficult to forgive those around us; perhaps we tend to rush to judge others negatively, or fail to see that their viewpoint is just as valid as ours. We may find it hard to let go of resentment or a desire for revenge, even though we know that Jesus tells us to love our enemies as well as our friends.

Getting to grips with such things can take a long time. I hope, however, that as you look back on your lives, you can see that changes have happened which have brought you closer to God, perhaps learning from mistakes made and drawing on the example of those close to us and from fellow members of the Church. I hope you can also see that true repentance, metanoia, is a form of personal transformation in which we need to be proactive but in partnership with the loving, nurturing, growth-giving work of the Holy Spirit, who is no less than the love of Christ within us, drawing us ever closer to God. Sometimes such change results from our readiness to go through the doors which God opens for us, as we are called to take risks in faith and learn how to trust God more deeply. If we do this, from time to time we can see more clearly what God's purposes are for us, and the destiny to which we are called.

As I prepare for my final service in the parish on 21st April, I am aware that this is a period of considerable change not just for Eva, myself and our family, but also for St Peter's and All Saints' churches. I do therefore hope and pray that in spite of all the uncertainties and anxieties which many of you will be feeling, as the interregnum draws closer, this will be a fruitful time for each of us as we discern what God has in store for us. As part of this process, the clergy team invite you to join a series of Lent discussion meetings, via Zoom on Thursday evenings, on the theme of 'The God of Change'. These sessions will be an opportunity for us to share our thoughts and experiences in this area; the first will be on Thursday 22nd February, and will be led by myself. Further details will be available shortly. I wish you all every blessing as we approach our time of Lenten prayer, study, and metanoia.

Services in February

Sunday 4th	8.15 am	Holy Communion	St Peter's
	10.30 am	Sung Eucharist	All Saints'
	10.45 am	Sung Eucharist for Candlemas* <i>Missa Brevis Imogen Holst</i> When to the temple <i>Eccard</i> Nunc Dimittis <i>Gustav Holst</i>	St Peter's
	5.00 pm	Holy Communion with prayers for healing	St Peter's
Monday 5th	1.15 pm	Meditation	St Peter's
Tuesday 6th	11.00 am	Holy Communion	All Saints'
	1.15 pm	Holy Communion	St Peter's
Thursday 8th	11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Peter's
Sunday 11th	8.15 am	Holy Communion	St Peter's
	9.45 am	Family Service	St Peter's
	10.30 am	Sung Eucharist	All Saints'
	10.45 am	Sung Eucharist	St Peter's
	3.00 pm	A service of love, life and inclusivity	St Peter's
	5.00 pm	Choral Evensong* <i>Responses Radcliffe</i> <i>Like as the Hart Howells</i>	St Peter's
Monday 12th	1.15 pm	Meditation	St Peter's
Tuesday 13th	11.00 am	Holy Communion	All Saints'
	1.15 pm	Holy Communion	St Peter's
Wednesday 14th Ash Wednesday	12.00 pm	Holy Communion	All Saints'
	7.30 pm	Sung Eucharist* <i>Mass for four voices Byrd</i> <i>In ienjunio et fletu Tallis</i>	St Peter's
Thursday 15th	11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Peter's
Sunday 18th	8.15 am	Holy Communion	St Peter's
	10.30 am	Sung Eucharist	All Saints'
	10.45 am	Sung Eucharist* <i>Holy Communion in G Jackson</i> <i>Ave verum Stephanie Martin</i>	St Peter's
	5.00 pm	Taizé Service	St Peter's
Monday 19th	1.15 pm	Meditation	St Peter's
Tuesday 20th	11.00 am	Holy Communion	All Saints'
	1.15 pm	Holy Communion	St Peter's
Thursday 22nd	11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Peter's
Sunday 25th	8.15 am	Holy Communion	St Peter's
	10.30 am	Sung Eucharist	All Saints'
	10.45 am	Sung Eucharist* <i>Missa Collegium Regale Howells</i> <i>Nolo Mortem Peccatoris Morley</i>	St Peter's
	5.00 pm	Compline*	St Peter's
Monday 26th	1.15 pm	Meditation	St Peter's
Tuesday 27th	11.00 am	Holy Communion	All Saints'
	1.15 pm	Holy Communion	St Peter's
Thursday 29th	11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Peter's

Book of the month

The Bramcote Bookworm

'La Vie' - A year in rural France
John Lewis Stempel

The bookworm has recommended reading the works of JLS twice before: 'The Running Hare' and 'Where Poppies Grow' - both deeply moving accounts of the English Country side albeit from hugely different perspectives, both of which generated positive, personal feedback from readers of this magazine. One reader told me that 'The Running Hare' had solved his Christmas present problems for that year!

In 'La Vie' JLS turns his attention to the other side of the channel writing about his year living in the Charente region to the northwest of Bordeaux. A thousand thanks to the dear Francophile friend who lent me her precious copy before Christmas and so was on hand when, after the festive season, I took to my bed with 'That Cough'. I read 'La Vie' in a day- all 208 joy filled pages. What a luxury to be able to do so, what a wonderful way to deal with the grey December dumps.

John Lewis-Stempel prefers the description of 'countryside writer' to that of 'nature writer' - "I give the view of the countryside from someone who works there." Interestingly, in 'La Vie' he also defines himself as the only 'religious nature writer'. There is always a deep vein of the spiritual in his prose which readers of the Hare and Poppies will already have experienced.

Tim Dee, writing in the Guardian, notes that the 'spark-plug energy' of Lewis-Stempel's pastoral style "comes from being always about the gaps between things: the town and the country, the wild and the tame, the old and the new, the rich and the poor, the sick and the healthy, the cerebral and the manual, the viewer and the participant. It is further charged by being nearly always invoked at the moment of its leaving or its loss."

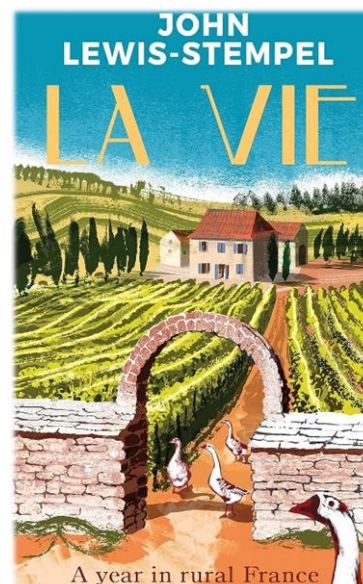
The resumé from the fly leaf of 'La Vie' serves as a taster:

"For many years a farmer in England, John Lewis-Stempel yearned to live in a rural landscape as he did in childhood. He wanted to be self-sufficient, to make his own wine and learn the secrets of truffle farming. Buying an old honey-coloured limestone house with bright blue shutters, the Lewis-Stempel's began their new life. Over that first year, John falls in love with the French countryside and living the good life - or as the French say, La Vie.

The Charente: roofs of red terracotta tiles, bleached-white walls, windows shuttered against the blaring sun. The baker does his rounds in his battered little white van with a hundred warm baguettes in the back, while a cat picks its way past a Romanesque church, the sound of bells skipping across miles of rolling, glorious countryside."

La Vie is divided in to 5 sections: Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter making it a particularly appropriate read for this month. Each season has a delightful illustration indicating the changing seasons and each chapter is headed by the month of the year.

The cover shows the Toulouse geese which are such a delightful part of 'La Vie' and the book ends with a list of: The Birds of La Roche (as seen in the garden and the tow paddocks adjacent to the house. I counted 50!)



Where are my rubber gloves?

A huge thank you to all the wonderful young people at St Peter's who appear on a Sunday morning and help with the job of serving hot drinks and biscuits after the main service - it is much appreciated.



MUSIC AT ST PETER'S NOTTINGHAM

(next to Marks & Spencer)

Concerts start at 11am
and last just under an hour

Coffee and biscuits are served from 10.15am

COFFEE BREAK CONCERTS

Admission by donation on the door, online at
easydonate.org/StPMusic

or text **StPMusic** to **70331** to donate **£3**
(to **70970** for **£5** or to **70191** for **£10**)

Saturday 27th January

Musicians from Luther College (USA)



*including music by
Beethoven, Mozart
and Dvořák*

nottinghamchurches.org

Saturday 3rd February

Zelenka: Missa Sanctae Caeciliae



The Petrus Singers & saraBande

Saturday 10th February

Edyon

duets for bassoon and cello



Saturday 17th February

Organ Music for Lent



Philip Sherratt & Peter Siepmann

Saturday 24th February

Mirabilé Vocal Ensemble

