

Midweek recording at All Saints Boyne Hill for Heritage Weekend

10/9/2020

This weekend is the beginning of Heritage weekend. I have just received my latest newsletter from the National Trust informing me of the wonderful buildings that can be visited during Heritage week. The church of All Saints from where I am offering this recording is a building that has been appreciated more and more as a building of rich heritage. Ken Smith and a number of other parishioners have over the last 3 years worked hard to open the building to offer tours, organ recitals and hospitality. Thanks to a father who used to attend Tiny Saints, by the name of Grant Nabor, we have too a wonderful virtual tour of All Saints Church, the former school which is now our parish centre, the curates houses and the Alms Houses. This virtual tour will be very helpful for this year's Heritage week as with the Covid 19 crisis we are limited in what we can offer.

Yesterday Ken and I met with various people including those from Heritage, The DAC of Oxford Diocese, Cliveden the people charged with looking at re-storing our floor and Roderick our architect of fifteen years. One of the key questions that I personally feel is important when seeking to repair parts of a building that require significant funding is the need to see how the Heritage of a place speaks also of it's importance in the present day to meet the mission objectives. This question has always been of importance but particularly when the World not just Maidenhead or Britain is in the midst of the worst crisis faced certainly in my time. In other words how can we justify the £250,000 plus needed to repair the tiles and indeed the sub-strata that underpins the tiles at a time when as Bishop Steven Croft has said we are encountering people that have experienced bereavement, on-going sickness, emotional issues, the challenges around education, job losses and the fact that we do not know how long this awful pandemic will go on. Add to this the fact that All Saints will lose £25,000 this year alone.

I made it clear when speaking to the people representing the various bodies interested in the heritage of All Saints that it was the religious heritage that was key to George Edmund Street and The Revd William Gresley when the vision began. The values were a beautiful building that would enable people to gather to worship and give thanks to God, education of the young, pastoral care to those in need and housing for women who needed that support. Those needs are still with us. Perhaps in the midst of this crisis they are as significant now as they have ever been. We still run the Alms Houses for four ladies, we still have at the heart of our mission the desire to build relationships with not only our three church schools but also the other schools who look to us for support. We are as part of our mission trying to make contact with families through Tiny Saints and our Young Saints groups and have been developing through our welcome group a way of making people feel a sense of belonging. In other words, it would be great to repair the floor so that not just our generation of baptised Christians can worship and live active Christian lives here at All Saints but future generations of Christians too.

Recent visitors to Heritage week at All Saints have been Teresa and Philip May, local councillors Stuart Carroll and Gurpreet Bhangra, the Vicar of St Mary's, Paddington, an academic from St Philip & St James Oxford and the editor of George Edmund Street a Victorian architect in Berkshire, John Pritchard. They visited because of the heritage but also for community and religious reasons. The councillors said what a wonderful witness to community our summer fete in the quadrangle is, Teresa and Philip May have supported from 2014 the Royal British Legion memorial services in

remembrance of those who gave their lives in the two world wars. The clergy and academics are interested in the heritage of the buildings in the way they spoke of Christian mission.

Alongside politicians and academics though we have over the last twelve months been engaging with Branding interviews. A number of us have been privileged to listen to people speak about how much the church matters. One person said that it's traditional in a good way, welcoming, it's part of the community and it's supportive. It is what a church should be. Another said I understand the need to praise God and gather in his name. To be fed and nurtured by Eucharistic worship of word and the sacrament of bread and wine to go out into the world.

Younger families have said they appreciate Tiny Saints for activities, hospitality and children's worship, the rich level of school involvement, the Salvation Army community carol singing in the quadrangle and the fete. 'You will not find me there week by week but I consider myself a part of the church.'

I think Street and Gresley would have approved. William Gresley was from Brighton and came to All Saints with a strong Tractarian background. He had been influenced by Wagner the incumbent of St Paul's, Brighton. Gresley loved the movement and belief in word and sacrament. As you enter the building you will find the prominence of the pulpit, font and altar and worship to the glory of God. In the surrounding buildings you will see the prominence of education of the young, pastoral care and support for those in need.

Last year the former mayor of Windsor and Maidenhead, Paul Lion, Ken Smith our church warden and myself visited Keble College, Oxford. The college is of course on a grand scale, but you can see some similarities of the building with ours. Keble has a wonderful quadrangle that offers the communal feel that young people still value today at All Saints. In terms of teaching Tractarianism meant tracts of teaching (We have wonderful writings from people like Newman in our Birinus Room) and Dr Pusey one of the great priest/scholars of the movement wrote one of the tracts on the sacraments and the idea that we are the visible body of Christ in the World. Pusey thought of the Eucharist 'as the gate through which the Lord came to take up His habitation in the soul.' (The mind of the Oxford Movement – Owen Chadwick)

Gresley was a hard-working parish priest, an excellent preacher, wore vestments, used incense and sang with pleasure (Something we are missing at this time). Kenneth Leech when speaking about Tractarian priests said of one Brother Neville who served in Dockland London that Neville loved his people. Gresley loved this parish and his desire to see children educated in successful schools was at the fore front of his mission.

Today in the 21st century we are following the Communion model of the church, partaking of the Body of Christ to become his body in the world. Our work in discovering our mission within Partnership in Missional Church has led us to Worship, Education and welcome that leads to belonging. Our worship aims to reflect the richness of the Christian year and challenges us to be a light to the community. We have the visual image of the ripple effect that encourages the idea that kind acts of compassion and courage can ripple out.

Our schools ministry has developed through Open the Book, having welcomers greet schools on their visits to the church, our school governors and advisers, the regular assemblies both live and now recorded, our team of people helping prepare baptism families and our Tiny Saints and Young Saints and Diocesan School Chaplains helping us to offer chaplaincy in schools all point to our desire to educate. The schools are asking us in these challenging times to offer Open the Book virtually, and assemblies both live and recorded.

The Welcome course 'Everybody Welcome' is leading us to think how we can make people feel a sense of belonging. We have a team of people trying to find ways of looking at outdoor church to walk alongside families with the help and guidance of Diocesan youth and children's advisers.

I hope this talk given for Heritage week highlights the need not just to celebrate our history, but to offer a place that proclaims the good news of the Kingdom, continues to teach, baptise and nurture new believers, responds to human need by loving service and seek to transform unjust structures in society. We will as all Christians are charged to do, continue too to safeguard the integrity of creation. Finally, by using your God given provisions of wealth, time and talent we can preserve this building and serve Christ's mission not only for the present but offer hope for the future.

Fr Jeremy

10/09/2020

PS – If you have not already done so please feel free to explore the wonderful 3D Virtual Tour of All Saints which was, as commented above, produced, with hosting organised, by Grant Naber, before he moved away.

The Tour can be found at:- <http://www.allsaintsboynehill.org.uk/welcome-about-all-saints/3d-virtual-tour-all-saints-church/>