



COWLEY ST JOHN  
TWO CHURCHES  
ONE COMMUNITY

# COWLEY ST JOHN PARISH MAGAZINE

**£1.50**

*January 2018*



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- **Main website:** [www.cowleystjohn.co.uk](http://www.cowleystjohn.co.uk)
- **Facebook Group:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/cowleystjohn.parish/>
- **St. Mary & St. John Churchyard Project:**  
[www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk](http://www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk)
- **‘Home’, an experimental Christian Community in Oxford:**  
[www.home-online.org](http://www.home-online.org)
- **Magazine issues:** <http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/parish-magazine>

### **Church Street Addresses:**

- **St. Mary & St. John Church**, Cowley Road, OX4 1UR
- **St Alban the Martyr**, Charles Street, Oxford, OX4 3AH
- **Bartlemas Chapel**, Cowley Road, Oxford, (turn down the lane next to the vicarage at 271 Cowley Road, OX4 2AJ, and you will reach the chapel at the heart of Bartlemas Village).

**Parish Postal Address (Vicarage):** 271 Cowley Road, OX4 2AJ

## REGULAR SERVICES

### Sunday:

- **8:00am** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John
- **9:15am** Sung Eucharist at St. Alban
- **10:45am** Sung Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John
- **6:15pm** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John

### Monday to Friday:

- **8:00am** Morning Prayer at St. Mary & St. John
- **5:00pm** Evening Prayer at St. Mary & St. John

### Wednesday:

- **12:00pm** Silence and Stillness at Bethlehem Chapel, All Saints Convent\* (During warmer months at Bartlemas Chapel).

### Thursday:

- **10:30am** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John

### Friday:

- **9:00am** Said Eucharist at St. Alban

\* All Saints 15A Magdalen Road Oxford OX4 4EN (<http://allsaintssistersofthepoor.co.uk/>)

*If for any reason you are unable to get to church but would like a visit from one of our clergy, please contact us. We could bring Holy Communion or simply come and pray with you.*

## **SOME REGULAR EVENTS IN RICHARD BENSON HALL (Next to St. Mary & St. John Church)**

### **Alice's Mad Hatter Tea Parties:**

Held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month, 3-4:30pm, a friendly place where people who have experienced mental health issues in their lives can relax and just enjoy a cuppa, cake and a chat.

### **A Place to Be:**

Held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month, 12-2pm, a friendly monthly lunch for people with dementia, their family, carers and friends.

### **Marhaba:**

Held on the last Tuesday of the month, 7pm, a collaboration between various Oxford groups that sets up a platform for sharing music between communities.

*To find out about other events, see the notices section in this magazine, visit the Parish website [www.cowleystjohn.co.uk](http://www.cowleystjohn.co.uk) or visit the church.*

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## Visit of Br James Koester, Superior of the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE)



Br James Koester SSJE, the present Superior, will be visiting Cowley St John for the Feast of Candlemas (transferred) on **Sunday 4 February 2018**. He will be preaching at the **9:30am mass at St. Albans**, the **10:45am mass at St. Mary & St. John Church** for the Blessing of Candles, Procession and Sung Eucharist. He will then be guest of honour at 'the Last Lunch of Christmas', a catered sit-down parish lunch in Richard Benson Hall **starting at 12:45 pm**. Tickets can be purchased from the parish clergy, from the parish office or on the parish website:

<http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/candlemas-the-presentation-of-christ-in-the-temple>

# OUR HERITAGE

**By Daniel Emlyn-Jones**

The more I learn about the Oxford Movement, the more impressed I become. For me, the most impressive aspect of this movement is not the beautiful buildings, or the re-expression of an ornate ancient liturgy. It is the fact that the people who led this movement confronted the appalling poverty, disease and lack of education of the time with an amazing level of heroism. Wealthy Victorian London woman Harriet Brownlow Byron could have had a very comfortable life thank you very much, but she saw the appalling poverty around her and answered her call to do something about it by founding the All Saints Sisters of the Poor in 1851. Initially she lived in a house with a few other sisters, some orphans, and a cook with pulmonary tuberculosis, not to mention the corpses of the local poor who had nowhere else to rest. In those days contracting tuberculosis (consumption) could mean a long and particularly unpleasant death. In our parish, The Porch Stepping Stone Centre, St. Johns Home, Helen House and Douglas House all sprung from the work of this order (see page 10 for my conversation with Sr Frances).

Our parish is also the historical home of the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE), founded by Richard Meaux Benson in 1866, whose memorial lies outside the South Porch and whose grave is marked with a large celtic cross in the churchyard (he died on 14th January, 1915 – 102 years ago today if you're reading this on the magazine's publication date). SSJE, known locally as the Cowley Fathers or 'Dads' did vital social work in the area. It's difficult to imagine today, but in Victorian times East Oxford was a major slum. Third world diseases like Cholera killed children in their thousands, and thousands lie buried in the churchyard, their graves unmarked. SSJE now have their home in the US (See page 20 for Fr Graeme's piece on how the SSJE went to America). On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February we will welcome to St. Mary & St. John Church Brother James Koester, Superior General of the society. There will be



Candlemas at 10:45am followed by a sit-down lunch in the Richard Benson Hall. Don't forget to sign up. John Hammock interviewed Br James over skype in December (See page 15).

The Society of St. John the Baptist (the Clewer Sisters), the Sisterhood of the Holy Childhood, the Community of St Peter and the Sisterhood of Compassion have also had important roles to play in East Oxford (see [http://www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk/religious\\_orders.php](http://www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk/religious_orders.php) for more information). The Community of the Sisters of the Love of God still live in the Convent of the Incarnation on Fairacres Road. It is a community dedicated to prayer and their witness includes hospitality, the encouragement of ecumenical dialogue and the publication of short works on prayer and the life of the spirit.

I can't help asking the question, what would the founders of these Anglican orders, the great heroines and heroes of the past, think of us today? Well, I think they'd be very supportive. The great diseases and grinding poverty of the past are now mostly gone in Oxford thank goodness, but there are still plenty of problems to deal with. The Porch Stepping Stone Centre continues to tackle the problem of homelessness (see pages 15 and 36), Helen & Douglas House help children with terminal illness. In these times of catastrophic climate change, our churchyard team maintains our churchyard as an invaluable wildlife corridor. This winter we are a part of the Oxford Winter Night Shelter programme providing warmth and safety for homeless people. We founded 'A Place to Be' which helps those affected by dementia, 'Alice's Mad Hatter Tea Parties' providing a safe space for people with mental health issues, not to mention the 'Marhaba' evenings, and also invaluable work with refugees and their families. It is sometimes easy to mistake change for decline. Of course we aren't the same parish we were one hundred years ago, because the world has utterly changed. But as Br.Koester points out in his interview (page 15), provided we continue to grow closer to God, God will always have a use for us.

## **A CONVERSATION WITH FRANCES DOMINICA, ALL SAINTS SISTER OF THE POOR**

Sister Frances is a member of the All Saints Sisters of the Poor and a familiar face in the congregation at St. Mary & St. John Church. She has been involved in many caring projects, and is the founder of Helen House, the world's first ever children's hospice, and Douglas House, a hospice for people between the ages of 16 and 35. Following our Religious Life Sunday on 3<sup>rd</sup> December: 'Monks or Nuns: Redundant – or Radical,' I met with Sr Frances over a coffee to find out some more about her life, her faith, and her perspective on the religious life.

Sr Frances was born in Inverness, Scotland, and lived in Greenock until she was three and a half, though later the family would relocate to Surrey. In Greenock her grandfather was an elder in the Church of Scotland (a role he had for forty-nine years). He was a man who never talked about God, but lived his faith, and was a great inspiration to Sr Frances. He worked as a lawyer, and was also a Deputy Lieutenant of Renfrewshire. When Sr Frances was made Deputy Lieutenant of Oxfordshire in 2006 it made a nice connection to this pivotal figure in her life.

Sr Frances trained as a Registered Sick Children's Nurse (RSCN) and as a State Registered Nurse (SRN). During her training she was seconded to the Middlesex Hospital, London, to do her General Training. It was there that a man was brought into the hospital with a serious illness and had to stay for six weeks. Sr Frances' curiosity was piqued when a string of nuns and clergy who looked Roman Catholic came in to visit the man, and yet on his chart it said 'Church of England'. Sr Frances asked him about this and it turned out he was an Anglo-Catholic vicar of the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Clerkenwell. Before he was discharged home, he asked Sr Frances to visit him for tea. Initially she didn't, but later she saw him on an outpatient visit and arranged to visit him at the

clergy house. She attended a service at the Church of the Holy Redeemer the next day, and it became what her parents would describe as a 'slippery slope'.

Sr Frances settled into the parish, and one October went with the congregation on a weekend pilgrimage to Walsingham. Walsingham is a village in Norfolk which has the national shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham, a place of pilgrimage since medieval times. At the time, Sr Frances found it all rather over the top, with for example women's heads draped copiously in black lace. On the Sunday, St. Francis's day was celebrated in the parish church at 11am. Sr. Frances was waiting with everyone else at 10:55am for the service to start on the hour. Autumn sunlight was streaming through the windows and the procession was gathering. At that point she had her life mapped out perfectly. She would finish her nursing training, work for an NGO somewhere, meet the perfect man, have lots of children and adopt some more. By 11am and the beginning of mass she knew she would enter the religious life. Sr Frances called this moment a conviction, because this word best describes what happened. She didn't go back to Walsingham for many decades, referring to it with a smile as a 'dangerous place'. In 2016 she was invited to preach there and so returned for the first time, over half a century since her first momentous visit.

Sadly, Sr Frances' parents wouldn't speak to her for the next nine years. Unlike her grandfather, her parents weren't particularly religious, and her mother said it would have been easier if Sr Frances had decided to become a prostitute: it would have been easier to explain at cocktail parties at least! Sr Frances' brother David subsequently decided to become an Anglican priest, so in the end their parents were not going to get away from having religious children! In their old age they too were confirmed.

Sr Frances became a postulant in All Saints Sister of the Poor on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1966, and was initially at a convent near St. Albans. She loved the contemplative aspect of the life there, the silence, the solitude and



*Sr Francis at a children's hospice in Japan*

the corporate prayer (in those days there were seven offices per day). There was also much nursing work to be done in an infirmary, and work with children in a children's home which Sr Frances loved.

The All Saints Sisters of the Poor, founded in 1851, was one of the first five or so Anglo Catholic women's religious communities to grow out of the Oxford Movement. Like the Society of St. John the Evangelist, which was founded in 1866, its goal was to combine the religious life with serving the poor. All Saints was founded by Harriet Brownlow Byron, a wealthy lady who engaged the help of a priest William Upton Richards, of the church of All Saints, Margaret Street in London. Harriet Brownlow Byron began the religious life with three other women and two orphans. The cook was suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. In those days, that area of London was incredibly poor, and many people who died didn't get a proper burial. The sisters had a small mortuary in the house where they could receive the bodies of those too poor to be taken in by undertakers. They were asked to start training nurses at University College Hospital and Florence Nightingale asked for sisters to work with her in the Franco-Prussian war. The Rector of a church in Baltimore asked if he could have sisters to work in his parish. Others were sent to south Africa and to India. By 1900 there were almost three hundred sisters.

Sr Frances took her first vows in 1969 and her final vows (for life) in 1972. In 1974 she was put in charge of new novices as Novice Guardian, and in 1977 was elected Leader – then known as Reverend Mother Superior General, a title which Sr Frances confessed was rather intimidating at the time!

In 1978 Sr Frances was contacted by the mother of Helen, a two-year-old child who was critically ill in hospital, having had surgery in an attempt to remove a brain tumour. Helen was in hospital for six months and during that time Sr. Frances got to know the family very well. At the end of that time Helen's parents were told there was no hope of recovery, and they knew immediately that the place where Helen belonged was at

home. A new baby had been born while Helen was in hospital. Helen needed 24-hour care, 365 days a year, and the family, like so many others, began to experience loneliness, isolation and physical and emotional exhaustion. Three months after Helen moved home, Sr Frances plucked up the courage to ask her parents if she could look after their child for a few days whenever they needed a break. The parents agreed, and Sr Frances became Helen's respite carer, allowing Helen's parents to catch up on sleep, focus on the other children in the family or have a few days away. Sr Frances began to wonder, if it was helpful to this family, were there other families out there who could benefit? Helen House, the world's first children's hospice was born. Later, Douglas House was set up to cater for young people between the ages of 16 and 35 with life-shortening conditions.

As the years passed Sr Frances was thankfully reconciled with her parents. Her mother greatly admired Sr Frances' work with sick children in Helen House, and did very valuable fundraising for the organisation. In their old age Sr Frances' parents even came to live at the convent and later in St. John's Home, which was a wonderful blessing.

When I asked Sr Frances about the future of the religious life, and why it's so unfashionable these days, she said that part of the reason is that people misunderstand what religious life is about. Many people for example misinterpret the vow of poverty as about not having things, when it's more about a simplicity in lifestyle, and about sharing this simplicity with others. Chastity in relationships is incumbent on all Christians and for members of religious communities that includes celibacy. Obedience isn't simply about doing what you're told. It's about reaching a common mind with other members of the Community.

Sr Frances doesn't now work with Helen & Douglas House, but she is still very active. As a Deputy Lieutenant of Oxfordshire among other things she takes her turn at welcoming new British Citizens in County Hall and recently welcomed thirty new British citizens, from twenty-one different countries.

She is President of FACT (Falsely Accused Carers, Teacher and other professionals). Sr Frances was herself falsely accused and this work grew out of that experience.

Sr Frances is also a trustee of the Porch Stepping Stone Centre, which helps homeless people. They have outgrown their current accommodation and are urgently raising £1,500,000 to purchase and renovate a new property. Please give to this appeal urgently. Speak to Sr Frances in church, call the Porch at 01865 728545 or if you use the internet, click on the following link: <http://www.theporch.org.uk/the-porch-appeal.asp>

Many thanks to Sr Frances for sharing!

\*

## **SSJE AND A CONVERSATION WITH Br JAMES KOESTER, SUPERIOR**

**By John Hammock**

The Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE) Monastery is right on the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts, literally steps away from Harvard Square and Harvard University. And yet, you enter into its Guesthouse and you are enveloped by silence and the rhythm of its daily Offices. I remember particularly going once with my Parish priest. On arrival he said that first we just had to sleep. The peace and quiet for him was a blissful opportunity to sleep! I had another idea. I went to my room and the quiet led to reflection, prayer and writing— interrupted by Vespers, by the Eucharist, by the repetitive routine of worship. I was married, with two children. I only lived 25 minutes away by bus. I could have been on another planet.

Once when I worked for Oxfam I went on a silent retreat to Emery House, a guesthouse about 60 miles north of Boston. I stayed in a cottage by myself. And there I was alone—all alone, a real retreat, an oasis of silence and prayer

Silence, Retreats, the daily Office, the Eucharist—a ministry of hospitality that has enriched and helped shape my life.

\*

On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February we will welcome to St. Mary & St. John Church Brother James Koester, Superior of SSJE. There will be Candlemas at 10:45am followed by a sit-down lunch in the Richard Benson Hall. Don't forget to sign up.

Before Christmas, I took the opportunity to interview Br. Koester on the telephone. Here is an edited transcript of the interview:

***Can you tell us something about your vocation?***

*I first encountered SSJE in Ontario at the Canadian House. When I was an undergraduate, I went there a couple of times on retreat. And then, when I was a Divinity student, I went a couple of times. I thought, this kind of looks interesting. Then I served for five years in parish ministry after I was ordained--out on Vancouver Island on the West Coast of British Columbia. By then the Canadian House had closed, and I had started to come down here to the Cambridge (near Boston) House to visit, and I thought well, let's give this a try. So, 30 years later I am still trying.*

*The thing that really got me was the regular praying of the Office and celebrating the Eucharist in community. I know a lot of people who pray the Office every day by themselves. But praying the Office in community is really different. When I went into parish ministry, I was by myself, and this memory of praying every day with other people in*



*community is what drew me here. It is not just praying every day. It is praying every day in **community**.*

### ***How did SSJE get to America?***

*The SSJE went from Oxford to Boston. Father Benson made his first visit to Boston in 1870 and then the Boston House was started in 1871. It was from the Boston House that work in Canada started. It first started by people going up and doing clergy retreats and missions and things like that; but it was in the 1920s that a House was opened in Canada. Then in the 1930's a House was opened in Japan. So, the American work went to Canada and Japan whereas the English work went to India and then South Africa. The India and South Africa houses closed in the 1960s and 1970s, I think. The Japanese House closed in 1974 and the Canadian House closed in 1984.*

*There were 3 people to begin with. Father Benson, Father Grafton and Father O'Neil. Father Benson was English; Father Grafton was American, and Father O'Neil was an Anglo-Irishman. So, the community started in 1866. In 1870-71 Father Grafton went to Boston. I am not quite sure, but it was one or two years later that Father O'Neil went to India. Father O'Neil spent the rest of his rather short life in India.*

### ***Does SSJE have a particular charism (role), such as working with the poor?***

*There is no one thing that the Society has done. It was not "we are going to be a teaching order" or "we are going to work with the poor." Or "we are going to be a hospital order." There was not one thing.*

*There is a wonderful story told about Father Benson. Father Congreve joined the community in 1874. When he was a novice, he went out one Sunday with Father Benson. They were going out in the country about 6 miles and they walked out there for Father Benson to preach an*

*Evensong. And Father Congreve said to Father Benson, "You know, I suppose the purpose of you founding the Community was to train missionaries." And Father Benson said, "No, the purpose was not to train missionaries, but it was to draw men closer to God, and then if God can use them, for God to use them in whatever way God wants to use them."*

*I would say the theme of all of our work is still for ourselves to draw closer to God, and then, helping other people to draw closer to God and then allowing God to do whatever God wants to do.*

*Some of our work has been through spiritual direction, or retreats, or quiet days. Some of that has been working with the poor--like in the neighbourhood of Cowley. We still do all sorts of things. We still have a guesthouse and guest ministry; we still do a fair bit of traveling to retreats and quiet days. Here at the Monastery, we are involved a little bit with the Cathedral's ministry with the poor in Boston, mostly a homeless ministry. We also have Emery House-- our retreat centre 60 miles north of Boston. We partner with the Cathedral for American Thanksgiving. We go down to the Cathedral and help put on Thanksgiving for the homeless community, and things like that.*

### ***How do you see Father Benson's vision today?***

*The vision of religious life for the present and the future is to draw people to God. I would say that that is still Father Benson's vision. Looking at the monastic history in England, England was largely converted or re-converted at different times in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> centuries through monk missionaries. Both from St. Augustine and Canterbury from the south up, and from St. Columba and Iona from the North down. I would say that the role of the religious life in the next decades is going to be much the same. Monasteries are centres of Christian living, where hospitality and teaching and formation and worship go on, in ways that are not possible in parishes: especially in places where parishes are*

*supported by half-time or quarter-time priests or in the smaller communities where you might only see a priest once or twice a month.*

*My sense is that these centres of Christian living, a monastic community or cathedral community, are going to be really important in the future. A Cathedral community is where there are half a dozen canons and where regular worship and teaching and formation are going on every day, much like is going on in a Monastery. The little parish with one priest or a half-time priest just cannot do this. So, these places where worship is going on every day are going to be really important centres of mission and evangelism.*

*I get asked a lot: What can I or what can we do for you? And I say, the most important thing that people can do for monastic communities is pray for the gift of vocations, because we will not be around in 5, 10 or 20 years if people do not come to try out their vocations with us. I think praying for the gift of vocations is really, really important. And I would say it is really important for a parish like Cowley St. John that has two religious communities in its parish bounds, and it has a history of being involved in religious communities. I think that one of the things you should do every Sunday is pray for the gift of vocations to religious communities.*

***We are doing the SSJE Lenten program this year. How do you see this programme?***

*In many ways the SSJE Lenten program comes out of Father Benson's sense of drawing people closer to God and then allowing God to do whatever God will do. The Lenten program is about drawing people closer to Jesus and developing a really personal relationship with Jesus. That sounds dreadfully evangelical; but it is very Father Benson. Father Benson was very passionate about people having a relationship with Jesus. Many of those first generation Oxford movement types, like Father Benson, were actually second-generation products of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*

*evangelical revival. Father Benson's mother was a member of the Clapham sect which was a very evangelical community, in Clapham in London. Lots of these guys, Father Benson being one of them, had come out of that evangelical tradition, of having a real sense of who Jesus is, and then they overlaid that with a real kind of sacramental theology. So, our Lenten program, Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John, is really very Father Benson: inviting people to really come to know Jesus and overlaying it with sacraments.*

Profound thanks to Br. Koester for sharing. We look forward to welcoming him to St. Mary & St. John Church on 4<sup>th</sup> February. There will be Candlemas at 10:45am followed by a sit-down lunch in the Richard Benson Hall. Don't forget to sign up!

\*

## **FROM HERE TO HARVARD: HOW THE COWLEY FATHERS WENT TO AMERICA**

**By Fr Graeme Napier**

The Society of St John the Evangelist, founded here in East Oxford in 1866, today flourishes in a beautiful Neo-Romanesque monastery on Memorial Drive, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, between the Charles River and Harvard University. Professed members of the Society there, the American 'Cowley Fathers', are involved in many ministries in the communities of Harvard, of the greater Boston area, and further afield. The Society has even provided bishops for the Episcopal Church; the most recent being Fr Thomas Shaw SSJE, Bishop of Massachusetts from 1994 until his death in 2014.

But how did ‘our’ Cowley Fathers get there? The answer to this question lies in the story of the foundation of the Society itself. It is often stated, inaccurately, that the Society was “founded by Richard Benson”. It is more accurate to say that it was co-founded by Richard Benson, Simeon O’Neill, and Charles Grafton, who took their vows together on St John the Evangelist’s Day 1866, and lived in community in Marston Street. Charles Grafton was American (indeed, Bostonian) and his part in the foundation and spread of the Society is very significant.

Charles Chapman Grafton (1830-1912), raised in Boston and educated at Harvard, and much influenced by the High Church movements in the USA and the UK, studied for the ordained ministry in the Diocese of Maryland because, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Diocese of Massachusetts was solidly Evangelical in persuasion. William Whittingham, Bishop of Maryland, by contrast, had been trained at General Theological Seminary (founded by the High Church Bishop John Henry Hobart of New York) graduating in 1825 with all the zeal, patristic learning, informed catholic impulses, and sacramental spirituality characteristic of this generation of Episcopal clergy, who preceded (and partly inspired) the Oxford Movement. Grafton served as deacon and then priest in the Diocese of Maryland from 1855. As a priest of the Episcopal Church he was, of course, aware of the establishment of religious houses for men and for women in the USA. Nashotah House, a community of celibate clergy running Christian mission in rural Wisconsin, had been founded in 1842; Valle Crucis, in North Carolina, in 1844; and the Sisters of the Holy Communion in New York in 1852. The Church of England had no religious orders for men in these decades, but a private meeting was held in London in 1865, attended by George Lane Fox and Charles Wood, notable High Church figures, who consulted Edward Pusey and Canon Carter of Clewer, to further the idea. They set their eyes on Richard Benson and on East Oxford.

Charles Grafton went to the UK to discuss his own ideas regarding religious orders for men. He met with Pusey, who sent him to Benson, then Vicar of the large parish of St James, Cowley (the parish was not

divided - into St James and Cowley St John - until 1870). Grafton and Benson, with Simeon O'Neill, together founded the Society of St John the Evangelist. Their very visible presence around the streets of East Oxford earned the members of SSJE the nickname 'Cowley Fathers' or 'Cowley Dads'. The extensive site, now owned by St Stephen's House, on the corner of Marston Street and Iffley Road was the home of the Society from 1868 to 1980.

It is arguable that Benson's aspirations to found such a society would not have met the light of day were it not for the energy, enthusiasm, and knowledge of earlier American experience, which Grafton brought to Oxford.

The Marston Street community grew; but Grafton was to remain here for only four years. In November 1870 he and two other members of the Society moved to Boston, Massachusetts, to set up a house there, as the first movement in the international expansion of the Society. This move was fitting and judiciously planned because Grafton was a Bostonian and understood the ecclesiastical culture and politics of the Diocese of Massachusetts. At about the same time Fr Arthur Hall SSJE was sent from Marston Street to the Society's other newly-acquired American possessions, the House of our Saviour and the Church of the Nativity, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where Fr Hall became Novice Master. This venture, due to conflict with both the bishop and the benefactors, was not to last, and Fr Hall later joined Fr Grafton in Boston.

In 1872 Grafton was called to be (the fourth) Rector of the Church of the Advent in Boston, Massachusetts. 'The Advent', as it was and is commonly known, had been founded in 1844 on High Church principles, and, despite a number of evangelical Bishops of Massachusetts, continued to worship, work, and witness within this expression of Anglicanism. In November 1882 Fr Hall moved to St Clement's, Philadelphia, a church which the Society had been in charge of since 1876. SSJE was thus staffing, and in charge of, two of the leading Anglo-Catholic churches on the East Coast.

Grafton, as did all the professed members of the Society in the USA, owed his allegiance at once to his diocesan bishop and to Fr Benson back in Oxford as the Superior of SSJE. In the eyes of the Bishop of Massachusetts, this was a severe conflict of interest. Grafton then left SSJE, though he remained faithful to his own vows. He also founded other orders in the USA for men (the Congregation of St Benedict) and for women (the Sisters of the Holy Nativity). In 1889 he was called to be Bishop of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, where he lies buried today. It is due to his own family and personal connections with Boston that that city became a locus for SSJE's witness and mission within its very first decade. The Society flourished there, and Fr Benson himself, in later life, spent eight years with his American brothers, working in their 'coloured' mission and teaching classes of ex-slaves in Boston.

The American Province of SSJE gained its independence from the Oxford mother-house in 1914, not long before Fr Benson's death in January 1915. The brothers there were thus free to make decisions about the mission of the community in their own context. The Superior General, Fr Robert Page SSJE, had visited them from Marston Street, to help them deliberate on their thoughts on re-location within Massachusetts. Just as the Marston Street base benefited from its proximity to the University of Oxford so, it was argued, would the Massachusetts house benefit from closer proximity to Harvard. This was made possible when benefactions from Isabella Stewart Gardner and others made possible the purchase of land on Memorial Drive, on the banks of the Charles River at the edge of Harvard's campus, and a new house and chapel were built there in the 1920s. Some of these buildings remain within the present architectural scheme, but the Neo-Romanesque beauty and understated splendour of today's monastery are the work of Ralph Adams Cram, one of the leading American ecclesiastical architects of his day. It was after the Great Depression that work could begin in earnest on this great scheme, with monies becoming available after the death of the parents of Fr Burton SSJE, the then Superior of the American Province.

The fortunes of the American Province were rosier than those of the English and other Provinces in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the monastery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is today the international base of the Society of St John the Evangelist. Br James Koester SSJE, the present Superior, will be visiting Cowley St John for the Feast of Candlemas (transferred) on Sunday 4 February. He will be the guest of honour at the Parish Lunch in Richard Benson Hall that day (see page 7 for more details).

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## **MUSLIM UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

**By Margaret Coombs**

Here in East Oxford we live in a vibrant, multicultural community which calls for friendly appreciation of our Muslim neighbours, whom we meet in the Cowley Road shops or making their way to and from Friday Prayers at the local Mosque.

To further our understanding of Muslim Health and Wellbeing, a fascinating morning conference for about forty people was held at the Friends Meeting House in St Giles, on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017. It was organised by the Revd. Dr Guy Harrison. He is Director of the Oxford Centre for Spirituality and Wellbeing and the Head of Spiritual and Pastoral Care, at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, which runs health care services, including mental health, across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Swindon, Bath and North East Somerset!

It seems helpful to include some key points from The Muslim Brief Guide to understanding “Islam, the Highway to Heaven,” recognising that a short summary can only give a light sketch of a religion followed by 1.6 billion Muslims world-wide. The Leaflet states that “Islam-meaning to surrender, submit and obey, as well as meaning



sincerity and peace- is not a new religion but the same truth that God revealed through all His prophets to all mankind.” It is not just an ‘Arab or Eastern’ religion.’ Islam “calls for belief in only one God, Allah, the God of Abraham, Moses and Jesus, and the acceptance of His last messenger, Muhammad.” Islam states, “Allah is the only Creator and Sustainer of the Universe and upholds belief in the existence of Angels, the Holy Books as revealed to the Prophets, in Fate, the Day of Judgement and Life after Death.” It affirms that “The Qur’an is a complete record of the exact words revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad, which is the principal source of every Muslim’s faith.”

The five pillars of Muslim Life are the Declaration of Faith, Daily Prayers, Charity, Fasting and Pilgrimage. In addition, Muslims believe in “absolute equality and human rights under the law of God. The. Rights and responsibilities of both sexes are equitable and balanced in their totality”<sup>1</sup>.

At the Conference, the Chair, Imam Monawar Hussain emphasised that good care requires informed understanding of different cultures. What do people bring when they come to this country, what are they seeking and what are the taboos? The Revd Charlotte Collins, a Chaplain, suggested that health professionals should listen to the sounds and the heartbeat of a patient’s story, amid the tears and struggles. What does it mean to be a Muslim? Great sensitivity is required in making an assessment of the spiritual care needs of Muslim people and in learning about their relationship with their Mosque. Charlotte draws upon hope, to try to understand a Muslim patient’s sources of hope and inner strength, alongside the causes of the mental distress. Are Muslim women always cared for by female clinicians and nursed by women on a women’s ward? What are their customs and rituals? Do they have access to a quiet space

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<sup>1</sup> Islam The Highway to Heaven, compiled and Published by Oxford Islamic Information ( Da’wah) Centre Int.

for prayer? Are their dietary needs met and can hospitals adapt to the requirements of the Ramadan fast?

She asks what customs and rituals are important to the Muslim patients she meets. What effect do religious beliefs in the Day of Judgement and individual accountability have upon someone admitted to hospital? Some patients feel shut off if they have behaved badly and express a powerful need for forgiveness. Being able to keep up the daily prayers and receive gentle guidance from an Imam to remind them that Allah has complete knowledge and is all merciful may ease their anxieties.

The belief that Allah is in charge of all our destinies requires total submission to His will. Muslim patients believe that illness has a purpose in God's plan. Imam Monawar Hussain said that we are never sent what cannot be endured; we are part of a bigger picture that we cannot see. However, such faith can be troubling if it is not understood by health care professionals. In some strands of Islam there are powerful cultural norms, such as a belief that the patient is possessed by spirits, by a Djinn or Black Magic. Such beliefs can prevent the Muslim patient engaging with mental health services. Instead they look to the Imam to exorcise them, and recite protective prayers. They may seek purification by washing their clothes and bodies. The Imam warned us not to make hasty assumptions. Here the health care Chaplain can work at the interface, endeavouring to engage in respectful dialogue with those who are troubled by receiving hospital treatment. Good mental health practice requires sensitivity to the needs of Muslims in hospital and within the wider Muslim community. Denial of the influence of evil spirits may distress the patient. Professionals should ask the person what they mean by the guilt and to take their need for forgiveness really seriously. It is very important for staff to work with the Imam to find the way forward.

Dr Khadija Rouf, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, offered some reflections on the experiences of South Asian women. Attitudes to mental health are inextricably connected with the development of societies as

well as with family relationships. Viewing mental distress within the particular cultural context will determine what kind of help is sought. Furthermore, traditional healing may restore balance as well as alleviate symptoms. Other influential factors are poverty, overcrowding and lower levels of education as well stigma, vulnerability and social exclusion. Islamophobia breeds unwelcome discrimination, The question is how do we create equity? One size does not fit all.

In the UK, Muslims comprise 2.8% of the population and 6.8% of the population in Oxford. However, there is low take up of mental health services especially by men, who may feel stuck in severe crisis. Other issues may be the impact of fasting on people with chronic conditions, such as anorexia nervosa. Muslims are more likely to express psychological symptoms in bodily terms and make less distinction between mind and body than Western people. Modesty is very important. Professionals need to be sensitive to cultural humility and the nature of Muslim religious practice as they endeavour to check out what is helpful to a patient. We all need to listen, to avoid generalising, as we search for more meaningful, reflective mental health practice.

Our aim should be to enable services to engage in partnership with Muslims. Shame, social stigma, rigid gender roles and fear of ostracism as well as lack of knowledge are the barriers to help for physical as well as mental health conditions, with a consequent loss of wellbeing and safety. Enduring shame and self-criticism affect the more vulnerable women who may have suffered abuse or sexual abuse. We need to encourage self-compassion, particularly among Muslim Asian women, offering non-judgemental understanding.

A Muslim psychiatrist, Dr Abdul-Hameed Latifi stated that compassion is natural. You have to feel compassion in order to do something without any reward. The problem is sharing compassion for shameful behaviour; self-compassion is not for us, it does not fit our role. Women have to cope with everything and keep everything inside. Self-compassion is seen as selfish. In one study participants were aware of

shame and reflected shame as they experienced internal suffering, silence and isolation. Although compassion might help, it is sometimes rejected as being a Western concept. We need to understand local ways of framing and healing distress. This requires specific cultural sensitivity and understanding.

Nurse Humaira Mirtza described Islam's focus on wellbeing. Eating well is important but there are issues of modesty around meal times. Spiritual education is also an issue for women. Professionals need to be aware of Islamic religious practice, such as prayer and fasting, by asking what is comfortable for women. It is important to know where people have come from to find out more about their local cultural origins. Much time has to be spent on translation and interpretation.

Dr Abdul-Hameed Latifi mentioned the psychological language of the Qu'ran, which shows ways of tackling crisis and how to pray for a peaceful self. He noted Freud's link to the Qu'ran through his analysis of the unconscious self and his theory of the three parts to the personality (id, ego, and super-ego: unbridled desires, the personality and the conscience). He stated that Islam was not against medical treatment as it is a command from God that one should seek and find help if needed. However, madness is a big problem for Muslims because of the stigma. He described an acutely depressed man who had avoided seeing his GP because of shame. It was also important for staff to recognise how important ablutions are to Muslims and discussed a case where the nurse had mistaken the washing rituals for obsessive compulsive disorder. He reiterated the need for staff to get help to enable them to assess Muslim patients properly. Eye contact is vital.

Finally, in summing up the morning's talks and discussions in small groups, Imam Mo Patel, said that a window had been opened so that we could all see outwards, a new view of the world. In the shaking of hands and the exchange of glances we could understand the healing nature of religious practice. Like trees we need to be rooted, with branches reaching out, as we take pains to avoid a lack of eye contact or

failing to ask enough relevant questions to gain proper understanding of a patient's diagnosis.

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## HELPING JISELLE

By Daniel Emlyn-Jones



I often stay in Singapore with friends, and dine at the Mercure hotel. My friends are regulars there and over the years have developed friendships with the staff. Jiselle Raquem is a Philippino waitress in her twenties who was working there to make money to send home for her family. In October she was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia, an aggressive blood cancer, and had to return to the Philippines. My friends helped her a great deal at that time. She

needs chemotherapy to stay alive, but it is extremely expensive, and there is no health insurance. As a more permanent solution she needs a bone marrow transplant, but this costs 4000,000 Philippino Pesos which is about £60,000. She has got some money from charities and individuals in the Philippines, but she needs more. Any donations are welcome. I have given £50. If 1200 people do this, she will approach the money she needs.

You can donate by clicking on the GoGetFunding link below and giving via the site. Jiselle tells her story in her own words there too, including how God helped her:

<https://gogetfunding.com/jisellefightagainstcancer/>

Alternatively, you can do a bank transfer. The details are here:

**Bank details: JISELLE RAQUEM, POSB Savings Singapore,  
ACCOUNT # 188-59309-7**



Also, if you can think of any other ways of raising the money she needs, please let me know and spread the word!

£60,000 is small change for some people, and there's something crazy about a world where a person's life has such a price tag...

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*Jiselle arrives home in the Philippines*

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# **!!!CALL FOR A NEW EDITOR!!!**

**By Daniel Emlyn-Jones**

Having been editor of the parish magazine for over a year, I have decided to finish.

I have enjoyed this role immensely and want to thank everyone who has contributed to the magazine, read the magazine, and worked behind the scenes in making the magazine a success.

If you think editing the parish magazine is a role you could do, please do be generous in coming forward and contacting a member of the ministry team. It is an interesting and stimulating role.



# **GLEANINGS: A gathering of random thoughts from various sources**

**By John Purves**

*The meal unshared is food unblest; thou hoardest in vain what love should spend.*

John Greenleaf Whittier

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*My mother made her homely toil and household ways  
An earthly echo of the song of praise.*

John Greenleaf Whittier

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*The rich, who with intention pure  
Amuse themselves to help the poor:  
Loving the gospel ordinance  
All night, to clothe the naked, dance  
To feed the hungry, drink champagne  
And waltz like mad for the insane  
They feel (if they have not been bored)  
The Charity's its own reward.*

George Herbert

\*

*In this world, good and evil interflow  
And wisdom's in the midst of things.*

Anon.



*Angel of God, my guardian dear,  
To whom God's love commits me here,  
Even this day be at my side,  
To light and guard, to rule and guide.*

Anon.

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*We have little control over the twists and turns of our lives. Perhaps our only choices lie within, in our reactions to what we experience.*

Aileen Few

\*

*More have repented speech than silence.*

Anon.

\*

*The soul needs few things, the body many.*

Anon.

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Letter to Lord Fairfax. 1649

*Let righteous hearts wait with patience upon the Lord, to see what end  
He makes of all the confused hurly-burly of the world.*

Gerard Winstanley (A Digger\*)

\* *The Diggers were a group of English protestant radicals, sometimes seen as forerunners of modern anarchists.*

*I believe that what we are called to do as human beings is to open our eyes, to give attention to the mystery that we are and the wonder of the world about us.*

Eric Woods

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## PRAYER CALENDAR: January 2018

**Daily Collect for use during January:** *Almighty and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth: mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, and grant us thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen* (Collect for Epiphany II, Book of Common Prayer).

Mon 1	Circumcision of Christ. New Year's Day
Tue 2	Church Music and Choirs
Wed 3	Teachers
Thur 4	Jurors
Fri 5	Mental Health Services
Sat 6	The Epiphany
<b>Sun 7</b>	<b>Epiphany I</b>
Mon 8	Prisoners and Prison Chaplains
Tue 9	The housebound
Wed 10	The homeless, especially the work of 'The Porch.'
Thur 11	Parents, Grand-parents and Great-Greandparents
Fri 12	Babies and young children

Sat 13	St. Hilary and all students
<b>Sun 14</b>	<b>Epiphany II</b>
Mon 15	Adolescents
Tue 16	Our Churchyard and those who use it
Wed 17	Richard Benson Hall and those who use it
Thur 18	Week of prayer for Christian Unity
Fri 19	Other Christian Denominations in our parish
Sat 20	‘Alice’s Tea Party’ project
<b>Sun 21</b>	<b>Epiphany III</b>
Mon 22	St. John’s Home
Tue 23	‘The Place to be’ project
Wed 24	Helen & Douglas House
Thur 25	Conversion of St. Paul
Fri 26	The bereaved and the work of Cruse Bereavement Care
Sat 27	The homeless and our cold night sleeping provision
<b>Sun 28</b>	<b>Septuagesima</b>
Mon 29	The unemployed
Tue 30	The work of Emmaus charity at Cowley
Wed 31	GPs and local health centres
Thur 1 (Feb)	Our clergy
Fri 2	Candlemas, Presentation of Christ in the Temple

Sat 3	Our Church-wardens and the P.C.C.
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## NOTICES

### **Porch Appeal**

The Porch, a local homeless charity, have outgrown their current accommodation and are urgently raising £1,500,000 to purchase and renovate a new property. Please give to this appeal urgently. Speak to Sr Frances in church, call the Porch at 01865 728545 or if you use the internet, click on the following link: <http://www.theporch.org.uk/the-porch-appeal.asp>

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### **Myanmar's Slow-Burning Genocide of Rohingyas since 1978**

**Speaker:** Maung Zarni, Burmese Human Rights Activist

January 28<sup>th</sup> 2018, 5.30pm, Richard Benson Hall

### **Unicorn Group Meetings (Hilary Term 2018)**

The Unicorn Groups is an Ecumenical group founded by Professor Nicolas Zernov in 1959

**26<sup>th</sup> January:** Revd Canon Dr Emma Percy, Chaplain and Welfare Dean Trinity College Oxford will discuss her book '**Mothering as a Metaphor for Ministry** (2014)'. Emma researches, writes and speaks about theology and mothering, Anglican ministry and the theology of care. She is a committee member of Women and the Church (WATCH) and sits on a National Research Ethics committee as a lay member.

**9th February: Unheard Testimony, Untold Stories: The Representation of Women's Holocaust Experiences'**, Dr Zoë

Waxman is senior research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. She is a Trustee of the Wiener Library, serves on the academic advisory board for the Holocaust Galleries at the Imperial War Museum, and has published widely on the Holocaust, gender, genocide, and sexual abuse. Dr Zoë Waxman will talk about her recently published book 'Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History' One review stated *every Holocaust history is disturbing to read, but by focusing on victims' voices which have traditionally been silenced – those of women – Dr Zoë Waxman's new account is one of the darkest, and most shocking.*

**Friday 23rd February: Post-denominational Protestant Christianity in China** The Venerable Godfrey Stone FRGS. As Archdeacon to the

Bishop of Stafford, Godfrey was a representative of the Diocese of Litchfield in the Anglican province of SEAsia. He has recently re-visited China as part of an official CTBI (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) delegation and British ecumenical charity 'Friends of the Church in China'. As China continues to develop, many new churches are found alongside the enormous amount of other new building all across China. But 'building the church' entails much more than church fabric, and they particularly welcome partnership from outside China in the crucial task of training seminary teachers - who in turn prepare the much-needed next generation of 'pastors' for this growing church.

**Friday 9th March: Immigration Policy and Policy Constructs: The Foreign Criminal Case Study** Dr Melanie Griffiths, Chancellor's

Fellow, University of Birmingham. Melanie is an anthropologist working on new developments in immigration policy and enforcement measures, in the context of Brexit Britain. She was previously an ESRC Future Research Leaders Fellow at the University of Bristol, where she led research examining the family life rights of 'deportable' male migrants. Her DPhil, obtained from the University of Oxford, looked at

the UK's asylum and immigration detention systems, focusing on Oxford. She is a longstanding trustee at the Oxford-based charity, Asylum Welcome.

**Particulars of Unicorn Group Meetings:** All Meetings are held in **The House of St. Gregory and St. Macrina, 1 Canterbury Road, Oxford.**

We welcome everyone from 12.30 p.m. when tea and coffee are available to drink with your own packed lunch before the talk begins at 1.00 p.m. Discussion follows the speaker and the meeting closes at 2.00 p.m. Please make this programme known to any who may be interested. Our meetings are open to all and no booking is required. Donations to cover expenses are welcome. For queries contact Convenors Judith Baker 07981345125, Ann Stedman 01865 559179

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## THE FRONT COVER

On the front cover is a photograph taken by Michael and Janet McCrae of the churchyard on 10<sup>th</sup> December, the second Sunday of Advent, when for the first time this winter it snowed in Oxford.

## NEXT ISSUE

Many thanks to all who contributed to and read this issue. Many thanks also to everyone who worked so hard printing, distributing and uploading this issue.

The deadline for the next issue is *Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January, Midnight*. The deadline for submissions is always midnight on the last Sunday of the Month, and publication on the first Sunday of the month. Please put handwritten submissions in the Cowley St. John Parish Magazine pigeon hole by the St. Mary & St. John back door.

**The ministry team are currently on the lookout for a new editor. In the meantime please send submissions to Father Phil (contact on page 2).**

Soft copies of the Parish Magazine can be found at:

<http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/parish-magazine>