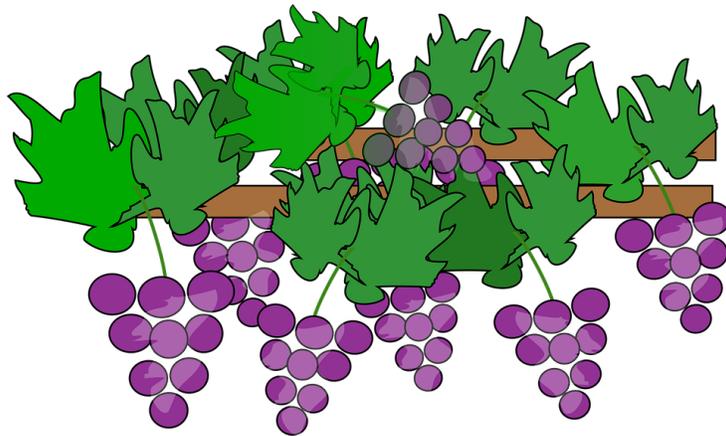


GRAPEVINE

WINTER EDITION 2020



St. George's Anglican
Episcopal Church

Nuñez de Balboa, 43
28001 Madrid

(Metro VELAZQUEZ - Line 4)

SERVICES

Sundays	08:30 am	Holy Communion
	10:00 am	Family Eucharist
	10:00 am	Godly Play (Sunday School)
	11:30 am	Sung Eucharist
	11:30 am	Sunday School (as announced)
Fifth Sundays	08:30 am	Holy Communion
	11:30 am	United Service
		No Sunday Schools
Wednesdays	19:30 pm	Evening Prayer
Fridays	10:00 am	Holy Communion

GET IN TOUCH

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A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE BY **OUR BISHOP ROBERT INNES**

During August last year, I was fortunate to take part in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and to see, again, the places associated with the life of Jesus Christ. Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, is now a sprawling Arab town but in the first century it was only a village of perhaps 500 people. Capernaum and the places around Lake Galilee have retained their peacefulness and beauty over the centuries. And Bethlehem where Jesus was born, and which was once the 'little town' spoken of in the Christmas Carol, now houses the large 'Church of the Nativity' built by Constantine, a bewildering array of gift shops and the terrible and much graffitied wall that separates Palestinians from Jews.

To visit these sites is to be reminded that Jesus was born in a physical place and time. His parents had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register in a Roman census. The Bethlehem 'inn' described by St. Luke would have been a large room in which visitors would have unrolled their sleeping mats. Despite St. Luke's comments, the room at the inn would be unlikely to have been completely full, as you could always squeeze in another body. But a crowded hostel floor was no place for a young woman about to give birth. So it seems the innkeeper – far from being the grumpy character that he has become in our infant nativities – found Mary somewhere more decent, in all likelihood in his own family's cave. Caves made good homes, as they stayed cool in the summer and relatively warm in the winter.

At the 'Church of the Nativity' you can visit the cave where, by tradition, the birth took place. It appears that Mary gave birth in the relative private part of the cave allocated to the animals. Luke tells us that Mary placed her newborn baby in a manger. The only ancient Near Eastern manger I have seen was used both as a reservoir for water as well as a being a feeding trough. And it was made of stone. Attending to the details of Mary's circumstances perhaps helps us to ponder again the earthy reality of the Saviour's birth. Jesus was born in a cave, surrounded by animals, and the newborn baby was laid in an elevated stone basin intended for the nourishment of the animals.

St. John reflects that 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth'. The divine Word is enfleshed, puts on humanity, in an utterly physical and natural manner. Yet this baby embodies the logos, the Word of

God. The divine Word takes flesh. The invisible, transcendent second person of the divine Trinity speaks into our human existence. God's speech is known in the life of this human person, and if we want to know how God speaks we are directed to Jesus. There is an integrity between the life and actions of Jesus, and the word and the will of the eternal God. This birth is an extraordinary divine 'speech-event'.

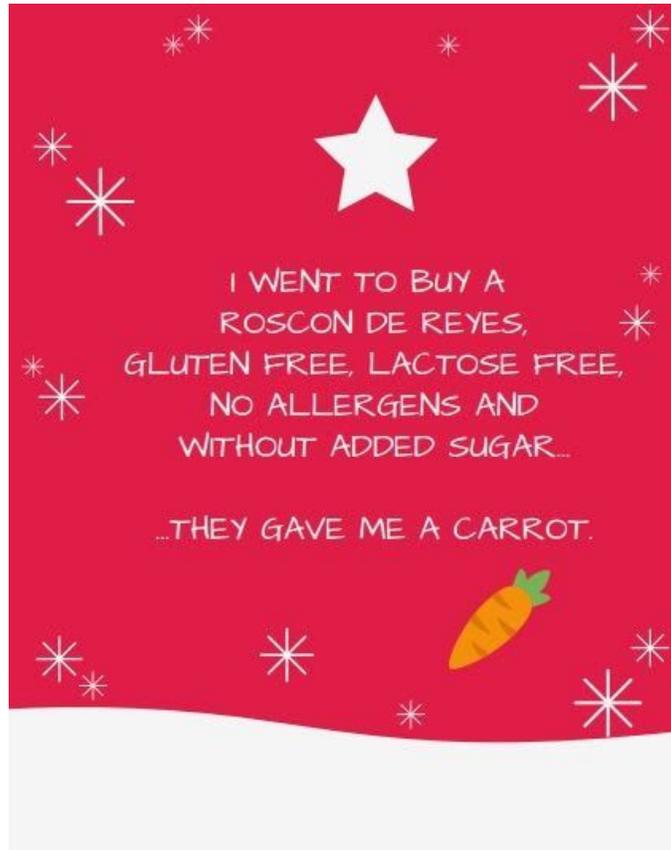
In our own way, speech and communication are as powerful as they ever were. Words are used to influence and persuade, to heal or to harm, to encourage or undermine, to nurture hope or generate fear. With the internet and social media the whole world now feels like one global speech community with a myriad of voices vying for attention, prominence and influence. What is so frequently lacking is a consonance between what is spoken and the physicality of real people. Disembodied voices with anonymous names or email addresses offer comment without responsibility. And public figures whose image has been created by marketing consultants deliver messages massaged by spin doctors that seem unconnected with their own personal histories. As a result we experience ourselves caught up in powerful communication networks where we can't easily distinguish truth from lies and struggle to find firm foundations for trust in what we are hearing.

Words are precious and powerful – sacred even; if we trace them back to the divine Word. The event of Christmas invites us to model our lives and our speech on the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, rather than be fashioned by the powerful networks of discourse swirling around us. Addressing Christians at Ephesus, the second century Father of the Church Ignatius wrote: “Pray without ceasing on behalf of other people. For there is in them hope of repentance that they may attain to God. See, then, that they be instructed by your works, if in no other way. Be meek in response to their wrath, humble in opposition to their boasting; in contrast to their error be steadfast in the faith, and for their cruelty manifest your gentleness. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us be found their brethren in all kindness”.

Faithfulness or trustworthiness, humility, gentleness and kindness remain the hallmarks of Christ-like communication. So amongst all the Christmas gifts, we prepare to celebrate the supreme gift – God's greatest ever gift to the world. It is the gift of a person full of grace – of loveliness, goodness, graciousness. And this is a gift, a person, full of truth – reality, integrity, trustworthiness. In fragile flesh he comes and dwells, being born in a cave

amongst the animals, laid in a manger. God who is outside space and time speaks into human reality to transform it from within. Wherever you live in our European diocese, I wish each of you and your families a very happy Christmas. And I hope that during 2020, whatever the year ahead brings, God will irradiate your lives with his presence and his peace. +Robert Gibraltar in Europe





Contributed by Anne Albritton



We wish all our readers a wonderful year!

THE EIGHT BEATITUDES OF JESUS

*Blessed are those who lack spirit,
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*



*Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall receive comfort.*



*Blessed are those who are humble,
for they shall inherit the earth's true rewards.*



*Blessed are those who truly long to be right,
for they shall be satisfied.*



*Blessed are those who show mercy,
for they shall obtain mercy.*



*Blessed are the pure of heart,
for they shall see God.*



*Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called the children of God.*



*Blessed are those who are persecuted and reviled for My sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Adapted from the Gospel of St. Matthew 5 vv 3-10.

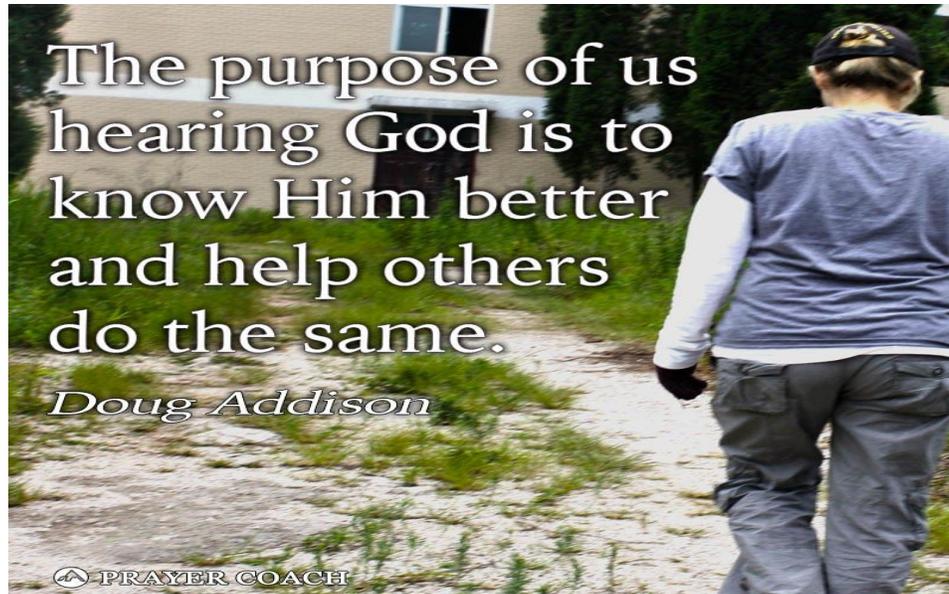


How to hear from God by Solomon Chidi

Part Two

(Written in answer to the many enquiries I have received as Ordinand from Christians, both Anglican and of other denominations on how to hear God. Does God still speak to us today as in the days of the Prophets & Apostles?)

If so, is it possible to hear from Him? And what are the necessary steps to take?



By Prophecy

God speaks to us through the word of prophecy; either directly through our own lips or through someone else. It can come as 'foretelling', I mean to predict what will take place in the future or what happened in the past, it can also come as 'forth-telling', I mean inspirational preaching, sermons, teachings, bible expositions in groups, pastoral care and so on.

The advantage:

Prophecy builds up, reprovess, exhorts and corrects errors (1Cor 14)

The disadvantage:

Prophecy can easily abuse when the congregation are not mature like in Corinth and evil spirits can make one prophesize too (Acts 16:16-18)

Circumstances:

God speaks to people through circumstances. He has given signs or omens as a means of answer as He did to Gideon (Jdg 6:36-40, 1Sam 14:8-10). You can ask God to speak to you through circumstances but you need to have absolute faith and trust in God.

The Bible

The Bible remains the most authentic way to hear from God because all scriptures were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

What measures can we take to hear from God?

1 Silence: we need to be quiet before God after our prayers and quiet time. Our quiet should be at a particular time and if possible let it be up to 1 hour or more.

2 We should not expect God to speak to us in a particular way because we can't put God in a box.

3 We need to live a holy and obedient life so that the Holy Spirit will not abandon us like Saul (1 Samuel 28:6). God refused to speak to Saul by dreams, urim and prophets. These are few examples but you can still hear the voice of God through Christian hymns, songs, poetry, literature, liturgy, pastoral care, counselling sermons, group discussions, films and nature.

Finally, we can know that hearing from God is not as difficult as many of us had thought.



Climate change: A topic for Christians? by Rainer Schmidt

Part 2

In the previous issue of “Grapevine” I summarized the *greenhouse effect* mechanism which underlies global warming from a scientific point of view. In this second part, I want to focus on the different positions in the debate about climate change and the role of the Christian church. That the mechanism of the *greenhouse effect* causes global warming creates no doubt among scientists, but some climate change sceptics do cast doubt on these scientific findings, and some even criticize the entire scientific process.

As a scientist myself, I have confidence in the scientific process as the best option available to humanity to gather knowledge and make judgements on matters such as climate change. I do, however, find it important to be critical and consider the arguments raised, from all parties in any scientific discussion, including criticism of the scientific process itself.

The problem here is that climate change sceptics usually exclude themselves from any scientific discussion right from the start by refusing to consider scientific arguments and by rejecting the validity of the scientific process as a whole. I believe this attitude comes about because climate change sceptics have no other choice, to persist with their views, but to criticize, or even better, completely ignore the entire scientific method. This method has come up with some very clear messages about climate change. It is, beyond doubt, caused by human activity. Some doubt might be cast on certain scientific publications due to an imperfect scientific process, but the phenomenon of human-made climate change has been confirmed by hundreds if not thousands of scientific publications and is regarded as fully established in scientific literature, leaving no room for scientific discussion. This is why climate change sceptics usually refrain from scientific discussion and criticize or ignore it entirely.

So what is the stand of the Christian church on the discussion about climate change? In the case of Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church, the message could not be any clearer. On September 23rd 2019, he addressed the UN Climate Action Summit in New York in a video message, insisting that “It is necessary to ask whether there is a real political will to allocate greater human, financial and technological resources to mitigate the negative

effects of climate change and to help the poorest and most vulnerable populations, who suffer the most. Climate change is related to issues of ethics, equity and social justice and connected to an evident human, ethical and social degradation, which forces us to think about the meaning of our models of consumption and production". The Church of England also has a clear message on the issue: "We believe that responding to climate change is an essential part of our responsibility to safeguard God's creation".

In fact, most Christian churches have a similar stand on climate change, emphasizing the need to reconsider our place in God's creation. One of the few exceptions is the Evangelical church in the United States, which officially denies that climate change exists. According to political analysts this church's position is motivated politically though, because there is a "seemingly unbreakable bond between evangelicals and political Conservatism". In fact, most evangelicals believe that "God has the whole world in his hands" and would protect us from any possible harm including from climate change.

This standpoint of the Evangelical church in the United States, in contrast to the clear messages of other church leaders, demonstrates that the rift between climate change sceptics and climate activists also exists between Christian churches.

Therefore, I believe that every Christian needs to answer the question for him or herself: "Should we, as devoted Christians, take a stand on this topic?". My personal answer to this question is a clear yes: There are still a considerable number of people out there who do not recognize that human kind is about to seriously harm God's creation. It is necessary to talk to those people and to enunciate the scientific facts openly and repeatedly. For me it cannot be a Christian attitude to watch silently as the climate on our planet goes out of control. I believe climate change is a massive challenge to all humankind to safeguard God's creation and our own habitat. Without any action against climate change the temperatures on Earth will continuously rise, until large parts of the planet become inhabitable. The economic, social, ethical and spiritual consequences of this being allowed to happen are just too horrible to imagine. I believe all humans should keep faith in our ability to act in order to safeguard god's creation. However, in order to at least maintain our current high living standards, we must act now to preserve the benefits of advanced human civilization for future generations.

Outreach by Jenifer Effer

Before Christmas, St. George's received a request for children's books from two young American volunteers working in Malawi. The call for books went out and friends of St. George's - the International Newcomers Club etc. responded very generously...



On December 31st, 2019, Sasha and Ryan arrived with their rucksacks and loaded up as many books as they could carry. They still managed to pose cheerfully for a photo under the fig tree! They are working in a primary school attached to the Anglican church on a Lake Malawi island where there are few books or other resources. They were only sorry not to be able to carry more, as they had wangled a special weight allowance from the airline.

Unfortunately, when they get off the bus at the other end of their journey, they will then have to take the ferry and go by foot to get to the school - carrying everything on their backs! They plan to send photos of the children reading and looking at the books from Malawi soon. We wish them well!

THE CHURCH COUNCIL

Chairperson	Jenny Effer
Church Wardens	Anne Cole, Rebecca Rico Irwin
Diocesan Synod Rep and Ferede Secretary	Celia Paterson
Synod Representatives	Elizabeth Pacey, Jenny Effer
Honorary Treasurer	Karen Mullins
Church Council Secretary	Adam Hill

ELECTED MEMBERS

Church Council	Patricia De Juanes Iain Deuchar Diana Grayland Angela Irwin Adam Hill Melissa Pearce Carol Skinner Gillian Trotter-Park
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OTHER APPOINTMENTS

Administration Officer	Liz Mason
Church Flowers	Louise Bueno
Director of Music And Organist	Stephen Knight
Deputy Organist	Diana Davies Burr
Safeguarding Officer	Melissa Pearce
Data Protection Officer	Anne Cole

FORTHCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS

Friday 31st January 2020 - Quiz & Curry Night!

Make up a team of 6 and come and test your knowledge while enjoying a tasty home-made curry. 20:00h in the Church Hall. 12€ per person, Bar serving wine, beer and soft drinks. We have the great Quizmaster, Richard Hunter so come along and have a go!

Friday 14th February 2020 - Yeats Evening!

Come and enjoy a Poetry Recital of Yeats and other favourite poets. 20:00h in the Church hall. 5€ per person, Bar serving wine, beer, soft drinks and sandwiches.

Saturday 21st March 2020 - Jumble Sale and Book Sale!

Lots of bargains to be found in good quality second hand clothes, books, toys, bric a brac and much more. Doors open at 11:00h until 14:00h.

For all enquiries and reservations, please call Liz Mason. Office telephone number 91 576 5109 or email info@stgeorgesmadrid.com

THE GRAPEVINE

Our church magazine is entirely made up of stories, messages and thoughts from our congregation, friends and helpers of St. George's. A big thank you to all of those who have contributed!

If you have a written article you would like published in our magazine or if you would like to write for future editions of Grapevine, please get in touch with our Editor.

Grapevine Church Magazine Editor

Iain Deuchar

iaindeuchar@live.com



We hope you have enjoyed reading Grapevine and we look forward to the next Spring edition!

