

ST. MARTIN'S MONTHLY

October 2021



AMWSS

50p

St Martin's Church, Hale Gardens, London W3 9SQ

(Registered charity no. 1132976)

www.stmartinswestacton.co.uk

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The Vicar is available for consultation and enquiries by appointment.
Please ring the Parish Office.

Articles for **next month's** magazine should be sent to

The Parish Office (email: stmartins@stmartinswestacton.com)

Please title your email 'November Magazine' in the subject heading

They should reach the Editor by 20 October.

The November magazine will be on sale by 31 October.

Harvesting our gifts

Here at St Martin's, October has always been associated with thanksgiving. We start the month with our Harvest Lunch on Sun 3 October; this is an opportunity to thank God for all His gifts to us and to give thanks especially for the good food which we enjoy.

We are particularly grateful for all the excellent produce which is available to us in our local shops, for the hard work and dedication of those who grow and distribute the crops both in the UK and throughout the world. We are reminded that climate change is already having a major effect on farming practices. 'Unusual' rainfall patterns, from drought to torrential flooding, and extreme temperatures, are becoming increasingly frequent, meaning that farmers worldwide are having to rethink their planting to produce viable crops.

This is especially true across the continent of Africa, where the most extreme changes are being felt most keenly – here at St Martin's, we have longstanding associations with Malawi, a country where climate change is likely to make farming even more difficult than before. We keep all farmers and providers in our prayers at this harvest time.

As usual, St Martin's harvest gifts will go to the local Women's Refuge, which is a safe place for women and children who are fleeing from domestic violence. We also mark World Homelessness Day on 10 October.

This year, Ealing Churches Night Shelter plans to reopen the emergency dormitory-style accommodation which is provided for rough sleepers in churches around the borough. As we look at the plight of rough sleepers, we are reminded that there are thousands of others, the so-called "hidden homeless", who live in temporary accommodation, those who "sofa-surf", those who lack the security of a settled place to live and sleep. We are grateful to God for all His gifts to us, as we seek to share His love with others. As the hymn puts it, we thank God for

“strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow”, but this is only possible if we make a practical effort to worship God and to care for others.

St Martin’s is fortunate to have many young families in our congregation and the Sunday School is now able to reopen for our children who can have separate lessons during the morning service. We are really fortunate to have PJ as our youth worker who will be helping to develop this important role with our young people.

Did you know that our Brownies and Guides have been meeting in person for the last six months? This is all thanks to their leader, Jennifer, who has been working hard so that the girls can enjoy fun together safely, whilst also helping to serve others. They have made regular collections of toiletries for the Women’s Refuge and have also been out in the local streets and parks collecting litter.

At a recent discussion group meeting, we thought about the meaning of vocation. We concluded that this means that we *all* have a vocation to love and serve God in all our activities. This means that as Christians we are especially aware of God’s gifts to us and that we seek to show God’s love to others. This year we are delighted to have two choirs to lead us in our worship and I know that we are all getting great pleasure from singing together. If there are others who would like to join the junior or senior choirs, or to play a musical instrument in church, I know that Becky would be delighted to talk to them.

This Autumn, as we meet in person once again, we have new opportunities to share friendship and our many resources with others who are in need.

Dr Margaret Jones, Lay Reader

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise Him.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)



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UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS

Sat 2 Oct: **10-12.00 - Japanese Café** in the Church
- stalls and refreshments

Sat 2 Oct: **Ealing Citizens' Community Walk**
through Acton: citizens are organising a walk through West, Central, and South Acton as part of our preparations for the local elections in May next year. As we walk, we will pay attention to what we see, and think about the local issues that we want to ask our candidates to address if elected to Ealing Council next May. It's also a great opportunity to get to know people from the other citizens' member-institutions in Acton (Acton Mosque, St Martin's, St. Mary's and All Saints Churches, etc.). We start with refreshments available here at **10:45am at St. Martin's Church**. We will leave the Church promptly at 11am, and should finish around midday at All Saints Church, Bollo Bridge Road W3 8AX.

Sun 3 Oct: **8am – Holy Communion** (Book of Common Prayer)

10am – All Age Harvest Festival Service. A 'non communion' service with the junior choir leading the singing. Food donations will be given to the Women's Refuge, who would particularly value store cupboard items (like tinned food). There is also always a need for kitchen utensils: saucepans, crockery (plates, bowls and mugs) and cutlery. There will be a 'bring and share' Harvest Lunch in Church which will start at 12.00 noon. Bring some food that others

could share, eg. casserole or salad, with an ingredients list for those with dietary issues. There is a sign-up sheet in the Church.

6.30pm – Evening Prayer on Zoom

Sun 10 Oct: **8am – Holy Communion** (Book of Common Prayer)

10am – Holy Communion – (Common Worship) with Baptism Service. Junior Church

6.30pm – Evening Prayer on Zoom

Sun 17 Oct: **8am – Holy Communion** (Book of Common Prayer)

10am – Holy Communion – (Common Worship). Junior Church

6.30pm – Evening Prayer on Zoom

Sun 24 Oct: **Bible Sunday**

8am – Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

10am – Holy Communion – (Common Worship). Junior Church

6.30pm – Taizé Service in Church





Celebrating, come rain or shine!

On Sunday 19 September, St Martin's Church held a 'Celebration Sunday'. This was to celebrate coming back as a community after lockdown. It involved a Communion service at 10am with a guest preacher, The Venerable Catherine Pickford, Archdeacon of Northolt. She talked about the trials of lockdown and the opportunities of coming back together.

After the service, during refreshments, we were treated to a cultural experience: exquisite Japanese music kindly provided by our friends in the Japanese Anglican Church. The Celebration Sunday lunch was scheduled to follow outside at 12 noon, but the inclement weather meant we had to rapidly bring lunch into the body of the Church. Once relocated out of the rain, lunch was delicious, and our enjoyment of the event was only enhanced by the collective action required to get it all inside – a spontaneous act of community spirit!

It was a great social event - there were family games and activities in the hall, including a bouncy castle, for our younger folk – and people stayed on after the meal, talking to each other and enjoying being together again, face to face. 'Convivial' is the word that comes to mind, which is an

important part of community life at St Martins. Let there be many more such occasions!

My thanks go to the catering team (Camilla, Tara, Shelley, Liz and Phil) for wonderful food and drink; to our Japanese friends for the music and particularly to Yuki Johnson for organising it; to our wonderful Choir and musicians (especially for Becky Stockland, our Choir Director); thanks to PJ And Rev Bryony for organising the family activities; thank you to those who very generously donated raffle prizes; and lastly thanks to all those who helped in many other ways, including the spontaneously-organised furniture removers!

With blessings for the future,

Rev Julia Palmer



With thanks to Camilla and Rev Bryony for sharing these images

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Hallowe'en...

Many Christians steer away from any 'celebration' of Hallowe'en. Some ignore it completely, or dismiss the festival as a recent American import. Others may hold 'rainbow parties' or 'light parties' as a concession to the 'holiday season' instead, and try to counteract the seemingly perverse (and apparently un-Christian) focus on darkness, evil, death, witchcraft, outsized arachnids and all other things best left to horror movies.

However, All Souls' Day and Hallowe'en on 31 October, and All Saints' Day (or All Hallows' Day) on November 1 are Christian festivals. They were instigated officially by Pope Gregory IV in

the year 835AD, and the celebration originates very fundamentally in these islands - in Ireland and the British Isles. Only the easy-to-carve giant orange pumpkin, the candy-corn sweets and the 'rampant commercialism' of a modern Hallowe'en derive from the US. It was Irish and Scottish immigrants who took Hallowe'en to the US and Canada, not the other way round!

The very early Christian Church recognised that the Autumn Equinox (that crucial point of the agricultural year when harvests are in, animals are heading for enclosure or slaughter, and meat and fruit must be preserved to last over Winter) had to be given a Christian focus with a strong message of thanksgiving for God's bounty over the Summer. There was a strong emphasis on the intercession of Saints and the power of prayer to keep people safe and focused on the future throughout Winter, as an alternative to the pagan focus on 'the dying Sun', death and fire.

The exemplary and virtuous Christian dead - the Saints and martyrs - took over from pagan ancestors as the focus for prayers of intercession, and the concept of praying for Souls struggling in Purgatory overtook from propitiating vengeful deities. The Church didn't deny that malevolent or unquiet spirits might be abroad, but prayer was the most appropriate response, along with light and constant vigilance!

The 'Celtic' pagan traditions connected to the death of Summer remained strongest in those areas where the Roman invasion and occupation, and later Anglo-Saxon and Viking influences, had been least pervasive. Here, the 'Celtic Church' had for centuries already accommodated older traditions as having a value, or a new message in a Christian context. So, for instance, a 'pagan' site where sacred objects were thrown into water to appease deities or communicate with ancestors became adopted as a place for baptism and a celebration of 'dying to sin' and taking on a new life.

There had to be an equally attractive and relevant alternative to the lingering practices connected to the most powerful and widely celebrated pre-Christian festival of all the 'quarterly' (solstice and equinox) pagan festivals.

The Irish called the pagan festival Samhain, the Gaelic-speaking Scots called it Samhuinn – essentially ‘end of Summer’ in Gaelic - and the Manx name was Sauin. The Welsh name was Nos Calan Gaeaf (or Noson Galan Gaeaf) and in Breton it was Kala Goanv - both meaning ‘the night before the first day of Winter’. In all cases, however, it marked a liminal point in the year, a misty moment on the cusp of change – in Welsh, such a hovering between light and dark was an ‘ysbrydnos’ or ‘spirit night’. Summer dies to Winter, nature decays, and all lives hang in the balance. The survival of the community depends on the success of the harvest and the severity of the oncoming Winter, and ancestors are called to mind – they might seem to ‘walk’ abroad, or even return to their ancestral homes to make their presences felt. People had a real desire to predict the future as they faced cold barren months with minimal daylight, and vulnerable children needed special protection from the elements, from evil influences, from becoming lost in the absolute darkness of a rural Winter, and from disease.

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'The Martyrology of Oengus', which was written in the early 9thC by Irish monks, describes fasting and all-night vigils being held over the night of Hallowe'en, in preparation for the feasting the next day but also to keep people from being out and about on a night when 'unquiet' souls of the dead were expected to return to the family home, evil spirits were abroad, dangerous mists and fogs lingered, and people were advised not to travel alone.

To keep the people awake and vigilant overnight, and to accommodate the ancient tradition of 'predicting the future' at this time of year, games involving chance or tokens became a traditional part of a Christian festival. The game of 'fuarag' (Scots Gaelic), which involved hiding tokens in big bowls of potage/porridge (or, in our house, mashed potato!), derives from this 'divining' tradition – a button for a bachelor, a thimble for an Old Maid, a ring for a marriage, a bean for the spendthrift, etc. 'Bobbing for apples' – a stored fruit that can resemble a wizened head bouncing unpredictably in water – that ticks a lot of ancient symbolic boxes! 'Snapdragon', or picking brandy-soaked raisins out of a flaming mound, is both a game of chance and a fire-themed throwback to Samhain fire ceremonies. Dressing as the dead was believed to honour and keep them 'in mind' and give their soul rest; they weren't forgotten and were being prayed for. Hollowing out turnips (and later pumpkins), making frightening faces, and filling them with light was believed to ward off evil, not attract it...

Children, particularly, were precious to their community and had to be kept safe from evil, so the tradition of 'hiding', dressing-up or 'guising' them developed, alongside moving from house to house to share the harvested wealth with the youngest and most vulnerable. In Scotland, children still 'go guising' and visit near-by homes, but to get their 'treat' they have to perform a poem, a dance or a song before they are rewarded! The 'sharing food' principle behind 'Trick or Treat' is present throughout Hallowe'en traditions, and is a soundly Christian principle too.

It is ironic that so many of the traditions sanctioned by the early Church that set out to keep people from evil, protect

children, and forge tight bonds of community in hard times have sadly come to imply the glorification or celebration of evil to some contemporary Christians. I've always loved Hallowe'en, speaking personally - it is a fascinating festival that's survived well over a thousand years in a Christian context. It's important to know the history, and understand the early Christian re-focusing of an even older celebration of the season and community survival against the odds – I think it's worth remembering its value, as we slowly come out of a pandemic.

Anna Sargent

Intercession... Your congregation needs YOU!

As we gradually come back from the restriction of lockdowns, one of the things we need to build up again is the Intercessions rota. Here at St Martin's, we have a long tradition of the laity (members of the congregation) leading the Intercessions. It is an honour to lead the prayers in Church, but it can seem quite scary standing up in front of the whole congregation. With that in mind, I have been reading up on the subject recently and I really hope, by sharing these tips, that you feel encouraged to sign up to the rota. Please speak to Dr Margaret Jones to join us!

Why do we have prayers of Intercession?

To 'intercede' on behalf of others is to speak for them – in prayers of Intercession, one person from the congregation addresses God on behalf of the whole as one voice. The way we do it at St. Martin's, with individuals actually writing Intercessions ourselves to reflect the concerns of the day (rather than just reading out a standard set), means that the prayers are fresh, and relevant, and reflect us as a congregation.

The key points are:

- To pray 'for God's Kingdom to come, for God's will to be done and for our daily bread' – how can God's will be done in the world, locally, nationally or internationally? Who are the needy, going without?

- To pray for *everyone*, especially those in authority that they may govern well and that we may all live peaceful and fulfilled lives with God's help.
- To 'model' our intercessory prayers, so that what we do and say in our services becomes part of our everyday lives.

What Intercession is *not* about is personal confession or meditation on any subject, or setting oneself up as a model of virtue, or for 'preaching' on any subject to a captive audience. Intercession is not for 'telling God what is what' nor for 'telling people what God thinks' nor for telling people what *you* think! We are asking God to act in our lives, we're not canvassing for a political party or pressure group.

Preparation is key!

- Try to stick to one side of an A4 sheet of paper, hand-written clearly or typed, and spell-checked so there's no cause for confusion when reading aloud. Your prayers should be legible to anybody, in case it isn't you reading on the day for any reason.
- Pray these prayers yourself at home, and time them, reading aloud clearly and allowing time for people to focus on what you're saying between prayers. Intercessions should certainly not take longer than 5 mins to read, including the necessary spaces between prayers.
- Arrive in church at least 10 minutes before the service begins so that the Vicar, Churchwarden or other officers know you are there and ready to take your part in the service. If you have to be absent for any reason on the day, please let somebody know as soon as possible so that alternative prayers can be offered or your prayers can be read by somebody else in your place

Who do we pray for?

Start on the grandest scale and work downwards in scale to the specific and 'personal':

- **The world** – for everyone, everywhere. We pray for the leaders of nations, and the people of those nations. We pray for those who have to take decisions that affect our lives: political and national leaders, business leaders, media leaders.
- **Peace** - we pray that people all over the world should know peace. We pray for victims of environmental disaster, economic problems, injustice, prisoners of conscience.
- **The local community** - we have a particular responsibility for our town and parish, so we pray for the local community; people in positions of responsibility (politicians), business leaders, media, police, people who work in local institutions: businesses, hospitals, hospices, etc., and for families, and individuals without families or who are bereft or lonely. You can reflect local and national events, if relevant, but 'don't become a newsreader'!
- **The Church and people of God** - Church leaders (of different denominations), overseas churches, churches facing persecution, our Archbishops (witness, unity, synods), our own bishops (as we pray for them, we pray for the whole diocese), different church organisations, church leaders, and staff. If you specify specific events in our church's life, stick to one or two things – don't read out a list!
- **People** – God works through us, as individuals, so we pray for people with a specific task or mission for the Church, people in need, sick or bereaved trusting in God's promises – we don't pray 'for' the dead for that reason, because God has already fulfilled His promise to them, but we can give thanks for them, or 'remember them before God'.

How do I know who to pray for?

What is in the news this week? What has touched you? If something has touched you personally, might it be generally relevant, or is it too personal to be a collective concern? What

has touched the community? Use the specific to pray for the general...

The format

A standard Intercession at St. Martin's starts:

"Let us pray for the Church and for the world, and let us thank God for his goodness", but there are other options that are equally suitable – you could discuss them with Dr Jones.

Each section of prayers ends:

'Intercessor: Lord, in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer' *Or...*

'Intercessor: Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, graciously hear us.' If you want to use different words, please check in advance because these words are printed in the Order of Service. To end, you acknowledge that we are praying together, with the added intercessions of the Saints: "Rejoicing in the fellowship of St Martin and all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love."

Lynne Armstrong, Reader Emeritus



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Usual Sunday Services

8am: Holy Communion, BCP

10am: Parish Communion (CW)

(All-Age Service – non-Communion -
first Sunday of the month)

6.30pm: Evening Prayer on Zoom

Junior Church (2nd and 4th Sundays)

Japanese Anglican Church UK

meets on the third Sunday of the month:

(except in August and December)

3pm Bible Study and Evening Worship in Japanese