

Time for sharing

gardening

ONE OF the satisfying aspects of being a gardener is the opportunity for sharing that it creates. Plants beget plants, whether by self-seeding or by the action of the gardener. I nurture new plants because I can, rather than because I need them, and this leads to surplus stock.

Years ago, I ran a community garden in the heart of Portsmouth. The industrious volunteers produced thousands of young plants that not only restocked the garden but were given away to local residents. It was satisfying to hear about the successes that people had had with growing on the plants. One visitor described the project as being like a stone dropped in a pool — the effects reached far beyond the boundaries of the garden.

Of course, it is also lovely to receive a plant from a friend, and, usually, it remains inextricably linked with that person. A garden can become a wonderful reservoir of memories.

At the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as a diploma student, I found that mutual horticultural generosity operates on a global scale. During imperial times, British plant-collectors travelled all over the world. We largely owe the fantastic variety of garden plants to them, but there is a sense that we should give something back to those parts of the world that were plundered.

This can occur, for instance, by re-introducing endangered plant species to their native habitats, or by supporting ethnic communities in sustainable practices. Plant material from the Kew Herbarium is donated to botanic gardens and scientific institutions all over the world, for education and research purposes. All plant material is catalogued on a computer database, and any receipts or donations are noted. I remember looking up "olive" on the database, and was amused to see that the main recipients were clerics all over the country. Presumably, these samples were used as visual aids to underline a scriptural reference, or a Christian concept.

Now is a good time of year to take cuttings of many garden plants. For beginners, I recommend trying it with tender perennials such as osteospermums and fuchsias. Cut healthy, non-flowering shoots from the parent plant, and, using a sharp knife, trim to about 7.5 cm (3 in.) long, cutting just below a pair of leaves.

Dip the cuttings into rooting powder, and insert into a small pot containing a 50:50 mixture of moist multipurpose compost and perlite. Cover with a plastic bag, and leave on a north-facing window sill, or in a shady spot outside. Success with these may lead you to survey your garden for other subjects.

There are many propagation aids available which can enhance rooting. ROOT!T offers a postal propagator that contains five natural rooting sponges in which you strike your cuttings on a windowsill before completing the address label of the lucky recipient.

Finally, there is the Greenhouse Sensation HydroPod. This home-assembled, hissing, misting machine has delighted my inner child this season, and rooting has been rapid, giving me plenty to donate to the summer fair.

www.propagateplants.com
www.greenhousesensation.co.uk

Jamie Cable

Sister
Rosemary



diary

Library heaven

I AM writing this diary in Gladstone's Library, Hawarden (formerly St Deiniol's). After three years, I have returned here as chaplain for the month, and I have rediscovered the delights of a residential library.

In the library itself, there is an atmosphere of studious quiet. This library has not succumbed to any pressure to provide background music; nor have its holdings been supplanted by DVDs or e-books. Books here are books, with bindings and pages.

An addition to the library since my last visit is the Islamic reading room. Gladstone (ahead of his time in so many ways) was open to the wisdom found in other faiths. This room is a treasury of books on Islamic theology, history, philosophy, and literature, as well as present-day Muslim society.

In a world in which the word "Muslim" seems to be interpreted as "terrorist", we would do well to acquaint ourselves with a more wholesome view of this faith.

Feast of languages

MY FIRST week here gave me the opportunity to take part in a course rivetingly entitled "Sodom". Despite what might have been some people's initial interpretation, this was a scholarly course on controversial passages in Genesis, based on the Hebrew text.

Other popular courses offered here include "Hebrew in a week", "Greek in a week", "Latin in a week", and "Welsh in a week". If I were ever here when this last was on offer, I should love to take part in it: it is always good to speak the language of the country you are in, and Welsh, I know, has a rich literature. The service book from which I lead the

eucharist here has the text in Welsh on the opposite page, but, fortunately, I am allowed to stay with the English.

The library's location in north Wales means that it is ideally situated for studying the Celtic Church, with visits to local sites, including St Winefride's Well at Holywell — an excursion that I am promising myself before I leave.

It's good to talk

IN THE convent, I am used to meals taken in silence, and I am happy with that. In the library, all meals (including breakfast) are volubly communicative. Initially, this is a shock, but I quickly adjust to it, and there are enormous advantages, because the people who come here are so interesting.

Some are scholars, taking advantage of the library's holdings; others are giving concentrated attention to writing a book or a thesis. You do not need to be a scholar to stay here, but others who stay appreciate the context of learning and thinking, and the stimulating conversation.

On a previous visit, I overheard a discussion at the table between two mathematicians who were arguing over some point of contention in their discipline. I did not understand a word, but it was exhilarating to hear the passion with which they engaged with the subject.

Other visitors include clerics or other busy people who enjoy the space for reflection away from the demands of their normal lives. They have an opportunity for rest and refreshment — but it is emphatically not a retreat.

'The C of E thinks ...'

WE HAVE heard recently the official response of the Church of England to the Government's consultation on same-sex marriage. Predictably, it was unequivocally against the proposal, in spite of the very public disagreement within the Church on this question.

Less predictable, though, was the apocalyptic tone of the response.

St Gargoyles



Alice came to Sunday School, representing George, Kate, Alfie, James, Susie, Tilly, Lizzie, and Tom

Should this law be enacted, we were told, it could threaten the continuance of the established status of the Church of England. I thought immediately that this was a dangerous strategy. I could well imagine that the reaction of many people — some within the Church of England itself — might be: "Good. The sooner the better."

What, after all, is the advantage of the current arrangement? In the Baptist church of my youth there was considerable resentment about the privileged status of the Church of England in comparison with other denominations.

Now, of course, concern is more likely to be about those of other faiths. Ironically, as with church schools, they seem happy with the Church's central place as the voice of faith in an increasingly secularised

world. Opposition is more likely to come from the aggressively atheist, or those indifferent to religion who dislike any interference with their daily lives from the institution of the Church.

Within the Church, also, there are those who feel that we would be better off without the interference of the state. It is well known that, at the time of the legislation for women priests, Parliament was instrumental in securing further provision for those opposed. Now, the probability is that there would be pressure from Parliament to avoid making discriminatory provision. Would disestablishment be a calamity, or a liberation?

The Revd Sister Rosemary CHN is a nun at the Convent of the Holy Name in Derby.

The Gospel last?

out of the question

Write, if you have any answers to the questions listed at the end of this section, or would like to add to the answers below.

Your answers

On occasion (as recently at Pentecost), the events described in the lectionary's Gospel reading chronologically precede what is described in other readings of the day. Is there any liturgical authority for the Gospel to be read first?

It must be remembered that the criterion used to arrange the eucharistic readings has not been the order of the biblical canon or the time sequence of events recorded in the scriptures; otherwise, the Acts of the Apostles would, at least on occasions such as Pentecost, come last — the possibility suggested by the questioner.

This cannot be authorised, because in all liturgies, from the fourth-century Antiochene Apostolic Constitutions onwards, there has been a strict rule that the final reading shall be from the Gospels, and, just as in a procession of clerics the highest in rank comes last, so,

too, in the series of readings, thereby highlighting the centrality of the Gospel as the "good news" that fulfils the past and, in the words of Christ, addresses the present and future life of the People of God.

At the climax of the Liturgy of the Word, in the Gospel we encounter Christ, the Living Word of God, to whom honour is given, not least by standing to hear its proclamation.

*(Canon) Terry Palmer
Magor Monmouthshire*

As a general principle, this is what always happens: the Old Testament reading (if any) of course precedes the New, but the epistle is about life in the Primitive Church, while the Gospel is about the life of Christ, which, though often written later, looks back half a century or so to an earlier period.

The earliest liturgical guides are silent on the readings (*Didache*, AD c.95) or ambiguous (Justin, c.160, and Hippolytus, c.205). Early sequences are: Old Testament or Acts, (Pauline) epistle, Acts, trisagion, and Gospel (Egyptian Anaphora of St Basil).

The Reformation introduced new sequences. For example, Zwingli's

Action and Use of the Lord's Supper of 1525 had the sermon well before the epistle and Gospel readings, while Martin Bucer's *Complete Church Practice* of 1539 had only a psalm followed by the Gospel and sermon. Fortunately, Archbishop Cranmer was more conservative.

I know of no case where the Gospel is read before the other readings.
*Christopher Haffner (Reader)
East Molesey, Surrey*

Are there any churches where the Prayer Book baptism service is still in regular use? If so, do parents request it, or is it the priest's preference?

Our services are mainly Prayer Book, although we also use *Common Worship*. For baptisms, we ask the candidate (or the infant's parents) which service they would prefer. Most choose *Common Worship*, but some opt for the Prayer Book.
*(The Revd) Alan Isaacson
High Bradfield, Sheffield*

Four years ago, when I came to faith in Christ, aged 19, and having become very fond of the Prayer Book as a living and relevant form of liturgy, I requested the form of Baptism for those of Riper Years, believing that it put into words exactly what I wanted to profess and promise.

This was the first time in more than two decades of ordained ministry that my priest had used the

rite, and also that anyone present, including several other priests, had witnessed it. In our rural Sussex parish, where matins and evensong are the primary services, the *Common Worship* rite of baptism is solely used, and no alternative is given.

*Benjamin Tyler
Sussex*

Your questions

Even though our church normally has two priests present, our new vicar has replaced the parish eucharist on the first Sunday of the month with a family service, and replaced the eucharist on the third Sunday with matins "to create consumer-choice variety". He refused his NSM's offer to celebrate a eucharist on those days at an earlier time, "as it will divide the congregation". Now we have been informed that his actions are in breach of canon law. Is this correct? We do not wish to go the same way as a neighbouring church that is now in rapid decline after ten years of a similar experiment.

What are the duties of a royal chaplain?

B. R.

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