

# SAINT GEORGE'S CHURCH

## PARISH MAGAZINE

an open door in the heart of the city



St. Patrick



MARCH 2026



# CONTACTS

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## CHURCH BANK DETAILS

Ulster Bank, Donegal Sq. East

Acc. name: St. George's Parish Church

Sort Code: 98-00-10

Acc. No.: 09028029

## CLERGY

Rector: The Reverend Brian Stewart, Tel: 07902792080

Curate: The Reverend William Odling-Smee, Tel: 02844841868

Honorary Assistant Priests: The Venerable Scott Harte, The Reverend Keith Suckling, The Reverend Graeme Pollock, The Reverend Terence Dunlop

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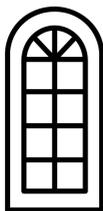
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## NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

St George's Church Parish Magazine is published on the Sunday nearest the first day of the month, except August and January. Views expressed by contributors do not represent the views of the parish. Please send contributions to the Editors: Selby Nesbitt, selby.nesbitt@btopenworld.com & Martin Taggart, wmartintaggart@gmail.com.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This magazine uses icons downloaded from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com).



## LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

The Reverend Brian Stewart

**Dear Friends in Christ,**

In my addresses on Ash Wednesday at 10:30AM and 7:30PM, I suggested two things that we might consider during Lent. Lent has been traditionally thought of as a season when we give up something such as an indulgence, a luxury or a habit and devote more time to religious matters. I wanted to offer the possibility of taking up two things which I think are worthy of consideration.

The first of them is 'reserve'. Reserve was a principle beloved of the founders of the Oxford Movement, sometimes called Tractarians, in the late 1830s and immediately afterwards. Reserve is not an unwillingness or reluctance to speak of spiritual matters or important aspects of faith, but a reserve to speak of them without knowledge, thoughtfulness, prayer or wisdom. So often in the various religious dialogues, conversations and controversies that I have observed and even shared in over many years, I've heard views, opinions and statements which were often misinformed, aggressive, confrontational and sometimes, sadly, very unchristian. Reserve emphasises the need to avoid such situations unless we have taken the trouble to inform ourselves as fully as possible, to be cautious about dogmatic stances and to make our views known with charity, wisdom and insight rooted in a deep faith and prayer.

Secondly, I spoke of the need for 'hope'. St. Paul, famously, in 1 Corinthians 13, listed the three theological virtues as 'faith, hope and love'. They are all essential to the life of the Christian, especially love, but we do need hope at this present time and it seems to be little spoken of. Purusing social media feeds is not called 'doom scrolling' for nothing. So much social media, the

TV, the newspapers and general social interactions is chock full of bad news, disasters, negativity and doom and gloom. Of course, the reality is that our world is full of suffering, injustices and cruelties. It has ever been thus, but perhaps we're more aware of it nowadays because of the internet, social media, rolling news and the speed of modern communications. It can all become a bit depressing to say the least. However, as Christians, we have hope, hope in Christ, hope because of our faith and hope we can offer to others - bearing in mind what I've just said about 'reserve'.

So then this Lent, why not try to discover more about your faith, its message and positive sources of practical hope in our world. 'Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 5:16).

We are hoping to have four tunicles made for the use of the ministry team in St. George's during the Choral Eucharist. I estimate that they will each cost £500. If you would be interested in covering the cost or part of the cost of these four vestments, perhaps in memory of a loved one, then please do speak to me in the next few weeks after which we can finalise plans and, hopefully, order them from our supplier in England.

**Yours Sincerely in Christ,**

**Brian Stewart**

**SUPPORT ST. GEORGE'S BY QR CODE**

You can now donate to church funds using the QR code printed here. Simply open the camera on your mobile phone and point it at the QR code. A link will appear on your screen – tap this to open the secure donation page. You may choose a suggested amount or enter your own donation, and decide whether to make a one-off gift or set up a regular monthly contribution.





## THE RECTOR'S ADDRESS AT THE FUNERAL OF GARTH DEVENNEY

**'Do not let your hearts be troubled'**. These are familiar words of Jesus from John 14, often read at funerals—and for good reason. They *are* words of comfort and assurance at a time of grief and loss. We all need such words from time to time, and especially when we lose someone we love. The honest truth is, we are troubled when a loved one dies, and these words of Christ were spoken in the face of his own death to reassure his friends and they are read today to reassure us.

Garth was a man of deep faith whose commitment to his faith and to this parish were clear to all who knew him. He and Doreen were very regular attenders at the early Holy Communion for most of their lives together - it meant so much to both of them. They also greatly valued Holy Communion at home in recent years when they were no longer able to come to St George's. I was privileged to bring Garth the Holy Sacrament just a week or so before he died last week.

Garth was the youngest of the two sons born to his parents, William and Constance. His elder brother Ernie resides in Dublin, now aged 102. Garth's father was in the Merchant Navy, and was lost at sea when his ship was sunk by enemy action during World War II.

Garth went to Belfast Model School where he played rugby, cricket and football. He had a lifelong love of sport, especially cricket. I enjoyed frequent discussions with him about football and cricket and discovered that he played rugby with the late Billy McArthur.

Garth first worked for NI railways in York Street, then in the Health Service and finally with the NI Fire Brigade until his retirement. All of these posts were either in a clerical or management role.

He joined St George's in the early 1950s when the church was threatened with closure. He saw five Rectors in his time as a parishioner: Dr. Aldwell, Fr. St. John Pike, Canon Turner, Fr. Barrett and finally myself. He was deeply loyal, helpful and was a member of the Select Vestry.

He married Doreen Copley in the mid-1960s in St. Mary Magdalene's church on Donegal Pass. He had a son, Phillip who married Debbie who gave him four grandchildren: Christopher, Aaron, Natasha and Ryan. He subsequently became a great grandfather to twelve great grandchildren. This large family circle were adored and deeply loved and he frequently spoke of them. Garth was a lifelong member of the Ulster Unionist Party with Doreen and was a member of the Ulster Unionist Council. He was also a lifelong member of the Masonic Order.

St George's is open, restored and thriving today because of people like Garth who made the decision to join this parish when it was threatened with closure in 1951. He stayed faithful and involved in the 1970s and 80s during the worst of The Troubles, when this building was bomb-damaged 21 times. It was the most bombed church in Europe. He helped clear up and repair it after each attack.

He was deeply involved with Liz Waring and Belinda Stewart in leading the huge fundraising effort in the late 1990s to restore and improve the church and hall. Indeed, St George's would not be functioning today if it were not for Garth and others like him who were faithful, diligent and committed to this parish.

There is much in Garth's 92 years to be thankful for. His devotion to Doreen, his love for his son, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. He loved God and his church and served both so faithfully and well. He loved his community and friends. He lived a long, good, loving and productive life full of love, generosity and service to others. May he rest in peace, now with Doreen, and may they both rise in glory.

# The Parish Church of Saint George, Belfast Music List –March 2026

## **Sunday 1st March**

### **11:00AM Choral Eucharist**

Processional Hymn	At the name of Jesus <b>338</b>
Setting	Collegium regale - <i>Howells</i>
Psalm	121
Gradual Hymn	Lord Jesus think on me <b>70 (Omit v3&amp;4)</b>
Offertory Hymn	Lord in this thy mercy's day <b>69</b>
Communion Hymn	312
Anthem	God so loved the world - <i>Stainer</i>
Recessional Hymn	Be thou my vision <b>339</b>

## **2nd Sunday in Lent**

### **Parish Choir**

### **5:00PM Choral Evensong**

Responses	Rose
Psalm	135: 1-14
Office hymn	60
Setting	Moeran in D minor
Anthem	Listen sweet dove - <i>Ives</i>
Hymns	<b>59, 476</b>

### **Parish Choir**

## **Sunday 8th March**

### **11:00AM Choral Eucharist**

Processional Hymn	Christ whose glory <b>234</b>
Setting	Jackson in G
Psalm	95
Gradual Hymn	Gather hear the prayer <b>357</b>
Offertory Hymn	Come down O love divine <b>137</b>
Communion Hymn	280
Motet	Sicut cervus - <i>Palestrina</i>
Recessional Hymn	Praise the Lord <b>437</b>

## **3rd Sunday in Lent**

### **Parish Choir**

### **5:00PM Choral Evensong**

Responses	Rose ATB
Psalm	40
Canticles	Moore 2nd service
Anthem	I will lift up mine eyes - <i>Lloyd</i>
Hymn	<b>74, 427</b>

### **Choral Scholars**

**Sunday 15th March**                      **4th Sunday in Lent - Mothering Sunday**

**11:00AM Choral Eucharist**                      **Parish Choir**

Processional hymn    Sing we of the blessed Mother **185**  
Psalm                      23  
Setting                      Mass of the quiet hour - *Oldroyd*  
Gradual Hymn              Jesus good above all other **387**  
Offertory Hymn            I bind unto myself **159**  
Communion hymn        Christ be with me - *Rutter*  
Anthem                      Ave Maris stella - *Ives*  
Recessional Hymn        Tell out my soul **186**

**5:00PM Choral Evensong**                      **Chamber Choir**

Responses                Ayleward  
Psalm                      31: 1-8  
Canticles                 Walmisley in D  
Anthem                      Drop, drop slow tears - *Gibbons*  
Hymns                      **456, 76**

**Sunday 22nd March**                      **5th Sunday in Lent - Passion Sunday**

**11:00AM Choral Eucharist**                      **Parish choir**

Processional Hymn    When morning gilds the skies **473** omit verses 2,4  
Setting                      Ireland in C  
Psalm                      130  
Gradual Hymn            All ye who seek **63**  
Offertory Hymn            It is a thing **83**  
Communion Hymn        275  
Motet                      Ave verum - *Byrd*  
Recessional Hymn        O sacred head **90**

**5:00PM Choral Eucharist BCP**                      **Parish Men**

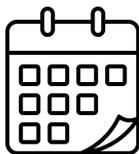
Setting                      Merbecke  
Hymns                      **82, 83,84**

**Sunday 29th March**                      **Palm Sunday**

**10:50am Choral Eucharist**                      **Parish Choir**

Processional Hymn    All glory, laud and honour **509**  
Setting                      Stanford in Bb and F  
Psalm                      31: 9-16  
Gradual Hymn            Glory be to Jesus **83**  
Offertory Hymn            We sing the praise **94**  
Communion Hymn        280  
Anthem                      Wash me thoroughly - *Wesley*  
Recessional Hymn        Ride on, ride on **511**

**5:00PM Choral Evensong**                      **Renaissance**  
**Evensong to be sung by Renaissance under the direction of Daniel Clements**



# CALENDAR

<b>Mar 1</b>	<b>THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT</b>
<b>9:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Choral Eucharist:</b> The Rector
	Preacher: The Rector
	Readings: Genesis 12: 1-4a; Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17; John 3: 1-17
	Reader: <i>Wardens</i>
	Intercessor: <i>Anne McBride</i>
	Servers: <i>Janet Sandikli, Steven McQuitty, Mark Claney</i>
	Tea and Coffee: <i>Mina Kelly, Richard Oldfield</i>
<b>5.00pm</b>	<b>Choral Evensong:</b>
	Lessons: Numbers 21: 4-9; Luke 14: 27-33 (Paddy Sloan)
<b>Mar 4</b>	<b>FERIA</b>
<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>Mar 8</b>	<b>THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT</b>
<b>9:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Choral Eucharist:</b> The Rector
	Preacher: The Rector
	Readings: Exodus 17: 1-7; Romans 5: 1-11; John 4: 5-42
	Reader: <i>Fr Tom Layden</i>
	Intercessor: <i>George Woodman</i>
	Servers: <i>Tony Merrick, Mark Claney, Jonny Calder</i>
	Tea and Coffee: <i>Catherine Hunter, Rosejane Peck</i>
<b>5.00pm</b>	<b>Choral Evensong:</b> The Rector
	Lessons: Joshua 1: 1-9; Ephesians 6: 10-20 ( <i>The Rector</i> )
<b>Mar 11</b>	<b>FERIA</b>
<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>Mar 15</b>	<b>THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT</b>
<b>9:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Choral Eucharist:</b> The Rector
	Preacher: The Rector
	Readings: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13; Ephesians 5: 8-14; John 9: 1-41
	Reader: <i>Pam Tilson</i>
	Intercessor: <i>Pam Tilson</i>
	Servers: <i>Banji Akinyele, Jonny Calder, Tony Merrick</i>
	Tea and Coffee: <i>Judith Fawcett, Joyce Cameron</i>
<b>5.00pm</b>	<b>Choral Evensong:</b> The Rector
	Lessons: Micah 7, James 5 ( <i>Janet Sandikli</i> )

<b>Mar 17</b>	<b>ST PATRICK'S DAY</b>
<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>Mar 18</b>	<b>CYRIL, BISHOP OF JERUSALEM</b>
<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>Mar 22</b>	<b>THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT</b>
<b>9:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Choral Eucharist:</b> The Rector
	Preacher: The Rector
	Readings: Ezekiel 37: 1-14; Romans 8: 6-11; John 11: 1-45
	Reader: <i>James Beattie</i>
	Intercessor: <i>Fr Tom Layden</i>
	Servers: <i>Omolewa Akinyele, Agape Laoye, Mark Claney</i>
	Tea and Coffee: <i>Julie, Issy Bannon</i>
<b>5.00pm</b>	<b>Choral Eucharist:</b> The Rector
	Lessons: Hebrews 9: 11-15, John 8: 46-59a ( <i>Paddy Sloan</i> )
<b>Mar 25</b>	<b>THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LORD TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY</b>
<b>10:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>Mar 26</b>	<b>HARRIET MONSELL – COMMUNITY OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST</b>
<b>1:00pm</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector & Fr Graeme Pollock
	The Walsingham Group meets at this Eucharist – all welcome
<b>Mar 29</b>	<b>PALM SUNDAY</b>
<b>9:30am</b>	<b>Eucharist:</b> The Rector
<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Choral Eucharist:</b> The Rector
	Solemn Reading of Passion Gospel
	Readings: Isaiah 50: 4-9a; Philippians 2: 5-11
	Reader: <i>George Woodman</i>
	Intercessor: <i>Janet Sandikli</i>
	Servers: <i>Steven McQuitty, Tony Merrick, Jonny Calder</i>
	Tea and Coffee: <i>Linda McConnell, Dot Lutton, Betty Flynn</i>
<b>5.00pm</b>	<b>Choral Evensong:</b> The Rector
	<b>Sung by Renaissance under the direction of Daniel Clements</b>
	Lessons: Isaiah 5: 1-7, Matthew 21: 33-46 ( <i>Janet Sandikli</i> )



## NEWS & NOTICES



### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TONY!**

Tony Merrick celebrated his 79th birthday on Wednesday 25th February at a surprise party in the Parish Hall after the 10:30am service.

### **EASTER VESTRY MEETING 2026**

The Annual General Vestry Meeting (AGM for St. George's) will be held on Sunday, 22nd March at 1:00pm after the morning service. There will be a sandwich lunch before the meeting. All General Vestry members should attend this AGM to elect the Select Vestry, Nominators and Synod members and to hear three short reports.

### **KEEPING YOUR DETAILS UP TO DATE**

To ensure our parish records remain accurate, we kindly ask all parishioners to confirm that their contact details are current. If you have changed your address, telephone number, or email address, please inform Judith Fawcett. Please be assured that all personal information is held securely and used only for parish purposes, in accordance with data protection regulations. Thank you for your help in keeping our records up to date.

### **CHRISTIAN AID ANNUAL SUPPORTER CONFERENCE**

You are invited to Christian Aid Ireland's annual Supporter Conference on Saturday, 14 March 2025 at Carnmoney Presbyterian Church. Join us to preview Christian Aid Week 2026 and take part in inspiring seminars where supporters can share ideas and learn together in the fight against poverty and injustice worldwide.

### **SPECIAL FESTIVAL EVENSONG - 19TH APRIL, 5:00PM**

Join us for a Special Festival Evensong on 19th April at 5:00PM, as we look ahead to our Patronal Festival of St George (23rd April). The service will include a guest preacher and the premiere of a new choral work, *Sabra and the Dragon*. Refreshments will be served afterwards in the Parish Hall.

### **LENT SOUP AND CHEESE LUNCH**

Thank you to all who came to the 'Lenten Soup and Cheese Lunch' in support of Middle East Charities. A special thank you to all those who kindly provided the lunch, who helped with the preparations and the clearing up afterwards. We have raised £1572.00 so far for the two charities, Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association and Embrace the Middle East, and we will continue the collection throughout Lent at the refreshments which follow the Sunday Choral Eucharist and the Wednesday morning Eucharist ~ Judith Fawcett

**HOLY WEEK AND EASTER 2026  
ST GEORGE'S CHURCH,  
HIGH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 2AG**



***Palm Sunday, 29th March***

**9:30am** Eucharist  
**10:50am** Blessing of Palms,  
Procession & Sung Eucharist  
**5:00pm** Choral Eucharist

***Monday, 30th March***

**1:00pm** Eucharist

***Tuesday, 31st March***

**1:00pm** Eucharist

***Wednesday, 1st April***

**10:30am** Eucharist

***Maundy Thursday, 2nd April***

**1:00pm** Eucharist  
**7:30pm** Choral Eucharist, Stripping  
of the Altar & Vigil

***Good Friday, 3rd April***

**10:30am** Stations of the Cross  
**12:00 - 3:00pm** The Three Hours  
and Liturgy of the Cross  
Conductor: The Rector  
**7:30pm** Compline and Reproaches

***Easter Eve, 4th April***

**7:30pm** Easter Liturgy, Holy Baptism  
Confirmation & First Eucharist of Easter  
Preacher: The Bishop

***Easter Day, 5th April***

**9:30am** Eucharist  
**11:00am** Festival Choral Eucharist  
**5:00pm** Festival Choral Evensong

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**SAINT GEORGE'S SINGERS**  
**Saint George's Sinfonia and Soloists**

*Present*

**AN EASTER CONCERT OF WORKS BY G.F. HANDEL**

Chandos Anthem: My Song Shall be Always

Vespers Psalm: Dixit Dominus



The Chandos Portrait of George Frideric Handel (1685-1759).  
Painted c. 1720 by unknown artist

**WEDNESDAY, 15TH APRIL AT 7:45PM**

Saint George's Church, High Street, Belfast

Tickets £20 (students £10)

AVAILABLE FROM CHOIR MEMBERS AND AT THE DOOR,

OR BY REQUEST TO: [contactstgeorges@gmail.com](mailto:contactstgeorges@gmail.com)



## A LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS by Karen Brett

In early July 1978, by pure serendipity, I found myself leaving London on an aeroplane bound for Israel. Until the moment my fortune changed, I was resigned to the prospect of working in Carrickfergus Library all summer. But then, by chance, I was offered, and at once accepted, the opportunity to spend three months on an archaeological dig in Israel. Compare the prospect of a damp summer, the wind and rain sheeting off Belfast Lough against the library windows, to the velvety nights, the olive groves and life in the ruins of a crusader fort at the foot of Mount Carmel. There was no competition. I was extremely short of money, but the organisation that had offered me the post was also paying for my travel, board and lodgings, and I had enormous confidence in my own good fortune.

Some sixteen weeks later that optimism and good fortune were both tested to the limit. The dig was over. It had been very hard work, but extremely interesting, and I had just spent a wonderful month in Jerusalem, staying with new-found friends, cataloguing and packing the finds at the University. Suddenly, there was only a week to go until the flight home. I had assiduously avoided the tourist traps - Bethlehem, Nazareth, the site of the walking on the water, in part because I didn't want to get caught up in the exploitation of special places, but largely through lack of free time and funds. Other places didn't need seeking out. Staying as I was in Jerusalem, I found myself by chance on the Via Dolorosa very early one morning. A group of pilgrims were walking quietly in the same direction, praying and meditating as they followed in the steps of Christ. Briefly drawn into their party and joining in their prayers, I was startled by how very moving I found it, and how bereft I felt as they moved on without me.

Another morning saw me at the Mount of Olives. It is one of those places that defy words. With departure looming there was one place I was determined to visit-Masada. Herod's summer palace, built high on a crag to catch the wind

and close to the Dead Sea. It was the last stand of the Zealots, those Jews who resisted to the end and who chose death the night before the Romans finally breached their stronghold by way of a great stone ramp in 74 AD. Getting to the Dead Sea was expensive, but a return ticket on the bus left me with just enough to pay for the modest accommodation and food charges in the youth hostel at Masada. I hadn't acquired a guidebook during my stay but had managed to find my way around by examining the pictures on the free leaflets the Israeli authorities occasionally provided. They were written almost exclusively in Hebrew, Japanese and most bizarrely of all, in German. The leaflet that I collected before leaving Jerusalem, showed a short stumpy arrow pointing from the shore of the Dead Sea to the ruined fortress. Clearly it was no more than an hour's walk.

The bus dropped me at the side of the road in a red and gold, barren landscape of rocks and withered scrub, through which ran a ribbon of tarmac. Ahead was a right turn. There were no signposts but, full of confidence, I set off in the beautiful late afternoon haze, to walk the 'short' distance to Masada. Some five hours later I was still walking. It was pitch black and I was hungry, thirsty and cold. I had donned all my spare clothing but, several hours after sunset, an icy chill was creeping through the layers of light cotton. My earlier euphoria had long since evaporated. The road was good, but that was all that could be said about it, for it was also narrow. Twice that evening, huge buses had screamed out of the darkness, forcing me into the rough ground that bordered the smooth surface.

The fears that tormented me ranged from lions and packs of wild dogs, to treading on a scorpion or snake in the dark. I was beginning to entertain the ghastly thought that I was on the wrong road and utterly lost. Then, when true despair was beginning to get a grip, I glimpsed a tiny pinprick of light ahead. I paused, but only briefly. I had wit enough to realise that whatever perils awaited me in the circumference of that light, they had to be less than the very real dangers of spending the night in the freezing desert.

I kept walking, one foot in front of the other, experiencing anxiety when a rise in the road obscured the ever-stronger light, and in this way another hour passed. Suddenly the light was no longer just a single light, a lifeline in the suffocating dark, it was one of three. I realised, with a sickening

jolt, that I was looking at one of the banks of huge security lights that illuminate the perimeter fences surrounding all establishments thought vulnerable to terrorist attack—army camps, primary schools, clinics, shops. Behind that light was probably a student of around my own age, bored out of his or her mind, twitchy and holding a sub-machine gun. I could have wept, I probably did. The newspaper headlines swam before my eyes: 'Woman shot attacking Melon Farm', 'Heroic Pump Attendant Fells Crazy Archaeologist'. Cautiously, I stepped into the harsh blue glare that spilled from the three great lights. They crowned a fence surrounding a collection of functional, prefabricated buildings. There was a gate. I approached. Shouts in Hebrew. I stopped, raised my hands to show I was unarmed and tried to call out something reassuring, but could only croak.

After a few minutes two young people emerged, cautious but projecting bravado, swaggering slightly. Shorts, sweatshirts, bits of army uniform and the obligatory sub-machine guns. As they approached me, they demanded my 'papers'. I handed over my passport and stood waiting while they examined it. They looked at me, and my passport, with growing incredulity. 'Has your car broken down?' they asked in a mixture of English and sign language. 'No,' I replied in kind, 'I walked.' They looked down the road, shook their heads and talked together for some minutes, all the while watching me closely. Then one of them searched my rucksack and pockets thoroughly. When they finally accepted that I was absolutely no danger to anyone except myself, I was allowed in.

I had reached the youth hostel at the foot of Masada. Water, food, a tepid dribble of a shower, and a bunk were provided, and it was more wonderful than I can say to be back within the pale of the modern world once more. Very early the next day, before dawn broke, I climbed the narrow path to the summit of Masada. Alone on the walls of that great fortress, I watched the sun rise over the Jordan hills and the Dead Sea. I felt as if I was suspended in time—caught between first century Roman occupied Palestine and twentieth century Israel. Nineteen centuries earlier the inhabitants of the rock must have seen the sun rise across the same incredible red and gold landscape with just such magnificence, on what they knew was their last day. Time stood still as I inhabited the past and the

present. It lasted longer than such moments usually do, but a shout from below signalled that the cable car was bringing the first day trippers to the summit, so I left, still in possession of the magic.

Throughout December and early January, the extended festivals of Christmas and Epiphany that we have just enjoyed, two themes recurred continually. One is light, 'the light':

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1: 4-5)

And journeys, so many journeys. The journey to Bethlehem for a birth two thousand years ago, the shepherds making their way to a stable, the journey of the Magi, the journey to the temple in Jerusalem where Simeon recognises Jesus as the Messiah, the flight into Egypt. At the end of December, I was in church with my little granddaughter. She stood rapt in front of the Nativity scene and then puzzled, queried why the three kings were missing. I told her they were still travelling to see the baby Jesus. Off she went to look for them, finding them half-way down the side aisle on their journey to the stable.

As I watched her search for the Magi, the journey through the desert that I rarely think of now flooded back. I remembered the pinprick of light that kept me going when I was really frightened. In 74 AD Masada fell to the Romans. Jerusalem was captive, the Temple in ruins, and throughout Palestine the blood ran freely as the Romans put down the rebellion. After Masada, it was all over. The Jews, dispossessed, were scattered throughout the world, not to return to Jerusalem for nearly two thousand years. For many it must have felt like the end.

For Christians too, the future looked bleak. And yet, the dreams didn't die. Two thousand years later Christianity, once a tiny sect of Judaism, is the faith of a third of humanity, and Judaism, which in Auschwitz stood face to face with the angel of death, is alive and strong. Christianity and Judaism live. Imperial Rome has long since passed away. The late Rabbi Lord Sacks described it thus: 'Faith proves stronger than empires... civilisations built on power never last. Those built on care of the powerless never die'.

Different dangers threaten communities of faith today.

Fanaticism, secularism, scepticism, materialism, cynicism and exploitation of the powerless, are rife. The online world is more real to many people than their physical surroundings, and war and poverty blight millions of lives. And yet there is also a great hunger for meaning and purpose, an almost instinctive turning towards the light, towards the source of 'the light'. We don't know what lies ahead. Our lives are but pinpricks in time, but they can shine and burn with faith and love. With God ahead of us, beside us, and within us as we journey, we can embrace the future with optimism, faith and hope. If, in the face of the challenges that threaten our world, congregations tend the light of faith, care for the powerless and open the doors of their churches wide enough to allow everyone in, the light will continue to prevail.



## BIBER: FIFTEEN SONATAS ON THE MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

by Francis FitzGibbon

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber was Master of Ceremonies and Kapellmeister (Music Director) to the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Maximilian Gandolph von Kuenberg. A genius whose life story is still largely unexplored, a violin virtuoso who raised the art of playing the violin in Austria to an incredibly high level of development, a man with incredible imagination who dares to abstract. The complexity of his work is amazing and extends from elaborately orchestrated masses, motets, vesper psalms, through artfully crafted chamber music, ballet music and operas.

He was born in Wartenberg (Bohemia). His baptismal certificate is dated 12 August 1644. His father, Martin Biber was a huntsman at the court of Wartenberg and was thus employed in the service of the counts of Liechtenstein, whose family originated from Tyrol settling in Bohemia and Moravia during the 16th century. It is unclear as to where and how Biber received his first music lessons. At school his teachers in Wartenburg included Wiegand Knöffel and Johann Georg Teifel some time before 1670. From a letter sent by Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, it is thought that Biber may have served with Johann Jakob Prinner in Graz at Prince von Eggenberg's court. When the court orchestra chapel relocated to the castle of Kroměříž, it is thought Biber was employed there in the service of the Prince-Bishop of Olmouc, Karl Liechtenstein Kastelkorn by 1668.

The facilities at Kroměříž with its extensive music library and local musicians were impressive and at that time even larger than that of the Imperial chapel in Vienna. It is there that Biber was able to study a wide variety of styles of music. Initially he was a bass viol and viola da gamba player, it is also considered he was influenced by the violin music of Johann Heinrich Schmelzer and that of his friend the court trumpeter Pavel Josef Vejvanovsky. In late autumn of 1670, Biber was instructed by the Prince-Bishop of Olmouc, Karl von Liechtenstein-Kastelkorn to visit Absam to arrange the delivery

of group of instruments from the violin maker Jakob Stainer. Biber cunningly used this opportunity to leave from his post at Kroměříž, without permission to take up a mutually arranged appointment at the court of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Maximilian Gandolph von Kuenburg, subsequently Biber remained in his service to the end of his life. In 1673, an epidemic of plague ravaged Vienna and Emperor Leopold I relocated his residence to Linz, offering Biber an opportunity of performing his works at the Imperial court both at Linz and Lambach. In 1679 he was promoted deputy Kapellmeister and subsequently Kapellmeister of the superb Salzburg ensemble in 1684.

In 1690 thanks to the generosity of Leopold I, Biber finally received the ennoblement he so desired adding von to his name, in view of his honesty, uprightness, nobility of manner, merit and understanding. On 3 November 1692, Biber was appointed steward by Archbishop Johann Ernst Count Thun. He then received his Coat of Arms. About 1700, Biber was at the head of an establishment comprising 25 musicians and singers, 2 drummers, 8 trumpeters and 18 choristers. His salary was then 850 florins a very high sum for a musician at that time. He died in Salzburg on 3 May 1704. His grave is located in the Petersfriedhof.

In 1905, a previously unknown collection of fifteen violin sonatas by the Salzburg Hofkapellmeister (Court Music Director) Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber was published as volume 25 of the series *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* (Monuments of Music in Austria). The occasion for this edition was the discovery of a beautiful manuscript acquired by the Bavarian State Library a few years earlier from the estate of the Munich scientist, Karl Emil Schaufhäutl (1803-1890).

The sonatas are illustrated with copperplate engravings of scenes representing the fifteen mysteries of the rosary and the cult of the guardian angel. Hence three groups of five sonatas make up the collection. Peter Wollny suggests they were composed between 1684-1687. The five Rosary sonatas representing the joyful mysteries include: the annunciation of the birth of Christ by the archangel Gabriel, the visitation of Mary to Elisabeth, the nativity and adoration of the Shepherds, the presentation of Jesus at the temple to Simeon and Jesus age 12 discussing the scriptures with the scribes in the temple.

The five Rosary sonatas representing the sorrowful

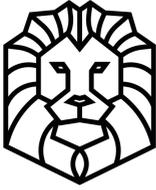
mysteries include: the suffering of Christ on the Mount of Olives, the flagellation of Christ, the crowning of thorns, Christ on the way of the Cross and the Crucifixion of Christ.

The Rosary sonatas representing the Glorious mysteries includes: The Resurrection of Christ, the Ascension of Christ, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and the Crowning of the Virgin. The set of mystery sonatas is concluded by a passacaglia for unaccompanied violin, with an illustration of the guardian angel.

The baroque violinist Gunnar Letzbor is of the opinion that the Mystery sonatas were never intended to be performed in one continuous cycle from a practical viewpoint, since only the first sonata and the concluding solo passacaglia use normal violin tuning in fifths. The rest of the Rosary sonatas use various scordatura tunings in thirds, fourths and in one case octaves. Gunnar Letzbor also suggests that in Salzburg, the continuo in the Mystery sonatas used a small lute consort, with organ and violone, rather than cello and harpsichord. It is most probable that Biber himself performed these Mystery sonatas as one sonata per rosary prayer at the private devotions of Archbishop Max Gandolph during the month of October traditionally devoted to the Rosary, the 2nd October being the Feast of the Guardian Angel, celebrated in Austria since 1667, either in the small Loreto chapel on Salzburg's Nonnberg or, during the Rosary prayers practiced with great fervour by the Confraternity of the Rosary in the newly built pilgrimage church of Maria Plain, near Salzburg.

**Reference Recording:**

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber Rosenkranzensonaten. Ars Musica Austria, Gunnar Letzbor. Pan Classics PC10409



## ASLAN'S SONG

by Paul McLaughlin

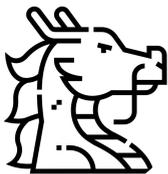
You are a lion  
With a sacred heart  
A battle hymn  
Upon your lips  
With eyes so bright  
That no Winter sky  
Can ever challenge or eclipse

You are a lion  
With a fiery heart  
Your song of love  
So strong and fierce  
Yet armoured  
With the mail of truth  
That hypocrisy can never pierce

You are a lion  
In each praying hour  
My day, my night  
My one and all  
A heaven's harbour  
For my heart  
A welcome strand  
In Donegal

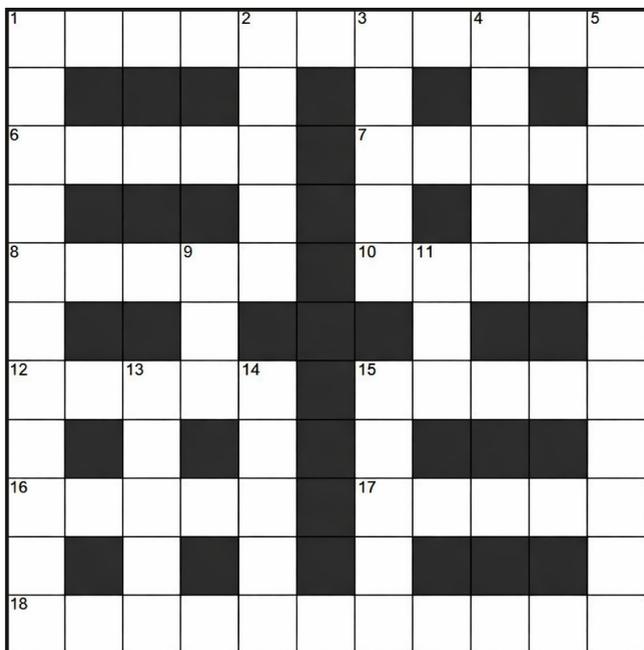
You are a lion  
In your words of love  
A beam of truth  
To light my way  
The honey in the  
Yeatsean hive  
The wine that flows  
On Cana's day

You are a lion  
And I cannot speak  
Your mercy strong  
My repentance weak.



## THE DRAGON'S CHALLENGE

set by Martagon



### ACROSS

- 1 Jack's hurdle (11)
- 6 Mature, as fruit (5)
- 7 Not deserved (5)
- 8 Come together (5)
- 10 Bob's catchphrase: "Can we \_\_\_?" (3, 2)
- 12 Die down (5)
- 15 Sturdy cotton fabric (5)
- 16 Opening statement, short (5)
- 17 Woman's name (5)
- 18 Ancient northern realm of Anglo-Saxon England (11)

### DOWN

- 1 Distribution (11)
- 2 Jousting weapon (5)
- 3 Slight blemish or scratch (5)
- 4 Quick reference (5)
- 5 Compulsion to steal (11)
- 9 Tsk! (3)
- 11 Skating surface (3)
- 13 Later on (5)
- 14 Era (5)
- 15 Nightmare, for example (6)

**Solutions in next month's issue.**