

Dear all

You may have heard the news that the Bishop of Lincoln, the Rt Revd Christopher Lowson, has finally had his suspension removed, and can return to his role as diocesan bishop. The Church Times reported that *Bishop Lowson has accepted a formal rebuke for the mishandling of a safeguarding disclosure, and has apologised unreservedly for his "error of judgement". The rebuke will stay on his file, and he has agreed to refrain in safeguarding matters. There has never been any suggestion that Bishop Lowson was responsible for any act of abuse.*

In a statement issued on Monday, he said: "I offer an unreserved apology for my error of judgement in the way I handled a disclosure about a member of clergy in the Lincoln diocese in early 2019. I regret the way I handled the matter, not least because I have always sought to take safeguarding matters extremely seriously."

What has been regretted by all involved is the length of time that it has taken to resolve the matter – 20 months. To put that in perspective, he was suspended before I took up my role here. I met with Bishop Christopher just after I was appointed, and was impressed by his commitment to good safeguarding practices.

It is quite right that all clergy are expected to act professionally and appropriately, and that there should be some sanctions when they don't. But it is generally accepted that the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) is not fit for purpose, being unwieldy, very time-consuming, and incredibly destructive in its process. It is currently being totally overhauled, and there are signs that a much better system will emerge.

Also in the news this week is the reporting of a tweet from a London curate and theologian the Revd Jarel Robinson-Brown. In it he explained why he would not be clapping for Captain Tom, due to the overt politicising of the event. Despite saying clearly that *I will offer prayers for the repose of his kind and generous soul*, people have chosen to interpret it as a personal attack against Captain Tom, and have sent hate mail and tweets to him. My own personal view is that this was to be expected, as that is what happens on Twitter. It is not a nuanced platform, and it encourages extreme and hateful reactions. The timing of the tweet was, perhaps, insensitive; but since it was a comment about the clapping, it would have lost much of its point if delayed.

It is ironic that the same issue of the Church Times carried an article by Jarel entitled *Can rage be holy?* In it he writes *While there are those who criticise the injustices of the day, but for whom they fundamentally remain tolerable, those who are in the prophetic tradition find that injustice assumes cosmic proportions. Whilst the world, so often in denial of the catastrophic, is fast asleep, the prophet feels the call from heaven: "Wake up, sleeper!"*

It is an excellent article. I am particularly interested in what can be considered 'of God' or 'of the Spirit', and what can be considered 'of the flesh', to use Paul's terminology. What makes a tweet from a black gay theologian attacking white nationalism more, or less, Christian than right-wing fundamentalist Christians supporting Trump, and seeing him as fulfilling the will of God?

Earlier in the article, Jarel writes *The prophetic individual has now only two companions: love and truth. They are often a person of agony whose reputation is at stake in everything they say because it is God who has filled their mouth with the words which no one else can speak.* Or as Paul says in today's NT reading for Morning Prayer *Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love* (1Cor. 16:13-14).

Love must be the key to our interpretation – and key to our response if someone gets things wrong! We have lost the ability to love... and to forgive. We have learned to react in knee-jerk ways, and to scapegoat to save our confusion, pain and reputation. The resolution to Bishop Christopher's situation, while taking unacceptably long, does hold some important keys to a mature Christian response. The original act was considered, deemed wrong, accepted, and repented of. Appropriate action has been taken, and support to ensure that it will not happen again has been put in place. Healing and restoration of all is the aim. We must continue to pray for him as he takes up his role again, and give thanks for Bishop Nicholas and especially Acting Diocesan Bishop David who have kept the diocese going in the meantime.

For those with children or grandchildren – or who just like baking themselves – I have attached a pdf I discovered recently called [An invitation to bake through Lent](#). Actually, it is more accurate to call it Holy Week, as it focuses on key events during the week, and gives a couple of simple recipes reflecting each part of the story.

Sunday 7th Feb Service: The readings are Proverbs 8: 1, 22-31; Colossians 1: 15-20; Psalm 104: 26-end; John 1: 1-14. Hymn – Christ is the world's true light.

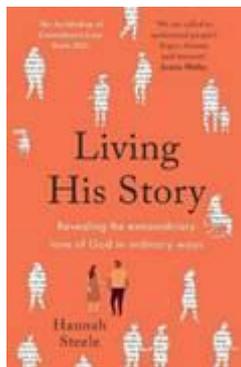
Bible Study: In our next bible study, we will be looking at Mark chapter 3.

We will meet on Zoom, Thursdays 2.30-3.30ish pm. The Zoom details are:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8109399155?pwd=STVVTU44RzJxTFFHbTY1Mnl0bjJ2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 810 939 9155

Passcode: 1w2C9a



A reminder that, during Lent, we will change to following a Lent Course, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book this year - *Living His Story: Revealing the extraordinary love of God in ordinary ways*, written by Hannah Steele.

Books can be bought from Peterborough Christian Bookshop (currently open for collection). If you prefer online, Amazon or the Book Depository are always options. However, I would recommend Aslan Christian Books [Aslan Christian Books | Books Change Lives](#) While not matching Amazon Prime next day service, I have always found them to be very prompt, and they are often at least as cheap, if not cheaper!

For those interested, you can see an interview with the author: **Living His Story with Justin Welby - Hannah Steele in conversation with Justin Welby** about her book written for Lent 2021 Date: Tuesday 16th February at 11.30am.

Register at: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/9316113316059/WN_rad8gGmzQySHgipeeVajEA

Another event that might be of interest is **David's Crown: An evening with Malcolm Guite on the Psalms: Thursday 11 February, 7pm GMT** Join Canterbury Press to celebrate the launch of Malcolm Guite's new poetry collection. Malcolm will be joined by Paula Gooder, Roger Wagner and David Taylor for a very special evening discussing poetry, the Psalms and much more. This is a free event.

Register via: canterburypress.hymnsam.co.uk/events

I have mentioned Malcolm Guite before, and shared one or two of his poems. He has written a poetic reflection on most, if not all of the Psalms.

Chris Pearce has shared this poem, which may sound vaguely familiar...

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree
I'll sanitise the doorknob and make a cup of tea.
I won't go down to the sea again; I won't go out at all,
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.
There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the North of Kathmandu
But I shan't be seeing him just yet, and nor, I think will you.
While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay
I'll make my bit of supper and eat it off a tray.
I shall not speed my bonnie boat across the sea to Skye,
Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.
About the woodland, just right now, I am not free to go
To see the Keep Out posters or the cherry hung with snow.
And no, I won't be travelling much, within the realms of gold,
Or get me to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.
Give me your hands, I shan't request, albeit we are friends
Nor come within a mile of you, until this virus ends.

Finally, music... [Ubi Caritas - Maurice Duruflé performed by Octarium - YouTube](#)

Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est. Where charity and love are, God is there.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor. Christ's love has gathered us into one.
Exultemus, et in ipso iucundemur. Let us rejoice and be pleased in Him.
Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum. Let us fear, and let us love the living God.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero. And may we love each other with a sincere heart.

Apologies for the opening advert, but this is a lovely performance, and the images are arresting.



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark