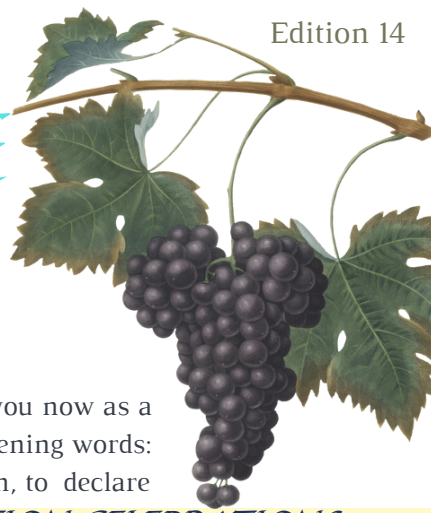




THE GRAPEVINE

The Newsletter of St. Mary and St. John the Divine, Balham



Mother Berni's Farewell

Four years ago I arrived in your midst as a newly ordained Deacon in Holy Orders. I leave you now as a Priest, yet always a deacon. At the ordination service in June 2019 the Bishop spoke these opening words: 'God calls his people to follow Christ, and forms us into a royal priesthood, a holy nation, to declare the wonderful deeds of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. The Church is the Body of Christ, the people of God and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. In baptism the whole Church is summoned to witness to God's love and to work for the coming of his kingdom. To serve this royal priesthood, God has given a variety of ministries. Deacons are ordained so that the people of God may be better equipped to make Christ known. There is a life of visible self-giving. Christ is the pattern of their calling and their commission, as he washed the feet of his disciples, so they must wash the feet of others'

Rather (I suspect) like marriage, none of us were quite prepared for what was to come but I hope all of us are one way or another a teeny bit better equipped in our ministries! It has been a joy and a delight to serve and be served here in Balham. Thank you for receiving me into your midst. To those who welcomed my ministry, thank you. To those who struggled, resisted, rejected, thank you. I carry you in my heart and in my prayers as I journey onwards to South Beddington and Roundshaw. We are all one in Christ Jesus. We belong to him through faith, heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace. Please remember me, Felix, Maddie and my new parish in your prayers. Mother Berni



--MOTHER BERNI'S LEAVING TEA PARTY--

Mother Berni's leaving tea party was a blast! A lovely farewell, full of sandwiches, savoury nibbles and lots of cake. The narthex was full of faces, both familiar and those outside our community who've felt her caring presence in one way or another over the years.



--CORONATION CELEBRATIONS--

The 'Come and Watch the Coronation on a Big Screen' at St Mary's Balham was a great success. The church opened at 10am on Saturday 6 May for tea/coffee/biscuits to watch the start of the Coronation procession. By the time of the

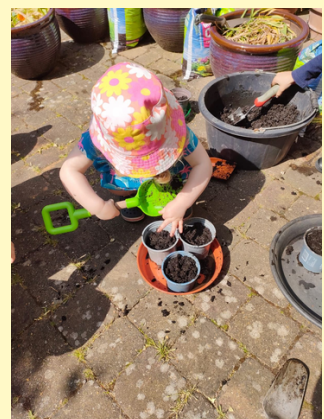


Coronation at 11am, we had about 60 people in the pews watching the ceremony, wearing their regal finery. We had our usual parishioners as well as visitors from Balham and further afield. Mementos in the form of Coronation buttons, pencils and bookmarks were handed to every visitor. Children had balloons and royal colouring-in sheets. All participants were given royal party hats and crowns. As the service finished, everyone celebrated with glasses of prosecco and sang the National Anthem. A special Coronation cake was cut and shared. At 12.30 pizzas were delivered by the Honest Italian restaurant.

The next day, an open invitation was given for the Coronation Picnic and 'street party' in the garden at St Mary's following the Balham service to celebrate the Coronation. About 60 people attended the Bring and Share lunch. Again mementos were distributed as well as Coronation hats and crowns. A second Coronation cake was cut and shared. We were very pleased that visitors attended including several members of the Gateway Club.

--JUNIOR GARDENING CLUB--

Junior Gardening Club was inaugurated in May. Lucy, Caspar and Lois are discovering the "ups and downs" of gardening. Sowing seeds in small pots is like offering prayers: sometimes we see the results and sometimes we don't. Early growth is beyond our sight, yet may still be fruitful. Keep planting, keep praying.



-- FATHER'S FRAPPUCCINO--



On a special occasion Helen and I might ask one another if we want to "make a day of it". This is our code for buying an overpriced coffee based beverage from one of the chain coffee shops. In the autumn that might be a pumpkin spiced latte and in the summer a frappuccino. Alas the best purveyors of frappuccinos (AMT and Pret) no longer sell them and we find the other chains too weak, too sweet or a combination of both. And so we set ourselves to producing our own.

Ingredients:

Espresso (two per person, or at a pinch instant coffee made up with a tiny amount of boiling water)

Milk (as much as you normally like)

Ice (equal to the same amount of water you would add if you were turning your espressos into an americanos)

Xanthan gum (1/4 tsp per person. Irreplaceable, this is what prevents the drink from splitting and provides a light fluffy texture. Available from health food shops)

Flavouring and sweeteners (sugar, vanilla extract, cocoa. Add to your taste).

Add all the ingredients and blend for about 30 seconds. A few pulses at the start help to break larger chunks of ice.

-- WITH HELP FROM AA--

My name is Hannah and I am an alcoholic/drug addict. These are not words that I ever thought I would say.

It was 2017 and I was living in Nightingale Square temporary accommodation. One night when I went to bed, I had a sudden vision of a bright light and as soon as I woke up, it was gone. I know this was Jesus Christ. I became a Christian.

I was baptised and confirmed but God was not finished with me.

On the 6th of June 2020, I surrendered to God fully. I gave up drink and drugs. The God of my understanding, spiritual not religious, saved me.

In the last three years, my life has changed beyond recognition.

I went back to college to take 2 GCSES, I was elected in to Wandsworth Council as a local Councillor (4 years previously, I had walked in homeless) and having served 5 months, I quit the Council role.

God was not finished with me.

In 2022, I signed a 5 year book deal and released my first book. I run 2 Poetry Open mic nights and I am a performance poet.

I owe my whole life to AA and God, my Higher Power.

-- PEN PORTRAIT: SARAH MCDERMOTT--

Sarah's youthful appearance belies the years of hard work and dedication she has given to the local community, notably as a Wandsworth Councillor and school inspector and governor. She chose to read Law at Exeter University, rightly thinking that it would provide useful background knowledge in a wide variety of jobs. She also spent a lot of time organising events for the Exeter University Riding Club, in this country and abroad. From 1987 several years were devoted to raising three children, during which period she completed an Open University course on Women in Management.



Sarah grew up in Worcestershire alongside three brothers. Their father was a farmer. Their mother was artistic and painted scenery for the local amateur dramatic society, and threw herself into various community activities. Small wonder that their sons' jobs are associated with farming and horticulture (plus running a pub) and that Sarah became committed to her own local community. Her husband, Evelyn, was a Councillor in Wandsworth for eight years and then, after another four years, Sarah took up the baton for sixteen years and retired in 2022.

Sarah was motivated by her desire to being, in her own words, "a busy-body", attending to the needs of local people and the urban environment. Most of us have seen Sarah patrolling the Ward over the years - even helping the police to detect speeding motorists - with Sam the dog in tow. She enjoyed meeting people on their doorsteps. She was keen to monitor the Council's finances and to make sure that our money was spent prudently and efficiently. She put herself in a strong position by joining five committees successively, three of which she chaired. At the same time, she served on the governing bodies of several schools. Until 2016, Sarah had spent over twenty years as a freelance school inspector, clocking up hundreds of inspections and resolving complaints between schools and inspection teams.

Now retiring from public duties, both Sarah and Evelyn look forward to moving to Worcestershire. We have appreciated Sarah's work as church warden in the last two years and

-- CULTURE CORNER--

Naomi Novik's The Schollomance Series books are set in a school of magic without teachers where only 1/4th of the pupils' graduate, with the rest being eaten by monsters or worse. The School's carved into the void - a 'perceptive space' outside reality and the laws of physics. Although a fantasy, Novik captures our day's human and geopolitical struggles. There's a sharp class divide, with an elite group of wizards living in enclaves, upheld by the laws of perception at the indies' expense, who fight to please the enclavers. The protagonist, Galadriel, a non-conforming indie, is strikingly witty and sarcastic. Her youth's trajectory goes from loser to heroine as she navigates hiding her affinity for mass destruction and terror to using it for the greater good of the wizarding world and all its horrors, hoping to end the enclave wars between the rising and established powers. -- Jack



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Please note that issues of "The Grapevine" are now available on the church website:

<https://tinyurl.com/StMaryGrapevine>