

Coffee after the Service...

Open Gardens commence!



The first of our Open Garden events will be taking place on Saturday 28th May, 2:30pm-5pm.

Hosted by Tom & Chris
(see the Open Gardens Programme for further information).

All are welcome!

VISIT TO WELLS CATHEDRAL

On Tuesday our long-awaited visit to Wells Cathedral happened - it must be at least three years since the in-coming Dean invited us, but events overtook us.

Around fifty members from Emmanuel and Christ Church gathered on the Cathedral Green for a group photo before we went inside. We were met by The Canon Pastor Rev Rosalind Paul (in the blue robe on the right of the photo) and our very own Julie Birkett.



Once we were seated inside, Rev Rosalind told us a little about the Cathedral's history. A church has been on the site since the 8th Century, attracted by the natural springs that feed the wells of Wells. The Normans later built a Cathedral Church as they put their footprint on the country. In 1175 a new Bishop, impressed by the new Gothic style of architecture in France, started to build a much grander Cathedral. We heard that, in medieval times, all the stonework and statues were painted in bright colours and that over the years different architectural styles were incorporated as extensions were built.

We were divided into smaller groups; each with our own tour guide. The guides have to complete seventy hours of training before they can show the public around. Each group took its own route round the building hearing more about the Cathedral and how the history of England had its impact. We also heard some amusing anecdotes such as the medieval choirboys who used to launch themselves off the (very high) gallery to land on another very high ledge until a balustrade was added to stop their aerial jaunts. Some of us climbed the worn-down chapter steps and saw Julie's own special seat which comes with her new role as Prebendary.

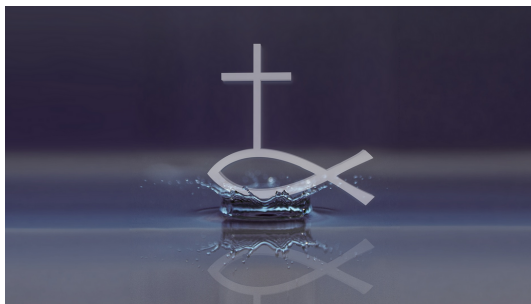
All the groups met together in front of the famous Cathedral clock to hear it chime 4 o'clock and watch the little figures race round the top. That was the end of our tour but not our visit. We were treated to a cup of tea and biscuits and then invited to join the Choristers and Vicars Choral for Evensong. I think the delight of the day was the opening song of the service sung by the Cathedral Song Squad. This after-school club for 5-11yr olds gives local children the experience of making music together and a taste of Cathedral music in particular. They were enchanting!

All too soon it was time to pile back into the coach. Many thanks to Chris Cole for organising the day and the transport. Can't wait to go back and see some of the things we simply didn't have time for - and there were many.

Bev

More coffee anyone?

THE POWER OF THE LORD



I am an “Accidental Anglican”. Perhaps I should explain that I was born into the Church of England – it was not something I became as a considered choice. “When you are asked your religion Barry, you are to say ‘I’m Church of England’”. This was the only specific instruction on matters of faith which my mother gave me. Yes – I was baptised as an infant, and I still have a very colourful card dated September 14th 1930 recording the event, which seems to have made me a member.

However, like several people I have met at Christ Church over the years, I am an “Instinctive Baptist”. There seems a certain rightness about their practice. So much so that, when I went with a party to Israel in 1999, I asked to be baptised in the River Jordan. The Clergyman leading our pilgrimage said I couldn’t be baptised again, as “I had already been done”. But I wasn’t going to miss this chance so – suitably garbed in white gowns – we went down into the murky waters. I can’t remember what he actually said at the time – something about renewing my baptismal vows I think – but I did get another larger certificate recording this event.



In the past there have been Clergy who have refused certain church privileges to the unbaptised. The tragic story of Tess D’Urberville in Thomas Hardy’s novel, set in 19th century Dorset, is a case in point. Tess, a young servant girl in the Great House, is seduced by the young son of the manor and becomes pregnant. She is then classed as a ‘fallen woman’. Her baby dies and Tess takes him in her arms to the local Vicar for burial. He is not without sympathy but tells Tess: “I am not allowed to bury your child in the graveyard. He has not been baptised”. Tearfully, Tess carries her sad bundle outside the church precincts and - as close to the churchyard wall as she can get, she digs a hole in the ground with her bare hands and gently covers the body with soil. She then lays some nearby wild flowers on top of the grave and goes sadly away.

The recent baptism of Kerry broke with tradition at Christ Church, where a large baptismal pool was set up in the chancel. Kerry had come to faith through the Alpha Course and had not been baptised as a child. Tom barely had a chance to interview her before she wanted to tell us herself in a strong, clear voice what it meant to her. She was then baptised and immersed in the cold water.

I took the opportunity to have a brief word with Kerry afterwards and told her “You have done a wonderful thing at Christ Church this morning. You may be a trail-blazer for others to follow your example”.

All credit must go to Tom for acceding to her request for immersion. Someone else could easily have said “Oh, we don’t do it this way at Christ Church”. Now we know that that we can and do! Yes, there were logistical difficulties. The effort needed to set up the pool and take it down afterwards. The ‘self emptying’ feature of the plumbing which flooded the Vestry! But lessons can be learnt from this.

We now pray that Kerry will ‘grow in grace’ and become well integrated into the family of the church. “We welcome you!” “Be still for the Power of the Lord is moving in this place” - it certainly was last Sunday!

