

## Edmonton Newsletter

January 2024

This year for the first time in four decades Christmas was very different for me. It was the first time that I had not attended Christmas services with a group or body of people. This was to celebrate the light that has been given to each and every one of us, but due to sickness I was forced to stay home and reflect and pray about the true meaning of Christmas alone.



The coming to a time when the light of the world has been delivered to and amongst us. The retelling of the meaning of that precious light. The feeling of loneliness overwhelmed me, and I realised the importance of being with those close to my heart. I missed the camaraderie, laughter, and joy of spending time with family, friends and congregation members. I pray that we will be able to celebrate Christmas with all of them next year.

Since becoming a priest, it has been one of the most wonderful things to express to others what that light means in our world today. But being at home watching an array of different services has given me a different perspective. The telling and retelling of this historical event is done in a variety of ways. There were sheep (real ones!) and donkeys. I watched the children and adults dress up as members of that beloved family. I witnessed dogs dressed as shepherds and angels. Some of the services were held in the dark using candlelight with whole communities... there was singing and readings.

This year Christmas was truly different - a sight to behold! Traditionally and imaginatively!

But through the haze of consciousness, I heard a carol sung by the Kings College Choir - O Magnum Mysterium which perfectly expresses a timeless sense of serenity and wonder, making it one of the most beloved pieces that I have heard. The haunting harmonies of the choir, combined with the beautiful lyrics, evoked a sense of awe and mystery that few other pieces have. The emotion of the piece is so powerful that it was able to linger in my memory long after the music has ended.

O magnum mysterium  
Et admirabile sacramentum  
Ut animalia viderent Dominum natum  
Jacentem in praesepe!  
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera  
Meruerunt portare  
Dominum Christum  
Alleluia

O great mystery,  
and wonderful sacrament,  
that animals should see the newborn Lord,  
lying in a manger!  
Blessed is the virgin whose womb  
was worthy to bear  
the Lord, Jesus Christ.  
Alleluia!

The mystery of the choir's powerful performance was an unforgettable experience that will remain with me for years to come.

*'Respice ad orientem pro confirmation'* – may we look to the east for confirmation of the Epiphany. May the divine mysteries inspire us all to reach our own epiphanies and bring us closer to God.

**Mother Patricia Brown – Curate of St Aldhelm Silver Street**

## CLERGY MOVES



### The Revd Stephen Brown

Fr Stephen trained for ministry with the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme and he was ordained in 2015. He served his title at St Augustine Kilburn and went on to serve as an NSM at St Mary Hayes before becoming Priest in Charge of St Alphege Edmonton and St Matthew Ponders End. He stood down as PinC of St Matthew's in 2021 and became Vicar of St Alphege. **Fr Stephen will retire on 7 February 2024.**



### The Revd Canon James Elston

Fr James was trained for ministry with the South East Institute of Theological Education and he was ordained in 2004. He served his title at the Parish of Old St Pancras, became a Team Vicar of POSP in 2012 and Team Rector in 2015. **Fr James will be licensed as Vicar of St Stephen with All Hallows Hampstead on 8 April 2024.**

## EDMONTON EVENTS

### Farewell Mass of Fr Stephen Brown

3pm on Sunday 4 February 2024 at [St Alphege, Edmonton](#)

You are warmly invited to join the congregation of St Alphege Edmonton at Fr Stephen Brown farewell mass as he retires as Vicar of the parish. We will be celebrating Candlemas and giving thanks for Fr Stephen's ministry among us. Preacher: The Rt Revd Peter Wheatley. Clergy are invited to robe in cotta and white stole. Please inform [Fr Stephen](#) if you wish to do so.



## NEWS

### Help Churches Become Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Friendly



***“Embrace the love and acceptance of Christ, for He welcomes all, regardless of our journeys or heritage, into His loving arms.”***

Jesus, born into a Jewish community, was a descendant of Abraham, the founding patriarch of Judaism. Abraham led his family and livestock from Ur, traversing Haran to reach Canaan and then Egypt. Seeking sustenance, his descendants moved to Egypt. After enduring oppression, they journeyed through the desert for decades before finally settling in the Holy Land, ever conscious of their nomadic heritage and the divine command to

offer compassion and hospitality to all peoples in their territory.

For much of his life, Jesus embraced a nomadic lifestyle. The Roman occupation compelled Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem, where, due to a shortage of accommodation, Jesus was born in a simple manger. To evade persecution, the Holy Family took refuge in Egypt, eventually establishing themselves in the northern reaches of the Holy Land. In the last three years of his life, Jesus travelled widely, frequently without a fixed abode.

The first to visit the infant Jesus were shepherds, semi-nomadic people who wandered with their flocks seeking pasture and safety. Although often marginalized and distrusted by established communities, the Holy Family welcomed these shepherds. Throughout His ministry, Jesus interacted with those cast aside by society, including tax collectors, sex workers, and lepers, always advocating for empathy towards the disenfranchised.

Christians, irrespective of social standing, are in essence pilgrims on a journey, steered by God—the ultimate shepherd—across diverse paths and through life’s trials. Fundamentally, this world is not our permanent residence; our souls yearn for eternal peace in God. When Gypsies, Roma and Travellers—many of whom profess Christianity—seek temporary haven, settled Christians are presented with the chance to live out the Gospel’s message through acts of kindness and generosity. This emulates the way Jesus, Mary, and Joseph interacted with the shepherds and mirrors the grace God extended to us. In offering hospitality to these groups, we may unknowingly bestow kindness and acceptance as though onto Jesus himself.

At the core of every Gypsy, Roma and Traveller is a deep-rooted desire to find a place to call ‘home’, but defining and finding it is a perilous journey of discovery that spans a lifetime. As one of the UK’s most misrepresented and misconceived ethnic groups, its people face unique challenges, plagued by misperceptions, generalisations and discrimination – often perpetuated by the media. Belonging is denied over and over. This is where you can make a difference.

#### How to become a friendly church

- Visit and talk with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Welcome Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people into church and worship, and be proactive in offering to conduct baptisms, weddings and funerals
- Offer to bless caravans and pray about concerns
- Offer simple practical assistance
- Celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month in June



You can also partner with Sanctuary Stopping, a new initiative that helps Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people find legal and safe places to stop over when they are travelling. To find out more about this initiative, visit [www.sanctuaryplaces.co.uk](http://www.sanctuaryplaces.co.uk).

For more information about how you can help churches to become Gypsy, Roma and Traveller friendly, email the Revd Preb [Joseph Fernandes](mailto:Joseph.Fernandes@diocese.org), Chaplain to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in London Diocese and Rector of St Mary’s Acton.

## TRAINING AND EVENTS



#### Leading Well: A Five-Session Online Leadership Course

9.45am-4pm from 16 January 2024 online – **registration closes on 5 January!**

Looking to develop in your leadership? Wanting to explore how to lead a church in mission? Longing for a place to explore questions and concerns in a safe environment? Leading well as an incumbent is both stimulating and demanding, particularly during the early years of an incumbency. This course is aimed primarily at those who want to grow in their core leadership skills, including:

- What is distinctive about Christian leadership, and how does this practically shape our priorities and style as a leader?
- What does a missional and collaborative culture look like, and what is our role in enabling this?
- How do we facilitate change in a way that enables churches to flourish rather than fragment?
- How do we establish healthy rhythms of ‘work and rest’ that are life-giving and keep us fresh and focused?

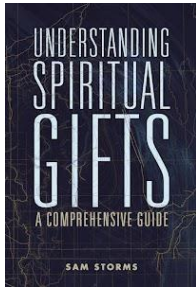
The Cost is £190 which could largely be covered by a CMD grant. More information and registration [here](#).

#### Alpha Course in Edgware Parish

From 10am on 18 January 2024 at [St Margaret’s Church](#)

Do you wonder if there is more to life? Got questions about life? All are welcome to our 11-week Alpha Course starting this January. Join us for friendship, discussion and a communal meal as we talk about the Christian faith together. To register by 11 January 2024 or for more details please email [parishoffice.edgware@gmail.com](mailto:parishoffice.edgware@gmail.com).





### **Understanding Spiritual Gifts: A Comprehensive Guide, taught by Sam Storms**

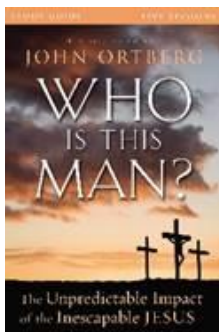
A 10-week course starting 8pm on 16 January 2024 by Zoom

Sam Storms has spent several decades teaching on the topic of the spiritual gifts and equipping believers in the faithful practice of God's gifts. Yet there remains a great deal of confusion about the nature of the gifts and how they best function in the body of Christ. In this comprehensive guide to the spiritual gifts, Storms addresses the many bizarre and misleading interpretations while confronting the tendency to downplay the urgency of spiritual gifts for Christian living and ministry. He explains how spiritual gifts are given to build up the body of Christ. You can watch the trailer [here](#) and for more information and registration please click [here](#). It would help us greatly if you were able to register by 8 January 2024.

### **Who Cares? An Introduction to Pastoral Care**

7-9pm from 23 January 2024 by Zoom

Are you interested in caring for others, whether in a small group or visiting them at home or in hospital? Do you want to care for anyone at their point of need? This course will give you an insight into what pastoral care is all about and what good practice looks like. Book your place [here](#). Cost for all seven sessions is £35. *Please book individually, rather than share one screen among many.*



### **"Who is this Man?" A 6-week Discipleship Course**

8pm from 25 January 2024 by Zoom

"Who is this Man?" is a fascinating book and video course looking at the impact Jesus has had on human history, on the human condition, and on our understanding of our obligations as human beings. Ortberg demonstrates that nothing in our existence has been quite the same since the resurrection of Jesus. The real power of this book rests on the paradox of our faith: that to follow Jesus is not a pathway to an easy life, but a call to do hard things if we are to live in the image of our Lord. The course is delivered via DVD teaching with plenty of discussion time. Participants will need to buy a Study Guide and are advised to purchase the Paperback Book. For more details and registration, please click [here](#). It would help us greatly if you were able to register by 15 January.

### **Lent Listening Groups**

7.30pm from 20 February 2024 online

With Lent and Easter taking place very early in the new year, we wanted to flag our 2024 Lent offering. You are invited for a deep dive into the theme of listening as a tool for deepening discipleship organised by our Discipleship Enabler and hosted by our Bishops. The sessions can be used as part of a church, small group, or other friendship group. Explore how listening can help create space to pay attention to what God is doing in our lives. In groups of three to four people we will be encouraged to listen, notice, lean into discomfort, discern and respond. Book [here](#)



### **Wil Gafney Talk and Q&A**

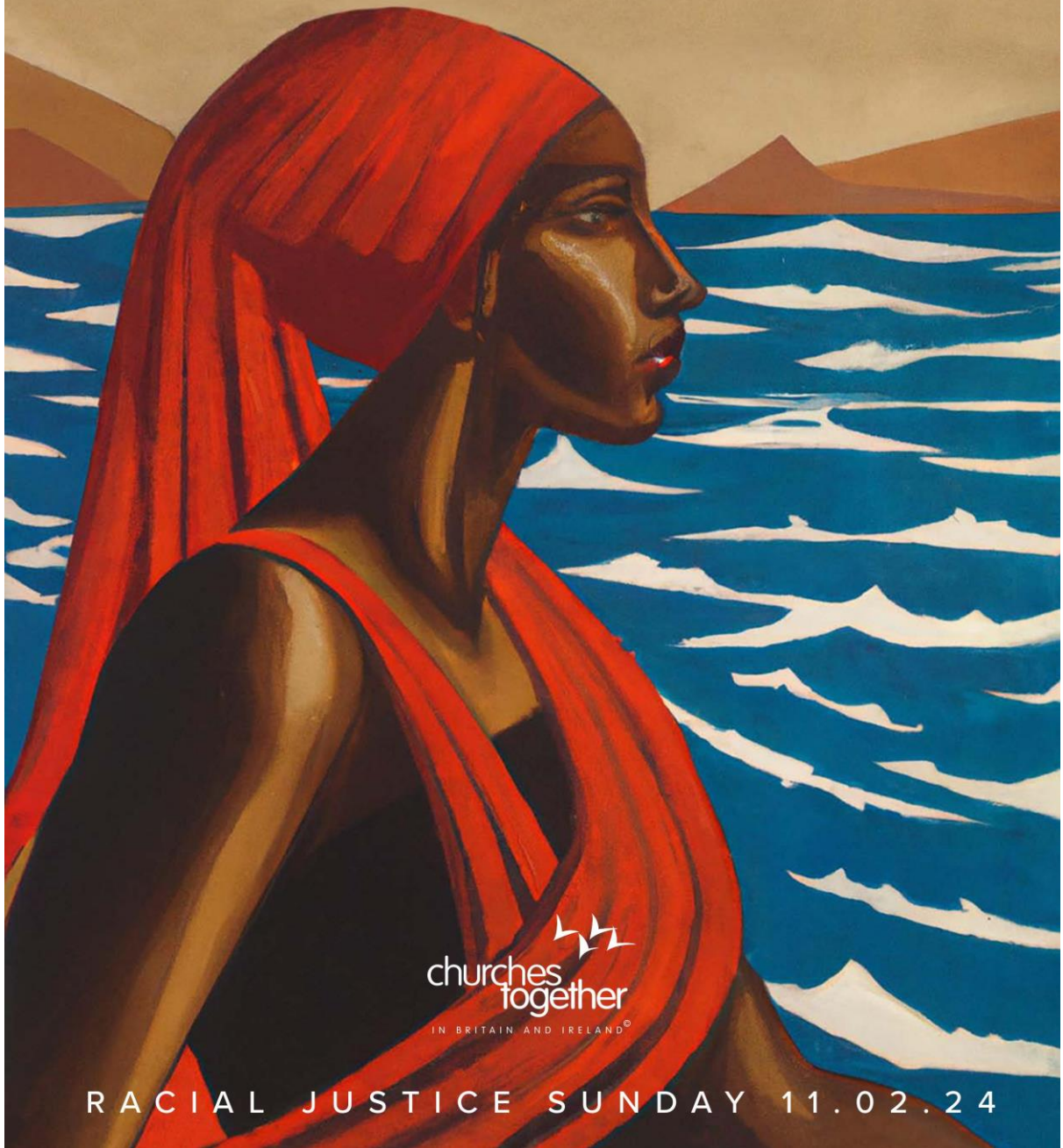
6-8pm on 26 May 2024 at St Paul's Cathedral

St Paul's Cathedral is inviting you to a lecture, Q&A and short reception with renowned biblical scholar and womanist theologian, the Reverend Professor Wilda C. Gafney. Professor Gafney will be speaking in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral on the stories of women in the Hebrew Bible.

Professor Gafney is the Right Rev. Sam B. Hulse Professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. She is also the author of A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church and translator of its biblical selections, and Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to Women of the Torah and of the Throne. She has completed the second volume of Womanist Midrash focusing on women in the Former Prophets, which is expected later in 2024, and will be featured in this event. The evening will be chaired by Dr Paula Gooder, the Canon Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, author and biblical scholar, and will include plenty of time for questions and answers. Please reserve your free place [here](#) by Friday 10 May 2024 and we will send you more information nearer to the date of the event.

# EXODUS!

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