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# Lifeline

## MAGAZINE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN HAARLEM

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## **Chaplaincy letter**

### **The kingdom of God is like a tree**

*Thus says the Lord God: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it, in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind”. (Ezekiel 17,22-23)*

*Jesus said: “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade”. (Mark 4,30-32)*

We encounter the image of a tree both in Ezekiel’s prophecy and in Mark’s gospel. For Ezekiel, the image of the tree serves as a sign of hope for the people of Israel, who have been deported to Babylon. The time will come, when God restores his people to their original dignity. They will no longer be trampled; they will stand up again as a large tree. They will bear fruit. They will be able to accommodate people of all sorts. A hopeful image for a people deported, trampled, deprived of their dignity.

In St Mark’s gospel, Jesus uses the same image – of a large tree – to describe the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God starts like a little seed. But it will grow and grow, until “the birds of the air can make nests in its shade”. This is a hopeful image as well – for the disciples of Jesus at that time, and for us the present disciples of Jesus. Both then and now, Jesus’ disciples *might* think that the kingdom of God has not yet come, and perhaps will never come. But in Jesus Christ the kingdom *has begun* – as a little seed. Jesus Christ *is* the little seed, sown into the earth, dying in order to bring forth many fruits. The kingdom of God is still growing. It is not yet the large tree that stands secure and protects birds of all kinds. The kingdom is still a little plant, you can trample it – and many people do. But it is there, and it will grow, and that is the hopeful image Jesus gives us in this parable. If we do not see *enough* of God’s kingdom *yet*, we may trust that it is there and that it is growing. And that it will become a large tree, accommodating many people of all kinds.

Why do I like the image of a tree so much? The image is *comforting*, because the tree gives shadow in the hot climate of the Middle East. Both Ezekiel and Jesus mention the shadow. And I like the comfort of that image. The heat of our day, the stress of our work, the responsibilities of our life – God offers us a retreat from all that, a resting place, a refreshing shadow.

There are colleagues of mine – priests, theologians – who think this approach is wrong. They think that God and Jesus don't offer us a retreat. They are suspicious that resting in the shadow of God's love will make us lazy. We have to work for the kingdom of God! Well, I would direct them to the parable immediately preceding the present one. The farmer sleeps and rises night and day, but the seed sprouts and grows, and he does not know how (Mark 4,27). We can *prepare the ground* for the kingdom of God, but we cannot *establish* it. When people try and *make* the kingdom of God, the result is usually a tyranny. We have to prepare the ground for the kingdom of God, and then we may *receive* the kingdom, from God. So I don't think it is wrong to take the image of the tree seriously, and enjoy the shadow it provides. It is a touching image, that we are allowed, amidst the stress of our lives, to find a refreshing retreat in God's loving care.

Finally, I find the image of the tree so touching, because it is emphasized that *all sorts of birds* find a home among its branches. Ezekiel says, "Every kind of bird", "winged creatures of every kind". I like this image of God's welcoming love. To be loved by God, to be a member of his church, to be part of his kingdom does not require uniformity. Growing into the likeness of Christ does not mean that we will all become similar. If we take seriously that God has created each one of us, then we may be astonished about the diversity of God's imagination and creativity. We may be astonished about God's capability to love – to love all sorts of people. And we may be grateful, that it is not *us* who make the kingdom of God, according to our own limited imagination, but it is *God* who builds for us the fatherly house with many mansions.

*Fr Mattijs Ploeger*

*(from my sermon in Haarlem on 17 June 2018)*

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## ***Music Matters***

On Saturday 9 June our Church choir and the Anglican Singers joined other choirs of our Archdeaconry and members of RSCM North-West Europe for the Archdeaconry annual Choral Festival. The Festival this year was hosted by Holy Trinity in Brussels and this was also their celebration for 200 years of Anglican worship in Brussels. The festival was held in the Eglise Royale where H.T.B. held services in the beginning. The conductor was Piers Maxim of Malvern Priory and our organist was Christina Edelen. The Service was a Choral Evensong and was based on the RSCM Festival Book King of Glory, King of Peace. We enjoyed a great day rehearsing and a good day was had by all!

Our final choral service in Haarlem before the holidays will be this coming Sunday 1 July, after which the choir will be on holiday until the beginning of September. We will be singing our annual Choral Evensong in the St. Bavo Church on Sunday 9 September at 7 pm. Do join us then!

As already mentioned, the choir will be part of the European Cathedral Week at St. Edmundsbury Cathedral in Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, singing the daily services from Monday 13 till Sunday 19 August. Do join us if you are in the area then, but please note that Thursday will be our day off. On the Friday evening the service will be attended by the composer and former Kings Singer Grayston (Bill) Ives as we will be singing a set of his Canticles and his anthem which we premiered in York Minster last year.

As this year commemorates the centenary of the end of the First World War, we shall be joining other singers for a special service in the Notre Dame on Sunday 11 November. The well-known composer Malcolm Archer is composing an anthem for this service and will be conducting. It will surely be a truly memorable occasion! If you happen to be holidaying in Paris at that time we should be delighted to see you!

Our first Choral Service in Haarlem Church after the summer break will be on Sunday 2 September, with a Choral Eucharist.

The choir and I wish you a very good holiday season and thank you for your continued support!

*Martin van Bleek,  
Organist and choirmaster*



## ***Annual General Meeting***

Our Annual General Meeting will be held after the service  
on Sunday 1 July.

Our new Area Dean for The Netherlands will be  
taking the service and presiding over the AGM.

Do join us for the service and that important meeting.  
We shall be looking at the events and the life of our church  
over the past year, but we will also be looking to the future.

In September/October we will be having a Vision Meeting  
with our Archdeacon Paul Vrolijk on the way forward for our  
Church in Haarlem. More news on the date as soon as we  
have been able to arrange it with our Archdeacon



*The young rabbi*

A young rabbi was an avid golfer.  
Even on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year,  
he sneaked out by himself for a quick round.  
On the last hole he teed off and a gust of wind carried his ball  
directly over the hole and dropped it in for a hole-in-one.  
An angel who witnessed this miracle complained to God;  
“This fellow is playing golf on Yom Kippur, and you caused  
him to get a hole in one? Is this a punishment?”  
“Of course it is,” said God smiling, “Who can he tell?”



*"Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me under the shadow of your wings."  
(Psalm 17:v8)*

## ***Compline and healing service in Haarlem***

For me, one of the blessings of Compline, perhaps the most basic, is that it helps my mind prepare for a restful state of mind.

Psychologically at least, this practice is a little like other details of a bedtime routine: locking the doors, turning out lights, brushing teeth, etc. On a solely natural level, Compline tells my body and mind that bedtime is approaching. As a man who has worked for eleven and a half years of permanent night shifts it also prepares me in a rather beautiful and tender way for the work of the night ahead.

But there's much more to it. The opening words of Compline

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*"The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end"*

are a doorway into rest for me. These words cue my spirit that rest is coming soon. The confession and plea for forgiveness that follow cleanse my conscience and prepare me for the night in a sense of purity and peace.

Also, I think this is because the quiet, meditative nature of the service is the perfect way to end the day. The prayers slow down my racing mind. It helps me to welcome the Word of God into my head and heart in the last moments of the day, and often helps it to lodge there.

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*"Into your hands do I commend my spirit ... keep me as the apple of your eye and hide me under the shadow of your wings" and*

*"Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace ..."*

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are all parts of a calming, reassuring use of words that help the feeling that you are receiving a special bedtime cuddle.

Compline also helps me commit to my loved ones and others, and the world; in fact in our monthly compline service in Haarlem we have included a practice of praying for the sick, and others who

have requested our prayers. In this way we have developed a service of compline and healing. Toward the end of that service there is a laying on of hands. This might seem strange, or silly to some people, but really all that we are doing is giving each other a blessing or benediction. It is a peaceful gesture of caring.

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*Watch, dear Lord, with those who wake or watch or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, Lord Christ, rest your weary ones, bless your dying ones, soothe your suffering ones, shield your joyous ones, and all for your love's sake, amen.*

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It is a critical and complete exercise in intercession and in trust, before I go off to my work.

Finally, I think the fitting words of the Compline hymn

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*"Lord, save us, save us while we are awake; protect us while we are asleep, that we may keep our watch with Christ, and when we sleep, rest in his peace"*

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along with the Gloria

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*"Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit..."*

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have come to affect my mind and spirit a little like a loving parent tucking me into the covers and planting a gentle kiss on my forehead. It punctuates my day; it draws the curtains and turns out the lights on all the activity of that day. It benedicts.

And that doesn't exhaust the blessings of Compline.

We celebrate Compline in Haarlem once a month, the dates are to be found in *Lifeline* and the weekly service sheets. If you have never tried it, then I can highly recommend attending, or just reading through the service, which can be found using the link on the Parish website.

*Francis Gordon*

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## **Ms. Miscellaneous**

### **Summertime**

*It's summertime summertime sum sum summertime  
Summertime summertime sum sum summertime  
Summertime summertime sum sum summertime  
Summertime summertime sum sum summertime summertime...*

*Well shut them books and throw 'em away  
And say goodbye to dull school days  
Look alive and change your ways  
It's summertime...*



These are two of the tunes which come to my mind when thinking of the weeks ahead.

My daughter past her exams exemplary, got accepted into the academy of her first choice, my son passed enough of his exams to be promoted to his second year in university and I am about to finish a troublesome project.

The way to summer bliss lies open before me..... Just taking some time to curl up in my happy cocoon with my children and other loved ones.

To recover from stress and small domestic worries, and greater worries about everything happening in the world. Not to close my eyes from everything – well, only for a short time then, enjoying the shady shores of the river Ebro – but to muster new courage and energy to contribute to trying to make the world a better place after all.

I wish you all a wonderful summer!

*Veronique Ruiz*

## **PERSONAL PRAYER**

Gij zijt de God van de aprilregen en van man en muis.

Gij zijn wijsheid, Kracht, Bewogenheid en Trouw,

Eeuwigheid en Oneindigheid, Gij zijt Al-barmhartig.

Gij zijt de Enige, de perfecte Liefde zelf!

Wat kan ik tot U zeggen, mijn God?

Zal ik U verwijten dat Gij zo ver van mij af zijt,  
of dat U schijnt te zwijgen,  
wat zo verschrikkelijk is en mij angstig maakt?

Zal ik klagen omdat gij onbegrijpelijk zijt,  
verborgen en onberekenbaar?

Maar hoe kan ik U verwijten maken om Uw verte,  
wanneer ik Uw nabijheid even mysterieus vind  
en Gij langzaam zijt met vergeven,  
als Uw wegen zo ondoorgrondelijk zijn  
en het mijn kwaad en verwarring van mijn eigen wil zijn,  
die mijn begrijpen zo duister maken.

Wat kan ik tot U zeggen, mijn God?

Zal ik mij toewijden aan U?

Zal ik zeggen dat ik tot U behoer met al wat ik heb en ben?

You are the God of the April showers and of man and mouse.

You are Wisdom, Might, Sympathy and Trust.

Eternal and everlasting You are All merciful.

You are the Only One, perfect Love itself.

What can I say to You, my God.

Shall I blame You for being so far away,  
or that You appear to be silent,  
which is so terrible and makes me afraid?

Should I complain that You are hard to understand, hidden and unreachable?

How can I blame You for Your remoteness, when I find Your presence mysterious,  
when You seem slow to forgive,  
if Your ways are so unfathomable and my own sins and confusion are my own choosing,  
which make my understanding so obscure.

What can I say to You, my God?

Shall I devote myself to You?

Shall I say that I am Yours?  
with all that I have and am?

*with thanks to  
Marga Beekman*

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

*Should you require further information about a service or event  
please contact the Secretary*

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|-------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sunday 1 July</b>                      | <b>14.30</b> | <b>Choral Eucharist (with choir)</b><br><i>retiring collection for Mission</i><br><br><b>The AGM will be held after this service</b> , conducted by the Area Dean, the Rev. Ruan Crew, from the Church of James in Voorschoten-British School |
| <b>Sunday 8 July</b>                      | <b>14.30</b> | <b>Sung Eucharist with hymns;</b><br>Rev. Dr. Mattijs Ploeger                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Tuesday 10 July                           | 11.30        | Coffee morning at Restaurant near Ann's beach hut, Wijk aan Zee                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Sunday 15 July</b>                     | <b>14.30</b> | <b>Eucharist (said);</b> Rev. Robert Frede                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Sunday 22 July</b>                     | <b>14.30</b> | <b>Eucharist (said);</b> Rev. Robert Frede                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Sunday 29 July</b>                     | <b>14.30</b> | <b>Eucharist (said);</b><br>Rev. Dr. Mattijs Ploeger                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Sunday 5 August</b>                    | <b>14.30</b> | <b>Eucharist (said);</b> Rev. Robert Frede<br><i>retiring collection for Mission</i>                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Sunday 12 August</b>                   |              | NO service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Monday 13 August till<br>Sunday 19 August |              | Our choir, together with other members of the European Cathedral Singers will sing the daily services in St. Edmunds Bury Cathedral (see Music Matters in this <i>Lifeline</i> )                                                              |

Tuesday 14 August 11.30 Coffee morning at the Molenplas

**Sunday 19 August** No service

**Sunday 26 August 14.30 Eucharist (said);** Rev. Robert Frede

**Sunday 2 September 14.30 Choral Eucharist (with choir);**  
Rev. Robert Frede  
retiring collection for Mission

A **Vision Day**, conducted by the  
Ven. Dr. Paul Vrolijk, Archdeacon  
will be held on a day in September  
(date and time to be announced)

