

MAY 2023

EBBSFLEET NEWS

Supporting Churches in Gospel Ministry



REFRESHING COMMUNION

By Bishop Rob Munro

"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me!" John 17:23

Jesus' prayer in John 17 is much quoted by those concerned about the unity of the church, but not often experienced. At GAFCON 2023, the joy of gathering folk from 52 countries with a common heart and goal had me in tears, not least when it contrasts so starkly with our usual experience in England.

Communion is not a structural thing! Communion is a gift of God flowing from obedience to God's Word – **TRUTH** (John 17:17). It is a commission from God to show and share with our world – **MISSION** (John 17:23). That is why talk of impaired communion is so serious. It is not about us choosing with whom we fellowship, based on our own estimation of their soundness; it is expressing the joy and pain of our God-given love for each other (John 17:26) – rejoicing in our shared obedience and grieving when that is failing or rejected.

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Summary report and letter

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It's not too late to book!

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Dick Farr

NEW EBBSFLEET PA

Introducing Steve Drake

GAFCON felt like that to me. There was real joy at the shared commitment to let the Doctrinal Truths, expressed in Canon A5 and the historic formularies of the Church, be seen as the basis of our Anglican Communion, rather than a quirk of colonialism. But that joy was tempered by a real grief that was felt as the 'mother church' was being challenged by its children on this. The fact that 85% of the weekly attending Anglican Communion, represented by the GSFA and GAFCON, agree on this, is a challenge to us all. Sometimes our unity has been more selective than God's generosity demands, but God's Word is its non-negotiable foundation.

At the same time I repeatedly met women and men who had made great sacrifices so as to share the gospel in their community and culture— like the Bible college principal whose nearby church was burned last month in Congo, the Mexican church planter pioneering a church in an unreached area with no resources except a great faith, the bishop whose home was destroyed soon after his marriage who now carries around some of its ashes to remind him not to overly-treasure this world's pleasures and to prioritise gospel ministry. Sometimes we forget that we are not resisting changes in the church's teaching for our own security, but for the sake of our gospel clarity. The lives that are at stake without Christ are worth staking our lives on His Word for. We are called to suffer and make sacrifices for the sake of those we are called to serve and seek God to save.



GAFCON 2023



KEY NOTES

- 1302 delegates from 52 countries; 315 bishops including 13 Primates, & 456 other clergy.
- Themes was Repentance and Evangelism – Repentance as our gospel essential; Evangelism as our gospel priority.
- Keynote address: call to be “a repenting church, a reconciling church, a reproducing church & a relentlessly compassionate church”.
- UK Contingent of ~90+ from across the evangelical streams and the ANiE linked groups.
- Significant coalition of GSFA and GAFCON. GSFA to focus on structural/doctrinal areas, GAFCON on mission/evangelism
- Significant outcome – redefining the heart of the Anglican communion as a commitment to Anglican doctrine rather than colonial history, so the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury will be recast.

For more reflections on GAFCON, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDjA2gBNVoU>

While the Bishops consider what changes to make to proposed LLF prayers, what guidance to give for their use and what provision to give to conscience, it is Jesus' prayer that reminds us that our unity and communion can only flourish when we honour His Word and are ready to sacrifice ourselves to bring His Word to a lost world.

We will be exploring more of what strengthening our fellowship means at this time at our Regional Conferences, whose details are below. Do come if you can as we serve the call to proclaim truth and prioritise mission in the face of all our pressures. Hope to see you there!

Bishop's Diary

Looking back since the last newsletter, here are some highlights:

15 th -16 th March	Church Society Council residential
16 th March	Meeting with +Warrington Meeting with Toxteth Wardens (Liverpool)
18 th March	Sheffield Diocesan Synod and formal licensing
19 th March	Preaching at Holy Cross, Gleadless Valley (Sheffield)
20 th March	Meeting Fresh Expressions coordinator Southwark Dundonald Church elders meeting
23 rd March	College of Bishops meeting – following up General Synod
26 th March	Preaching at Central Church, Warrington (Liverpool) Visit to Emmanuel, Wimbledon (Southwark)
27 th March	Visit to All Souls, Langham Place (London)
28 th March	Clearing the Blindley Heath office
29 th March	Meeting with Southport wardens (Liverpool)
30 th March	Meeting with the CEO of CPAS Ebbsfleet Pastoral Conversations via Zoom
2 nd April	Preach at St Andrew's Cheadle Hulme (Chester)
3 rd April	Virtual meeting with +Manchester
4 th April	Trip to Oxford Diocese, meeting DDO and Bishop Meeting minister of St Ebbe's Oxford
5 th April	Virtual meetings with +Barking, and Ordinands
7 th April	Celebrating Good Friday
9 th April	Easter Sunday. Six Confirmations at Dundonald (Southwark)



12 th April	Interview new PA for Ebbsfleet
16 th – 23 rd April	GAFCON in Kigali, Rwanda
24 th April	Chelmsford Bishops meeting and licensing Ebbsfleet Pastoral Team meeting
25 th April	Meeting ADO, DDO and Director of Ministry (London) Meeting ordination candidates
26 th April	Pastoral meeting with a Manchester Deacon Installation of new vicar of Toxteth (Liverpool)
27 th April	Lichfield Bishops meeting
30 th April	Confirmations at St Andrew's Leyland (Blackburn)

Highlights of what's ahead

10 th May	Regional Conference in London
13 th May	Meeting with +Southwark
14 th May	St John's Barkham for Morning Service & Confirmations at St Nic's Sevenoaks
15 th – 17 th May	House of Bishops Residential
21 st May	Confirmation in St Albans diocese
22 nd May	New Ebbsfleet PA starts – Steve Drake
25 th May	Regional Meeting in London
28 th May	Morning Worship & Evening Confirmations at Harold Wood (Chelmsford)

Strengthening our fellowship

Join our Regional Conferences

The conferences are open to all, but are clustered by region, so as to strengthen our fellowship across diocesan boundaries

For Chelmsford, Ely, Europe, Norwich, Oxford, St Albans, and St Eds & Ips

in London on Weds 10th May at Emmanuel centre

REGISTER [HERE](#)

For Canterbury, Chichester, Guildford, London, Portsmouth, Rochester, Southwark and Winchester

in London on Thurs 25th May at Emmanuel centre

REGISTER [HERE](#)

For Blackburn, Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, York

at St Andrews, Leyland, PR25 3EL on Thurs 8th June

REGISTER [HERE](#)

For Birmingham, Coventry, Derby, Leicester, Lichfield, Lincoln, Peterborough, Southwell&Notts, Worcester

at St.Giles, Derby, DE23 8DE on Tues 13th June

REGISTER [HERE](#)

For Bath & Wells, Bristol, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Salisbury, Truro,

at St Leonard's, Exeter, EX24NG on Thurs 15th June

REGISTER [HERE](#)

They are open to all, but please register for catering purposes.



Confidence in God

By Dick Farr

When our grandson heads off to his Explorer weekend on Friday, Suzanne and I are confident he will be well looked after and well taught.

Having preached on 1 Samuel 2 recently, I wonder if Hannah had the same confidence. Now weaned she gives Samuel to Eli at Shiloh, not for a long weekend but for the whole of his life he shall be given over to the LORD 1:28. In 2:11 we read the boy ministered to the LORD under Eli the priest. Our author shows us his vulnerability in that each year when she and Elkanah go to Shiloh for the annual sacrifice she made him a little robe 2:19.

Did she know what wicked scoundrels Eli's sons were, treating the LORD's offering with contempt and sleeping with the women who served at the shrine? Did she know that Eli favoured his sons over the LORD? Yet under Eli the priest Samuel becomes the faithful priest promised by a man of God in v35.

Which takes us back to Hannah's remarkable prayer in v1-10. The scope of it is breath-taking: from creation, to God's King, to final judgement. And whilst she affirms the silencing of the wicked, and the breaking of those who oppose the Lord, she declares He will guard the feet of his faithful servants 2:9.

Samuel is the immediate answer to that prayer, the LORD keeps him. As He kept the Lord Jesus, and so many faithful servants throughout the centuries.

May we find our confidence in Hannah's prayer, as we face the challenges of this moment – contempt for the word of God and approval of sexual immorality from our denominational leaders. The LORD will guard the feet of his faithful servants.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. *Hebrews 4:16*

Introducing Steve Drake

The new +Ebbsfleet PA starting on 22nd May



Date of birth? 20 September 1968

Significant others? I am the husband of Mrs Drake, known to her friends as Francesca (never Fran) and the proud father of Harriet and Imogen.

How did you meet Francesca? I swept her off her feet by offering to help her move house. I was (and remain) besotted by her very pretty eyelashes.

When did come to faith? When I was around 12 at a youth camp in Devon.

What have you been doing up to now? Latterly I have been the Church Administrator at Holy Trinity, Hurdfield, but previously I have worked for the Philo Trust (with J.John), Cre8 youth & community project and Willow Creek Association.

Favourite character from a book / film? The child catcher from Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Any hobbies? Basket weaving, squirrel juggling and Norwich's one way system. I like American football (#gohawks!), crime novels and science fiction movies. [NB One of these has yet to be verified.]

Favourite book of the Bible? I'm rediscovering the gospels at the moment (again).

One item to take to a desert island? Giant spoon. Sorry I thought you said dessert island. And lots of books. Assuming I already have a Bible, my one book would be Lawrence Block's Collected Mystery Stories.

Interview from HTH website

News & Prayer Updates

A new call for our Administrative Assistant

Allan Baird, who has been assisting the Ebbsfleet office part time with our online presence and computerised filing, has now stepped down to become the part-time pastor of a Church in Birmingham. I am very grateful for his help, and trust he will have a fruitful ministry in the future.



Pray for the challenge of this next month before Steve starts, as we have increased pressures on administration.
Pray for Mark Wallace as he picks up the extra load.



Personal Updates from Bishop Rob

We are learning all about patience and perseverance regarding our housing. We are still 'squatting' in Cheadle Rectory, but are now awaiting the result of searches regarding a purchase of a house about 15 minutes outside Chester.

Pray for my wife Sarah and son Sam, as both will have find new jobs. **Pray** also for wisdom to find the right fellowship to be a home base, for both personal support and opportunities for service. **Pray** for Cheadle Parish as they search for my successor – hoping that I am not still squatting there when they need the house free!

Compelled to Resist

If you haven't already done so, let me encourage you to connect in with the CEEC



"Keeping Faith" response to the proposed Prayers of Love and Faith. Their petition is heading towards 10,000 signatures (<https://declaration.ceec.info/>). This is a time to stand together, pray together and work together to see biblical teaching on marriage and sex upheld.

Pray for the CEEC in initiatives to be heard by those reviewing the Bishops' response to the Synod votes.

Pray for those who are on the three groups, revising prayers, producing guidance and planning provision / 'reassurance', including some from resolution churches (although not +Rob)

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