

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



JANUARY 2026



CONTENTS



From The Rector's Desk	4
Parish Notices	5
Rector's Address at the Funeral of Erina McIldoon	6
The Aroma of Innocence by Paul McLaughlin	8
Poets Corner	10
Music List	13
Calendar	15
'Where love is, there is God' by Karen Brett	18

St George's Parish Magazine is published on the Sunday nearest the first day of the month, except August and January. Please send contributions to the Parish Office at stgeorgesoffice@btconnect.com. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of the parish.

Editorial Team: William Odling-Smee, Selby Nesbitt, Tony Merrick.

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

The new year always brings new hope, new resolutions and hopefully a rejuvenation of lives and outlook. For me personally, I am hoping for an end to the conflicts currently raging in the world and a peaceful resolution of disputes which have the potential to spill over into open conflict. Not only do conflicts such as the ones in Ukraine and the Middle East cause untold numbers of deaths and injuries, but they also have huge costs psychologically for those affected by them and massive financial implications for the nations and peoples caught up in them. There are other areas where the potential for renewed hostilities is very real, such as India/Pakistan, China/Taiwan and Cambodia/Thailand. Amongst others. The Christ whose birth we have just celebrated came as the Prince of Peace, and it is our duty, as his followers, to pray and to work for peace in this and every land. Perhaps as a New Year resolution, we might consider finding a respected, recognised charity that helps the victims of war and works to promote understanding, justice and peace the world over and then give it our regular support.

Whilst I am on the subject of New Year resolutions, I would ask you all to review your financial contributions to St George's, whether you make them by Standing Order, by Freewill Offering (FWO) envelopes or by cash in the collection plate. I have made it my practise to increase my own contribution at the beginning of each year. It is so easy to do so now with a Standing Order as the bank App allows me to adjust the monthly amount in a minute.

Easter comes very early this year and we hope the Bishop will in St George's for confirmation on Easter Eve (Saturday 4th April), as he traditionally has been. If there are any young people of secondary school age who might be considering confirmation, or if a parent wants more information, then please do give me a ring on 07902792080. The same applies to any adults who would like to be confirmed on Easter Eve. Confirmation is an important sacrament, a milestone on our pilgrimage of faith and I am happy to discuss what is involved with anyone, young or not so young.

Finally, I would like to thank David Falconer, Daniel Clements, Mark McGrath and all of our choir members in the three choirs for the wonderful feast of seasonal music we enjoyed over Advent and Christmas. It was truly uplifting and we are all very grateful for your hard work and dedication.

Every blessing to you all for a very Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Brian Stewart

PARISH NOTICES

Register of Vestry Members: 2026

The annual review of the Register of Vestry Members will take place during the month of February. This is a reminder of the registration process. First, if you are already registered, then there is nothing more you need to do; you can check for your name on the 2025 list of Vestry Members, which is in the narthex. However, if you are not registered and would like to be 'signed up', Forms of Declaration will be available from our Churchwardens during the month of February. Membership of the Vestry entitles you to participate and vote in the elections, which are held at the Easter General Vestry meeting.

The 'terms' for those who can be included on the Register of Vestry Members are that they must be a resident or accustomed member and subscribe to the funds of the parish by a receiptable collection. The Free Will Offering (FWO) scheme is an ideal way to subscribe to parish funds and satisfy this requirement; for further information on the scheme please consult Selby Nesbitt, FWO co-ordinator or Douglas McIllood, our Treasurer. If you have any general queries about the Register of Vestry Members, please speak with the Rector or Peter Hunter, Hon. Secretary.

Please note, the **Easter Vestry will be held on Sunday, 22nd March at 1:00pm** after the morning service. There will be a sandwich lunch before the meeting.



The Rector's Address at the Funeral of Erina Mcildoon

Today, our first responsibility is to offer our love and sympathies to Douglas, Erina's husband of almost 54 years, to her son Ben, her daughter Harriet, and her grandson Gabriel. The loss of Erina will leave a huge gap in all your lives. We too, in this parish and beyond, will miss her greatly. Her quiet and gracious presence, her wry sense of humour, her intelligence and her sharp mind; these virtues were a blessing to us all and to so many who knew and met her over the years.

Those opening lines of our first reading from the Wisdom of Solomon, Chapter 3 set the tone for this Requiem today 'But the souls of the righteous are in hand of God'. That ringing declaration is set in the context of the trials and challenges laid out in the first two chapters of Wisdom, and chapter 3 begins then with an emphatic **'But** the souls of the righteous are in of God.' The Hebrew concept of righteousness is firmly rooted in the prophetic tradition of justice as espoused by the Old Testament prophets and by Christ himself. For Erina, that call to justice was rooted in her upbringing in her parents' curatages and in the Rectory in Cullybackey.

The background is fairly simple. Erina was born into a clerical family. Her mother, Dorothy, was a devout parishioner in St Peter's on the Antrim Rd when she met and married the Curate there, Jack George in 1941. Erina was born in 1944 when her father was curate of St John the Baptist, Upper Falls. They then they moved to St Luke's, Northumberland St in 1946 and finally the family moved to Craigs Parish at Cullybackey in 1949, where her father was Rector until his untimely death in 1963 during Erina's first year in Trinity. She was joined by her brother and sister, twins Stephen and Geraldine in 1949. Erina's education was Cullybackey Primary School, Ballymena Academy and Trinity College, Dublin, where she took a modern languages degree in French and German. She spent 10 years working as a researcher in the Ulster Museum and at one stage undertaking a survey and listing of all the church silver in the Connor and Down and Dromore Dioceses – a mammoth task by any standards.

Craigs Rectory may seem a quiet and idyllic place to grow up in rural North Antrim but her father Jack was a very interesting and in many ways a progressive Rector who pioneered religious broadcasting, and 'clergy retreats' when such things were regarded as somewhat 'Popish' - they called them 'quiet days' so as not to frighten the horses! He also brought a selection of interesting and even controversial preachers to Cullybackey such as Fr Trevor Huddleston, a monk of the Community of the Resurrection (Mirfield Fathers), who had been expelled from South Africa for his courageous opposition to apartheid. His book, 'Naught for your Comfort', was a religious

bestseller in the late 1950s and did much to galvanise Anglican opposition to the policy of the South African government at that time and he inspired a young boy called Desmond Tutu to be a priest. In such a family home, soaked in the Church of Ireland, but very aware of a greater and rapidly changing world beyond the 'dreary spires of Ulster', it is no wonder that Erina's faith was built upon the recognition of the call of the prophets to exercise a righteousness based on justice. It is no wonder that she and Douglas met as a result of their involvement in the Northern Ireland Labour Party and only discovered later their shared membership of St George's which they have kept up since then.

Erina's sense of humour shone through on various occasions. Once she was tackled by someone who did not approve of St George's. "Isn't that place a bit Popish?", no doubt expecting an argument. Erina's reply was priceless, "Oh we **do** like a bit of popery!".

Then there was the occasion when a well-known literary academic, who really should have known better, solemnly announced, 'A reading from St Pauls Letter to the Timothians'. I looked down the church and saw Erina in fits of laughter, attempting to hide behind a handkerchief and that started me off and it took me a full 5 minutes to recover my composure. The more I looked at Erina, by now almost in tears with laughter, the more I had to control myself and failed.

Her home in Rugby Rd was a warm home, full of love and where she devoted herself to Ben and Harriet. Visitors were always welcomed and made to feel at ease. The many challenges of living in Belfast through the worst of the Troubles and of rearing two children, were met with stoicism and good grace, and indeed not without steely determination and a degree of courage, no doubt inherited from her parents.

Erina served St. George's as churchwarden for two years, helped reform the Sunday School and supported the rejuvenated choir in the 1980s. She was also very involved as secretary of the Irish Church Association's Wednesday Forum for many years, with its monthly meeting to hear interesting and challenging speakers on religious questions and topics of the day. Through all of this, she was supported and encouraged by Douglas. The cancer that she had successfully fought off in the late 1980s returned last year after nearly 40 years. I think it was St Augustine who said that in the evening of life what remains of us is love.

Erina's faith, rooted and grounded in the Anglicanism of her upbringing, a broad and generous faith, resonant with the prophetic call to righteousness and justice, lived out in her life, her associations, her parish, and above all in the family she built with Douglas, Ben and Harriet, was a life soaked in love. That is her legacy and that is enough.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory to life everlasting. Amen.

THE AROMA OF INNOCENCE

by Paul McLaughlin



More than one aspiring poet has described the smell of freshly baked bread as an inspiration for nostalgia and innocence. The marketing men, who my father described as assassins with accountancy degrees, helped put an end to the many family bakeries that Belfast once boasted, but remembered that mystical aroma when they developed the supermarkets that made bread-servers redundant and closed corners shops the length and breadth of the country.

‘Put the bread counter at the door and let the smell work its magic’. Nothing half-baked about that idea. It could not have been simpler or easier on the bottom line and it is still working today where a vast range of pre-baked products are available ‘upfront’.

I was born within a hundred yards of one of the city’s most famous bakeries and its remembered smell, described by the experts ‘as a mix of warm bread, vanilla, cinnamon, butter, sugar and other sweet and savoury notes’, is a recipe for memories and enchantment.

JB Kennedy’s bakery opened for business in the Beechmount area of West Belfast in 1921 and he quickly became famous for quality bread, Paris buns and baps that would take on the brand name ‘Belfast’ many years later. But JB was more than just a successful businessman.

He was a champion of local charities, a kind man who treated staff and customers with respect and empathy. A man who brought employment to an area previously deprived. He was revered as late as the 1950s when I first became a customer. Albeit a latecomer in every sense.

A day late to be precise in this instance. JB had a policy of waste not, want not, and nothing of value was destroyed. Any bread that wasn’t sold on the day of baking was slashed in price and made ready for the long queues the following day. Many children, like myself and my older sister, stood in line to buy buns and scones, others had pillow cases filled with cut-price loaves that made sure no child went hungry. And always that fantastic smell filled the air. A smell of comfort, a smell of warmth, a smell of home.

I rushed from school each lunchtime to my Aunt Jean’s bungalow with the aroma in my nostrils. Thankfully, Paddy our bread server came each day and there was always a Kennedy’s bap and an apple

tartlet to compliment the daily boiled egg.

Many residents in the small, terraced houses of the district had their Christmas turkeys cooked in JB's industrial ovens on the eve of the feast, a feat that would have been impossible to manage in tiny sculleries with even tinier gas stoves. This was done free of charge on the orders of a man who became a cherished institution, and while enjoying commercial success, made a point of championing local charities and welfare associations. This endeared him to all.

I moved schools at the age of nine in 1962 and the smell of the bakery in Beechmount Avenue was left behind. But, not for long.

My mother's bread server, Hugh, a Kennedy's man through and through, transported that magical delight to our street every day in the back of his electric van.

He would pull-out and push-in the long drawers in the van reaching for baps, Veda loaves, cinnamon biscuits and assorted 'fancies' in a hand-operated action that bellowed the beautiful smell into the mountain air.

I can still smell it today. Sometimes when I join in the dreaded supermarket shop day, their bakery efforts, which have been known to include pumped-in artificial bakery smells, take me back to happy days and beloved people.

Kennedy's bakery, famous on celluloid in the Northern Ireland Digital Film Archive and in song with its jaunty television advertising jingle extolling JB Kennedy's as 'the best', closed its doors in 1998. A casualty of competition and spiralling costs. Sadly, the ending of a family tradition of baking in the city that went back to the end of the 18th century, but, happily, the renewal of a nostalgia and remembered innocence that linger on in a familiar scent.

POETS CORNER

CATHEDRAL

Places where the air is moth-wing thin,
Where worlds slip through the needle eye of worlds,
This copse so simply dressed in sweet neglect,
Pays tribute to a providence within.
The psalter song of rain on loam and leaves
Will gently call the congregation in.

Cathedral trees; the oak, the ash, the beech,
A shaggy nave of hazel holds the pews.
A blackbird calls the ancient rapturous words,
The darkling thrush flings notes of malted wheat.
The air incensed by mist and petrichor,
A shrieking vixen passes on the peace.

The alter swathed in threads of silk and gold,
Pale primrose hems the cowslip alter-cloth,
May's green lap comes seat of the divine,
Plainsong thrums through constant marigolds.
The earth vibrates to this unearthly note,
And wakes the grizzled badger from repose.

Relentless, we will tidy up the earth,
To pay penance for the apple that we took.
Our plunder missed this sacred fairy-bower,
Thus avoids the wrathful Maker's curse.
We're doomed to pass on misery to man,
And remodel God to reassure our worth

Georgina Milne

CATHEDRAL – an explainer

Several weeks ago, Brian mentioned in a sermon that there are sacred places where the air is “thin” and the divine may manifest with ease. This made me think of my own experiences in places with “thin air”: space where I connect with a being greater than myself. HM King Charles III once reflected that “*The garden at Highgrove really does spring from my heart and, strange as it may seem to some, creating it has been rather like a form of worship.*” King Charles and Queen Camilla recently made history by conducting their first state visit to the Holy See, with the King praying side by side with Pope Leo XIV in the Sistine Chapel. Both the Anglian and Catholic traditions

respect the teachings of St Francis of Assisi, the Patron saint of those who care for nature. In the *Canticle of the Creatures* (c. 1225) he writes “*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Earth our Mother who sustains and governs us*”. Unsurprisingly my faith centres on God as the creator of Nature and our place as stewards of this creation. My love of nature and poetry inspired *Cathedral*. For those keen on literature, I have referenced eleven poems either directly or indirectly therein. Some of these are explained here.

Poet George Herbert acknowledged in *Providence* (1633) that God established the natural world, but he asserted that nature’s praise of God is “*brought to man*”. Humankind can then offer this praise to God on their behalf, as beasts are “*lame and mute*” – Not so, I say! In verse one of *Cathedral*, God is present and is praised by nature in this untidy scrap of wilderness.

The oak, ash and beech are keystone species of ancient woodland and have also held spiritual meaning for many people, including Christians. John Wesley planted two beech trees in Lambeg to symbolise connection between Anglicans and Methodists. In verse two, imagine these trees as cathedral vaults and buttresses, whilst a bushy, knobbly hazel tree provides perching space for birds and shelter for animals. The thrush and the blackbirds are common songbirds that we have all heard and cherish. The “*darkling thrush*” that Thomas Hardy wrote about is placed intentionally in this copse. Thomas Hardy was a deeply religious person until Darwin’s “*On the Origin of Species*” was published in 1859. I like to think that today, Hardy would find a way to reconcile his faith with his clear understanding of science and the scientific method. Furthermore, the poem *The Darkling Thrush* (1902) itself has a theme of hope in a bleak time of change, which is something we can all relate to.

Verse three, concerning the altar, is inspired by poems by Robert Herrek and John Milton. The “*constant marigold*” chronicled by the prolific Robert Graves in *Marigolds* (1917) is a nod to both the resilience of nature and the resilience of love, which are inseparable to me. Graves himself fought in World War I and was friends with Siegfried Sassoon. His battlefield experiences led him towards pacifist tendencies, and he is included here as God is lover of peace.

Lastly, I mention the damage that humans continue to inflict on the earth, all leading back to our betrayal that invoked God’s wrath. Now we are doomed to tame the land and manicure the fields, we erase the bits of nature that we find offensive and plunder the planet for resources, often at great cost to indigenous peoples. We remain vain and greedy, taking more than we should in order to feel secure in this life. This misery is inherited; we damage our children and pass on dissent and disconnection, crudely and impactfully outlined by Philip Larkin in *This be the Verse* (1971).

Somehow, this sacred space in *Cathedral* has evaded our attention – but for how long?

Georgina Milne

POETS CORNER

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT - Joseph Brodsky

In the cave - it sheltered them, at least,
safer than four square-set right angles -
in the cave the threesome felt secure
in the reek of straw and old clobber.

Straw for bedding. Outside the door,
blizzard, sandstorm, howling air.
Mule rubbed ox; they stirred and groaned
like sand and snowflake scourged in wind.

Mary prays; the fire soughs;
Joseph frowns into the blaze.
Too small to be fit to do a thing
but sleep, the infant is just sleeping.

Another day behind them now,
its worries past. And the 'ho, ho, ho!'
of Herod who had sent the troops.
And the centuries a day closer too.

That night, as three, they were at peace.
Smoke like a retiring guest
slipped out the door. There was one far-off
heavy sigh from the mule. Or the ox.

The star looked in across the threshold.
The only one of them who could
know the meaning of that look
was the infant. But He did not speak.

Translated from Russian by Seamus Heaney

Submitted by Geoffrey May

MUSIC LIST January 2026

Sunday 4th January

Christmas 2

11:00AM Sung Eucharist

Hymns **39,21,48**

Sunday 11th January.

The Epiphany

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn **47**

Setting Stanford in Bb and F

Psalm 72: 1-7, 10-15

Gradual Hymn **48**

Offertory Hymn **42**

Communion Hymn 307

Anthem What child is this? - *Hewitt-Jones*

Recessional Hymn **36 (Omit *)**

5:00PM Epiphany Carol Service

Parish Choir

See separate booklet.

Sunday 18th January

Epiphany 2

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn **349**

Psalm 40: 1-12

Setting Stanford in C and F

Gradual Hymn **55**

Offertory Hymn **352**

Communion Hymn 280

Anthem Nova - *Chilcott*

Hymn **466**

MUSIC LIST January 2026

Sunday 18th January

5:00PM Choral Evensong

Epiphany 2

Chamber Choir

Responses	Rose
Psalm	96
Canticles	Sumsion in G
Anthem	Sussex carol - <i>Ledger</i>
Hymns	46, 74

Sunday January 25th

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Epiphany 3

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	271
Setting	Jackson in G
Psalm	27: 1, 4-12
Gradual Hymn	360
Offertory Hymn	391
Communion Hymn	302
Motet	Beati quorum via - <i>Stanford</i>
Hymn	498

5:00PM Choral Eucharist

Parish Men

Setting	Merbecke
Motet	Ecce Advenit - <i>Byrd</i>
Hymns	27, 244

CALENDAR January 2026

Jan 4	2ND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS
9:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
11:00am	Sung Eucharist: The Rector Preacher: The Rector Readings: Jeremiah 31: 7-14; Ephesians 1: 3-14; John 1: 10-18 Reader: <i>Wardens</i> Intercessor: <i>Janet Sandikli</i> Servers: Banji Akinyele, Mark Claney, Tony Merrick Tea and Coffee: <i>Steven McQuitty, Jack McCormick</i>
5:00pm	Evening Prayer: The Rector Lessons: Isaiah 41: 21 - 42: 4; Colossians 1: 1-14 <i>(Fr Tom Layden)</i>
Jan 7	FERIA
10:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
Jan 11	THE EPIPHANY
11:00am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector Preacher: The Rector Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3: 1-12; Matthew 2: 1-12 Reader: <i>Meisam Khalili</i> Intercessor: <i>Archdeacon Harte</i> Servers: Steven McQuitty, Janet Sandikli, Jonny Calder Tea and Coffee: <i>Mina Kelly, Richard Oldfield</i>
5:00pm	Carol Service: The Rector
Jan 14	FERIA
10:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
Jan 18	2ND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
9:30am	Eucharist: The Rector
11:00am	Choral Eucharist: The Rector Preacher: The Rector Readings: Isaiah 49: 1-7; 1 Corinthians 1: 1-9; John 1: 29-42 Reader: <i>Mark Claney</i> Intercessor: <i>Anne McBride</i> Servers: Omolewa Akinyele, Janet Sandikli, Tony Merrick Tea and Coffee: <i>Catherine Hunter, Rosejane Peck</i>
5:00pm	Choral Evensong: The Rector Lessons: Ezekiel 2: 1 – 3: 4; Galatians 1: 11-24 <i>(Geoffrey May)</i>

CALENDAR January 2026

Jan 21

AGNES, MARTYR

10:30am Eucharist: The Rector

Jan 25

3RD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

9:30am Eucharist: The Rector

11:00am Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 9: 1-4; 1 Corinthians 1: 10-18; Matthew 4: 12-23

Reader: *Anne McBride*

Intercessor: *George Woodman*

Servers: Banji Akinyele, Agape Laoye, Jonny Calder

Tea and Coffee: *Judith Fawcett, Joyce Cameron*

5:00pm Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Lessons: Romans 12: 16b-21; Matthew 8: 1-13

(Geoffrey May)

Jan 28

THOMAS AQUINAS, PRIEST

10:30am Eucharist: The Rector

Jan 29

1:00pm Eucharist: The Rector & Fr Graeme Pollock

The Walsingham Group meets at this Eucharist – all welcome





For Sound Expertise and Advice

formula HEALTH

Disability Aids including:
Wheelchairs Walking Sticks
Scooters
Easier Living Rehabilitation Products
Incontinence Bed Pressure Care
Bathing Surgical Appliances
Toileting Cosyfeet Footwear

Household Mobility Comfort & Dressing
• Easy Parking • Mail Order Available

Tel 028 9023 1002 City Centre Location

Open: Mon-Sat 8.45 - 5.30
59 High Street, Belfast BT1 2AB

www.formula-health.co.uk
email: formulahealth@aol.com

VICTORIA SHOE AND KEY SERVICES

THE NO. 1 IN SHOE REPAIRS
WHILE YOU WAIT SERVICE

EVERY SHOE CAN BE REPAIRED

COMPREHENSIVE KEY SERVICE, LEATHER SOLES STITCHED ON, COMANDOS ETC.

QUALITY SHOE REPAIRS SINCE 1955

GOOD WORKMANSHIP ISN'T EXPENSIVE
IT'S PRICELESS,

CHURCH LANE
HIGH STREET

Belfast BT1 4QN Tel: 079-3476-0467

Endpiece by Karen Brett

הסדHesed

‘WHERE LOVE IS, THERE IS GOD’ (*Benedictine hymn*)

I am very glad the Supreme Court has required the Department of Education in Northern Ireland to re-examine its Religious Studies Curriculum.

Last year I taught Religious Education, along with Psychology and English, at an excellent Belfast Grammar School.

Teaching 13 year olds about Judaism was a joy. At the end of each class, if we had finished our allotted tasks, I taught them a new word in Yiddish.

A high point was when I asked three *very* annoying boys to either help me teach our Yiddish lesson or spend a lunchtime detention in my room. They picked the former. I asked them to come to the front of the room and on the white board behind them I wrote: 1 Nebech, 3 Nebbishes. Grammar is so important.

I asked the boys, and the rest of the class, what they thought it meant. One young lady wearily offered: ‘idiot boys.’

Indeed. And we had all had our fill of them that morning.

One of the nebbishes asked me the Yiddish word for an ‘idiot girl’ and was instantly enlightened by another girl, ‘There isn’t one, because there is no such thing.’

They left the room, each promising to be a ‘mensch’ – a fine young man.

When I pass them in the corridor these days, they assure me they are still striving to be mensch.

The low point in the year was teaching the CCEA GCSE course in Christian Ethics.

Studying the ethics of relationships requires students to learn many biblical verses, including one or more from Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and 1 Peter, which order a woman to submit herself to her husband and obey him. In Northern Ireland we have enacted legislation to protect women, and men, from controlling and coercive partners, and yet this is still being taught in GCSE Religious Studies.

In the context of material about same sex relationships, pupils are exposed to the condemnation from Leviticus, along with verses from the psalms asserting that God hates sinners.

Yes, pupils are allowed to disagree in their examination with these verses and attitudes, but they are being taught them as the ‘Christian’ norm. Learn this first they are told, then disagree if you must.

Oliver, 15 years old, and a nebech if ever there was one, earned my respect and admiration when, unprompted, he said in front of everyone that what he thought really mattered was love. That the gender of the people concerned, and whether people were married or not, is irrelevant. What God really cares about is that they love each other and treat each other properly.

There was a moment’s silence then his classmates broke into applause. Oliver became a mensch that day.

Ethics is a system of moral principles. They influence how people make decisions and lead their lives and are concerned with what is good for individuals and for society.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches the radical concept of loving one's enemies and praying for those who persecute you. This extends to showing compassion for all people, regardless of their background or beliefs. He provides a universal guide for interpersonal relationships: "do to others what you would have them do to you."

He identifies an inner righteousness that goes beyond outward actions to include thoughts and intentions, condemning hypocrisy and showy public displays of piety and generosity.

Jesus also directly challenges the *lex talionis* principle of the Old Testament, instructing his followers not to resort to violence when faced with aggression and evil, but to be willing to work for a resolution, to go, quite literally, the extra mile.

Generosity and compassion are central. Jesus encourages generosity towards anyone who asks for help, highlighting the importance of caring for the poor, the hungry, and the marginalised, as if one were caring for Christ himself.

And he demands humility and detachment from materialism. Jesus condemns the pursuit of wealth and self-promotion. Instead, he tells us true well-being is centred on how we live in the presence of God, rather than focusing on worldly success and admiration. The Hebrew word for this is **עֲנָוָה** *Anavah*. It means sincere humility, and Christ is the embodiment of *Anavah*.

In the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, there isn't a single exposition of ethics as we have in St Matthew's Gospel, but Jesus was a Jew and what he is expounding and extending is the Judaic system of ethics that infuses the teaching in the Torah. There is nothing in the Torah that does not offer an opportunity to learn.

In this short piece there is no time to explore all the Judaic ethics that underpin our Christian beliefs, but one I will mention, as tribute to Oliver who spoke up in defence of all those who are condemned by some human beings, but are treasured by God.

חֶסֶד *Hesed* is the Hebrew word that refers to God's devotion to humanity. God's enduring, abundant, transformative, undeserved, steadfast, merciful, covenantal love. A love that is unconditional, demanding, forgiving and extraordinary. Hebrew contains all these meanings, and more, in one single word.

In English, or indeed any other language that I have researched, there is no single word to translate *Hesed*. Attempts to comprehend and communicate the love of God must always involve employing a string of adjectives, nouns and verbs, as I have just done.

In our relationships we experience *Hesed's* human shadow in the kindness, mercy, love and faithfulness that people give to each other.

It is also important to know that *Hesed* is not just a feeling. It is an action.

Just as God is a loving creator, always engaging with humanity and the world, so in our relationships we must practise the love, affection, generosity and unwavering support that binds families, friendships,

