



St HELEN'S WINDOW

Rendering unto Caesar

The Revd Dr Charles Miller

With a general election on the horizon this issue of the *Window* is concerned with politics. Perhaps more now than in many recent decades we feel the pertinence of a thoughtful assessment of where we are politically. As the Archbishop of Canterbury observes in his Foreword to a book reviewed inside these pages, the so-called 'crisis of faith' is now complemented by a crisis of faith in politics. The global economic crisis and the MPs' expenses scandal have been presenting symptoms. Both of them, however, point to more basic, deeper problems. Whether we want to resort to the rhetoric of 'broken Britain' or not, we sense that the moral compass is somehow askew. Is there, in fact, a moral compass at all holding the social and political edifice together? In asking that question I don't mean to suggest that individuals are devoid of a moral compass. I'm wondering instead whether there is anything like a shared compass that expresses an enlivening, effectual vision of human character and action that acts as a common moral currency throughout society. If there isn't then it's hard to see how political trust can be restored (what would 'trustworthy' behaviour actually look like?) and how 'community cohesion' (a current political buzz-word) can be achieved.

Those are huge questions to which I have no simple answers. One thing is clear though: the matter is very pertinent to Christians in Britain today. The example of Jesus and the teaching of the New Testament lead Christians to acknowledge their political standing and to engage the political powers-that-be respectfully and seriously. For Christians this expresses our belief in 'God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth' since political association in its various forms (monarchic, republican, etc) is an inevitable part of our social nature. Political life - life in a *polis* or community/city - is a gift from God that we should honour.

It's interesting to see how the relationship between political institutions and faith communities has (unexpectedly) re-emerged. In so far as that interface has arisen Christians ought to take every opportunity to invest themselves in suitable ways. For all of us it means a thoughtful participation in the actual election process at both the national, local and European levels. For others it may mean active work for a political party; for others still it may mean helping constituencies like church communities learn about and think through political policies and specific issues from the angle of Christian principles. All of that is vital grist for the mill of a healthy society.

Another thing is clear too: none of us benefits from political cynicism. The more people opt out of concern for the principles, policies and practices that impact on our lives as individuals, families and communities, the more decisions for the many ('us') are made by the few ('them'). That's perilous for any democratic process.

Anyway, this issue gives you ample food for thought and tells you how you can find out more about Christians and politics. Take it seriously.

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Questions to ask when the canvasser calls - on Overseas Aid

Peter Penfold

In the run-up to an election, economic issues, such as how much the prospective government will put towards the health service, schools, pensions, transport, etc, tend to dominate debate, but the question of overseas aid rarely, if ever, becomes an issue between the different parties vying for our vote. Presently nearly £6 billion of our taxes go towards international development assistance and both main parties are committed to increasing the aid budget to 0.7% of GDP, the target set by the United Nations, by 2013. The Labour government has recently published a draft bill which, if passed, would enshrine this target in law, and the Tories have announced their support for such legislation.

When it comes to overseas aid, does it matter which party gets in at an election? Nearly half of our aid goes to multilateral organisations like the EU (£1.2 bn!), the World Bank and the UN and our treaty obligations preclude us from making any significant changes. The remaining bilateral aid is focused on 102 countries around the world. Some of these might be considered contentious. For example, one of our largest aid programmes is in India, the twelfth richest country in the world. We also maintain an aid programme in China, soon expected to become the second largest economy in the world. The Tories have announced that they would reduce the number of recipient countries and focus more on the Commonwealth. But they have also announced that they would use some of the aid budget to finance a new military stabilisation force for places like Afghani-

stan, a move that has been criticised by some UK non-government aid agencies which see this as taking money away from humanitarian operations?

Despite current attention on places like Haiti and Afghanistan, the focus for aid will continue to be Africa where the majority of the poorest live and the majority of aid is spent. But does it make a difference? In 1970 10% of Africans lived in poverty. It is sad to reflect that today, despite the billions of pounds of aid poured in, that figure is now 70%!

So is aid a waste of money? Do we spend too much of our aid budget on promoting democracy and good government (25%) and not enough on providing water and sanitation (3%)? Would we achieve more by promoting trade and investment? Aid is only a part of the solution to eradicating poverty and promoting development but there has been much waste and so, whichever party comes to power, we will look to them to ensure that our aid is used more effectively.

(Peter Penfold is a former British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone and is Chairman of St Helen's Charitable Giving Group which advises the DCC on charitable giving. Up to 2005 10% of the Church's income was allocated to charitable giving but this has dropped in recent years. Presently St Helen's gives around £3,500 a year (2%) to charities such as USPG in Ethiopia, the Milton Margai School for the Blind in Sierra Leone and The Abingdon Bridge.)

Good News

Alan Joinson

WE DO have Christians in Parliament and in political parties. Two organisations promote their interests. 'Christians in Parliament' is specific to the Houses of Parliament and 'Christians in Politics' links to Christian groups in the three main political parties. The vision of **Christians in Parliament** (CiP) is "*to encourage relationships in, with and through our Lord Jesus Christ in those who work in the Palace of Westminster*

(about 10000 people)". The Christian faith of many parliamentarians in the past changed our country for the better and CiP encourages this generation, be they Peers, MPs or staff to fulfill their Christian vocation. They hold informal prayer and Bible study groups, and formal services in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft.

Both Houses of Parliament begin each day with

prayer, led in the Commons by the Speaker's Chaplain and in the Lords by a Bishop. CiP "deeply appreciates knowing that many thousands of people are praying for Parliament and its work every day" (Is that you?)

Christians in Politics is an alliance of Christian groups in the three main parties. It aims to show Christians why they should get into politics, how to do so and to encourage them in their work. "Westminster is famous for offering new MPs a peg with their name on and a red ribbon below, so that they may take their sword off and hang it up safely before entering the Chamber. In the modern world there is great pressure to treat faith in the same way - to put it safely aside before entering our workplaces, and to pick it up again at the end of the day. I therefore welcome this new initiative, which will encourage Christians not to put their faith aside before entering the political fray, but instead make it the essential core of their daily work.", said Lord Carey, previous Archbishop of Canterbury. 'Christians in Politics' has a regular presence at Christian conferences and holds an annual Westminster Carol Service.

Reading these websites cheered me up because of their commitment to practical Christianity. Here is the **Conservative Christian Fellowship**:

"to follow Christ with our hearts, souls, strength and minds; playing our part in the redemption of culture and individual lives." When Parliament is sitting CCF holds a monthly prayer meeting to pray for the fellowship, Parliament and the nation.

The **Liberal Democrat Christian Forum** is a strong voice for Christian faith in the party. It enjoys the support of many leading MPs, peers, councillors, and members. It continues to grow, and actively engages with Humanists and secularists in the party, striving to increase religious literacy and affirm the valuable role played by people of faith in the party and in the wider political community.

And this from the **Christian Socialist Movement**: "We believe that 'loving our neighbour' in the fullest sense involves struggling for a fair and just society, one in which all can enjoy the 'fullness of life' Jesus came to announce. And we want to work to make it happen."

All the Christians in politics and Parliament want Christians everywhere to stand up and be counted in this next election. The convention that you don't speak about religion or politics could be the death of us - quite literally.

Follow up anything here, and lots more, through www.susa.info (Brand new on 3rd February.)

A Voting Agenda for Christians - two books to help

"Everyone who is eligible to do so should vote; but it's another thing to vote wisely"

The Revd Dr Joel Edwards

• **If you are looking for a straightforward book to help you engage, in a meaningful way, with the range of issues relevant to the forthcoming General Election, this is the book for you.**

In ten short chapters this book pools the wisdom of ten informed Christians and guides the reader through the key issues on which the election will be fought such as health care, education, the environment, the economy, justice, international law, immigration, tax, employment and housing, rehearsing the current situation from a faith-based perspective. In three further chapters it gives individual Christian MPs from the three main parties a chance to make a case for voting for the party they represent. The words of Vaclav Havel introduce the final chapter challenging the reader to understand the meaning of HOPE, inspiring everyone to take his or her citizen's responsibility seriously because, "*The General Election is important - the outcome will shape our society for at least the next five years.*" I recommend it.

VOTEWISE NOW edited by Rose Lynas. Pub. SPCK in association with the Jubilee Centre: £7.50
ISBN 9780281061921

Reviewed by Jeanne Wesson

• If you are looking for a book that tells you which way to vote in the forthcoming General Election, this is not it!

But if you are seeking an intelligent Christian discussion about what Archbishop Rowan Williams in his Foreword labels “*a deep crisis of faith in politics*”, look no further. The Archbishop worries that there is “*a gloomy passivity about public life*”. Here is a collection of essays by a range of highly respected theological thinkers (Anglican, Free Church and Roman Catholic) to counter such passivity. They all in different ways address the basic question: **what, according to a Christian understanding, is the proper role of Government?** Should Christians support “big” government (when the general complaint becomes “nanny state”) or “small” government (when the complaint in the banking crisis becomes “too little, too late”)? Are the expectations we have of government realistic? The first four chapters major on foundations in the Bible and on views developed in Christian history. The last four chapters work out more practically some contemporary examples – taxation, a realistic living wage rather than minimum wage, environmental issues, education, government welfare action versus voluntary efforts. Within a broad Christian tradition there is room for disagreement and a healthy recognition that solutions are not easy. But all are confident that Christians have something coherent to say. It is good to have such a useful book available at an election countdown. The writing is clear, accessible, mostly non-technical, and the ideas are stretching and thought-provoking. Polly Toynbee of *The Guardian* declares “*Politics is all about the clash of moral universes.*” This book helps us sharpen our moral thinking in preparation for the election clash.

GOD AND GOVERNMENT, foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury; edited by Nick Spencer and Jonathan Chaplin. Pub: SPCK £9.99 ISBN 9780281060719

Reviewed by John Wesson

Mieneke Cox

Pieter Cox



Jonkvrouw Jacomina Elsje Elias. Even for the Dutch that was a mouthful! The Dutch love to shorten names or give alternatives. Ma’s elder sister Michaela was known as Ila and her younger, Florence, as Pans. Mienieke was short for Jacomina – a name she hated!

Mienieke grew up in Nijmegen, emerged from WW2 very weak and had to take a long rest in a sanatorium to recover from tuberculosis. She picked up her life wonderfully well, finished college and went to Utrecht to study history. Then she met George during a holiday in the Lake District. After a brief spell in Oxford they moved to Abingdon and to Bath Street in about 1957. When they became members of St Helen’s Church, many people first got to know her. The Church sparked off her over-riding passion for history, so it’s no exaggeration to say it all started in St Helen’s.

If you ask a hundred people to describe someone, you get a hundred different views, so here’s my personal view of our mother: a woman who was passionately proud of her Dutch ancestry; strong-willed, inquisitive and a lover of stories. Most will know her as a staunch member of St Helen’s Church or as a local historian. I’ll return to that, but the story starts much earlier.

First – her name was not Mienieke. She was born

If I had to choose one characteristic, I’d say that Mienieke loved stories. Looking around the Church and reading the memorial stones, she became fasci-

nated by the names carved on them and wanted to know the stories behind them. Logically, she started to read the parish registers – at that time held in the vestry – to track down the various names. I still remember her lugging these priceless leather-bound volumes back home in her shopping trolley to read them in a better light.

Names led to stories, which led to links, local businesses, involvement with the church until she had pieced together enough strands to produce her first publication – a slim *History of St Helen's Church*, bashed out on a small green typewriter. Her interest spread and she was soon devouring the registers in Christ's Hospital, then making regular pilgrimages to the Bodleian Library to continue her research. Curatorship of the Abingdon Museum in the County Hall followed, and the publication of a 4-part *History of Abingdon* – which is still available!

Running through all this was her remarkable ability to weave bits of information into a story and I'm sure that in her mind's eye she was actually present during the episodes she depicted. As a child it was sometimes quite difficult to keep track of which century we were actually in at any one time! It wasn't just the stories in the registers she enjoyed. She was equally thrilled by Hobgoblins, Dragons, hobbits, moomin-

trolls, Pharaohs, Wizards and other exotic creatures, and switched from one world to another with alarming ease. Like any good story-teller, she would pick and probe at the pieces until she had made sense of them. Once she got the bit between her teeth, she was incredibly tenacious. She also had a passion for sharing her enthusiasms, whether it was for local history, social gatherings or cream-cakes. She very soon became involved in the WEA, giving Local History lectures, which continued with her membership of Abingdon Archaeological Society and its successors. Such was Mienieke's love of things Anglo-Saxon that we even had two cats named Frideswide and Berinus after two local saints of that period. Mienieke liked things to be well-presented and everything in its place. She especially loved to see the candelabra in the Church lit up for Christmas.

Mienieke wasn't always a terribly practical person. However, I don't know too many 80-year-olds who regularly use a computer for writing, emailing and contributing to a family blog, as well as keeping up a lively correspondence with the Abingdon Archaeological and Historical Society.

So, to summarise, her great loves were: the Wittenham Clumps; her beloved cats; stories; her friends and family; her garden; the Church and Abingdon.

What is FOSH?

Colin Casemore and Mike Faulkner

FOSH is a word frequently heard at St Helen's. It is not a polite expletive but an acronym - Friends of St Helen's.

The Friends of St Helen's is a charity set up in 1987 to assist with the maintenance and repair of the church building. Since its creation FOSH has built up a capital sum of about £200,000. Interest and dividends from the investments, together with other regular income, have enabled the Friends to commit £10,000 annually towards the St Helen's fabric budget since 2008. Total grants to date amount to over £38,000.

FOSH (Registered Charity No 296638) has trustees in the Rector, churchwardens, pro-wardens, and treasurer (Colin Casemore). A recent duty for the

trustees is ensuring that the annual interest is spent in accordance with the charity's objectives.

There is also a Friends' committee which organises a coffee morning and book sale in April, a visit in June, a summer lunch in August, and talks in November, January, and at the AGM in March. These events, members' subscriptions, donations, and profits from the stall at the back of the church contribute to our regular annual income. The membership secretary, Colin Casemore, is delighted to meet prospective Friends. An individual can be a Friend for £10 p.a., a family member for £15 and a corporate member £25. Individual life membership is £200 and subscriptions can be gift aided. Leaflets (including an application form) are available on the welcome desk or from the Church Office.

St Helen's and Church in Abingdon News

St Helen's

Tuesday 9 March Mothers' Union

20.00 in Church Centre talk by Colin Pattenden
'Relationships in the Community'

Tuesday 9 & 23 March Reading Group

14.30 Meets in Church Centre Lounge
New book: *Sister Wendy on Prayer*

Friday 12 March Friends of St Helen's

19.30 AGM with wine and nibbles
20.00 Talk by Mark Turner, Head of Abingdon School

14 March Mothering Sunday

16.30 Tea with music in the South Aisle

Monday 15 March

19.30 Meeting in Church Centre about Mali
with Tim Hewes

17 March Wednesday Club

20.00 in Church Centre. Talk by John Watson on
'MG and Abingdon'

Thursday 25 March Feast of the Annunciation

19.00 in Lady Chapel, then refreshments in South Aisle

Saturday March 27 Super Soup Lunch

12.00-14.00 in Church Centre for Christian Aid.

Chamber Improvisations Concert in Church

19.30 An evening of small group performances in various
musical styles, jazz, classical, folk, rock and pop; an evening
of stimulus and surprise! With piano, saxophone and bass.
www.oxfordimprovisors.com £8/£6 concessions

For list of Holy Week Services see page 8

St Michael's Church

St Michael's Fellowship 25 March

19.45 in the Church Room.
John Enticott talks (with slides and music) about the CiA
visit to Schongau & Oberammergau Passion Play in 2000

Wednesday 31 March Lunch Club

12.30 To book a place ring 522591 or 538758

Church in Abingdon

Friday 5 March Women's World Day of Prayer

Theme: 'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord'
10.00 At the Salvation Army
19.00 At All Saints' Methodist Church

'Back to 35': a joint venture with Age Concern

Baptist Church Hall
10.30-11.30 An opportunity for chat and fellowship.
Thursday 4 March: 'Life as Abingdon's Mayor' by Pat
Lonergan
Thursday 18 March: Musical Morning with Richard
Bittleston

Thursday 11 March Bereavement Support Group

Church Centre Hall 19.30 - 21.00 A time to share and
reflect. More details from Tim Hewes 01865 735646 or
timothy.hewes@btinternet.com

Saturday 20 March Barn Dance for Christian Aid

19.30-22.00 at Trinity Conduit Road Centre
Live Music; Fish & Chip supper
£10 /£6 without supper
Children £4/£2; tickets from Church rep or 530486

Life in the Spirit

Thursdays 19.45 - 21.30 St Edmund's Church This con-
tinues to 25 March. Famous speakers. All welcome. More
details 528528.

Lent Course: The King and the Kingdom

Continues at Peachcroft Christian Centre on Mondays at
20.00 pm with Canon David Winter until 22 March.

35 Ock Street closes for Easter Break

14.00 Wednesday 31 March until 10.30 Monday 12 April.

Good Friday 2 April CiA United Service

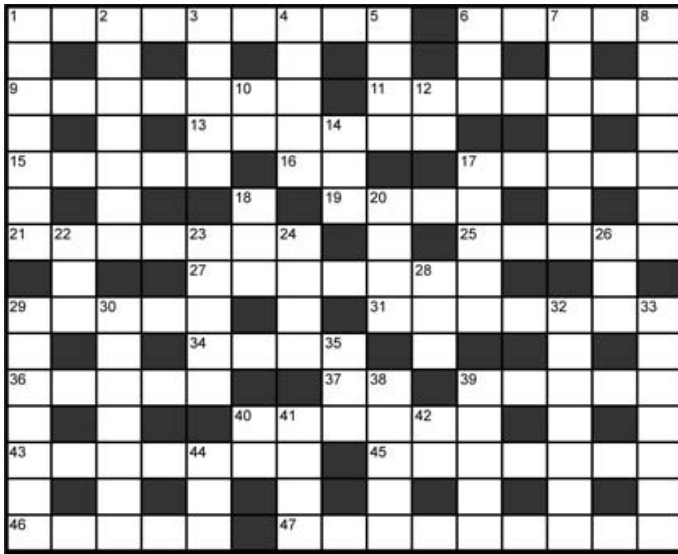
St Nicholas Church: all welcome at this special service

Look at Revised CiA Website:

www.church-in-abingdon.org

If you would like an event listed on this page let us know by
the 10th of the previous month and we will try to include
it. Contact Silvia at alanj@phonecoop.coop. Or tel.521247

Dreaming Spires by Eccles



DOWN

- 1 * Put everything into school lesson (7)
- 2 Hopin' to feel its painstaking effect (7)
- 3 Sins and lives badly (5)
- 4 Jane lost her head playing this (5)
- 5 Every preacher takes this to heart (4)
- 6 First lady on 31 December 31. (3)
- 7 Dried fruit is playing on the radio (7)
- 8 * Abraham's car (7)
- 10 Refusal to play number (2)
- 12 Male gas (2)
- 14 "And we must love him ____" (3)
- 17 Heathen god keeps silver (5)
- 18 Alternative European mineral (3)
- 20 One's friends have clothes before the hour (4)
- 22 Diamonds in reserve (3)
- 23 Germany follows Indian belief (5)
- 24 Urges baby horse to go in two directions (4)
- 26 Poem that seems overdue (3)
- 28 Dance hot or cold (3)
- 29 "____, ____, - a helluva town" (3,4)
- 30 A load of nonsense baked in a pie (7)
- 32 Insert a change of composer (7)
- 33 * Father, Son and Holy Ghost (7)
- 35 Sailor starts training at Rochester (3)
- 38 Tony not Edvard (5)
- 39 Most of these clues are.....filled with wonder? (5)
- 40 A needle pulling thread (2)
- 41 Single king is an expert (4)
- 42 De from Old French (2)
- 44 Rage that is about river (3)

ACROSS

- 1 * Sane and sober mixture (9)
- 6 We hear forty are very good (5)
- 9 Bird doing a circuit when flying (7)
- 11 Car let go northern indication of rank (7)
- 13 Hate to see a hotel in ruins (6)
- 15 Cader ginger beer (5)
- 16 Doctor in Carnoustie; certainly not in Deuteronomy (2)
- 17 Quietly Mr Miles enters the post office (5)
- 19 Lady's fingers are all right for the gunners (4)
- 21 * 50 in 4840 (7)
- 25 Board for example backing weight (3,2)
- 27 Get a tar to frolic at Cowes event (7)
- 29 What a ____ to make that a new over (5)
- 31 Telephone often seen in Bath and Settle (7)
- 34 Direction of echo along a road (4)
- 36 Twisted injury (5)
- 37 Silver period cut short (2)
- 39 Violin at the centre of dramatics (5)
- 40 Pig eats old bishop in grief (6)
- 43 Speech with nothing to restrict (7)
- 45 Turkish title makes difference without eastern Roman Catholic (7)
- 46 * Main male in the herd ? (5)
- 47 Evenly spaced in each of order, age, guile and fair play (9)

Solution
to
February
Crossword



The asterisked clues relate to the title in some way and do not have a definition.

I make no apology for the reappearance of some clues. There is a nostalgic clue for the Rector and two other members of the congregation get a mention.

March at St Helen's Church

Divine Services

Morning Prayer	09.10 every weekday
Evening Prayer	17.10 every weekday
Sung Eucharist	10.00 every Sunday with Junior Church
Wednesday Church	10.30 every Wednesday (Holy Communion followed by refreshments)
Sung Compline	20.00 Monday 29 and Tuesday 30

Sunday Evening Services

7 March	18.30 Eucharist
14 March	16.30 Choral Evensong for Mothering Sunday
21 March	16.30 Choral Evensong
28 March	18.30 Healing Service for Palm Sunday

Meetings and Gatherings all in Church Centre unless marked

Baby and Toddlers	09.30 and 11.00 every Monday except 29
Baptism Preparation	20.00 Tuesday 2 and 16
Beavers	17.15 every Wednesday except 30
Brownies	18.15 every Tuesday except 29
Cubs	18.20 every Wednesday except 30
Darby & Joan	13.00 Tuesday 9 and 23
DCC meeting	19.30 Thursday 11
Reading Group	14.15 Tuesday 9 and 23
Friends of St Helen's AGM	19.30 Friday 19
Healing Ministry Group	20.00 Wednesday 10
Marriage Preparation	20.00 Wednesday 3
Museum Friends' meeting	19.30 Thursday 4
Preaching Forum	19.45 Tuesday 2
Wednesday Club	20.00 Wednesday 17

Events

ADMS concert	19.30 Saturday 20
Talk on Mali	19.30 Monday 15
Oxford Improvisors	19.30 Saturday 27
Peal of Bells	19.30 Monday 8

The services and events listed are correct at time of going to press - please consult the weekly Newsheet if in doubt.

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01235 520144

E-mail: administrator@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk
www.sthelens-abingdon.org.uk

Holy Week at St Helen's

Palm Sunday 28 March
10.00 Procession and Palm Liturgy

Monday 29 & Tuesday 30 March
20.00 Sung Compline and Address

Maundy Thursday 1 April
20.00 Sung Eucharist
and stripping of the altar

Good Friday 2 April
12:00 Devotional Concert

Easter Eve 3 Saturday
20:00 Easter Vigil

Easter Day 4 Sunday
10.00 Sung Eucharist

To arrange baptisms, weddings and funerals contact the Parish Office.

Clergy are available in the Church Office between 19.00 - 20.00 on Wednesdays. Call the office to book an appointment.

Rector:

The Revd Dr Charles Miller

Assisting Priest (NSM):

The Revd Tim Hewes

Curate (NSM):

The Revd Dr Simon Thorn

Director of Music:

Christopher Fletcher-Campbell

Parish Administrator:

Linda Barker