

## Canon Christopher Burkett Writes....

### Where is God in all of this?

You're breathing, but you can't move. You try to shift a leg or an arm, but you can't. All is dark. You're breathing, but your body seems heavy and no matter how you try, nothing will move. Your breathing rate speeds up; still no movement, still no light. You try to squirm—unsuccessfully. You can feel the panic rising. You make an almighty effort. You're fit to scream!



Suddenly you're awake. Panting and perspiring. Free of the nightmare and glad of the dull shadow of the street lamp on the bedroom wall. It's a common nightmare, this horrifying claustrophobia that can ensnare any of us in the dread small hours of the night.

The appalling thought is that for God knows how many people in Haiti it has been not a figment of the night terrors but reality. For every living body we've seen on our TV screens pulled free from a cavern deep inside a mountain of rubble, how many more have died alone, constricted in some hollow amongst the debris? Such suffering doesn't bear thinking about. It is indeed a living nightmare.

The doubter properly asks 'Where's a loving God in this?' If there is a God, and God is all loving and all powerful, how could such horrors happen? If God is the Creator, then God has created this mess, or at the least created the forces that produced this mess. Neither way changes the ultimately destructive and hurtful consequences. As Sydney Carter once put it, 'It's God they ought to crucify, instead of you and me ...'

Believers can't, and shouldn't, avoid the force of the question. But the question seems to me to bring with it a strange idea of God. It uses the notion of cause and effect, and assumes that consequential reasoning must apply to God. It limits God in categories of our human thinking.

Searching for cause and effect spurs science. This kind of thinking has brought all kinds of wonders to light. It is a simple and remarkable way of asking productive questions of our world and the life within it. But it can't tell us anything about God.

Thinking it can tell us something about God leads to assertions like that made by an American Televangelist the week after the earthquake. According to the Reverend Pat Robertson, the earthquake was the consequence of the Haitian people's pact with the devil and should be seen as a likely blessing. The thought of lives whimpering away in a confined black-hole deep under the rubble as blessing is I think perverse. It cannot be that tens of thousands snuffed out, all that pain and despair, is the intention of God.

One day, according to the Gospel writer Luke, Jesus stood up in his local place of worship and read from the prophet Isaiah:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' (Luke 4.14-21)

There was nothing usual in that, men who could read did so week by week. But there was a hush on that day—something new was in the air. And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. We are told that the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he said to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' And that word once said can never be rescinded. God is among us.

(continued on page 2)

## The Greatest Hits of Gilbert & Sullivan

at Chester Cathedral

"Here's a first rate opportunity" to hear all the most familiar toe-tapping songs from the *Topsy-Turvy* world of Gilbert and Sullivan  
Join Dee & Alyn Gilbert and Sullivan Society to celebrate the best of British comic opera. It's guaranteed to "leave you with feelings of pleasure".

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010  
Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2010  
at 7.30pm, Chester Cathedral Refectory.



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Tickets £10.00

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Box office

01244 500959\*

www.chestercathedral.com\*

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\*Nominal booking fee may apply

[www.deeandalyn.co.uk](http://www.deeandalyn.co.uk)

## Chester Cathedral Nave Choir and the Eighteenth Century Concert Orchestra



## Messiah Handel

Saturday 22nd May  
7:30pm

Tickets:

Tel: 01244 500959 (Cathedral Box Office)

or online at [www.chestercathedral.com](http://www.chestercathedral.com)

## Don't forget to Gift Aid!

If you are a UK Tax Payer, your generous donations go so much (28%) further if you fill in your details on the Gift Aid envelopes provided. You'll need a pen of course!

Thank you so much for your generous support—it all goes a long way.

giftaid it



**Saturday Singing Club** Don't forget the new term starts again 30 January at 10-11.30am in the Song School for all children aged 6-11 years, free of charge. Please contact Carmella De Lucia on 01244 324756 for more information.

**(Where is God in all this?...cont'd)**

In this Jesus, this man for others, God has answered the cry of despairing humanity. Not in bitterness, not in anger, not in retribution, but in presence and gracious loving kindness. This is good news, not the media catalogue of illustrated woe. This is the jubilee that cancels debts and frees the despairing. God is among us, really among us. Not a force of terrifying destruction unleashed on a weak and unprepared people, but God as person amongst persons. Here is the evidence for all times and forever that God will not do without people what it is his plan to do with people. God is not abstract and alien force; God is man.

The anguished cry of humanity is answered by a God who comes amongst us as one of us. This is a God who works with people and through people, and who will bear the full consequences of working in that way, even if it is the tortured death of a cross. God loves us that much; and that much is to be the pattern of our lives. God trusts us to live it.

So if you ask me to point to God's action in Haiti, I most certainly won't cite devastation and despair. Instead I'll point to the Haitian woman nursing a scared and pained orphan and promising to do so permanently. With nothing to offer but her care to a little child who was a total stranger to her. Or, I'll point to the Haitian man organising water distribution because he had a tap that still worked. Nothing grand was being done, just a bit of neighbourly organisation and concern for the good of all. Or, I'll point to the rescue worker squeezing himself through a grim dark passage, and hours later dragging so carefully behind him a young woman freed, after seven days of confinement, into the sunlight. These are people making godly responses to the vagaries of life. Just as I don't see the earthquake as a direct action of God, neither do I see the world as a mishmash of complex forces that God leaves us alone to contend with. We are not abandoned to our own devices. God has rather entered into our experiences, to live with us and in us, in this ever changing and complex world. Ours is an understanding of God who is at one with us in all the potential for good, and for hurt, in existence. God provides the resources to make us response-able, so that we are free to chose, free to love, free to care. Humanity is neither constrained by a world of absolute predictability, nor abandoned to total blood and claw randomness and the unbridled will to power.

So, yes, I will affirm with the psalmist the wonder of creation, 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' (Ps 19.1) The beauties of this earth's landscapes were created by the same changes, the same forces that produce devastation. Glacier, earthquake and volcano have shaped the very earth on which we stand. And those things didn't stop way back when; all is still movement and change. From the perspective of one human life this globe appears still and fixed, but we know it isn't. Just as each of us when we pause to consider know that we ourselves are constantly changing. The rose's beauty, the carrot's taste, finds their source in the decay that is the soil fertile for their growth. Change, movement, an alteration of states; these are the principles of a world of wondrous and awful possibilities. Much of the time we ignore these possibilities, or feel them benevolent. But sometimes they terrify.

Part of the way to cope with that reality is to be certain that these forces are not the sign of God's displeasure. Bring to mind the law of the Lord, says the Psalmist (Ps 19.7), and it will revive your soul. It's not so much a making sense of terrify experiences, as enabling words to make within us a well of security. From that security we may come to know in our heart of hearts that this world and its forces are never against us in any direct and intentional way. In the face of horrifying suffering we claim no knowledge of a reason why that is beyond the forces of nature. Neither do we claim a judgement of God against a poor people who have suffered too much over too many years. What we do claim is the certainty of God in the debris, burdened by grief, and spurring his people's compassion. God is for the people of Haiti, as he is for us and all.

**Christopher Burkett**

**Join our pilgrimage to the Holy Land!**



Led by Bishops Peter, Robert and Keith, this spectacular diocesan pilgrimage will take place from 5 to 14 April, 2011. The itinerary will be the same as the one so much enjoyed by participants last time. Bishop Peter said: "The hotels will be excellent – 4-star deluxe or better – and exclusive use of a dining room will enable us to have evening fellowship and talks. "The fundamental purpose of the pilgrimage is to deepen our faith, and our awareness of the Bible. It's amazing how familiar passages come alive as we read them in their cultural and geographical context."

There are still places available, but you are advised to book without delay. For details and to book, please phone the Revd Canon Diane Cookson on 0161 483 2633 or email her at [st.saviours@virgin.net](mailto:st.saviours@virgin.net) Or, if you'd like a chat about just what you can expect of the trip speak to Canon Christopher Burkett. Those who have already been sent brochures for the pilgrimage, please respond without delay, as Diane needs to process the necessary administration.

**Remember the snow.....?**



If you have any lovely pictures of the Cathedral that you would like to share, please e-mail them to [carmella.delucia@chestercathedral.com](mailto:carmella.delucia@chestercathedral.com) and we may publish them in future newsletters.

**Thanksgiving Sunday 2010**

Thanksgiving Sunday last March was the culmination of the Giving with Joy Christian Stewardship Initiative. Following that Initiative, Chapter agreed to make a renewal of our monetary offering part of the annual pattern of Cathedral worship, so the Cathedral Stewardship Group have been meeting to plan for our next Thanksgiving Sunday, which will be on March 7<sup>th</sup>. To help us to think about what our giving of money for God's work means to us, to our worshipping community and beyond, the Dean will be preaching on this theme at both the 10 am Eucharist and at 11.30 am Matins on February 14<sup>th</sup>. All members of the Cathedral Congregation will shortly be receiving literature about this year's annual renewal of giving.

**Carol Sims**

**‘ANNE FRANK + YOU’**  
*Her Story, Today’s World*

To coincide with the 65th anniversary of the betrayal and arrest of Holocaust and the literary heroine Anne Frank on 4th August 1944, Chester Cathedral is proud to announce that the famous ‘Anne Frank + You’ exhibition will be coming to Chester Cathedral from 3rd-25th February.

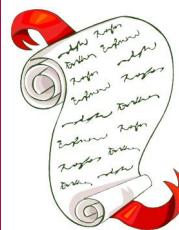


‘Anne Frank + You’ is a touring exhibition presented by the Anne Frank Trust UK which examines the experiences of Anne Frank, and draws out the parallel context of British teenage life today. The exhibition is presented in two parts – contemporary and historical.

The contemporary panels present post-Holocaust narratives and issues in modern British society. The historical parts of the exhibition present the story of Anne Frank and her family, with a pictorial timeline charting the rise of Hitler, the Nazis and the subsequent Holocaust.

We are looking for extra Volunteers to assist with stewarding during the exhibition, so if you would like to offer your services, please contact Nick Fry on 01244 500958.

On 25 February, Canon David Porter, the Canon Director of Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral, will close the exhibition with an evening talk which promises to be very inspiring: “Making Peace in a Diverse World”



**DOWNLOAD A SERMON**

Starting from this month, you will now be able to download the very latest Sunday sermons from our website.

Simply go to [www.chestercathedral.com](http://www.chestercathedral.com) and click on the ‘Services’ tab which will take you to the ‘PDF Sermons’ link. It’s that easy!



**One Way to Support Chester Cathedral Get Sponsored!**

Are you planning to walk, run, cycle, parachute jump, shave your head, or anything else, however madcap, to raise money for charity?

There are thousands of worthy charities to choose from, but don’t forget that Chester Cathedral is a charity too and desperately needs to raise funds to further its mission, to maintain its fabric, to support its music and education programmes, and to remain accessible to all who wish to visit this amazing place.

It is easy to start fundraising, particularly if you have internet access, as the Cathedral has its own Just Giving pages and all online donations are eligible for the addition of Gift Aid, if made by a UK tax payer. Just go to [www.chestercathedral.com](http://www.chestercathedral.com) and click the ‘Donate Online’ button at the bottom left of the screen - from here you can make your own sponsorship page or donate directly to the Chester Cathedral Development Trust.

**Thank you and Good Luck!**

**Friends of Chester Cathedral  
PLANT SALE**

**Friday 30 April & Saturday 1 May 2010**

Anybody out there who has ‘green fingers’ is asked to support our annual Plant Sale by sowing extra seeds and potting up extra divisions of plants. Those of you who provide marmalades, pickles and chutneys for our ‘Cake’ stall are reminded that this is the time of year to be thinking about your preserves. Nearer the time we will be glad to receive offers of cakes and raffle prizes.



For further information about the Plant Sale please call 01244 350293. Many thanks for your support.

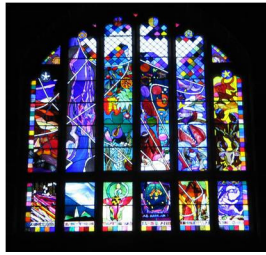
**JUST A QUICK REMINDER  
about the Friends of Chester Cathedral Card:**

This card, issued to members of the Friends of Chester Cathedral, entitles the holder, on presentation of the card, to 10% discount in the Cathedral Shop and the Cathedral Refectory Cafe and, again on presentation of the card, to free entry to the Cathedral with one guest.

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUNDRAISING WORK IN 2009**

As we begin a new schedule of events, I would like to reflect on some of the extraordinary generosity that was shown to the fundraising project for Russia and the Education Department last year. After the first visit to Russia in 2007 Judy Davies organised her sponsored row on the Thames, raising £1,300. The Extravaganza in December 2008, organised by Caroline Dennis, raised £2,300 on the day, and we added even more afterwards from sales of valuable items on Ebay. Bags of baby clothes which did not sell at the time are now being worn by Russian babies struggling in temperatures of -40°. A market trader whom I had met only once gave me over £800 worth of stock to sell at 25% commission and when she came to collect her unsold stock, she donated another £10. A neighbour of two of our servers spent hours making pillows, toilet roll holders, aprons and dolls. A jeweller who came to the Craft Evening last October not only did not charge a fee but gave away earrings, 4 raffle prizes and £15 commission from her own sales. Roger Royle came to talk at our dinner last November, again for no fee. Marguerite Elliott donated a limited edition print of one of her paintings that was auctioned at the dinner. Another neighbour spent over 20 hours at my house making table centres which not only adorned the tables at the dinner but were sold afterwards at the Extravaganza. The group ‘Going for a Song’ performed free of charge in September. A lady who saw an advertisement for the book sale is now a valued member of our team. Since the return visit to Russia in 2009, even more people have been inspired to help and the message has spread beyond the cathedral about the work going on over there. St Thomas’s Church raised £132, a coffee morning in Great Barrow raised £460, St Mary’s church have given us £100 and St James’ in Christleton over £700. Trevor Dennis and I have raised several hundred pounds via talks with PowerPoint demonstrations. **Continued on back page**

## Coffee and the Creation Window.



Come along to the Refectory on Friday, February 5, or February 12, have lunch, and then at 2.30, over your coffee, join Canon Trevor Dennis as he talks about the Creation Window. Hear about the artist, who suffers from Parkinson's, using acid to bleach some stained glass on one of her 'wobbly days', or how the window was damaged just days after its completion and how the artist responded.



Discover the pain in the window, its humour, its exuberant joy, and the blessing and challenge of God. And see the details of the glass as you've never seen them before through a powerful telescope or binoculars.

## Trees in Abbey Square

Earlier this month, Abbey Square lost a piece of history where one of its oldest trees had to be cut down, due to a dangerous birch cavity within it.

After conducting a comprehensive Tree Survey last year, Cathedral Custos Hortorum, Phil Hunt said there were three trees in a very dangerous condition in the Square, because of a fungal organism that was gaining access to the heartwood.



The tree, which stood on the grass in the middle of Abbey Square, had most likely been there for almost half a century, during which time, it's safe to say the world has changed considerably!

Trees are important as they are very much part of our history. Sadly, it is because of their age that some of them are no longer safe enough to remain standing, and have to be cut down to avoid potential danger. Over the next few weeks, a cherry tree will be cut down in the Cheshire Regiment Garden of Remembrance, as well as the Weeping Elm in the Deanery garden, both of which have been deemed particularly dangerous.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUNDRAISING WORK IN 2009 (continued)

I would also like to acknowledge the immense amount of help we have received from the cathedral staff and congregation. The office staff have been tremendous, David Mayer and the Refectory staff have also gone out of their way to help us. Carolyn Bruce and the finance office have graciously coped with odd amounts of money. Nick Fry has kept a careful record with his camera, Sue Petranca has lent her support, Ian Atkinson has been a rock with his expertise and advice, the vergers and estate team have been invaluable and the music department have cheerfully stood outside singing in the rain to help bring people in at the Extravaganzas. Finally, members of the congregation have regularly given their time, talents and money to make each fund-raising event a huge success.. Without people's generosity, the amount raised would have been far less. This was intended to be just a few examples, but it has grown and grown and I am sure must have missed people off. My eyes have been opened to the immense amount of goodwill and compassion there is in the cathedral. So much fun is to be had by getting together with others. I hope to continue the support we have found so far. The next event will be a pancake lunch at my house on February 16, at 12 noon, price £7 to include savoury and sweet pancakes, a soft drink and tea or coffee. Tickets will be available from me on any Sunday at coffee between services.

**JANE JONES**



## Canons in Residence:

### FEBRUARY

1st-6th Canon Dennis  
7th-20th Canon Humphries  
21st-28th Canon Dennis

### MARCH

1st-6th Canon Dennis  
7th-20th Canon Burkett  
21st-31st Canon Humphries

## Worship in the Cathedral:

### Weekdays:

0730 Morning Prayer  
(St Anselm's Chapel)  
1230 Eucharist  
(1130 on Thursdays)  
1730 Choral Evensong (said service on Wednesdays)

### Saturdays:

0900 Morning Prayer  
(St Anselm's Chapel)  
0930 Eucharist  
1615 Choral Evensong

### Sundays:

0800 Prayer Book Communion Service (said)  
1000 Cathedral Eucharist  
1130 Sung Mattins (or Prayer Book Eucharist 3rd & 5th Sundays)  
1530 Choral Evensong  
1830 Evening Service on 1st and 5th Sunday

*All subject to occasional variations.*

## This Month at Chester Cathedral

3rd-25th February  
5th February  
12th & 13th February  
25th February

Anne Frank + You Exhibition  
Mary Duff 'Voice of an Angel'  
Dee and Alyn 'Greatest Hits of Gilbert & Sullivan'  
'Making Peace in a World of Diversity'  
Canon David Porter (Closing Anne Frank Exhibition)

Normal Cathedral Admission  
Tickets £25 and £30  
Tickets £10  
Entry by Donation

### For your Diaries

1 May Phantom of the Opera (Original 1925 Movie)  
*Accompanied on the Grand Organ by David Briggs*  
22 May Handel's Messiah  
*Chester Cathedral Nave Choir & 18th C Orchestra*

Tickets £10, £12.50 & £20 (VIP)  
Tickets £15

More information and tickets available at the Admissions Desk, online at [www.chestercathedral.com](http://www.chestercathedral.com) or call 01244 500959