

## Inspiring Music and Faith

“I feel closest to God when I’m playing, writing and recording music.”

Richard McLester is Director of Music at St Peter’s, Parkstone in Poole. In his 5 years there the choir has grown to 26 members, including 14 boys and girls aged from six to twelve.

“A few years ago, we only had one



junior chorister”, says Richard, “Music done well attracts new singers.

“I studied German at university but spent a lot of time teaching myself music. My musical background is mixed. I record and produce music, and I’ve played in a rock band with my colleague at St Peter’s, Bournemouth!

“I don’t discriminate between kinds of music: to me an electric guitar is as good as a boy treble! But our acoustic is perfect for choral singing, so we mainly sing the standard, RSCM-supported, Anglican choral repertoire.

“The choir is vital to the life and worship of St Peter’s and a major outreach tool. New churchgoers come to our Christmas and Easter services for the music. It starts our young singers exploring Christianity for themselves.

“When we do baptisms I encourage our choristers to come down to the font. The look on their faces is amazing.

“Music breaks down boundaries between people and God. Regardless of people’s previous opinions, if music moves them, it opens doors.

“Our faith is a living faith. It’s not about telling people what to think, but showing them what we live out.”

## Bishop’s Letter

The Right Revd Dr Edward Condry  
Bishop of Ramsbury

The starting gun seems to have been fired. The General Election is on the way.

The result, of course, is the most unpredictable for years.

There are so many possible combinations of parties which might take power in May.

I suspect that as a consequence there will be many more of us who vote tactically this time.

It is our duty to take part, to listen to the debates, and to consider our votes carefully.

I long for more talk about what kind of life we are going to live.

I am not moved by those who argue they are going to spend £2bn more on this, or cut that cost by £2bn; those who make bland promises about a few more nurses, more trains, or more classrooms.

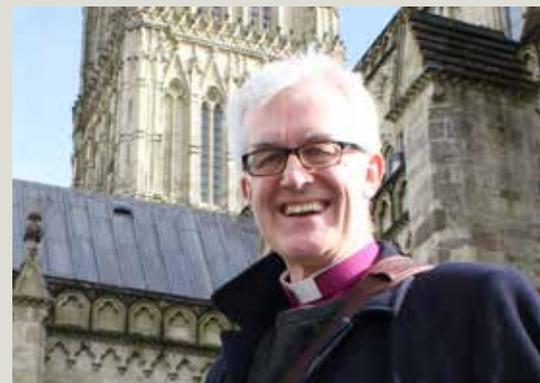
I want a debate which lifts itself beyond the inevitable pragmatism of current politics: impossible promises about what is going to be done about education, the NHS, the welfare state move me little.

I long for candidates who tell us what

kind of society they would like to see.

We want competence. We don’t want false dreamers.

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We do want people who recognise the limitations of politics.

But surely we want people who have imagination: politicians who can lift the debate beyond the distorted exchange of statistics ripped from context, and arid criticism of the opponent.

## Treasuring the Memory

Memories are treasured, so once a month a group meets at St James' Church Hall in Ludgershall for chat, crafts and a catch-up.

The 'Memory Café' offers people with dementia and their carers a place to make friends, socialise and get advice, support and information.

Mary Cullen from Wiltshire Council says, "Tidworth Area Board made a 'Big Pledge' to work towards becoming a more dementia-aware community. We are grateful to the church for hosting the Memory



Café. It's proving to be a much needed group for people living with dementia and their carers."

Rector, the Revd Claire Maxim added, "We are blessed to have a modern church hall. The cafe is part of loving and serving our neighbour, as Christ instructed us to do."

group. Yet evidence shows it is vital to involve young people in relationships across the generations to grow a faith that lasts.

"We're also aware it can be easy to reach children with the Gospel at the cost of ignoring their parents. It's about working with all age groups together."

A Christian from childhood, Becky grew up in Free Churches in different parts of Southern England.

"I read theology at university, but didn't really pursue God there. After graduating, my faith revived in a lively house church in London. 11 years ago, I started coming to St James', and then later working for the parish."

As a result of her work in Devizes, she was recently invited to lead a

# Witness on the Streets

Every Friday and Saturday, Christians from almost every church in Salisbury hit the streets around the city's nightclubs, to pray and help revellers and night-time economy workers.

Xanthe, from St Osmund's RC Church, has been helping for four years. "It's an amazing opportunity to witness to our love for Jesus. Most people know why we're there and are glad to see us."

The Revd Jonathan Plows, Associate Priest at St Thomas', is a 'prayer pastor'. "We stay at our base in the Baptist Church. We pray for the city and the street team, who sometimes ring asking for prayer for a particular situation."

Co-ordinator Brian Percey said, "We are seeking new street and prayer pastors. I can be contacted on **01722 580 023**."



conference for Sunday School teachers in Kajo-Keji in South Sudan.

"It was fantastic. This was my first trip to rural Africa. It was fun learning to work with an interpreter

"There are real differences - there are few resources there, no children's storybooks or guides for teaching Bible stories in local languages. Even a ball to play with is an unusual luxury.

"What we have in common is the passion of teachers to share the Gospel with children. Many South Sudanese had their education interrupted by the Civil War, but grab every opportunity to learn new skills. There is a great belief in the power of education."

