



St Mary
Magdalen
OXFORD

Parish Notes
August 2019

Services:

Sundays

Eucharist at 8 am and 5.30 pm,
Matins 10 am High Mass at 10.30 am

Weekdays

Eucharist at 12.15 pm and 6.00 pm
Morning Prayer 8.15 am,
Evening Prayer 5.40 pm

Confessions

Daily after the 12.15 pm Mass,
Wednesdays & Saturdays at 6.30 pm

Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage by
appointment with the Parish Priest

Parish Clergy:

The Reverend Canon Dr Peter Groves
On Sabbatical

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The Reverend Dr Jonathan Jong
Telephone: 07799 271913
jonathanjong@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

The Reverend Prof Judith Brown
Telephone 01865 514486
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Parish Administrator

Dr Jonathan Roberts
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admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

Website

www.stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

www.theschooloftheology.org

Events

August Feasts

The Feast of the Transfiguration is on 6th August, which is a Tuesday this year. We will keep the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Sunday the 18th.

Untune the Sky: Italian Madrigals Music by Monteverdi, Aleotti, Casulana, and others. 2nd August, 7.30pm in Church.

Vocations Brunch Might God be calling you to any aspect of service? Why not come to the Vocations Brunch in Henley on the 5th of October. A chance to explore with others in an informal setting with coffee/tea and croissants. You will have a chance to meet those engaged in lay and ordained work and ministry around our diocese. We are here to advise and to help you take the next steps. For more information please contact Revd. Jane Hemmings jane.hemmings@oxford.anglican.org or Revd Nicholas Cheeseman nicholas.cheeseman@oxford.anglican.org

If you have any additional needs please contact Revd. Katie Tupling
email: katie.tupling@oxford.anglican.org 01865 208254 or 07442762998

The venue has disabled access.

Bookings via eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/vocations-brunch-tickets-65812861039>

Notices

Prayers for those experiencing homelessness Christians from many denominations working on issues surrounding homelessness, and those who find themselves homeless, come together for prayer in churches in Oxford throughout the year. We are hosting this prayer service on the 7th August at 2.10pm. All welcome.

Marathon Our intrepid Churchwarden, Mr Speight, walked a marathon on July 27th for Macmillan Cancer Support, in memory of his late wife Tish. To donate go to: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nigel-speight2> or drop in to the office.

Ride and Stride The annual Ride and Stride in aid of Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, takes place on Saturday, 14th September. This is a great way to see some of the very many fascinating churches in our part of the world, while raising money to preserve and maintain them at the same time. Half of any money raised by members of our congregation will come straight back to St Mary Magdalen's. Please speak to Nigel Speight or Jonathan Roberts for further details.

If you aren't walking or riding yourself, please consider sponsoring one of the members of the congregation who are.

St Giles Fair We will be running our full complement of stalls this year and so any donations are very welcome: clothes, books, jewellery, CDs, DVDs, bric-a-brac. Collection is possible by arrangement. Deposit items at the church office on weekdays or after Sunday service, or email Nigel S. as above.

Those who can make scones, biscuits, cakes, jams, chutneys etc. are encouraged to start as soon as possible; these can be brought to church where they will be collected and stored - freezer space is available. The pre-ordering of produce brings about a third of the money we raise. Please liaise with Anne Dalziel – madal62@btinternet.com.

Also, any volunteers to help man the stalls on the 9th and 10th of September please speak to Nigel S. or Jonathan R.

Gatehouse Sandwiches We collect sandwiches made in advance by members of the congregation to take to the Gatehouse on specific Sundays throughout the year. The 18th of August is the next date for this, and all contributions are gladly received. Details of what kind of sandwiches to make are on a notice by the north door, or ask Joyce for further information.

Which Old Testament? Susannah Peppiatt

I was recently looking for an audio Bible app for my phone and came across a review of one particular app which declared, rather fiercely, that ‘This version can send you to hell’. The reviewer objected that

‘KJV Jesus says we must be “converted” and this ESV says “forgiven”. This is huge. Converted and forgiven are two different words. Being born again and forgiven is not even close. This doesn’t save NO ONE. Garbage.’

I probably wouldn’t go so far as to declare the ESV to be ‘garbage’ myself, but this upset reviewer is right about one thing: how we translate things matters. If we believe, as the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion tell us to, that ‘Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation’, then what Scriptures, and what translation, we are reading is important, and it may not always be as straightforward a question as it seems.

The books now considered Scripture in the Christian Canon were composed over a span of about a thousand years, with some material potentially having roots as far back as the 10th or 11th centuries BCE, and some as recent as the end of the 1st century CE. By and large, what we now call the Old Testament was composed in Hebrew and what we now know as the New Testament was composed in Greek. However, the first language in which a story was told is not necessarily the language in which it should always be

kept. The hymn ‘Let all mortal flesh keep silence’, for example, was originally composed in Greek, and Gerard Moultrie’s translation found in the New English Hymnal is not exactly a wholly ‘literal’ translation, but it is the one we know and love and the one that has seeped into the consciousness of many hymn-singers over the years.

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Around 3,000 years ago, the Hebrew people created the first alphabetic language by doubling the consonants heh, vav and yudas vowel letters. In English, this would be roughly analogous to using the letter h as a; the letter y for i and e; and w for o and u. The use of these vowel letters made it a lot easier to read and write with less training, because vowels allow us to understand a word far easier if we are not professional scribes or not native speakers of the language. For example, although it would be relatively easy for us to recognise “Lndn” as London, knowing that the vowels were not shown, you can see how quickly this might get confusing once we enter full sentences. Timothy Law gives a good example: “Jn rn t th str t by brd” could be anything from “Jon ran to the store to buy bread” to “Jane, I run to thee, a star to obey, a bride!” The comparison to English is, of course, quite unfair because English is more dependent on its vowels than Hebrew (we have whole words that are just one vowel, for example, like ‘I’ or ‘a’), but this may give some idea of the sort of exercise that the Masoretes were attempting to carry out in the 7th and 8th centuries CE when they set out to standardise the Hebrew Scriptures and aid reading by adding indications of vowels and other grammatical structures. These grammarians likely spoke Arabic natively, not Hebrew, and indeed, it seems likely that Hebrew had become an exclusively liturgical language somewhere between the 2nd and 6th centuries CE. Of course, the vowel-letters mentioned above would have made it quite a lot easier than it might otherwise have been, but because they were a relatively recent addition to the alphabet and not strictly necessary, these vowel-letters were often omitted, especially in manuscripts where there was a desire to preserve a sense of antiquity – even today, the central bus station

in Jerusalem spells “Jerusalem” as ירשלם, without the final yud which would be more conventional in modern Hebrew.

The creation of the Hebrew texts from which we translate the Christian Old Testament, then, should already be considered, if not a translation, then at least an interpretation. Which is all just to problematise the straightforward assumption that Hebrew means older means better.

But if not Hebrew, then what?

Well, while the oldest complete Hebrew manuscripts we have date from no earlier than the 9th century (CE), we have a smattering of complete Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament from the 4th and 5th centuries CE. However, the date of the exact copy of the text is, in many ways, less interesting than the date that it came to take the form in which we know it. Which, for the Greek, means around the 3rd to 2nd centuries before Christ. That is, almost a millennium before the Masoretes were working, a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures was being made in and around Alexandria, which later came to be known as the ‘Septuagint’, from Latin for ‘seventy’, in honour of the legend that 72 translators (six from each of the tribes of Israel) worked together on translating the Pentateuch at the request of King Ptolemy Philadelphus II. One of the versions of this legend, passed on by Philo in his *Life of Moses*, tells us that each of the translators was separated into their own cells to work on their translations, and when they later joined back together to compare translations, they found that each and every translator had come up with exactly the same rendering of every passage. Other versions of the legend are more understated, but this version best conveys the claim that the Septuagint was not so much a faithful translation as an inspired translation – which allowed Philo (and later the New Testament writers, and Church Fathers) to draw heavily on the Septuagint as authoritative even where it did not agree with the Hebrew text.

Indeed, there is no shortage of places where the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text disagree. If the Septuagint is viewed as simply a translation

of the Hebrew text that we have today, then it would turn out to be a rather shabby translation that doesn't even cover all the text – missing, as it does, a sixth of Job and an eighth of Jeremiah among other things, as well as containing extra books (some that were not even originally written in Hebrew), and changing the order and groupings of the books included. We should also be aware that just as the styles of different books in the Old Testament vary quite a lot, so too do the translations, some of which are extremely literal translations that try to preserve even Hebrew syntax and word order, while others are more focused on rendering it into elegant and readable Greek; a variety which suggests, despite the fun legend that I told a moment ago, that the Septuagint was probably translated in sections, as and when (and where) the need arose.

If we were reading the Old Testament on its own for purely academic interest, then all of these differences might not be all that important, but as Christians, which Old Testament we use makes a difference to how we understand God.

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When I was in my early teens and aggressively suspicious of strange ideas like the Virgin Birth, I remember learning, to my delight, that it was a doctrine based on a mistranslation. Matthew quotes Isaiah as saying 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel' (Matt. 1.23), but if you flip back through your Bible, you find that the bit of Isaiah here quoted says 'Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.' (Isa. 7.14). Vindication! The Virgin Birth was an unnecessary doctrinal mistake based on a mistranslation and could be done away with!

But how does Matthew see 'young woman' and read 'virgin'? Well, he doesn't. Matthew is here following the Septuagint in using the Greek word *parthenos* (παρθενος), which is closer to 'maiden' in English, with all its young and virginal connotations, while the Hebrew has instead the word *almah* (עלמה)

for 'young woman', with no more than a slight implication of virginity due to most young women of the time being virgins.

Many more examples can be enumerated from the Gospels, Paul and indeed the Church Fathers, but this is perhaps the clearest instance in which the Septuagint allows for a much more Messianic reading than the Masoretic Text would allow.

Which is, perhaps, no accident.

After all, it wasn't only the Christian canon that was being solidified around the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, but also the Jewish canon, and the fact that the pesky Christians kept reading Messianic prophecies into their texts was, let's be honest, probably quite irritating for Jewish communities with no interest in this Jesus fellow. Thus, that textual or interpretative traditions that prioritised non-Messianic readings might well have been 'naturally selected' among Jewish communities exactly at the same time as the opposite trend is happening in Christian circles, should be unsurprising.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 also help to flesh out this picture. These texts found in caves near Qumran are largely biblical texts or commentaries on biblical texts dating from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE. Generally speaking, these texts look exactly the same as the Masoretic Text only about half of the time, and in many of the places where they disagree with the Masoretic Text, they contains a reading much closer to that found in the Septuagint. Which is to say, the Hebrew text of the Bible, like any ancient text, was not entirely uniform or stable in this period, and it is possible that the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls are both witnesses to different and not necessarily less valid textual traditions of Scripture.

As the Church spread in the first few centuries CE, the Septuagint spread with it, being translated into new languages as Christianity spread to new lands, among them Coptic, Armenian, Latin, Gothic, Georgian, Ethiopic, Syriac and Slavonic. For the Western Church, the most important of these was Latin, the language of the Roman Empire and the language which would

remain the language of the Catholic Church for well over a thousand years. The Latin translations, however, were quite bad and incredibly varied, to the extent that St Augustine laments in a letter that “The variations found in the different codices of the Latin text are intolerably numerous; and it is so justly open to suspicion as possibly different from what is to be found in the Greek, that one has no confidence in either quoting it or proving anything by its help”.

In an effort to combat this shambles of Latin Scripture, Pope Damasus commissioned St Jerome to make a new translation of the Bible into Latin. Pope Damasus, of course, intended this to be from the Septuagint as all previous translations had been, but Jerome agreed to make a translation only if it could be translated from the *Hebraica Veritas*, or ‘Hebrew Truth’.

Until this point, with the exception of a small Syriac community, every Christian community had known the Scriptures through the Septuagint, whether directly by reading it in Greek or through one of its many translations. Unsurprisingly, then, given some of the considerations discussed above, Jerome’s translation was treated with suspicion by many at first, especially in the East, but by the end of the 6th century (nearly two full centuries after Jerome had completed it around 405), it became standard in the West and would remain so until the Reformation a thousand years later.

It would, of course, be impractical to attempt to reintroduce the Septuagint as the standard Christian Old Testament today – but, practicality aside, re-adopting the Septuagint in the West could allow for the unity of the Old and New Testaments to be shine through more clearly, and would put us in good company with the Fathers of the Church and the Eastern Orthodox, who continue to use the Septuagint, either directly in Greek or as the basis of its translations, to this day.

Intercessions

Please pray for the long term sick and those in special need, among them:

Ann-Marie, Anna, Phoenix, David, Elizabeth, Di, Terry, Michael, Lucy, William, Joy, John, Bernard, Fr Michael, Conor, Mary, Margaret, Philip, Liam, Allan, Colleen, Jo, Sr Mary Bernard, Jean, Eleanor, Clifford, Christopher.

Sunday readings

Sunday 4th August: Ecclesiastes 1.2, 2.21-23; Colossians 3.1-5, 9-11; Luke 12.13-21

Sunday 11th August: Wisdom 18.6-9; Hebrews 11.1-2, 8-12; Luke 12.32-48

Sunday 18th August: Apocalypse 11.19,12.1-6,10; 1 Cor 15.20-26; Luke 1.39-56

Sunday 25th August: Isaiah 66.18-21, Hebrews 12.5-7, 11-13; Luke 13.22-30

August 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Alfonso Maria de'Liguori B Dr	2 Feria	3 Feria
				Bishop Steven	Archbishop Justin	Christian unity
4 Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time	5 Feria	6 Transfiguration of the Lord	7 Feria	8 Dominic Pr	9 Teresa Benedicta of the Cross V M	10 Laurence M
The Church in SE Asia	Helen and Douglas house	Missionaries	The PCC	Preachers	Europe	Servers and sacristans
11 Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time	12 Feria	13 Feria	14 Maximilian Kolbe Pr M	15 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	16 Feria	17 Feria
The Church in South India	Theologians	Churches together	The persecuted Church	Women	Hungary	The Gatehouse
18 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	19 Feria	20 Feria	21 Feria	22 Feria	23 Feria	24 Bartholomew Ap
The Church in Southern Africa	Penitence	Europe	Healing ministry	Pilgrims	Grandparents	Oxford Deanery
25 Twenty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time	26 Feria	27 Monica	28 Augustine B Dr	29 The Beheading of John the Baptist	30 Feria	31 Aidan B
The Church in South America	Those burdened by work	World peace	Campion Hall	Prisoners	Those abducted or disappeared	Lindisfarne