



October, 2026.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome to your 69th (and my first!) congregational and community newsletter.

THANK YOU

First, a big thank you from me for your warm welcome to Ely Cathedral. Everyone has been very kind and generous and friendly and open to multiple repetitions of their name for my failing memory's sake... I'm very grateful.

It has been lovely to fall into the rhythm of daily Morning and Evening Prayer and the Eucharist and I'm much encouraged by those whom I have found already sharing in those liturgies with me. If you find you have space in your diary at 7.30am or 8am Monday to Saturday – even if only occasionally – there is no better way to consecrate your day to God than to begin with these services. You also get the cathedral to yourself, which is extraordinarily special. I have had to pinch myself when I consider the astonishing privilege of having daily Choral Evensong, for free, on my doorstep. I keep thinking as I stand there that this treat must come to an end soon and I'll have to go back to saying it on my own. Happily, this is not true. I hope as a newcomer that I can remind those of you of rather longer standing of the spiritual treasures and riches here at the Cathedral and urge you to embrace them afresh. It's easy for familiarity to breed forgetfulness, and so to miss out on transcendent things.

Since there are 280 on the Cathedral Roll, it will take me a while to get to know you all, and so I thought you might like a little autobiography in the meantime:

WHO IS THIS BLOKE?

I was born in Nottingham and brought up in a village a few miles east, called Bottesford, where my parents still live. I have a younger sister, Joanne, who lives with her family in Leigh-on-Sea. I went to school in Grantham and then read history at Christ's College, Cambridge. It was while at university that my nascent faith came alive, thanks to the ministrations of my college chapel. This is also where I discovered the glories of the Anglican choral tradition for the first time. After Confirmation I sensed there was more to come and eventually discerned a vocation to the priesthood. Following some post-graduate research, I began training for ordination at Westcott House in Cambridge and was ordained in 2003. I served first in a parish in central London and then headed north to work in Liverpool. I returned later to Cambridge as Assistant Chaplain of Emmanuel College to complete my doctorate (on the Bishops of the reign of George II; should any of you suffer from insomnia just call me and I'll read to you from it).

In 2012 I was appointed Vicar of S. Mary the Less, Cambridge – known almost universally as Little S. Mary's – and have been there for fourteen years until coming to join you last month. During that time I served as Rural Dean of South Cambridge, on Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (which deals with planning requests for church buildings), together with being a Trustee of the Friends of Fulbourn Hospital and the Cambridge Churches Homeless Project. I was also an honorary Canon here for the last three years.

I've moved into the Black Hostelry here with my partner Richard (who is a musician) and our two black labradors Sancroft and Parker. We're so pleased to be here and the dogs are excited to find so many canine neighbours (in Queen's and Powcher's Halls, Walsingham House – and more apparently).

LEGACIES OF THE WINDRUSH EXHIBITION AND A GUEST PREACHER

I'm delighted to have arrived in time for what promises to be a fascinating exhibition running from 13th Oct to 1st Nov in the South West transept. It's a celebration of the Windrush generation who made Cambridgeshire their home; we'll be able to find out more about them and hear the voices of the Windrush pioneers, discover how they shared their music and culture, food and usually deep Christian faith and all their amazing service to the United Kingdom, not least in the armed forces and the NHS.

Then on Sunday 25th Oct we're very pleased to welcome as our guest preacher at the 10.30am Eucharist The Rev'd Canon Guy Hewitt. London-born to Barbadian and Indian parents, Canon Hewitt is the first Director of the Church of England's Racial Justice Unit. First and foremost an Anglican priest, he is a social development specialist with work spanning racial justice, community cohesion, and wider questions of belonging and inclusion. He has lived in many countries and worked across the Commonwealth and beyond. A former High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, he played a leading role in responding to and campaigning about the Windrush scandal. He defines himself as formed in London, rooted in faith, forged in the West Indies, and shaped by the wider Atlantic world. We look forward to hearing him preach the Gospel to us as we mark Black History Month.

TRANSLATING ETHELDREDA (AND OTHER SAINTS)

One of the preachers of the Gospel who most strongly drew me to Ely is Saint Etheldreda. The opportunity to minister on the site of her abbey and to pray by her shrine each day is a great blessing. I can't resist therefore urging you to make space in your diaries for our celebration of the Feast of her Translation on 16th and 17th October. There will be a glorious Sung Eucharist at 5.30pm on Friday 16th and then a Festal Evensong in her honour on Saturday 17th, also at 5.30pm. Bishop Sarah will celebrate the Eucharist and the Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech will preach. It will be a wonderful opportunity to deepen our faith and devotion. In case you were wondering, as I had been, her 'Translation' is nothing to do with changing language or something but rather with the moving – or translation – of her body from her grave outside to a tomb inside the church in c.696AD as part of the recognition of her holiness.

Hot on her heels is S. Luke the evangelist, whom we celebrate on Sunday 18th October and then Ss Simon & Jude, apostles, on Wednesday 28th October. On that Wednesday therefore there will be an additional celebration of the Eucharist at 12.10pm. As the poet priest George Herbert wrote, 'seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee' and these celebrations of our forebears in the Faith are a splendid chance to discover more of this family into which we have been baptised and to be fed with Word and Sacrament that our faith may be strengthened. I look forward to seeing you there.

With renewed thanks and the assurance of my prayers as we seek to serve the Gospel, I am,
yours ever in the Lord,

Rob

The Rev'd Dr Robert Mackley,
Canon Residentiary & Canon Pastor.

AND FINALLY...THE NEW DEAN

Gemma Hardy, Executive Assistant to the Interim Dean and the Chief Operating Officer writes:

"Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to contribute to the consultation process on the new Dean. The Panel is now carefully considering all of the submissions received. It has been greatly encouraging to see how many people have engaged with the process and the thoughtful and constructive nature of the feedback offered. We are very grateful to all who have shared their views and reflections. Your contributions are valued and will help to inform the Panel's work as it continues its discernment."