

# Affirming Catholicism

Inspiration and hope  in the Anglican Communion

**JUNE 2009**

Dear Affirming Catholicism Supporter,

## **WELCOME**

Welcome to Affirming Catholicism's latest email newsletter!

It's been a little while since I last wrote to you, and during that time we've celebrated once again the great seasons of Lent and Easter, culminating in last Sunday's Feast of Pentecost. At Truro Cathedral where I work we've been trying out many of the new Common Worship services available for that period, and very shortly several of them are going to be available through our Christian resources site [www.gospelimprint.com](http://www.gospelimprint.com). We'll be letting you know when these liturgical goodies come online – in the meantime you can still download all kinds of useful leaflets from that site to put out on Church bookstalls and welcome tables.

We've also been very busy within the Board of Affirming Catholicism in seeking to inform debates within the Church and in our preparations for some exciting new initiatives. You can read all about them in this newsletter, and don't forget to look at our updated website: [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk) to find out about what's happening in your part of the country. You'll find on our website a link to our Annual Review, hard copy of which is progressively being mailed out to centrally registered supporters, which goes into more detail about our work and our plans.

As ever it would be very good to hear back from you, and to receive your contributions for future newsletters, so that we can continue to encourage one another. Please send comments, questions, articles etc. to [perran@perrangay.com](mailto:perran@perrangay.com).

*Perran Gay*

*Canon Precentor and Head of Worship at Truro Cathedral,  
Affirming Catholicism Supporter Liaison Trustee*

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## **BOARD ANNOUNCEMENT**

The new structure for Affirming Catholicism has moved from one of “distant” trustees and a full time Director to a Board of Executive Directors, each with responsibility for a different strand of the organisation’s work. This is in line with the charity’s updated deed, drawn up with the Charity Commission’s help, and reflects current best practice for the needs of an organisation like ours - bearing in mind our resources and their best use.

This model enables us to put more resources into a wider range of front-line initiatives. Nonetheless, it has implications for how we structure and resource day to day administrative support. The Board have concluded that the administrative support we now need should no longer be at St Matthew’s Westminster, but located more alongside the current Chair.

Lisa Martell, who has faithfully served Affirming Catholicism for the past 7 years, will, therefore, be leaving the organisation on June 14th. The new Board, together with its preceding trustees, places on record its thanks for all Lisa’s care of our affairs over that time. Our thanks are also due to Fr Philip Chester and all those at St Matthew’s who have made it such a hospitable home for the Affirming Catholicism office.

With effect from 14<sup>th</sup> June the position of Administrator will be filled by Mark Perrett, located in Stoke Newington, initially on a temporary basis while we test out the new modus operandi.

Contact details as of June will be as follows: email addresses will remain the same; the new contact telephone number will be **078 9185 1722**.

The postal address will be:

**Affirming Catholicism  
St Mary’s Parish Office  
Stoke Newington Church St  
London N16 9ES**

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### **IN THIS NEWSLETTER:**

A Day with Archbishop Rowan Williams  
Meet the Team: our Vocations and Lay Formations Trustee Sally Wright  
Vocations  
Two very different Day Conferences in October  
Affirming Catholics in Synod – A Homily by the Dean of Durham  
Synod Elections  
Perpetua – a Publishing Sensation  
Annual Review

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**CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL: Two sides of the same coin?**

## **A Day with the Archbishop of Canterbury**

**20<sup>th</sup> July 2009: 10.30 am-3.30 pm**

**BRISTOL CATHEDRAL - £10 per person including Lunch**

**Book now – a few remaining places left ...**

Through the good offices of our Affirming Catholicism Bristol group, we have put together a really exciting programme, at the heart of which is a keynote address by Archbishop Rowan Williams. There are **very few places left** for this day, so if you are thinking of coming please book at once or you may be too late! Go to our website [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk) and follow the link on the home page.

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### **MEET THE TEAM**

*Here's our latest profile from the team of Trustees working on behalf of our movement as Directors of Affirming Catholicism. Heading up our work on Vocation and Lay Formation is the Reverend Sally Wright who writes this about herself.*

My name is Sally Wright and I was appointed to oversee vocations for Affirming Catholicism last year. For most of that time I have been on maternity leave, as my first baby, Caspar, was born in June 2008. However, I am looking forward to getting more involved with the life of Affirming Catholicism.

I was born and brought up in Prestwood, Buckinghamshire, though my family is actually from the North East of England. I studied Theology at Durham University and as a student travelled around parts of Europe and to rural Brazil, where I spent time helping a small farming community build a village church. Following my years at Durham I lived and worked in London, travelling to Africa for a few months but otherwise working in various temporary, administrative roles.

After a year's work in the City I left to explore my vocation and offered myself for training for ordination. In 2000 I headed to Westcott House in Cambridge, where I enjoyed training and studying for an MA in Pastoral Theology at the same time.

My curacy was spent in Chichester Diocese and from Chichester I moved back to London where I became Chaplain of Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Assistant Priest at St John Chrysostom, Peckham. I am also involved with the work of Fresh Expressions.

I am passionate about vocations, both lay and ordained, a passion which began with my own very positive experience of the process of discernment. I am also passionate about the richness of the catholic tradition, which led me to become a member of Affirming Catholicism.

My interests outside family and work include reading, music, swimming, walking and theatre/cinema-going. I am also fascinated by expedition literature, following a week spent on Mt Kilimanjaro. I continue to maintain the fantasy of learning a language in my spare time and still have a love of travel, though these days more likely to Norfolk than Nepal!

*Sally Wright*  
*Vocation and Lay Formation Trustee*  
*Affirming Catholicism*

*To find out more about the Directors of Affirming Catholicism go to [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk) and download our Annual Review!*

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## VOCATIONS

*Here's Sally's first report on her Vocation work for Affirming Catholicism*

I am happy to inform our readers and supporters that there are plans afoot in the world of Affirming Catholicism and vocations. To begin with we have a Vocations web page which has now gone live and which will be updated and added to as information/reports come my way. The website includes basic information about vocation and has links to various websites such as Gospel Imprint, Church of England etc. As part of this Andrew Davison, a lecturer at St Stephen's House, Oxford, has written a piece on vocation which gives much food for thought.

I am busy compiling a list of courses which might be of interest to lay people interested in exploring a vocation, which will include anything from Bishop's Certificate courses to courses focused upon general life skills, living our faith etc. I am hoping that diocesan convenors might be able to assist me in this by informing me of any such courses in their area/diocese.

I am in the midst of setting up a mentoring scheme, the idea being to use the insights and energy of the newly ordained to act as mentors to those who are themselves considering ordination. This is being advertised via the web page and enquiries are being directed to me to begin with so that I have an idea of interest levels. Again I have been in touch with diocesan convenors to ask them to think about newly ordained priests/deacons who would be willing and able to participate in this scheme should I receive any interest. In the future I hope to expand this to include reader and accredited lay ministries as well.

This year I hope to attend the SCP/Affirming Catholicism vocations conference, more details about which will be available via the web page shortly.

In the meantime, I would be delighted to hear from any of our supporters who have ideas as to what else they would like to see happening in the world of vocations. I look forward to working with you!

*Sally Wright*

To find out more go to [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk), and select 'Who we are' to take you straight to the Vocations web page.

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## KEEPING IN TOUCH

We hope that you find these regular email newsletters useful, and do please forward them on to others who might be interested to find out more about us. Keeping in touch in this way is obviously much cheaper than producing printed newsletters, and enables us to use our limited financial resources in other ways that we hope can really make a difference to our Church, as we provide educational and catechetical sources and seek to inform debates. But those of you who support us financially will also be receiving our printed Annual Review.

If you have received this because someone has forwarded it to you, please consider becoming a supporter yourself. It's easy to do this on our website [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk). In doing this, you will receive regular news and updates including the Annual Review; your financial contribution will help us to do more and to do it even better; and you will be one more voice calling for a generous and open Catholic future for the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

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## DAY CONFERENCES IN OCTOBER

*We're pleased to bring you news of two very different day conferences taking place during October, that between them give a sense of the wide and deep agenda of Affirming Catholicism*

### ON OCTOBER 6:

#### **LOVE'S LABOUR: CATHOLIC EVANGELISM WHY AND HOW...**

Sponsored by Affirming Catholicism and the Society of Catholic Priests

**Love's Labour** is a practical day for catholic Anglicans. Through worship and workshop we will discover anew how evangelism is close to the heart of the catholic witness to the faith. There will be opportunities to consider questions as to why and how we approach evangelism as well as the chance to engage, challenge and inform. Our speakers are recognised authorities in their areas and the day will be of considerable interest to all who want to renew their vision of catholic evangelism.

Keynote speaker: Bishop Stephen Cottrell

Venue and time : Southwark Cathedral – 9.30 – 4.00 p.m.

For further details contact 078 9185 1722

More details to follow in the next newsletter and on the website.

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**ON OCTOBER 24**  
**THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH; PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE**  
**A Day Conference at St John's College, Oxford**  
sponsored by Affirming Catholicism and the Theology Faculty

This day will examine the principles behind the Establishment of the Church of England, describe a number of approaches to it during different periods of the Church's history, and ask whether it remains a working option for today's world.

10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m. Cost £20 including lunch. Booking via St. John's College Oxford

More details to follow – please write it in your diaries now!

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**AFFIRMING CATHOLICS IN SYNOD - GENERAL SYNOD ELECTIONS**

*We are much indebted to Mary Johnston for her work in convening the progressive Catholic group in General Synod – ACiS (Affirming Catholics in Synod). Please read and digest this important message from Mary.*

**Are you represented at General Synod?**

During the summer of 2010 elections will be held for the next General Synod quinquennium, 2010-2015. Its inaugural session will be in Westminster in November, 2010.

Meanwhile, who are your current diocesan representatives at Synod? Who is speaking and voting there on your behalf? If you don't know, look at your diocesan website or directory or ask your diocesan secretary. More importantly, are they expressing **your** views on social and church issues? Since the introduction of electronic voting two years ago, every vote is in the public domain, so you can now get an idea of an individual's position on all the items debated simply by looking up his or her voting record on the General Synod website. Those representatives may stand for re-election next year. Are you content?

Like it or not, the Church of England is a synodical church. We can't escape that – nor should we wish to if we value the participation of clergy and laity with the bishops in the governance of the church. (Alternative models, e.g. all clergy, all male, and all celibate, do not appeal). And we cannot afford to ignore General Synod either. Decisions made there guide the direction of the church. The current Synod has a strong Evangelical component, especially in the House of Laity, and a smaller but forceful "traditionalist" catholic group. With the 2010 election comes an opportunity to shape a Synod which will better reflect our own distinctive progressive catholic perspective. We all have a responsibility to see that that happens, not for our own satisfaction, but for the sake of the whole Church.

It's not too soon to begin thinking about your diocesan representation. Who among your clergy colleagues might stand for election? Who among the lay people in your congregation? Could you serve in this way yourself? Start thinking, start talking, start asking. The 2010 elections to General Synod are important for all of us.

*Mary Johnston*  
*Convenor – ACiS (Affirming Catholics in Synod)*

*Watch out for future newsletters in which Mary will be giving some more detailed advice on the procedures involved in standing for General Synod and supporting those who are standing.*

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### **A SYNOD REFLECTION by the Dean of Durham**

*On the first evening of every February session of General Synod, members of ACiS gather in the Lady Chapel of Westminster Abbey for a eucharist together, followed by an informal reception at which the agenda is discussed. This year the homily was given by the Very Revd Michael Sadgrove, Dean of Durham. Numbers of those present asked for a copy, which is reprinted here for wider circulation.*

### **TOHU WAVOHU**

*Readings: Genesis 1.1-19, Mark 6.53-end*

'The earth was a formless void' says Genesis: *tohu wavohu*, a rare moment of Hebrew rhyme. The creation story tells how shape and order emerge out of the chaotic deep: light and dark, sea and dry land, vegetation, the different orders of life in earth, air and water; and humanity as the crown of God's achievement. This patterning of time, space and the material world is fundamental to a cosmos that is stable and trustworthy. In this universe that is 'very good', the disordering, destructive powers of chaos have no place.

However, order was experienced as precarious: fears that chaos might return loomed large in the consciousness of all ancient peoples. In the enthronement psalms, Yhwh is king over cataract and flood who has crushed the heads of the monsters of the deep; yet the laments are full of terror at the waters rising inexorably over the head. And the threat is both natural and human. The raging of the enemy is personified as an overwhelming force which only the mighty power of Yhwh can subdue. In a bleak vision of Jeremiah, *tohu wavohu* appears again: 'I looked on the earth and lo, it was *tohu wavohu*, waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and lo, there was no-one at all, and all the birds of the air had fled. I looked and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger'. This is Genesis wound backwards from cosmos to chaos, its finished artistry unravelling to a terrible, anarchic collapse.

Our Synod agenda adds to the evidence of our current situation that *tohu wavohu* does not only belong to antiquity. The global financial crisis, the effects of climate change, human trafficking, the abuses that drive asylum seekers to our shores all point to it as a present reality for us, both as nameless fear and felt reality, consequences all of them of what the collect calls 'the unruly wills and affections of sinful humanity'.

Tonight's gospel speaks into this edgy, bewildering experience. The disciples have just been in their boat on Galilee struggling against the storm. Over the chaotic water walks the Lord, and they are terrified. But he gets into the boat with them and says: 'take heart, it is I: do not be afraid' and the wind is stilled and the sea calmed, as if the demons of the flood have once more heard a divine voice and been tamed. And on dry land, Jesus at once turns to life's victims, desperately clamouring for help, begging to touch the hem of his garment. The chaos that eats away at human lives is turned back and contained, for he is alongside them, as if to say once more: 'take heart, it is I: do not be afraid'.

This Benedictine foundation we are sitting in reminds us how in the 6<sup>th</sup> century St Benedict set about creating communities of stability and order when the Roman Empire was in its final descent into anarchy. Perhaps his Rule saved Christian Europe from the dark ages. His enterprise could be a model for mission today: intelligent religion marked not by easy successes or showy drama but by the sustained spiritual commitment over generations to live with complexity. In his book *A Staircase for Silence* Alan Ecclestone offers clues as to how we might set about this. He says that only a radical deepening and broadening of our vision is equal to the task of 'bringing to birth and nourishing a spirituality strong, generous and inspiring enough to help men and women.... grow up as truly human beings in the immensely complicated world that lies ahead. That spirituality must provide a disciplined way of living in which growth to the fullest possible stature of each is made the concern of all.... It requires a [Trinitarian] spirituality [that] relates the creativity, the humanising and the unification of mankind in one growing experience of mutual love. The world may well be entering a yet darker age than any known before. The demands laid on the spirituality needed during such time will be correspondingly greater.'

The eucharist is God's pledge to renew the face of the earth, and amid *tohu wavohu* shape a new creation. It is the church's call and privilege to have a part in this. We shall need stability, obedience and conversion of life in our communities and our personal lives. These catholic values are deeply counter-cultural. But to embrace them is to live by the promise and hope of the gospel. It is how we make a difference in the world and live out for others and for ourselves the conviction Benedict held on to for dear life as the world fell apart around him, that we must never despair of the mercy of God.

*Michael Sadgrove*

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## BOOK REVIEW

*Perpetua: The Third Testament for the Third Millennium*

By Kevin Carey

This is a book review with a difference – in that the book exists only in electronic format for download – you can't buy it in the shops!

Kevin is a keen supporter of Affirming Catholicism, a Reader, a Member of General Synod representing the Diocese of Chichester and Chairman of the RNIB. His exciting novel is an account of Perpetua, a 19-year-old girl of ambiguous parentage who preaches a gospel of love and self-affirmation. With her own unique take on how this applies to 21st Century people, suspicion is aroused when disciples begin to group around her and it is not long before conflict with the establishment of the media, large supermarket chains and, of course, the Church of England follows ...

Perpetua's story is (like all the best Gospel stories) told by four very different voices: the first part (now available) is by Jack, a tabloid hack who loves a good story. It was brought to my attention just as I was about to enter the drama of Holy Week, and despite it being one of the busiest weeks of the year, I simply had to keep reading to the end. It certainly helped me to approach Holy Week and Easter this year in a different way. And I'm greatly looking forward to reading the subsequent instalments, for three very different versions of Perpetua's remarkable story.

Like all the best things in life, it's free – simply go to [www.perpetua.tv](http://www.perpetua.tv) and follow the simple instructions.

Perran Gay

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That's all for now – watch out for the Midsummer edition coming to a computer screen near you.....and have a good Summer!

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