

HYMN FOR ST. GEORGE'S PATRONAL FESTIVAL M.G.S

It is a brave person who sets out to write a hymn about St. George, or other saints such as Bartholomew, because nobody knows much about them. As you probably remember, our former Rector, the late Rev. John Townsend, wrote a St. George hymn which we sing every year. Laurence Housman is the only poet represented in standard hymn books with a hymn for St. George, who was probably martyred in Turkey or Palestine in the third or fourth century. He came up with this:

*To George our Saint thou gavest grace without one fear all foes to face,
And to confess by faithful death the word of life which was his breath.*

All Athelstan Riley (1858-1945) could manage for St. Bartholomew (August 24th) was an acrostic - successive lines beginning with S, A, I, N, T, B, etc., including this second verse:

*Twelve poor men, by Christ anointed,
Braved the rich, the wise, the great,
All the world counts dear rejecting,
Rapt in their apostolate.*

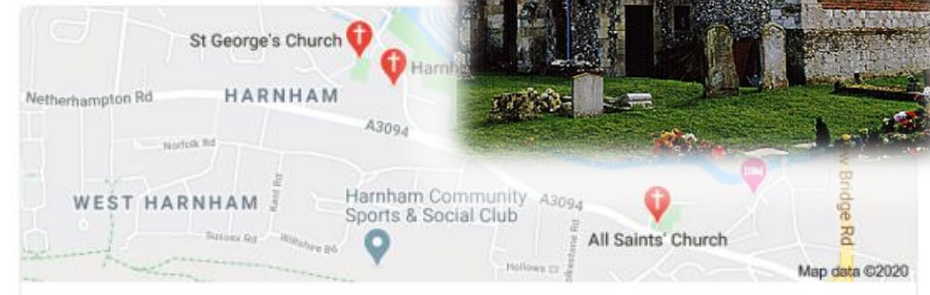
So do we fall back on 'For all the saints'? Those militaristic verses might do for George, though they're hardly suitable for saints like Mother Teresa. I suggest the following, by a proper poet, Robert Bridges. It comes from the days of Empire, but is not too jingoistic. It is concise, and is usually sung to the well-known tune, *Wareham*:

*Rejoice, O land, in God thy might,
His will obey, him serve aright;
For thee the Saints uplift their voice:
Fear not, O land, in God rejoice.*

*Glad shalt thou be, with blessing crowned,
With joy and peace thou shalt abound;
Yea, love with thee shall make his home
Until thou see God's kingdom come.*

*He shall forgive thy sins untold:
Remember thou his love of old;
Walk in his way, his word adore,
And keep his truth for evermore.*

St George's Patronal Festival 2020



John 15 v 18-2

Revelation 12 v 7-12

Almighty God,
you have built up your church
through the devotion of your saints;
inspire us to follow the example of
St George,
that we in our generation,
may rejoice with him in the vision of your glory. Amen.

Connections... a reflection by Revd Becky

Social connection.

I wonder how you have stayed connected to others over the past few weeks? We know the importance of social connection for positive wellbeing. Positive human relationships can even improve our immune systems. As we celebrate St George's Patronal Festival, we are connected to each other through phone, electronic and postal communications even though we are not physically connected to the church building itself.

Places bring connection.

Of course, St George's is usually a place to gather and more... The ancient building of St George's church connects us to the past and at the same time gives us a sense of belonging in the present.

Often wedding couples and families choose church for their celebrations because of a physical connection to St George's – their grandparents or parents were married or baptised in St George's too. It represents an ongoing place where they continue to honour their family and God.

We celebrate St George's Church as a focal point in our community throughout different generations into which people have poured their 'faith, joy, sorrow, labour and love.'

Other people comment that within the walls of St George's they feel a connection to the prayers of the Christian Community throughout its 905 years. 'When people come into church what matters most is that it is a thin place between heaven and earth... 'Where prayer has been valid.' The outer building provides a place of inner connection.

Inner Connection.

I find it fascinating that psychologists speak of the importance of inner happiness; a positive internal connection with the self can foster, nurture, and build our external sense of connection. They have discovered the principles of thanksgiving, forgiveness and peace that Christian spiritual writers and practitioners have been promoting for years! And yet Christians do not shy away from struggle either- as we consciously deepen our lives into the joy and acceptance of God we name the things in our lives that prevent us from true connection with our maker, redeemer and friend. We

struggle with whatever is wrong in ourselves and in our world, armed with the peace and the joy of Jesus Christ.

Global Connection.

The few facts we do know about St George are that he was born in Palestine of a *Palestinian* mother and a *Greek* father, and brought up a Christian. He was a soldier, in the *Roman* Army, praised by the Emperor Diocletian. When Diocletian ordered that every Christian in the army should be arrested, George objected and publicly declared himself a Christian. Diocletian tried to persuade George to denounce his faith, but George stood firm. The Emperor tortured George and put him to death on 23rd April 303.

St George is venerated throughout the world besides England, including Georgia, Bulgaria, Greece, India, Syria, Iraq and in many cities such as Genoa, Beirut, Rio de Janeiro, Barcelona and Moscow. He is highly respected by many Muslims and in Beith Jala in the Holy Land there is a Christian shrine where the neighbouring Muslims bring people to be cured. St George has connections all over the world with very diverse groups of people.

We celebrate his global connection and turn our eyes again to those people and places that are out of sight of the news due to Covid 19- Syria, Libya, and immigrant people like St George.

Disconnect.

In our Gospel of John, Jesus talks about his followers being hated. The original audience of John's gospel was very likely suffering real and dangerous persecution. Jesus command to his disciples has been to love but there was no guarantee that they would be loved in return. If Jesus was hated so bitterly as such a loving person, his disciples cannot expect to be treated differently. We are rightly proud of our martyrs and saints and are challenged when we ourselves meet the language of hatred, directed either towards ourselves or others. The disconnect which is named outright in the Gospel, encourages each of us to reflect on what it means to struggle for Christ whoever we are, wherever we are.

Quotes from: Emotions, morbidity, and mortality: new perspectives from psychoneuroimmunology. Kiecolt-Glaser JK, McGuire L, Robles TF, Glaser R *Annu Rev Psychol.* 2002; 53():83-107.
Bishop Nicholas Holtam 'A Room with a View' SPCK P.18 and P.13
Emma Sappala, Science Director, Stanford Center For Compassion And Altruism Research And Education. Co-Director Wellness, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.