

Malvern PCN

Programme 2021-2022

14 October 2021 via zoom

The Imagination as a Key to Unlocking Scripture - Revd Dr John Bell

Many Christians have been brought up with a reverence for intellectual interpretations of scripture from people with whom they have little in common. The suspicion is that the 'right answer' to puzzling scriptures can only be unlocked by the learned. In this lecture, the 'right answers' mentality is questioned and the proven worth of experience, insight and imagination celebrated in graphic detail.

John has worked for over 30 years in the areas of music, worship, spirituality and social justice. He conducts workshops and seminars across the globe and, with his colleagues, develops new and accessible liturgical materials. He is an occasional broadcaster and contributor to Radio 4's Thought for the Day.

11 November 2021 via zoom

The Apostate's Creed - Rethinking Christianity for the C21st – Ben Whitney

Ben writes, 'All theologies have a context. Mine is the 21st century.'

Can I still find some truth in the Christian story, even if, like most people, I no longer believe its historic doctrines or share its faith in a supernatural God? Jesus radically reinterpreted his religious inheritance. Can we learn from him and do the same, or is he too no longer relevant?

This book is an exploration of some phrases from the 8th century Apostles Creed, together with a series of reflections based mainly around Luke's gospel. Is there anything left I can believe in? And what difference does it make?

Ben Whitney is a retired education social worker who also has a postgraduate degree in theology. He was previously a Baptist minister and then a Church of England lay-reader. Ben's talk this evening is based on his recent book, *The Apostate's Creed*. Some copies are available. Please email for a copy to be sent to you.

9 December 2021 via zoom

Theology and climate change: a personal journey – Revd Dr Paula Clifford

Paula will be reflecting on the challenge of formulating a theological approach to climate change, in the context of international development, in working with churches and other faith groups, and in encouraging personal lifestyle choices. She will pose the particular question: do we have a sufficiently robust theology from which to address the ever-increasing complexities of the current climate crisis?

Dr Paula Clifford has published widely on topics as diverse as medieval French and popular theology. Having been a regular contributor to BBC Radio 4's Thought for the Day and teaching Medieval French and Linguistics at the University of Reading and University of Oxford, she spent 13 years working for Christian Aid, first in communications and then as Head of Theology. Paula is now a priest in the Church of England. Paula is on the Faraday Institute's list of speakers.

13 January 2022 in person (tbc)

Church Going Gone: a biography of religion, doubt, and faith - The Revd Canon Brian Mountford

In this colourful memoir, from 1950's childhood to the COVID crisis, Brian Mountford describes his life as a priest, which has spanned a period of immense social change and seen the secularisation of Britain to the point where 52% of the population say they have 'no religion'. Opening with a vibrant account of London in the Sixties, he moves to Cambridge college life in the Seventies, Suburbia in the Eighties, and thirty years as Vicar of the 'most visited parish church in England', the University Church, Oxford. Rich in humour and anecdote, he unpacks his liberal theological ideas on the way, addressing questions such as God, the meaning of life, sexual ethics, and the relationship between doubt and faith. A central idea is that the abandonment of organised religion has not eradicated spiritual questioning and, following Philip Larkin's poem Church Going, from which the book takes its title, people of all ages are forever 'surprising/A hunger in (themselves) to be more serious.'

The Revd Canon Brian Mountford was Fellow and Chaplain of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, before becoming Vicar of the University Church, Oxford from 1986-2016. He has been Chaplain of St Hilda's since 1989 and conducts worship in the Chapel on one day each week in term. The 'Chaplain's Chat' is a termly meeting with a visiting speaker when issues in public theology are discussed.

Canon Mountford is Publisher at Large for the 'Christian Alternative' imprint of John Hunt Publishing which seeks to promote radical theological ideas and to engage theologically with public issues.

10 February 2022 zoom/in person (tbc)

<title tbc> - Revd Dr Al Barrett and Ruth Harley

Al Barrett and Ruth Harley are authors of *Being Interrupted: Reimagining the Church's Mission from the Outside*, a book that 'challenges the multiple ways in which privilege operates to 'other' and refuse the gifts of those who are different from us. It will help individuals and communities find new ways to co-operate with the Spirit of God in her fluid, generative work of kindling and sustaining life - in unlikely and surprising places and ways'.

Revd Dr Al Barrett is rector of Hodge Hill Church in the Diocese of Birmingham. He is an Honorary Research Fellow at the Queen's Foundation

Ruth Harley is an ordinand in the Church of England. Prior to that, I was the Children's and Families' Minister at a town-centre parish church.

10 March 2022 via zoom

Islam & climate change: personal and system change - Rianne ten Veen

Rianne C. ten Veen is an independent disaster governance, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue facilitator, consultant and trainer. After a decade at an INGO, and a decade at a consultancy (some of which part-time), she has been a researcher on globalisation and surveillance. She focuses on intercultural/ disaster-related/ environment/ teaching/ development projects (the more interdisciplinary, the better!). She has published a 'save cash& planet' style book from Islamic perspective: *199 ways to please God, how to (re-)align your daily life with your duty of care to Creation*.

14 April 2022 in person/zoom tbc

<title tbc> - Professor Anthony Reddie

Anthony Reddie is Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford and an Extraordinary Professor of Theological Ethics at the University of South Africa. He is specialising in black theology.

12 May 2022 via zoom

<title tbc> - Dr Andy Pakula

Andy Pakula is an atheist Unitarian minister. He was elected in 2009 to serve on the executive committee of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, the umbrella body for British Unitarians. He is the minister of two neighbouring congregations in north London: Unity, on Upper Street in the heart of Islington; and Newington Green Unitarian Church, on the village green of that name about two kilometres north. He holds a doctorate in biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Master of Business Administration from the MIT Sloan School of Management.

9 June 2022 in person/via zoom

<title tbc> - Dr Hannah Bacon

Hannah is Acting Head of Theology & Religious Studies; Associate Professor in Feminist and Contextual Theology, University of Chester. She is a member of a number of academic organisations including the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and The European Society of Women in Theological Research (ESWTR). She is affiliated to the feminist educational centre of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) and she has just completed a period of serving as board member and UK representative on the Women's Caucus (affiliated to the AAR and Society for the Study of Biblical Literature). She is also a member of The National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA).