

June 21st 2020

**Greetings in the name of our
Lord Jesus Christ.
In this time of uncertainty,
we declare: Jesus is Lord!**

Eugene Peterson, author of the Bible translation, The Message

Eugene Peterson died in October 2018, aged 84, and I would like to share my reflections from his excellent memoir, *The Pastor*.

For 30 years, Eugene was pastor of the Presbyterian Christ our King Church in Baltimore, USA. He did not plan to be a pastor but found himself in that place and random events, experiences & memories gradually took the form that was congruent with who he was becoming. He likens it to finding a glove that fits his hand perfectly.



Some of his memories are of slow and secret formation such as the impact of the home in Montana beside the lake that became for him and his wife Jan, sacred ground, a place of hospitality and healing. Then there are light bulb moments such as realising that 'Pastor John of Patmos,' as he calls the author of Revelation, wrote to his people in the same conditions in pagan Rome mirrored in pagan New York.

He pays tribute to Luther and Calvin who taught him to think largely and passionately about God and the scriptures. They were concerned with right thinking, understanding doctrine and interpreting Scripture. He recalls Sister Genevieve who introduced him to Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross who 'worked from the other end' and using different language, paid attention to the life of prayer and recovering the ways of prayer. He learned that both are essential to helping him pursue his pastoral vocation.

Eugene lived through a changing culture in America that deeply impacted the Church. He describes the debilitating effects of consumerism, the urge to be relevant, the need to tot up numerical successes and his own temptations to give in to pressure both inside and around him to defect from his calling as a pastor.

Three years into his ministry and following a successful building programme, Eugene hit what he calls the 'badlands', named after the desolate landscape of Dakota where nothing grows. Thus began six years of being in the desert where he was tempted to leave and look for something else, but he stayed and discovered so much more: intimate relationships, a tradition of holiness and the cultivation of souls.

I've taken away these points from the book. Firstly, the importance of people who help keep us to the course that God has set for us. Secondly, staying immersed in the Scriptures so they become the air we breathe, inhabit and pray. Thirdly, to remain 'unbusy' so that we keep to God's agenda and not our own or someone else's.

Eugene helpfully points out that his understanding of the life of a pastor cannot be measured or counted. This is also helpful, it's a book I recommend.

Paul

A reflection on Psalm 23 by Carla A. Grosch-Miller

A Psalm of David.

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

You can probably recite this psalm by heart. And, like me, you may have prayed it at the bedside of the dying, chanted it in a quiet sanctuary or entreated it earnestly to yourself in times of trouble.

The words flow into and over us as balm to our souls. We breathe deeply the green of the pasture. Our heartbeat slows as we approach the still waters. We drink deeply of the assurance of God who fears neither death nor dark valleys, who leads us on a right path even through disasters. We sit at the table and know that there is enough, there is more than enough. The blessing hand has been laid on our shoulders; our cup overflows. Surely, goodness and mercy.

Psalm 23 is ballast for trying times. These days we need all the ballast we can get. We need the breath of peace, the kind that passes understanding, the kind the Good Shepherd breathed on his disciples in his post-resurrection appearances. We need the clear, cool stream of living water he poured into the thirsty woman's cup. We need the green, the growing newness of spring – life emerging from the empty tomb, that feeds body and soul.

When the world is topsy-turvy, when our own homes may feel like a prison, when the news is bad and the shadows are long, we are reminded of where our true Home lies. It lies in the hands of God who made heaven and earth, who walked amongst us and bore the worst humanity could dish out, who even now sighs too deep for words. Good Shepherd, Host and Friend, be with us now and forevermore.

Opening St. Peter's in the City.

You may be wondering when St. Peter's will be open again. This is not as simple as it may seem, and it will be an item for the PCC to discuss at our meeting on June 29th.

The Government has issued its guidance on re-opening places of worship for private prayer. At the same time, the Diocese has emphasised there is no obligation for churches to open and many are planning carefully and cautiously for a re-opening at a much later date.

Before we are able to open St. Peter's for private prayer, we will need to complete a risk assessment, and this will need to be approved by the Archdeacon of Derby. Paul has asked Bill Poole to work on this, and we are grateful for his help in this matter.

As it is permissible for employees, volunteers and contractors to enter a place of worship prior to re-opening for the purpose of making preparations so that the building can be used safely, this is currently taking place. Melvyn and Gillian have been doing a wonderful job making sure everything is in order, and a huge amount of decorating and cleaning has been happening over the past three months. St. Peter's in the City is gleaming!!! MANY THANKS TO MELVYN AND GILLIAN!!!

We have undertaken a 'Hygiene Audit' at no cost from a local company as we prepare for opening at some time in the future. This has highlighted changes that are essential before we open again.

Colleagues from St. Peter's Quarter Business Improvement District are providing some helpful resources, including hand sanitiser and social distancing signs and these will be placed strategically around the church. We will all have to get used to new practices; for example, from now on, everyone will need to use a sanitiser on entering and leaving the building.

In the meantime, our place of worship will remain closed to the general public.

Bible Study with Zoom

Tuesday, 8.00pm Bible Study by Zoom, hosted by David and Margaret Phypers

All are welcome to join, please email David at david@phypers.co.uk or text him on 07866 777015.

Prayer ...

In this very testing time for us all, do not hesitate to ask for prayer for any concern you have. We all face difficulties and challenges, but prayer makes a difference. In an emergency, call Bren (07967 183601), and she will ask those on the prayer chain to pray for you.

Space to take notes from today's readings, prayers and sermon.

St. Peter's in the City Staff:

Vicar: Revd. Canon Paul Morris
paul@stpetersderby.org.uk

Associate Priest: Revd. Anita Matthews
anita@stpetersderby.org.uk

Vicar's PA and Church Administrator
Kismet Barber
office@stpetersderby.org.uk

Inside Out Project Worker: Wayne Haycock
wayne@insideoutderby.org.uk

Building Manager: Melvyn Wood
Kitchen Supervisor: Gillian Wood

Church Wardens: Tim Benson, Sung-Hee Lee

We are a community of faith, hope and love in the heart of the city
Follow us on Twitter: @stpetersderby
www.stpetersderby.org.uk

Parish Safeguarding Links: Revd. Anita Matthews and Kismet Barber

IN THE WEEK

**The church and church office are closed until further notice,
but telephone calls to the Office on 01332 360790 and
emails to office@stpetersderby.org.uk will be monitored**