

# HEATH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

September-November 2017





Dear All

My introductory report encouraged you to keep in touch with me.

Unfortunately, it omitted my e mail address, so here it is: t.thom@hotmail.co.uk.

Heath Street continues to witness through its regular services and community outreach including the toddler group (which now meets twice weekly) and various musical activities. The core congregation increases steadily, with some of those who attend weekday activities now making regular appearances. As a Contact Club helper, I am particularly pleased that a patron has joined our Community Choir and started attending services. At Pentecost, we were delighted to welcome Jose Mbombo into the universal church through Baptism.

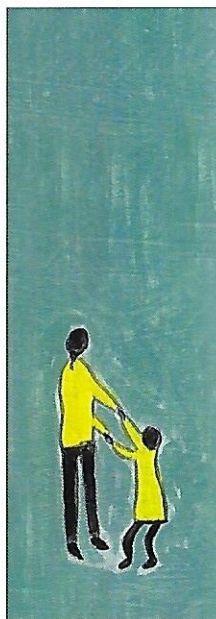
Together with other churches in the area, we are now starting to get involved with a local government scheme to sponsor a refugee family, providing intensive support to help them settle into their new life: there is a particular need for people in the London area who can provide or help to locate suitable rental accommodation, assist the family to negotiate the benefits and education system and provide ongoing support. Learning the language is crucial, so if you have experience teaching English, especially as a foreign language, do get in touch with Ewan. On a practical level, works to improve health and safety and

accessibility are progressing and it is hoped that the building will become fully accessible next year, assisted by community funding and a very generous bequest from the estate of our late minister, the Reverend Dr Marie Isaacs.

Inter-church activity flourishes with regular meetings and cooperation over specific projects such as Contact Club and refugee sponsorship. We had a joint fund raising quiz on 13th May, which Heath Street won and which raised £590 for the Camden and City Churches Cold Weather Shelter. We recently had a lovely Summer picnic in the garden of the Unitarian Church on Rosslyn Hill, where members of various denominations shared fellowship.

Love to you all,

Theresa



Hebrews 7:26 & 28:

“We have a high priest exalted above the heavens a Son who has been made perfect forever.”

## GOING THE WHOLE WAY

A sermon preached by Revd. Proff. Paul Fiddes, Regent's Park College, Oxford,  
at the ordination of Ewan King, August 13th, 2013

This sermon is a bit of a first for me. It's the first time I've been asked to preach an ordination sermon on a text set for the Feast Day of a Saint. And it's the first time the person being ordained has already written an essay on this Saint for me. I won't tell you what mark I gave it.

But those of you who know Ewan know that you end up doing a number of things for the first time when he's around. So my text is from a passage of Scripture set in the Orthodox Church for the Feast Day of St Maximus the Confessor. Maximus, in case you don't know, was around in the seventh century, and we have already heard some of the saint's own words and thoughts in the piece especially written by James Cave. Our New Testament text is about Jesus Christ who has passed through the heavens to the Most Holy Place of all, into the very heart of God the Father. It echoes the confession of Maximus in James' piece, that the eternal Son of God has become a human being in order to raise our human life into the fellowship of God's life. Maximus insisted that God really became human in every way, and didn't just pretend to be a man. This was at the heart of Maximus' thought, and both the music and the scripture text recall his

affirmation. Maximus was inspired by our scripture text saying that Christ, who was God made man, has gone right through the heavens into the most secret presence of God. So I want to speak about Maximus' Lord, about the Christ who has gone the whole way.

Thank you, Ewan, for asking me to share in this special day, a solemn and joyous day, when you are ordained as a minister of word and sacrament in the church of Christ. Nick and I bring with us the greetings of Regent's Park College, and our prayers for your future ministry throughout your life to come. On this day, the Feast Day of Maximus, let us think about the Christ who has gone the whole way.

If you drive a car, perhaps you've had an experience like mine. Driving slowly through the centre of town you come upon a pedestrian half-way across the road. He looks up and sees you coming and panic strikes him. I call it 'mid-way panic'. He has left the safety of the curb from which he has started out, and he is not near enough to the other side to feel safe in carrying on, so he dithers, hesitates – and then makes a dash, usually in the wrong direction. Mid-way panic! If



you don't drive, you'll still know what I mean because you and I have all been that person crossing the road at one time or another.

This is a parable of many situations in our life; we often have the feeling of being half-way along a difficult path when something strikes us that we can only call "mid-way panic". In between the safety of the beginning and the security of the end, there is a space - an open space where we may feel lack of support. So on this day I want to ask us all - not just Ewan but all of us: do we have mid-way panic?

Our text from the book of Hebrews celebrates Jesus Christ as the one who has gone the whole way on the journey through the tests and trials of life. He has found a path through the tangles of human experience, blazing the trail through suffering and trouble. And he has gone through: look, he has gone through to the innermost presence of God the Father. The writer says "He has passed through the heavens" after being "tested in every way as we are". This letter to the Hebrews constantly portrays Jesus as the pioneer, the trail-blazer of our salvation; if we put our trust in him he will take us with him into the heart of God. We too can come through. We can go the whole way on our pilgrimage. We can travel on in the midst of the tensions of life: and one of the tensions we have to face is mid-way panic.

It can be like this for us when we begin to deepen our faith through study of the bible and theology. The safe shore

of a so-called "simple faith" has been left behind. Perhaps we have left behind too the first sense of excitement as new horizons began to open. But we have not yet reached the further shore of a firmly thought-out faith, and mature devotion.

There are many other experiences in the spiritual life like this too. Perhaps there is some new step of responsibility we have taken on, some new job in daily work or in the church. We are at the stage where the opening thrill of being engaged in something worthwhile has faded away, but as yet we are not on the far shore of really coping with the job, being at ease in it. Or it may be that we've recently got involved with someone who needs our help - an older person who can't cope; a mother who finds the children are wearing her down; a young person who is bewildered by life and feels lost. We've got to know someone like this and offered them the friendship of Christ - and then we've felt, "Help - what have I let myself in for?". Perhaps the church as a whole has embarked upon a project, an adventure of mission and service to the people around we began with enthusiasm, but now we are getting cold feet about it. Ministers, let me warn you, Ewan, are especially prone to feel this panic. The minister can often see the whole situation, and realise all its implications, when these are hidden to other church members. Ministers will also feel responsibility for leading others into what they know is alarming territory, when those being led may be blissfully unaware of what is likely to happen. It's no wonder that ministers can feel anxious about being out in the middle of the way.

Now, there are different reactions to mid-way panic for all of us. First there is

1. The desire to run back - Many of the people to whom the author of this letter is writing were in this sort of situation. They had made a good beginning in the faith, but now as they faced opposition and attack they were inclined to make a dash backwards - they were wanting to retreat to the beginners' course, which seemed safer. The writer rebukes them, saying: "Then let us stop discussing the first lessons of the Christian message. We ought not to be laying over again the foundations of faith..." (you can find that in chapter 6, v.1). They were making the move backwards because they didn't want to cope with the challenge of growing in their faith, and being witnesses to Christ in hostile situations.

They wanted to remain beginners for ever. They shrank from the tension of being out in the middle, on the way to that goal which is set before the people of God. But we shall be bitterly disappointed if we insist that God should simply repeat the blessings of the past, that God should give us the same kind of joy we knew then. We are inclined to say to God - "Bless me the way you did before - then I will feel like praising you...". We say "Repeat the good thing I enjoyed ten years ago, and then I will call you a faithful God". As a church we may say: "bring back the good times of fifty years ago" - awake O Lord as in the time of old! But our God is the God of the new. He always has new things to surprise us.

So our New Testament writer encourages his readers to go out into the middle of the way; to follow Jesus who has gone the whole way, passing right through the heavens; he has run the course from first to last, and so he can sympathise with our weakness, our mid-way panic.

But another way we can try and cope with this panic is to dash forward too quickly; like the pedestrian, we can run and trip over, or run into traffic coming the other way. There is

2. The temptation to bring the journey to an end too soon. Some of those to whom the author is writing his letter obviously think they have arrived at all the answers. In the panic of the midway they have dashed to quick conclusions. They don't need the testing Jesus has gone through; they've found the solutions without pain. And so the writer has to say to them: "Let us go to Jesus outside the city and share his shame; for there is no permanent city for us here on earth... We are looking for the city which is to come..." (you can find that in chapter 13 of the letter). We have not arrived at our destination; we haven't reached the city where we can settle down as Jesus





was crucified outside the city walls we are to go out on pilgrimage with him, into the mid-way where we feel exposed.

But we are often tempted to come to quick, clever answers without having done a good job, without growing through our experience. A little while ago I read an item in the newspaper headed "Christian computers." It was about a research worker at Reading University in the UK, who had first studied mathematics and then become a Christian minister, and who had developed a remarkable computer programme. With this programme, it appeared that anyone could go along to a computing centre and receive Christian counselling from the machine. Whatever the problem you had, the computer would diagnose it (if you punched the right keys) and it would offer you counsel and support: it would give you the right answer. I thought.... You're never alone with a microchip. We laugh at this, but we can sometimes look for programmed answers in the Christian life. We can often give them to others. At times in our fellowship together it does seem like pressing an input key and getting an automatic response. You know what I mean: we share a problem with a Christian neighbour, and we are offered an instant answer; nothing more than a formula, a cut and dried reaction to our needs. "These things are sent to try us" someone may say; or, "if you don't know what to do, try praying about it"; or "is there some secret sin you're hiding?"; or "God blesses those who honour him". When people say these things we know they haven't really felt deeply with us. It is like getting a pre-set answer from a machine.

I want to tell you, Ewan, that this is also a temptation that befalls ministers. When we've had some experience in dealing with people's problems, it's easy to think we recognize what a problem is, to name it and classify it, and offer a solution that's worked before. "I've seen this before" we say to ourselves, and we rush forward with an answer too soon, before we've really listened at the depths to what someone is saying. Perhaps those who've come for our help don't express themselves well, and really to listen is going to take time that's very hard to find. Committing this time and attention, especially when you're tired, is one of the costly pledges that you make today.

So we may try to dash back, or forwards. A third reaction to mid-way panic which the writer describes is:

3. The feeling of being paralysed by uncertainty. In this passage the writer portrays Jesus as a son who has been 'made perfect' in a painful process. What he means he has already explained in an earlier chapter when he pictures Jesus himself as out in the open space, in the middle of the way. He is the Christ of the Gethsemane garden. [There the security of the fellowship of the Upper Room was left behind. Now Jesus was in the mid-stream, in an open and exposed place, a place of "loud cries and tears"; The goal of being glorified by his Father lay ahead]. Though he was the divine Son of God, he was still in the agony of the mid-way, in the uncertainty of Gethsemane, in the waiting, the learning of obedience

through what he suffered. Scarcely able to speak, he can only make deep sighs and groans. We too know that experience of numbness and silence. In the mid-way we may find ourselves paralysed, struck dumb by our problem. We find it hard to talk to others, and to talk to God. We are driven in upon ourselves, to brood and simmer.

A little while ago I read in the newspaper of a worker with an aid organisation who had been immersed in the terrible experience of working with people who had suffered the floods in Bangladesh. In the midst of this disaster she had felt that she did not know how to cope; returning to Britain she had been unable to talk to her friends about it - and had retreated into isolation and silence. Finally, tragically, in depression she killed herself. She was well loved by many, and the Coroner said that a ward in a London Hospital was to be named after her - the Maria Procope Ward.

Faced with the tragedies of others, or in perplexity ourselves, it can be hard to express how we feel. We are struck dumb - there are no words to match how we feel. We cannot cry to God or share it with others - communication has broken down. There is a paralysis of the spirit. But, says our writer, we have fellowship with Jesus who intercedes for us as our Great High Priest. He takes our half-formed cries and groans into his own prayers. He takes us and our wordless sighs with him to the Father and makes them into true communication.

He has gone the whole way; he has won through from deep sighs and tears

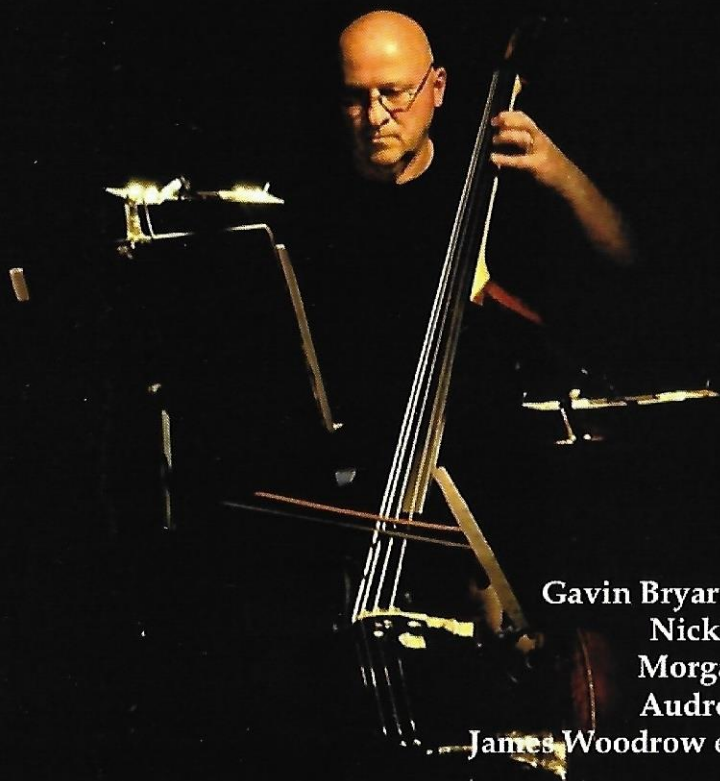
to a prayer of trust to the Father. He has learned the way of prayer and so he can help us to pray. Ewan, this day you are promising to stay with Christ in Gethsemane. Unlike the disciples who ran away, you are pledging to stay and pray with him, to stand with him in the hour of his need, and so to discover that he takes you with him the whole way, taking you out of bafflement and silence into joyful conversation with the Father.

St Maximus knew that fellowship - Put on trial, tortured, his tongue cut out so he couldn't speak his faith, his hand cut off so he couldn't write down his teachings, sent into the loneliness of exile. He stood with Christ in the mid-way, and Christ stood with him. So this is our Christ, our Lord - the Lord of the open space, of the mid-way. Ewan, he gives you a place to stand today. He gives us all a place to stand, just where we are.



The Gavin Bryars Ensemble presents

# *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*



Gavin Bryars double bass

Nick Cooper cello

Morgan Goff viola

Audrey Riley cello

James Woodrow electric guitar

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 7.30pm

Heath Street Baptist Church

84 Heath Street Hampstead London NW3 1DN

Tickets £15

Booking: [www.ticketsource.co.uk/gavinbryarsheathstreet](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/gavinbryarsheathstreet)

Full programme available online [www.gavinbryars.com](http://www.gavinbryars.com)

# HEATH STREET CHOIR ALL WELCOME

NOW RECRUITING



ALL AGES & ABILITIES WELCOME

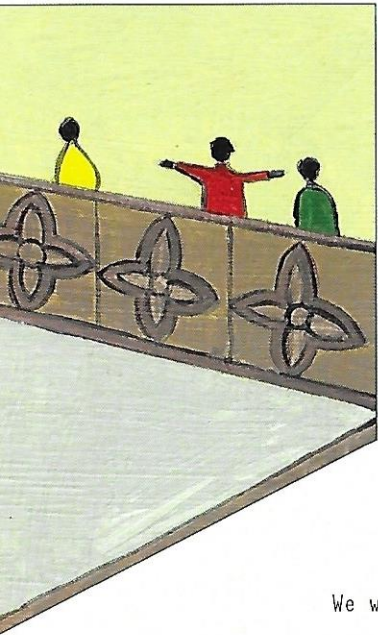
VOCAL/SIGHT READING  
TRAINING PROVIDED

PLEASE CONTACT  
The choirmaster  
[emily@heathstreetchoir.com](mailto:emily@heathstreetchoir.com)  
07986 535 693

Rehearsals weekly  
Thursdays 19.30 - 21.00  
Termly Membership £15  
(£5 joining fee)

Heath Street Baptist Church  
84 Heath Street  
Hampstead  
London, NW3 1DN

# THE TEMPLE



We laid foundations in the wasteland  
Greasing the shovels with our spit  
As they squeaked through bony soil  
We heaved blocks  
From baking sun

We called the sick there  
We did our best to heal them  
They lamented in the great cool cloisters  
They wept into the sandy light under the dome

We set a day aside  
For dancing, one for saying  
More than can be said  
We called a truce then  
And healed the enemy's sick

Our temple got burned down  
Our relics got crushed up  
The slanting rain would not pass  
Through the empty lot where it once stood

We built it again  
Working mostly at night  
We built in honour of our enemies  
We would only work when we felt true gratitude for the enemy  
We would only work when it was enjoyable

When there was wine we danced  
Calling out from the highest minaret  
When the night was good and done  
We sung a verse like a boundless '?'

Just imagine when the dawn came in reply!

So the next night we sung  
The dawn in greater detail  
Allowing the dawn to edit  
Our dawn work with its large, meticulous eye

We called from the tower a poem that turned  
Statesmen to poets and poets to statesmen; it was  
Canonized then banned, then canonized, banned

People came  
Remembered how  
The temple towered  
For everyone who died  
A grove of beech or a mighty oak

We swept  
We cleaned  
We wrote letters.  
We made a great meal, with potato, rice, pasta  
Lashings of sauce: lutinizta, moule, remollette  
Jerk sauce, chili sauce, bread sauce, gravy

We invited the hungry, we  
Invited the spoiled and the  
Selfish. We invited feuding  
Mothers, warring breeds of monkey  
Bathing their mangy wounds in our mouths  
We promised them we would love them whatever  
We invited the wolf and the lamb to lay down in the clearing by the stream

We swept, we cleaned, we wrote letters  
Of thanks and letters strongly worded  
The children played and we taught them  
And they taught us and we struggled always to make  
The right decisions and do the bravest things we could

We swept, we cleaned, we wrote letters  
And we looked back on it all  
The temple holding the sun above the trees  
And we said

Look at what the Lord has done

BY  
WILF  
MERTTENS



September 10th – 16th

Lamentations 3.19-26

10th For the Ukraine  
11th Lydia Baker  
12th For our deacons  
13th Joachim King  
14th For those who have been married in our church  
15th Wilf Merttens  
16th Hildegard Williams

September 17th – 23rd

Jeremiah 29.1,4-7

17th For the work of Henderson Court  
18th Monsignor Phelim Rowland  
19th Ewan King  
20th For all who sing in our Community Choir  
21st Margaret Smith  
22nd Beryl Dowsett  
23rd Annie Fang

September 24th – 30th

Jeremiah 31.27-34

24th For those who clean the church  
25th Susan Le Quesne  
26th For all places of learning  
27th Evelyn Baker  
28th Sofia Clarkin  
29th Rebecca McLeod  
30th David Neil

October 1st – 7th

Joel 2.23-32

1st For our worshipping congregation  
2nd Tom and Susan Brandt  
3rd Mysie Johnson  
4th Robin Thorne  
5th For the bereaved  
6th Gaynor Humphreys  
7th Neil McLeod

October 8th – 14th

Exodus 20.1-4,7-9,12-20

8th For our Sunday club  
9th Nesa Thorne  
10th For children, parents and carers who attend Oldtime Nursery  
11th For Panzi hospital  
12th 'Lord, make me an instrument of your peace'  
13th 'Where there is hatred, let me sow love'  
14th 'where there is injury, pardon'

October 15th – 21st

Exodus 32.1-14

15th 'where there is doubt, faith'  
16th 'where there is despair, hope'  
17th Laura Somers  
18th For the Baptist Union of Great Britain  
19th For all in prison  
20th 'where there is darkness, light'  
21st 'where there is sadness, joy'

October 22nd – 28th

Exodus 33.12-23

22nd For all who attend the Contact Club  
23rd Wilf Merttens  
24th For all in hospital  
25th For our deacons  
26th Tom Somers  
27th Theresa Thom  
28th 'O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console'

October 29th – November 4th

Deuteronomy 34.1-12

29th 'to be understood as to understand'  
30th 'to be loved as to love'  
31st John Walsh  
1st Ethan McLeod  
2nd Stan Dorer  
3rd Susan Le Quesne  
4th Edward Humphreys

November 5th – 11th

Micah 3.5-12

5th 'For it is in giving that we receive'

6th Theresa Thom

7th Josi Mbombo

8th John Baker

9th Paul Conrad

10th Heini King

11th Nomsa Ndebele

November 12th – 18th

1 Thessalonians 4.13-18

12th 'it is in pardoning that we are pardoned'

13th Frida King

14th HM

15th Eleanor Neil

16th Euan McLeod

17th Josh Somers

18th Jeremy Fletcher

November 19th – 25th

Zephaniah 1.7, 12-18

19th For all who help at the Contact Club

20th For Syria

21st Beauty Kunene

22nd Thaddeus King

23rd Isabelle Somers

24th Joachim King

25th 'and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.'

November 26th – December 2nd

Ezekiel 34.11-16, 20-24

26th For our Sunday club

27th Nesa Thorne

28th For our church treasurer

29th Judith Peak

30th Andrea MacEachan

(Dec) 1st 'All praise to him who came to save,

2nd 'who conquered death and scorned the grave'

# WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Full information about all our weekly activities is available on our church website

Sundays	11am-12 noon 7.30-9.30pm	Divine Worship (including Sunday Club for children Contact Club
Mondays	9.30-11.30 7pm	French class Les Pitchounets Swing Patrol (Swing dancing)
Tuesdays	10-11am 1-2pm	Oldtime Nursery Lunchtime recital
2nd Tuesdays	7-9pm	Sacred Harp hymn singing
Wednesdays	10am 4.30 pm	Show mw Spanish Storymakers Club
Thursdays	10.30am 7.30-9pm	Oldtime Nursery Heath Street Choir
Saturday	Coffee Morning (alternate Saturdays – see website for details)	

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For requests regarding church membership, Baptism or opportunities for Christian ministry in the church, please contact the minister.

For questions regarding space use and room hire, please contact the minister.



HEATH STREET BAPTIST



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