

This address is not intended to be a long and detailed re-examination of what my life is and has been as an adult, but it is a statement of the life that I have made for myself through the inspiration of the Gospels; the miracle of Jesus Christ; and most recently, the help and support of the parishioners and clergy of St Mary Abbots Church, Kensington.

First of all, as no-one reading this actually knows who I am, I think a brief summary of my life would be illuminating:

I graduated at the top of my class with a First-Class Honours Degree in PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics). My dissertation was awarded an academic prize, and I subsequently studied law, both of which I have leveraged to make a successful career largely in IT and cyber-security, with a stint in investment banking.

My successful studies have enabled me to travel the world and experience the broad panoply of human life, in all its glory and complexity, its highs and lows, its grinding poverty and brash luxury, living and working in seven different countries (the United States, Germany, Russia, China, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong), in the course of which I have learnt a variety of languages – including Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese.

My professional life is only one aspect of a very full life, in which I have published five volumes of poetry, written two others; two novels and a screenplay. In what little spare time I have, I enjoy a range of hobbies and interests including astronomy, football, cricket, classic cinema, world and classic literature, history, classic rock music; and I am fanatical about The Beatles and The Simpsons.

I am a firm and passionate believer in living a moral and virtuous life, of embodying Christian virtues and the virtues that I most admire most in others and as Ghandi believed “being the change you want to be”, so I am proud to be a teetotal, non-smoking vegetarian, which I have been for 25 years.

My entire life revolves around putting others first, treating every human being with the courtesy and respect everyone is due as a child of God, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, creed, religious affiliation or none, income or political stance – in short, I take each and every person as I find them, accept them for who they are, while accepting that we all have to be able to agree to disagree.

Being an active member of the community as is important to me as living a moral and virtuous life – I take genuine pleasure and feel a genuine thrill from helping and serving others, whenever and wherever I can, and so my voluntary work includes being an active member of the Kensington and Chelsea Branch of the Royal British Legion, serving on its Board and as a volunteer for the annual Poppy Appeal. Organising a team of approximately 40 volunteer lay readers and welcomers drawn from the congregation of St Mary Abbots Church, something which I do year-round. I am also a lay reader myself and “welcome” parishioners and visitors at Matins and other Sunday services most weeks of the year. Although I am not able to devote as much time to it as I would like, I am also a member of Society of the Friends of St George’s, based at St George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle.

It has been my honour to serve on the St Mary Abbots Parochial Church Council since May 2025 and to serve on the Kensington Deanery Synod since May of this year.

And this brings me very neatly to my life within the Church and how the Gospels and the example of Christ have been an inspiration and guide to me every day of my life and why I passionately believe that the Church has been, can be today and should remain a force for good in the world. If truth be told, like many people I think, I have not always attended church assiduously every Sunday – although I do now. Indeed, there was a period in my life after university, during the time that I was travelling the world that I seldom attended services, even at important Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas. During those years - like many people and Christ Himself in Matthew 27:46 - I had my moments of doubt and pain, and yes within me, there was a genuine desire to distance myself from the Church, and if not to ignore my faith, certainly to limit its role in my life, but at no time during those years was my faith completely absent and at no point did I not feel the presence of Christ or that Christ had deserted me. The years spent travelling the world often and suddenly presented me with great challenges and put me from time-to-time in even greater danger, whether it was being robbed at knifepoint in India or being involved in a hit and run car accident in Beijing, losing my mother to cancer, and all the other many challenges that inevitably that come simply from human and a child of God, as anyone who has read the Book of Job will know, but no matter what, I felt at all times and in all places, throughout it all, that I had a constant companion and guide; and that companion was Jesus Christ. No matter how far I travelled or where I found myself or in whatever circumstances, I always carried my King James Version of the Bible with me and it was always to the Gospels that I turned for solace, guidance and inspiration. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that I am the man I am today for two reasons: the first my late mother, and second, the miracle of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. At the best and the worst times of my life Christ has always been there, not necessarily at the forefront of my mind, but always a presence in the deepest depths of my heart and soul. It is the constant presence and example of Christ that has always guided me towards being moral and virtuous, and a constant reminder to be not only a good person, but to strive to be the best person I can be. To live as lovingly and selflessly as my own flawed human nature allows; and above all else, whenever I have had my

moments of doubt and pain, it has always been to the miraculous example of Christ's life of selfless virtue that I turn. Whilst life has had its myriad ups and downs, its twists and turns, His example has always brought me back to the path of righteousness - no matter how far I may have strayed.

My long sojourn came to an end in June 2023, after bearing as much as any human being possibly can in Hong Kong, and I returned home to Kensington feeling lost, lonely and dejected (no doubt suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). And in the months that followed, I struggled to find my bearings, but one day walking along Kensington High Street I came upon St Mary Abbots Church, with its Gothic revival architecture and awe-inspiring spire (the tallest in London, as everyone is fond of quoting). In the beginning, it was not definable or even something I could articulate. I did not feel it calling to me, but walking past it day after day, time after the time, I felt a slow, subtle but constant calling I cannot put into words, but it was a genuine calling and I now know it was a genuine calling from Christ, calling me to enter his Church and seek his loving protection and kindness once more. It really was as Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30: *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

And what more can I say? Since that day in December 2023, I have not looked back. I have found my faith and reconnected to Christ again. The parish community - the clergy and congregation of St Mary Abbots Church - have been such a haven and blessing beyond words to me, and it is my sincere hope and wish that I can return to this community in kind, all that it has given me. The community of St Mary Abbots inspires me not only to be a better person, but also to be a better Christian and to take this example with me in all that I do, in every relationship I have and towards everyone I meet in the parish community and the community at large. For as Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16: *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."*

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The personal aside, I think it behoves us all to ask what sort of Church do I want and what sort of Church should we be? My own personal view is to be inspired by and follow the inspiration of Jesus Himself: it is very clear from the Gospels that Jesus was always a person for the downtrodden, the marginalised and the dispossessed - for those on the traditional margins of society and those whose voices have historically been unheard or even denied. Jesus gave the marginalised a voice, He was very clearly their advocate, in this sense He was the archetypal opponent of the status quo, of traditionally institutionalised power and appeals to human-made hereditary right and authority, in favour of human need and divine compassion. For example, when Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and cast the merchants out of the temple courts in Jerusalem in Mark 11:15-17, or in Mark 2:1-12, Jesus healed a paralysed man who was lowered through a roof, by telling him, *"Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."* before telling him *"Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house,"* in a direct challenge to the teachers of human-made religious law that held this to be blasphemy, as only God could forgive sins, by healing the paralysed man Jesus laid down the gauntlet by demonstrating that He had the power granted Him by God to forgive sins on Earth. And while the history of the Church is replete with instances of the institution itself falling back on those human-made pillars in support of the status quo, the powers of the State and elites over the rights and human dignity of every single person, it is also quite clear that the Church has a scripturally and morally inspired right and duty to be the living embodiment of Christ's teaching and example here on Earth. That the Church as an institution, and we as Christians, its living body, must be advocates for the downtrodden, marginalised and dispossessed, the victims of all the ills we see in our local, national and international communities. To speak out on the most pressing issues of the day from climate catastrophe, war, famine, disease, human trafficking, domestic violence, homelessness, the epidemic of drug and alcohol dependency that blights so many lives, to a skewed form of market capitalism that, while benefitting some, disadvantaged many others and laid waste to once thriving industrial communities; to the terrifying consequences of power, wealth and influence being concentrated in the hands of a small clique of avaricious, egotistical, narcissistic monopolists in the technology industry, who ally themselves to equally egotistical politicians enabling them to further concentrate power in their own hands and institutions at the expense of the ordinary citizen, while at the same time commodifying what it means to be human by reducing each person to datasets to be leveraged for profit or traded in some grotesque form of digital slavery. Our Church, yours and mine, and we as individual Christians, should not be afraid to put our heads above the parapet, by drawing attention to these issues, speaking truth to power and yes, even sparking controversy. Surely, we should expect nothing less of our Church and ourselves? Just as surely as Christ should expect nothing less from His people and His Church. For, as Ella Wheeler Cox wrote in her classic poem, "Protest"

*"To sin by silence, when we should protest,
Makes cowards out of men".*

That is what I want the Church of England to be: the authentic voice and advocate for all of God's people today, tomorrow and always, the embodiment of Christ and His teaching, and His living, breathing spirit; and that is the role I would hope to fulfil if I am elected to represent my fellow Christians in the General Synod.