

Licensing of Katy Hacker Hughes Commissioning of Matthew Butler

S Marylebone Parish Church

1 September 2019

Hebrews 13:1-8; 15-16

Luke 14:1 & 7-14

I have spent the last month travelling, for much of the time in countries where I did not speak the language, did not know the geography, and had no idea how to work the transport system. Some of the best advice that we received was don't ask your phone, ask a local. The experience makes you vulnerable enough to be a recipient of care and in need of teaching.

Clergy and ministers spend most of our time giving support and care, and it is salutary to be in need of it. A couple of times we were ripped off: the taxi driver in Yerevan who I am sure overcharged us, and someone in Tblisi whose inflated price for a milkshake was almost as much as the value of a small house; but mainly we were helped out, pointed in the right direction and kindly treated.

Mostly the world is about mutual pastoring. In all sorts of ways we are cared for by those around us. People show hospitality to strangers, love each other, and by these means

as the letter to the Hebrews reminds us, some have entertained angels unaware.

This is a work of the whole church. In our fast busy anonymous city in which we are all too likely to respond to a request for help by telling people to ask their phones, we are all called to have eyes for the needs of others and to reach out – sometimes unasked to see if we can help just a little.

Today we license a pastor and commission a leader for work amongst families. Katy, your first and greatest task is to animate the whole body of Christ in the care support and love of others. You are not to work alone but to help us all to serve better enabling this big and complicated church to be even more effective in the work that is undertaken here.

Matthew, nationally the Church of England is encouraging us to understand that children are best nurtured when supported by family, school and church working together. At S Marylebone where there are such strong links, your work amongst families will be crucial. Once again it is not work that you do on your own but with others, Mother Katy and Fr Jack and his work in chaplaincy.

I mainly wrote this sermon on the platform at Kayseri Station, ancient Caesarea, where Basil the Great, Father of Eastern Monasticism, was Bishop. He taught the monks who had sought the desert as solitary individuals to live in

ordered communities. It is by ordering our community in Christ that we can offer pastoral care to adults, children, so that all may thrive. We are not about looking after people one by one, nor about teaching a curriculum, but about inviting all to be members of a community with Christ at the Head and each of us in the place to which He calls us within it.

In teaching the prominent Pharisee, Jesus dines at his house, joining community with him, and then teaches about how to behave within the relationships in that community.

And the Body of Christ is called to be a source of pastoral care teaching and life for all those who pass by and who do not even want a place at the table of the Lord. The Changing Lives project is a context in which Katy and Matthew will do your work. It has been amazing to see how this has come together, and let me make a public thank you to the Rector for his indefatigable leadership at some cost of energy in bringing us through the ups and downs of the last months to the good place in which we now stand. Father, thank you for all that you have done for us. In saying this I am sure you would want me to include also the whole team who have worked on the project.

It is a project which seems to be about buildings and money and heritage: but it is about community and life and growth to the future: it seeks to change lives, and for the Good: and that means changing them for Christ, calling people to leave their old ways and come to join His Body, and to receive from Him salvation and life as members of His community, the Church.

Having said all this, it is individuals whom today we license and commission. Katy comes to us with great gifts and experience. As vicar of St Paul Newington, with ministry in both hospice and hospital contexts, and experience as an adviser in the diocese of Chelmsford on relationships and family issues.

Matthew has wide experience with children and young people.

You will deploy your personal skills, not simply giving help to those slightly lost in the streets, not only helping those caught in the labyrinth of the benefit system or the mazes of personal trauma or need. Any helper can do these things with the right training or support. Katy, you are to be a Pastor in Christ's Church. So you will pray with us; administer the

sacraments among us; teach the Christian faith; encourage us in the name of Christ with the hope of his triumph over not merely the suffering of this world but over death itself.

Both the pastor her or himself, and the community in which they work, may seek thanks and recognition for this. The lottery specifically works like that, rewarding outreach with money. We know that much of your work, indeed the best and most important parts of it, are done at the lower places at the table and not for those who can invite us back or reward us for what we do. In a world of data capture and returns and reporting, your work is immeasurable precisely because it is of eternal value.

For us all – we are called to redouble our work in service of others in the grace of God. His strength alone is enough for all this. Brothers and sisters, pray for those who minister amongst you and support them in the work that they do. For their work is your work and our community together must thrive in the service of God and neighbour.

Let us ask God's blessing now this work; let us turn to receive from Christ the sacrament which empowers and enables us in it. And then let us go out and set to.