Canon Anne writes...

November 2026

Name change?

Refresh, challenge, what do you think? After three years it's time to change the name from 'Canon Anne writes...' to **?**

I invite you to submit your thoughts.

Canon Anne

~ *Read Exodus 33:18-23*

Today's reading is a continuation of Tuesday's passage, when Moses asks God more than once to send God's presence along with him and the other Israelites. God agrees to go with Moses and the people, but Moses wants proof: Moses wants to see God. "Now show me your glory," he says. In today's passage, we read God's answer—yes. Yet God also explains that Moses cannot see God's face and live: The fullness of God's glory is more than a human being can bear to experience. So God places Moses in a crack in a rock, from which he can peer out and glimpse God's receding back.

Was this anything like what Moses expected? Surely this was an awesome experience—but did Moses also have to let go of his own ideas for what would happen when he encountered God in a new way? It seems that God could have simply said no. But instead, God devised a plan to grant Moses' request as far as possible. There's a tender grace in the image of God finding a safe refuge for Moses and gently placing him there. Perhaps as much as Moses wanted to see God, God also wanted to be seen.

Many of us dream of enjoying the intimacy with God that Moses had, but Moses could not even catch sight of more than the distant back side of God, let alone comprehend any part of God. God is transcendent, glorious, awesome—well beyond our human frame of reference. Sometimes God is with us in ways we can't understand. Usually, God is with us in ways we don't expect. But always, God is graciously finding a way to meet us where we are, even in our smallness. God is gently pressing us into the cleft of a rock in order to share with us just a little more.

God, help me to notice and see you, even when your presence appears in a way I don't expect. Amen.

Why Anglican priests kiss the stole before wearing it.

Kissing the stole before wearing it in the Anglican tradition is a quiet but meaningful act of reverence, humility, and renewed commitment to sacred ministry. The stole is not just a garment, it is a visible sign of the priestly office and the authority given at ordination to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and bless God's people. By kissing it, the priest shows deep respect for the calling and responsibility entrusted to him/her.

The gesture symbolises accepting again the yoke of Christ, a reminder that priesthood is not about honour or position, but about obedience, sacrifice, and faithful service. It reflects the priest's willingness to carry out duties under Christ's lordship and guidance.

Kissing the stole also serves as a brief personal prayer and moment of inward preparation. Before stepping into public ministry, the priest pauses to dedicate himself afresh to God, asking for grace to serve with purity, compassion and truth. It is a silent confession that ministry depends on God's strength, not human ability.

In essence, the act says:

This vestment is holy, this calling is sacred, and this service belongs to God.

The crozier in the hands of the bishop's chaplain

In Anglican liturgical practice, the way sacred objects are handled reflects both reverence and theology. The crozier, as the pastoral staff, signifies the bishop's authority as shepherd of the flock. It must therefore never be treated casually, especially by those assisting in the service.

The bishop alone bears the crozier as a sign of the office and he/she can hold it with one hand. This manner of holding reflects rightful authority and familiarity with the symbol he/she carries. It is not merely a matter of convenience but of meaning and order.

However, a bishop's chaplain holding the crozier with one hand, is not correct. When a chaplain is entrusted to hold the crozier, it should be done with both hands. The grip must be steady, upright, and deliberate, expressing reverence and attentiveness. Holding it with one hand suggests casualness and diminishes the dignity of the act.

Liturgy forms both the ministers and the congregation through visible signs and actions. Every posture communicates something about authority, service, and the sacred. When done correctly, the distinction between the bishop's office and the chaplain's role is clearly preserved.

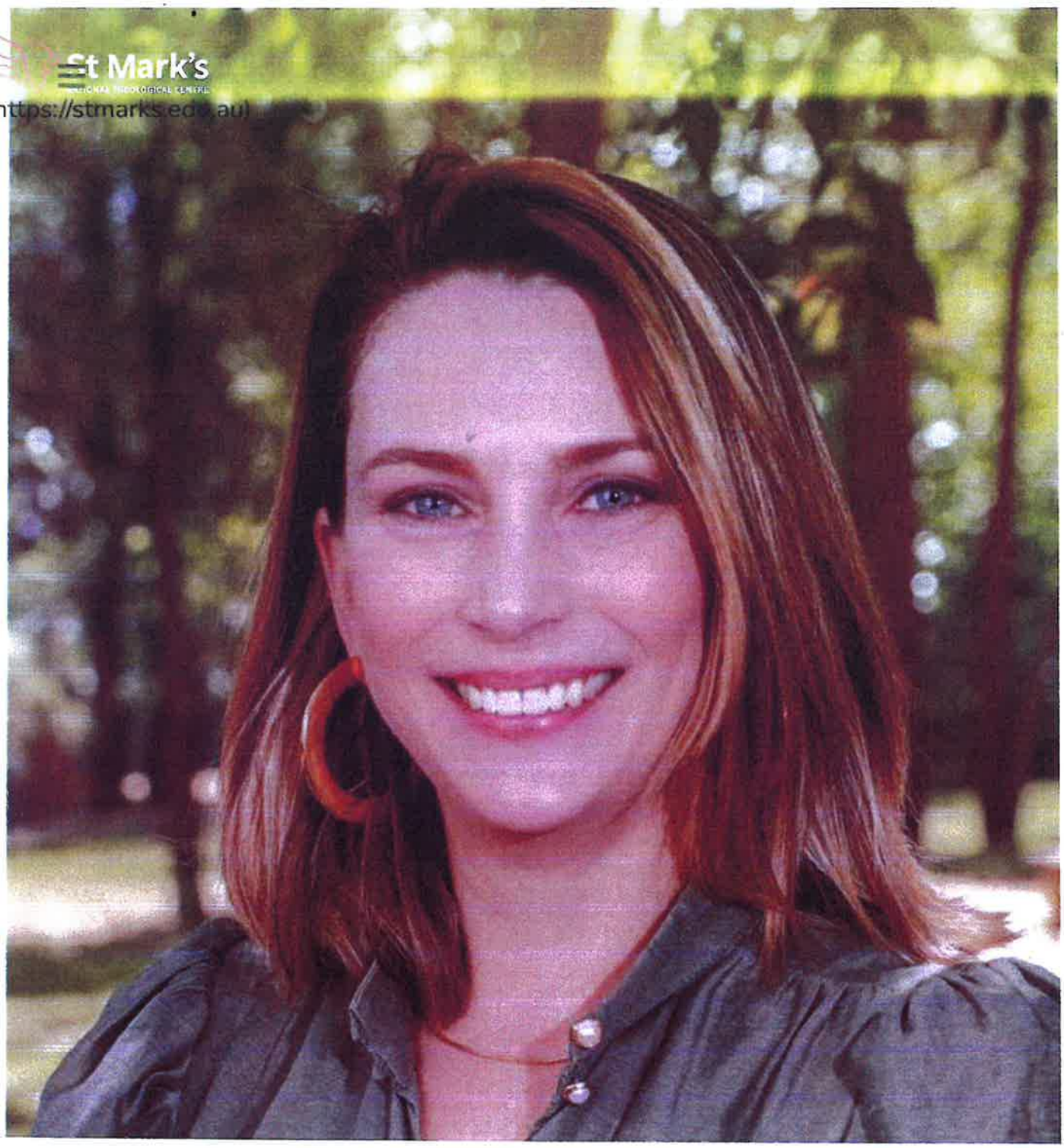
Let all things be done decently and in order, with care given even to the smallest gestures.

Thursday 12th November

150 YEARS

Join us, Join in

Advent Service 11am
Lunch to follow in Hall.
$40



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The Defeat of the Dragon

And I watched and saw a great dragon spread its wings and soar across the sky of … Glasgow?

Since ancient times, across the globe, dragons have been part of folklore. More recently, through the HBO TV series *Game of Thrones*, the modern imagination has been enlivened again to such creatures. In July this year, an engineered dragon, with an eight-metre wingspan, flew over the River Clyde in Glasgow as part of a stunt ahead of the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

The Bible also has dragons. But these are not mere creatures of folklore or fantasy.

They draw us into a theological vision of reality: the wrestle in spiritual realms between an ancient enemy of darkness and the purposes of God.

Recently, a feast in the Church calendar caught my eye—the feast of *Michael and All Angels* (29 September), more commonly known as *Michaelmas*. Based on Revelation 12, the day commemorates a great war in the heavenly realms, in which the archangel Michael and a host of angelic beings fight against Satan, depicted as a dragon. Michael emerges victorious, hurling the wicked beast out of heaven.

This liturgical day cracks open the supernatural, otherworldly dimensions of Scripture that the Western mind so often dismisses as mere myth. It challenges our reductive, materialist view of reality and confronts us with the far-reaching impacts of Christ's work.

A few weeks ago, in one of my Christology classes, we discussed the *Christus Victor* paradigm of atonement, which has held a prominent place in the Church's understanding of Christ's work throughout its history. Broadly conceived, *Christus Victor* understands the work of Jesus as the decisive defeat of the powers of sin, death, and the "works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

At the cross of Christ, evil gathers for a showdown. It converges to destroy the Son of Man. Yet, as Jesus himself declares in anticipation of his crucifixion, "Now the ruler of this world will be driven out" (John 12:31). Here, in Christ, is a power that no evil can overcome. Indeed, the Apostle Paul announces the outcome of the confrontation: Christ "disarms" evil principalities and triumphs over them (Col 2:15).

From Irenaeus to Athanasius to Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine, Christ's defeat of the "powers of darkness" is pivotal to a full apprehension of God's saving work. Martin Luther, too, would attribute to Christ's work the defeat of Satan, saying in his 1531 lectures on Galatians:

> *By faith in Christ a person may gain such sure and sound comfort, that he need not fear the devil, sin, death, or any evil. "Sir Devil," he may say, "I am not afraid of you. I have a Friend whose name is Jesus Christ, in whom I believe. He has abolished the Law, condemned sin, vanquished death, and destroyed hell for me. He is bigger than you, Satan. He has licked you, and holds you down. You cannot hurt me."*

It is against this backdrop of Christ's victory that the liturgical remembrance of *Michael and All Angels* takes on deeper significance.

While the Church calendar invites us to acknowledge the triumph of the angelic hosts over the dragon—"that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray" (Rev 12:9)—there is a greater victory in view. For the triumph of these heavenly warriors is inseparable from Christ's ultimate defeat of darkness. It is the Lamb who has conquered; his blood overcomes the accuser (Rev 12:10-11). Moreover, from Christ's victory springs our courage as we confront evil in our world.

Michael and All Angels reminds us that the work of Jesus cannot be reduced to an ethical example to follow, the expression of Christian niceties, or our own efforts to confront social evils.

There is something far weightier here.

Something that only God, in Christ, can accomplish.

A victory that only the blood of the Lamb can secure.

It is *from* this victory, *from* this crucified cry—"It is finished"—that Christians work *towards* victory. We do not struggle to secure Christ's triumph—he has done that. We struggle, secured by his triumph.

The skirmishes we endure may, at times, leave us feeling "struck down." But, like Paul, the truth is, we are "not crushed … not in despair … not destroyed" (2 Cor 4:8-9).
So today, let us remember Christ the Victor, whose blood-stained victory enables us to press on—for indeed:

> *"He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves"* (Col 1:13).

View

Dr Jacqueline Service
Director

ANGLICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2026

Every year members of the Society are offered a tour of churches, old and new, open or closed, falling down or restored, sold or in operational ministry. Every year, we meet faithful people, many devoted to the upkeep of their church, which may be open to them twice in a year. They are the keepers of great treasures.

This year the travelling group gathered at Tuena, the first stop. The local café was ready to receive us after a vibrant Rev Sally Cullen told us of the history of the small wooden church built in the gold-mining town.

We continued, and regathered at Abercrombie House in the Bathurst Diocese, where owner, Christopher Morgan conducted us on a fascinating history tour of the grounds, the chapel and homestead. After a sumptuous sandwich lunch and the beautiful weather we were experiencing, we drove into Bathurst to our motel accommodation.

Time to wander the shops, galleries or rest up. At 4.30pm +Richard Hurford met us at the entrance to the cathedral and we were absorbed into a wonderful historical talk on the early cathedral, its chapels, the magnificent Coburn work dominating the nave and the spectacular glassed in bell tower. Full of facts and many questions, the group walked to Pantanos to enjoy a hearty Italian meal.

On Sunday after Eucharist with the 8.30am congregation and much enjoyed refreshments, we headed to Holy Trinity, Kelso. Opened in 1835, it was the first church west of the Blue Mountains. Its adjacent graveside holds the remains of first pioneers dating back to 1826.

After lunch in local cafes we drove to St Peter's Rockley, a beautiful brick church opened in 1867 but destined to be sold to assist the diocese to repay debts.

From Rockley it was a 30 minute drive to St Aidan's church in Black Springs. Historically, the church was closed, but finally purchased by a local and reopened for the local community and in recent years returned to the congregation as a community church. Its ministry is ongoing. The Rev'd Andrew Sempell and Rosemary invited us to restore ourselves with coffee and cake at their beautiful landscaped homestead before heading to our respective homes. It was the end of just another exciting and enriching experience with the Anglican Historical Society of Canberra-Goulburn.

(Canon Anne)

Abercrombie House - Chapel.

Anglican Historical Tour 26

Warriors' Chapel
All Saints Cathedral
Bathurst

Rockley. N.SW.

Anglican Historical Society Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn

The Anglican Historical Society was formed in 1985 under the bishop of the time, Bishop Owen Dowling. The Society exists to preserve the history of the Diocese through regular talks, excursions, church services and through a Journal published twice a year.

The Patron is the Right Rev'd Mark Short, Bishop of the Diocese and Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia. The Committee meets bi-monthly consisting of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Memberhsip Officer, Journal Editor and Tours Officer and other members.

The Society's aims and objectives are:

* to promote the study and appreciation of the history of the diocese.
* to appreciate the stories of faith over time from across the diocese.
* to encourage the preservation of records, buildings and other material.
* to promote the publications of books and papers of historical interest.
* to arrange visits to places of historical interest through annual excursions.

Highlights in recent years have been:

* Excursions to the fire affected parishes of the Diocese to the far South Coast and to the South West slopes.
* Excursion to St Alban's Cathedral Griffith and surrounding areas in 2025; and this year to the Cathedral Church of All Saints Bathurst.
* A recent Annual General Meeting held at St John's Lake Bathurst, located near the site of the first Christian service with Governor Lachlan Macquarie and the Rev'd Robert Cartwright in 1820.
* In 2013 the Society published a history of the parishes on the sesquicentenary of the diocese entitled, Deep and Lasting Foundations.

HATS

A good friend of mine sometimes says to me, "You can't have too many hats." I'm sure one can, although the poet Carl Sandburg suggested that 'all politicians should have three hats – one to throw into the ring, one to talk through, and one to pull rabbits out of if elected.'

Hats come in all shapes, sizes and functions, and, as is clear from the apostle Paul's comments, they are cultural objects too. As in ancient Palestine, in world cities like London, Paris and New York today, hats are a political, social and religious phenomenon. Cardinals wear skull caps, and some priests wear birettas; Muslim women may wear the hijab or burka and Muslim men the *taqiyah;* Jewish men wear a kippa or *shtreimel* and orthodox Jewish women a *tichel*.

Questions about head coverings for worship or in public take us back to the roots of all the Abrahamic faiths, to what was considered decorous by their early leaders and to what they felt the Lord required in terms of modesty and respect. The apostle Paul steps into this tradition, probably answering a question that has been asked in the newly founded Corinthian church, who are mostly Greek in cultural background. In addressing the issue of hats, he reveals and draws upon his Jewish upbringing and imports it into his teachings for the new church, saying that there is no real alternative than to follow these customs. He concludes by saying that he does not want to get into a long debate or argument about it. It is interesting that even today this issue is still contentious – for some, the forced covering of the head expresses repression; for others, modesty and decorum.

Hats are practical; they keep the head warm and dry, and enhance (or even disguise) one's appearance. The western habit of ladies wearing hats in church or at the racecourse is well-established. However, not only the wearing of a hat, but also the *kind* of hat one wears can be an indication of social status. In Elizabethan England, for example, there were clear rules about the wearing of hats or caps. In 1571, a law was passed stipulating that any male over six years old who was not a gentleman or noble must wear a woollen cap on Sundays and holy days. A hat denoted social standing, as in the scene in *Hamlet* when Ophelia comments on Hamlet's not wearing a hat as an indication of his madness: 'Lord Hamlet, with his doublet

all unbraced, No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled, Ungarter'd, and down-gyvèd to his ankle… comes before me' (Act II.i.74–81). The hat that Hamlet was not wearing would have been something much posher than a woollen cap, perhaps made of taffeta or velvet. While the absence of a cap could indicate madness, its removal could be meaningful in other ways: to doff the cap was to pay respect and to hold out one's 'cap in hand' was to ask a favour.

When we put on a hat to go out into the rain or to wear on the beach to protect our heads from the scorching sun, we are ignoring these conventions, deliberately perhaps. Yet when we hold our hat in our hands, or hang it on the peg, we might remember how much cultural and religious significance we are overlooking. In the modern west, we have the freedom to wear whatever hat we want and risk only the ridicule of our friends, rather than punishment or ostracisation. (Shakespeare's uncle was fined in 1583 for not wearing the right kind of hat!) As Christians, we do not have formal practices or rules about headgear (although some denominations have conventions still), and in many places the maxim applies, particularly in relation to women, 'All may, some do and none must.' That said, generally it would not be acceptable for a man to wear a hat in church even today, and many would say that a man's hat should be removed when entering any building (except a synagogue). We have inherited conventions whereby a man wears a hat outdoors only and a woman wears a hat whenever she wants. As time goes by, these will probably become vaguer and less strict, but they still hold for now.

As we put on or remove our hats at will, we might think of our freedom. To wear a hat or not wear a hat, that is the question Hamlet did not ask. Behind the fact that we can do as we please is the freedom in Christ we have to worship and go about our business released from many of the constraints of formal religion. Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment history have brought us this far. Initially, we have to thank the apostle Paul, who campaigned for the right of people to become Christians without becoming Jews first. So, whether or not you wear a hat, give thanks

for the freedom of faith and pray for those whose rights are curbed and denied in the name of religion, class or culture.

O God, you bring us freedom in Christ, to worship you in Spirit and in truth. Uncover our headstrong nature, and help us always to pray for those who are slaves to injustice. Amen

The Friends of St Saviour's Cathedral

invite you to their

Annual Service,

AGM and High Tea

On Saturday 14th November

from 11 am $35 per person

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Leah Edge edgeleah04@gmail.com

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Account: Friends of the Cathedral

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Please put AGM and your name in the reference field

CHURCH TIMES

The last temptation of TikTok

09 OCTOBER 2026

After her TikTok videos receive millions of views, *Pippa White* considers how parish and digital ministry work together

I PUFF out my cheeks and collapse onto the sofa. I give a little sniff and a big sigh. This morning was the final Sunday service of my curacy. The presents have been exchanged, the prosecco has been drunk, the sermon sobbed through. I sit next to my sprawled-out spaniel, whose round belly and contented sleep suggests he had extraordinarily rich pickings at the post-service bun fight.

I feel oddly weightless: I am no longer a curate, but nor am I a rector yet. The next few weeks are chocka with redecorating the new rectory and moving all my worldly belongings into a new corner of the diocese, all while trying to not trip over the aforementioned spaniel. But

a bigger, heavier question hangs over me. . . What now?

The Revd Pippa White

The past four years have been highly structured. Of course, this has been for good reasons: my curacy has had clear projections, a sense of direction, and markers which I had to meet in order to progress. Having done all of that (relatively) successfully, I now stand on the brink of first incumbency. The wide-open vistas of parish ministry yawn before me. I must now move from the led to the leader, from the structured to the structurer. I lean my head back onto the sofa cushion and ponder all of this.

My phone — which I lobbed on to the sofa when I got back to my house — buzzes as it shows a notification. I turn my head to the side, not bothering to pick it up. Seeing as I'm already considering existential questions after a morning of crying and prosecco-drinking (always a good combination, and one which never leads to catastrophising or panicking, no, sir), there's another item I need to add to my navel-gazing agenda. What to do with my TikTok page?

My TikTok profile currently stands at over 31,500 followers, and I have amassed over one million likes cumulatively. I have three videos with over one million views each, and one video with over two million views. As a project which started with the attitude of "Let's see if this works," even I — with my crippling Protestant work ethic and perfectionism — have to admit that's not bad progress.

I started posting TikToks in March 2024; my training incumbent had got a new job, I was following him over to the new patch, and it seemed a good time to try something new. Having complained throughout discernment that I couldn't see anyone who looked like me on the other side of ordination, I thought perhaps now was the time to be the solution. With the help of my sister and Clem, a friend from Westcott, we were cooking up ideas and they were giving me invaluable feedback on my videos before I posted them. The videos were met with curiosity by those on TikTok, and the momentum started growing.

GIVEN the timing, this meant that my experience of parish ministry had almost always gone hand-in-hand with my TikTok presence. In a sense, this is entirely usual for many

people my age: having an "offline" life and an "online" life that are not separate, as they might have been 20 years ago.

We are the generation that has grown up with the internet: at school we discussed YouTube videos at breaktime, and, if we wanted to talk privately, we would ask for each other's Snapchat username. Tagging each other and sending memes over social media is just as much part of a friendship now as seeing each other for a coffee. So, for someone my age, it made perfect sense that I would have an online ministry alongside my parish ministry.

And they blended nicely: children at the church school would tell me they saw my latest video; at the local Air Cadets squadron (where I'm chaplain) a new adult volunteer upon our first meeting that he had already seen my TikToks; a mum on the high street opened a conversation by asking about my social media, which led to her explaining that several families wished they could make the family service, but they were always working at that time.

The reason it all blends so nicely is because the converse is true, too: my age group expect to see an online presence from anything or anyone they encounter in "real" life now. Look on TikTok and you will see accounts for the Metropolitan Police, Encyclopaedia Britannica, and even Andy Burnham. To have a social media account is not an optional extra any more: it's expected.

But this expectation is not a light one. I'd be lying if I said I've been able to keep both parish ministry and TikTok production going at full speed. In the last six to nine months, when I have been applying for an incumbency, finishing off a book and serving as curate to a three-parish benefice, making TikToks has always sunk to the bottom of the to-do list. It's been sorely neglected, if I'm honest.

So I look at my phone, my eyes and nose still a little pink, and think. . . What now? Because here's the kicker. If it could — given how quickly AI is advancing — TikTok would turn to me and ask the same in return: What now?

UNLIKE other social media, TikTok does not have a chronological timeline. On other platforms, such as Instagram or Facebook, one friend posts a photo three days ago and

another friend posts a photo two days ago, and they are shown in order. TikTok is much more of a melting pot.

While the proportion of users posting is smaller than on other apps, the quantity involved is still mind-boggling: according to Google, TikTok has almost two billion monthly active users. What happens, then, is that all this content is posted onto one app, and through people's interactions and the algorithm, good videos rise to the top, and rubbish videos sink silently to the bottom.

If a video has that unspoken "it" factor, it will gain traction and can achieve tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of views. If a video doesn't appeal or is too slow off the mark — you can easily swipe past ten videos in ten seconds — people don't hang around to watch.

It is an odd feeling, knowing that I have achieved both these extremes: one of my most popular videos has been copied and pasted on to different accounts, even on to different social-media apps. Yet I have also posted videos which barely scraped 100 views, and I later deleted them out of embarrassment.

This is what makes TikTok so volatile and so much fun: there is no guarantee of success, and there's no predicting what might take off. Accounts with millions of followers can have videos that flop, while an anonymous account with under 100 followers can debut their first video and achieve millions of likes. Really, it's the social-media version of gambling.

Given its precarious nature, this also means that people will go to extremes to capture that "it" factor to make a video rise. I have felt this temptation myself. What can you do to stand out against the noise? I find my natural appearance seems to give me a head start here: people are so surprised to see a young woman wearing a clerical collar that it automatically seems to hold their attention.

Once they are watching, I can challenge misconceptions or quickly put a point across. Sometimes, I have deliberately leaned into this: by beginning a video by talking about "how Christian women should dress", I can then show that I reject the idea of Christian women dressing "modestly".

But where is the line? What is the difference between pushing the envelope and deliberately antagonising people? What is distilling theology into ten seconds, and what's being a reductionist? This is where my sister and Clem really are invaluable: as the rush for

dopamine and success sing to me like a siren's call, they stand firm, reminding me that that isn't what life, and ministry, is about.

So here I am. What now? Perhaps I should take this break between parishes to give my TikTok page the TLC it needs? Or perhaps this is the natural stopping point? TikTok itself is changing: it has been flooded by corporations as they realise the platform's advertising potential and lack of interfering third parties. It's becoming increasingly polished and monetised and, well . . . less fun.

The days of plucky unknown content creators giving it a go — filming in their front room on a shoestring budget — seems laughable compared with what is being posted today. The big boys are coming into the playground, pushing everyone else out. Do I persevere, or do I give up? Although maybe "giving up" is too harsh. Perhaps, in the words of Ecclesiastes, I just need to recognise that there is a season for everything? And that there is a time to die? It's time to find out.

The Revd Pippa White is the author of Not a Priestess: Tales from beyond the pulpit, *published by Canterbury Press at £12.99* (Church Times Bookshop £11.69); *978-1-78622-724-9. Pippa White will be speaking at the Festival of Faith and Literature, to be held in Winchester, 26-28 February 2027.*

CHRIST THE KING

The Cat and the King

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24; Matthew 25:31-46

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by: Sheila Walker

Once upon a time, there lived a fat cat;
(there was, at that time, an obesity problem in the land).
One day there was a knock on the door of his executive-style home;
on the doorstep stood a thin man.
'Good day,' he said; 'I have something here that may interest you. May I come in?'
'Who are you?' said the fat cat. 'You speak well, but you look like a tramp.'
'I have fallen on hard times,' said the man; 'come down in the world, you might say.'
'You may come into the kitchen,' said the fat cat, 'and tell me your story, but make it snappy: we have drinks at seven, supper at eight;
I have a lot on my plate.'

The thin man sat at the table
sensing the quality, and the inequality.
'Well?' said the fat cat. 'What do you have that could possibly interest me?'
'I have the answer,' said the thin man.
'Oh yes,' the fat cat was becoming impatient, 'and what was the problem?'
'Your weight,' the other said calmly. 'You will not be able to get through the door.'
'Nonsense!' the cat laughed. 'The doors of my house are enormous.'
'This house, yes: for twenty, thirty, maybe forty years; but then?'
'But then, I shan't much care: by then, I'll be dead!'
'Exactly: what then?' the thin man said.

'Death's door, yes; that is wide enough
for all to pass through. But the doorway after that – to life?'
'Oh, I'll take my chance,' said the fat cat. 'I mean, who knows?
A bird in the hand, and all that: I've had a good life, done things my way, creamed off some of the rewards,' he patted his stomach.
'We cats like to do our own thing; you know the old saying,

"Dogs have masters, cats have slaves"? Though I do try to treat people well.
No, I'll take my chance when the end comes.'
'No chance. And death is not the end, you know.'
The thin man stood and made as if to go.

'Goodbye – until we meet again.'
The fat cat shook his hand; held it an instant
'Nice talking to you. Er – would you like to take some bread and cheese,
a bottle of beer or two? For the road?'
The sun broke through the clouds and the thin man smiled.
'Thank you,' he said and, taking a battered notebook from his coat, wrote.
'I won't forget you.' The fat cat groaned. 'Now he's got me down as a
soft touch, he'll be back with all his friends.' He put the food in a bag,
handed it.
'I'll come with you to the gates,' he said to his own surprise;
'I could do with the exercise.'

The thin man was back with winter
and, as the fat cat had suspected, a couple of mates.
'You look well, my friend,' he said. 'I think you have lost a little weight;
but one of your coats would still cover two of us!'
The cat was not impressed by the thin man's friends:
they were dirty, and spat, and would not meet your eye
but the thin man brought them into the kitchen, like he owned the place
and the fat cat turned out his wardrobe, turned away from the tears
of the friends as they fingered the fine cloth, which to him was the norm.
He joked 'I'll have to go jogging now to keep warm . . .'

And the strange friendship grew
and it seemed to the cat there was nothing, now
he could safely call his own; his comfortable life was disturbed,
was being, he felt, re-arranged . . .
To the thin man he complained one day 'My God!
What have you done? If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't, couldn't care less
about all these people: but since they are friends of yours – well,
I guess I must say, any friend of yours is a friend of mine;
but if I go on like this, I'll soon be as thin
as you!' 'Good,' said his friend with a grin.

It was late. The cat stretched, yawned.
'You mean I might one day be thin enough to get through that door of yours, if I keep up the good work, keep fit – that I might squeeze through?'
His thin friend shook his head. 'No chance.'
'All this counts for nothing, then? That I have lost, and others gained weight?'
'It counts as evidence: that you love me, trust me. And that is what counts. The door that won't admit you on your own, on your own merit, is yet wide enough for two.' He drew out his notebook. 'When first you let me in, I entered your name on the list of those *I will bring home*, into my kingdom.'

'Your – kingdom?'
As he spoke, and the light outside faded,
the thin man seemed to burn with his own brightness.
'I am the poor,' he said
'but I am also heir to the riches of heaven.
Now I tramp the world: but the whole world will soon be under my feet.
I throw myself on your mercy: but I will be your judge.
I am the Shepherd, but I am also that door
of the sheepfold; only through me can you enter.
It is almost night. Are you ready?'

Advent
STUDY

Tuesday 5pm in the Cathedral

1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd December