

Self- Introductionss

Maggie Guite

I am a retired priest who served most of my ministry in the diocese of Ely (Cambridgeshire) before retiring to a market town in north-Norfolk, between the sea and the Norfolk Broads. Before I was ordained priest in 1994 I had already been in the church's ministry for nearly 15 years as a Deaconess and Deacon. In both those roles I was able to be a full-time assistant in a parish, taking services other than Holy Communion, preaching, teaching and giving pastoral care. I have always particularly enjoyed the roles of teaching and preaching, especially when preparing adults for baptism and confirmation.

Since 1999 I have been a parish priest in both rural, village communities in Cambridgeshire, and for 9 years in the neighbourhood of Newnham within Cambridge itself, an area where there were many academics living, and a sizeable part of the congregation was international, comprising 'visiting scholars' to the university, and postgraduate students.

I am delighted to be coming to spend some time with you this summer at St Ursula's where I have three personal links: first as a friend of Helen and David, of course, but secondly because I found a warm welcome at the church as worshipper in the winter semester of 1977/78 when I was auditing courses at the University of Fribourg (as part of my preparation for a PhD on the theology of the Second Vatican Council). Canon Peter Hawker was very pastoral to me – a rather homesick student - and arranged for a fellow-Brit who lived in Fribourg to drive me over to Bern for services. It was at St Ursula's that I first experienced church community lunches, which struck me as such a good idea that I then encouraged similar events in some of the parishes I subsequently served in England. My third link to St Ursula's is more contemporary, as I have been very pleased to hear that my nephew James Squire his wife, Kate, and their family have also found a spiritual home in the church while he is serving in Bern as HM Ambassador, (though as it happens, we shall not be 'coinciding' in the church in the summer, as my visit with Malcolm occurs at the time when they shall be away on holiday).

I look forward very much to meeting you all.

Malcolm Guite

Although I shall not be conducting services nor preaching while we are in Bern, I am, like Maggie, an ordained priest. I studied English Literature at university, and then started working-life as a school teacher (during which time I met Maggie). Soon after our marriage I felt called to join her in the church's ministry, for which I studied at Ridley Hall in Cambridge. There I met David Marshall, and we formed a friendship which has now lasted for 35 years. In my ordained ministry I first served in parishes, and then moved into student chaplaincy, latterly at Girton College, Cambridge. Within this context I was able also to find time to develop as a poet, and my first book of lyric poetry, *'Sounding the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Christian Year'* was published in 2012 (shortly to be re-published in an

expanded edition). Since then I have published 4 other volumes of my own poetry, as well as twelve other books, including a biography of the poet S.T. Coleridge, some anthologies of poetry with commentary, some theological reflections on the role of imagination in the communication of truth, and several volumes of the short essays which I regularly write for the *Church Times*. I am always pleased to hear that my work has been used in churches around the world, and am touched to know it that sometimes Helen includes it in her written reflections for St Ursula's. I believe that God has given me the vocation to kindle people's imaginations for Christ through my art, and I aim to write work which is 'accessible' to ordinary readers and hearers through its use of classical forms such as the sonnet, where rhyme and rhythm create musicality, and potentially transforming apprehensions.

Alongside my work as a poet I have also enjoyed being the lead in a rock-band, *Mystery Train*, which till recently performed in pubs and at functions around Cambridge, using much of our own material, but also drawing on the Blues and Rock traditions of the 1960's and 70's. I am particularly a fan of Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Van Morrison.

I retired from chaplaincy at Girton College in 2020 (though I retain a life-fellowship there) and have for the last few years travelled extensively as a speaker, much of this being in the USA and Canada. It will be good to enjoy a more relaxing stay in Europe this summer!

Maggie and I have two grown-up children who enjoyed a holiday with us in Switzerland (St Gallen) in 2009, although they will not be with us this time.

I look forward to meeting you all, and entertaining those who are able to join us for an evening of '*Songs and Sonnets*' on August 2nd.