

MR BROWN & HIS BRIDE

A STOWE CHURCH CELEBRATION
of the marriage of
LANCELOT 'CAPABILITY' BROWN
22 November 1744

at Stowe Parish Church, 2.30 p.m. 22 November 2016

5 readings and 5 hymns, with an introduction and conclusion from Sue

THE 9 READERS express the views of:

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown; Bridget 'Biddy' Wayet, Lancelot's bride; Jane Brown, a modern biographer; the Revd. Henry Gabell, Stowe vicar; James Gibbs, architect; Alexander Pope, poet; Benton Seeley, creator of the Seeley guides; Mary Wayet, Lancelot's sister-in-law; Gilbert West, Lord Cobham's nephew

THE 5 HYMNS:

For All The Saints; Breathe on me, breath of God; O God Our Help In Ages Past; All My Hope On God Is Founded; Great Is Thy Faithfulness

No costumes or wigs! Just fairly smart modern dress.

The READINGS

The more pace, eye-contact and atmosphere we can create, the better they will go:

PACE

The pace of the readings should generally be a bit faster than the usual pace of readings at the lectern. These are really conversations rather than readings, and the more conversational and OTT we can make them, the better. (Ideally, we should look for places where we can speed things up, and other places, perhaps, where we might go slower than usual, to achieve greater emphasis.) We're aiming to finish the Service within an hour, and that could be quite a challenge. If we all pick up our cues fast, and don't allow gaps between speeches, we'll probably save a full ten minutes!

EYE CONTACT

If we've become familiar with what we have to read, we should be able to look at the congregation and fellow readers from time to time. It's important not to have our heads totally buried in our scripts! The more eye-to-eye communication we can achieve the better!

ATMOSPHERE

The text is somewhat surreal. The figures from the past are heavenly figures, with a deep sense of bliss inside them. [Lord Cobham and Earl Temple were omitted on the grounds that they seemed unlikely to be available for the reunion!] We should be smiling quite a bit and generally communicating a sense of deep happiness and serenity!

MR BROWN & HIS BRIDE

Before the service: A Mozart quintet on CD (with Simon Whistler on viola)?

SUE'S WORDS OF WELCOME

READING 1 (Henry Gabell, Jane Brown, James Gibbs, Mary Wayet)

The organ plays a verse (or half a verse) from one of the hymns, during which the Revd. Henry Gabell climbs cheerfully into the pulpit.

Gabell: Good afternoon. I'm the Revd. Henry Gabell. Vicar of this parish. From 1734 to 1761.

My predecessor was the Revd Conway Rand, whose gravestone lies just in front of the altar. Very interestingly, the word 'vicar' is spelt on it with a CK in the middle and ER at the end. And it has to be possible that that is a very bad joke from the owner of Stowe at the time, Lord Cobham, who had a somewhat irreverent sense of humour.

But, dear me, I mustn't digress! I'm really here to say a little about Lancelot's early days at Stowe. (We're going to call him Lancelot, for he only acquired the nickname 'Capability' in his post-Stowe years.)

When he first arrived here on a chilly February day in 1741 and rang the bell at the gate beside the Lake Pavilions (the strangers' entrance), the gardens that were opened up before him were the semi-formal ones created for Lord Cobham by Bridgeman and Vanbrugh. In front of Lancelot was a lake of 8 equal sides with a fountain in the middle. Having skirted this, he entered a straight and narrow tree-lined walk, sloping up towards the house, in front of the south side of which he found a wide parterre. It was hardly the garden of today, but it was already famous. Let's hear from Jane Brown, one of Lancelot's biographers, writing of the situation in 1741:

Jane Brown (*who has moved swiftly to the lectern, on the mention of her name*):

Visitors had streamed through the gardens' walks for more than twenty years, the cleverest, like William Congreve and Alexander Pope, immortalizing the experience in rhyme. Pope's 'Epistle to Burlington' of 1731 offered Stowe as an example to all aspiring gardeners:

To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
To rear the column, or the arch to bend,
To swell the Terras or to sink the grot,
In all, let Nature never be forgot.
But treat the Goddess like a modest fair,
Nor over-dress, nor leave her wholly bare;
Let not each beauty ev'ry where be spy'd,
Where half the skill is decently to hide.

He gains all points, who pleasingly confounds,
Surprises, varies, and conceals the Bounds.

[She returns to her seat]

Gabell: Pope went on to write that the secret of good gardening was ‘to consult the genius of the place’ - the ‘genius’ being a mixture of the pagan gods of fields and wood, and the whole character of the countryside.

Nowhere was Pope’s advice more clearly followed than in the Elysian Fields, that William Kent had created for Cobham in the immediate years before Lancelot’s arrival, the 1730s. Close by us. Just out there *[he points]*. Something completely new at Stowe, naturalistic instead of formal, the very latest thing in landscape gardening. Perhaps the carrot that drew Lancelot to Stowe. Because he had come here to learn.

Gibbs *(appearing at lectern)*: Yes, he had! And what a quick learner he was! I was Cobham’s leading architect at the time the 25-year-old Lancelot first arrived. His elevation was meteoric. Soon he was not just Head Gardener but also Stowe’s Clerk of Works, and, of course, working with Lord Cobham, Cobham’s nephew and heir Earl Temple, and myself. Eager to learn, Lancelot was as capable as anyone I ever met. *(Gibbs disappears as quickly as he came)*

Gabell: That, of course, was James Gibbs, the architect, from whose coat-tails Lancelot would hang! As early as the 1720s James had been creating highlights for the Bridgeman gardens, - the Boycott pavilions, for example, and the Fane of Pastoral Poetry in its earliest guise.

(Mary Wayet has appeared at the lectern)

And we have a new contributor! *(He smiles at her)* I know the face and I ought to be able to put a name to it!

Mary Wayet: Mary Wayet *[pronounced Waite?]* Capability’s sister-in-law! And you....? Oh yes, I remember! You married them!

Gabell: I did, indeed! Henry Gabell. Do call me Henry!

Mary: I thought our friends might like to hear about Bridget’s background.

Gabell: Yes, please! Do tell us.

Mary: Well, they met in 1739, five years before the marriage. In the busy town of Boston on the Lincolnshire coast. Bridget’s father had been an important figure there. An engineer and surveyor; an alderman too. But after Bridget’s parents died, my husband John naturally insisted his sister live with us. We had a big house in South Square. Plenty of space. Bidy seemed very content. Then one day, at some big social gathering, there he was! Lancelot wasn’t local. Came from Northumberland, of course, and was already travelling wherever experience in gardening or engineering might take him. He’d come to the Lincolnshire fens to learn the latest technology in water-engineering and dam-building. Love at first sight. They met, out walking, the next day. There she was in the prettiest of all her frocks; there he was in that dark-green worsted jacket with high collar and large pockets, which became his uniform, plus, of course, the snow-white stock and felted tricorne hat.

After that there were just occasional visits. Lancelot and his horse would usually come by boat, the swiftest means of travel. But it was only when he got his big promotion at Stowe that they were able to think of marriage.

Gabell: The marriage that made him professionally. And spiritually. I was always very pleased that when Lancelot, in his prosperity, got himself a coat of arms, he gave it that thoughtful motto. ‘Never less alone, when all alone’.

Mary (*nodding*): Never alone, thanks to God's Holy Spirit. Bidy's idea, of course. Educated Lancelot. Still does.

Gabell (*nodding at this*): And now to the first hymn! It's your choice, my dear. What will it be?

Mary: Something, perhaps, that reflects that motto of Lancelot, the struggles of the Christian life and the light to be enjoyed at the end of the tunnel. For All The Saints?

Gabell: Yes! Yes!

Mary and Gabell (*calling up to the organ loft together*): 'For All The Saints'!

HYMN 1: FOR ALL THE SAINTS

For all the Saints who from their labours rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed.
Thy name, oh Jesu, be for ever blessed.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might.
Thou, Lord, their captain, in the well-fought fight;
Thou in the darkness drear their one true light.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Oh may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the Saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victor's crown of gold,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Oh blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine,
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are our Thine,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

READING 2 (Lancelot and Bridget Brown)

Bridget (*at the lectern*): It's so lovely to be here again in Stowe Church, Lancelot, though I don't remember this lectern!

Lancelot (*in pulpit, consulting copy of the Stowe Church guidebook*): Nor I this pulpit. (*He puts aside his guidebook*) Gifts, apparently, at the end of the 1st World War. But overall it hasn't changed much in two hundred years.

Bridget: 272, dear!

Lancelot: Even so, it's not so very different!

Bridget: Well, dear, there are the lovely new radiators!

Lancelot: Oh yes, and splendid new pews!

Bridget: With gorgeous new cushions on them!

Lancelot: No chance of nodding off in the sermons in our more Spartan times!

Bridget: (*confidentially, to the congregation*) The thing that was most striking, when I first entered the church that lovely wedding day of 1744, was all the whitewash. A dingy old church with dazzling white walls!

Lancelot: That was Lord Cobham's idea of a joke, Biddy. The ten commandments, painted in great letters on the whitewashed walls.

Bridget: And the creed.

Lancelot: Not that he subscribed to either.

Bridget: He simply wanted to keep the natives anxious.

Lancelot: He simply wanted to keep us in our places.

Bridget (*nodding*): Remember what your job description said!

Lancelot: 'Able to converse instructively on gardening, but free from vanity and conceit'

Bridget: He wanted to keep you all in your places.

Lancelot: Whatever his faults, I liked him. He had a talent to amuse.

Bridget: What was it James Hammond said of him?

'To Stowe's delightful scenes I now repair
In Cobham's smile to lose the gloom of care.'

Lancelot: He was a smiler, you must give him that, he was a great smiler.

Bridget: I don't remember him smiling at our wedding.

Lancelot: Weddings weren't really his thing, dear. Unless, of course, there was an heiress involved.

Bridget: Well, with or without his Lordship, we had a good one!

Lancelot: We did, indeed, even if Henry's sermon had its digressions.

Bridget: Lengthy sermons, dear, are good for the soul.

Lancelot: Yes, but 15 minutes on Conway Rand and the spelling of 'vicar'!

Bridget: Well, the spelling of 'vicar' is important, dear. Up to a point!

Lancelot: Henry, of course, has very kindly asked us to choose a reunion hymn.

Bridget: Well we mustn't digress then!

Lancelot (*smiling at audience*): When you get a little older, you tend to reminisce.

Bridget: I'd rather like something Victorian.

Lancelot (*nodding*): You can't beat the Victorians, Biddy! Shocking taste in gardens, but great hymn-writers!

Bridget: And something to remind us of that key wedding day moment when we prayed for the Holy Spirit to be with us for whatever lay ahead in our lives.

Lancelot: Then how about 'Breathe on me, breath of God'?

Bridget (*delighted*): Your taste, Lancelot, both in gardens and hymns, is immaculate!

Lancelot and Bridget (*looking up to the organ loft*): 'Breathe on me, breath of God'

HYMN 2: BREATHE ON ME, BREATH OF GOD

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may live what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glow with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

READING 3 (Henry Gabell, Benton Seeley, James Gibbs , Alexander Pope)

(Gabell goes to pulpit, Seeley to lectern)

Gabell: The year of the wedding saw the first appearance of something very significant, the Seeley guidebook.

Benton Seeley (*arriving at the lectern, nervously*): Hallo, I'm Benton Seeley, the writer and publisher of those first Stowe guides.

Gabell: Ground-breaking books! A completely new genre!

Seeley: Very kind of you, Reverend, but I feel a little uncomfortable at all my mistakes. I didn't include the church, for example. But back in 1744 I was just a young and humble writing-master from Buckingham. . . I was going to include the church, of course. But then Lord Cobham said 'No'. Well, he said a little more than that, in fact.

Gabell: Please don't distress yourself, Benton. We know it wasn't your fault.

Seeley: But there were lots of terrible errors in my books, too.

Gabell: You couldn't help it, Benton. There was no Wikipedia in those days.

Seeley: I left out poor Capability altogether.

Gabell: Don't worry, Benton. He's had time to get over it. And look at him now, as famous as a rock star.

Seeley: He does seem to be becoming some sort of national treasure.

Gabell: It's said – and I quote - his Tercentenary will 'reinstate him at the heart of the Pantheon of British Genius'! So in your own little way, Benton, you've helped the tercentenary. Your guidebooks were, are and always will be wonderful!

Seeley (*perking up just a fraction*): That's kind of you, Reverend, very kind. I do have a little fun sometimes, watching them sell for amazing figures on EBay! (*Perking up a lot*) In fact....! In fact....! [*He goes*]

Gibbs (*at lectern*): Seeley was in a rush!

Gabell: I think there's excitement on EBay.

Gibbs: (*To congregation*) Seeley guides have beautiful engravings and extremely dodgy facts. Benton's motto was always 'when in doubt, take a chance, and go for William Kent'! (*To Gabell*): I gather you'd like a quick word about Lancelot and his early Stowe career?

Gabell: Yes, please, Jemmy. (*Turning to congregation*). No-one worked closer with Lancelot than the great James Gibbs.

Gibbs: Well, when he first arrived, I'd just finished the Temple of Friendship and Lord Cobham was wanting to develop the whole of the Hawkwell Field, to turn it into a kind of *ferme ornée*, so Lancelot had huge landscapes to play with and spectacular

eye-catchers, like my Gothic Temple and Lady's Temple, as well as Friendship. He was learning about the Genius Loci, too, 'the genius of the place'!

Gabell: Ah! That was Alexander Pope's great thing. But as he died in 1744, Lancelot never really met him. Look out, Jemmy, here he is!

(Gibbs makes way for Pope at the lectern).

Pope (*appearing at lectern swiftly and seriously*): The name is Alexander Pope. I wasn't just a poet of course, I was also the eighteenth-century's answer to Alan Titchmarsh. Well, rather an up-market version, I suppose. And Mr Brown, bless his cotton socks, took my key advice much to heart. If you'd like to hear that advice, in some rather admirable couplets, here it is!

Consult the Genius of the place in all,
That tells the waters or to rise or fall,
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale
Or scoops in circling theatres the Vale,
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines,
Paints as you plant, and as you work, designs.

(Pope sweeps out; Gibbs returns to lectern)

Gibbs: The Genius of the Place, the Genius Loci, helped with so much. In 1747, for example, when Cobham's young nephew, Captain Thomas Grenville, was killed in a sea battle, fighting the French, we were tasked in creating a memorial pillar. We sited it initially looking across the Grecian Valley. But the Genius Loci led Earl Temple to move it to where it is today, just outside the church, on a diagonal from the South Front. An inspired setting.

Gabell: Earl Temple, Captain Grenville's elder brother, could see the memorial, simply by going out onto the South Front portico.

Gibbs (*slowly and reflectively*): Day after day, they say, he would silently commune with it, a poignant symbol of man's fragile mortality.

Gabell (*quietly, after a slight pause*): Your turn for a hymn choice, my good Jemmy.

Gibbs: Well, with the Grenville Column on our minds, perhaps we should go for (*calling up to the organ*): 'O God, Our Help in Ages Past'!

HYMN 3: O GOD OUR HELP IN AGES PAST

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of Thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thy arm alone
And our defence is sure.

A thousand ages in Thy sight

Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an everlasting stream,
Bears all its sons away.
They fly forgotten, as a dream
dies with the dawning day.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be our defence while life shall last,
And our eternal home.

READING 4 (Bridget, Jane Brown, Gilbert West, Alexander Pope)

A highly excited Bridget goes to the pulpit.

Bridget: Lancelot and I have just spotted the Register Book in that case, with our signatures in it! What a lovely thought to display it on our anniversary! And over there, on that far window, are our signatures again! Copied from the Register and engraved by Simon Whistler only the other day – 1972! - either side of the May Close-Smith Memorial! It really is one honour after another! What with that amazing Tercentenary gesture from the Royal Mail! Lancelot's stamp collection has suddenly grown enormously! And as for the National Trust! My goodness, they've really pushed the boat out! Lancelot's terribly chuffed.

Looking back, we had a lovely six years living in the Boycott Pavilion. Mind you, we'd have loved to have had all those modern beagles too! There was only one blot on our landscape. A certain Lord, not around any more, whose name began with C. (*Jane Brown has gone to the lectern*)

Oh! That charming biographer again!

Jane Brown: Lancelot and Bridget were, in the old-fashioned sense, a Christian couple, and one wonders what Bridget made of Stowe, if - when walking out into the quiet garden on a fine evening - Lancelot dared introduce her to some of Lord Cobham's more risqué pagan indulgences: the walk to church through the Elysian Fields meant encountering so many graven images that one visitor had noted that 'unless the influence of the preacher is great indeed, more will pay their devotions among the ancient heathens than the modern Christians'. Lord Cobham fully intended the irony of having the Ten Commandments painted on the church wall yet being freely broken all over the garden... [She goes and Gilbert West arrives at the lectern]

Bridget: He certainly went in for some pretty risqué statues.

West: Good afternoon, Bridget! Lovely reunion!

Bridget (*turning to the congregation, smilingly*): Gilbert West, a nephew of Lord Cobham, is an excellent example of all that Lancelot had to contend with when he was working at Stowe.

West (*smiling broadly*): Steady on, girl, steady on! (*He explains to congregation*) As Lord Cobham's nephew and a budding poet, I was part of the fun-loving and rather arty young set that my uncle Richard gathered around him. I suppose we were rather wild! I wrote a poem about Stowe that enjoyed some success, not least because I made fun of Henry Gabell's predecessor here at the church, the Rev Conway Rand.

Bridget: You were very naughty, Gilbert!

West: I suggested, quite outrageously, that it was Conway's fondness for young ladies that got Dido's Cave its final name.

Sudden to seize the beauteous prey he sprung!

Sudden with shrieks the echoing thicket rung!

I know it was wrong, Bridget, but all-smiling Uncle Richard was a powerful presence.

And you remember the sequel?

Bridget: A remarkable conversion, here at Stowe!

West: Thanks to Henry! (*To congregation confidentially*) It's all there in Michael Bevington's Church Guide. (*To Bridget*) And Conway's forgiven me!

[*He goes. Alexander Pope returns*]

Pope (*smilingly*): There was a poem, Bridget, circulating just before you arrived, that summed up the way a lot of people were talking about my good friend Lord Cobham, contrasting his lavish expense on his garden with his total disinterest in this church.

While stately temples numberless arise,

Temples devoted to heathen deities, [day it ties?]

On which is spared no cost, no grace, no art,

Such their importance genius could impart...

One single line is all you can afford

To decorate the temple of the Lord.

Shall greater honour be to Bacchus given

And strumpet Venus than the God of Heav'n?

In Christian land, gods pagan to prefer!

Christian! Is this in taste or character?

Oh Cobham! Deign God's house to beautifie,

Nor let this only place neglected lye.

(*He pauses and smiles*)

It rather made him smile!

And I often think it may have inspired him to that final great endeavour of his that also became Lancelot's biggest Stowe achievement, the Grecian Valley, a deep, deep homage to pagan Arcady, with his own godlike image on top of a huge column nearby, lording it over the entire gardens.

Jane, tell us about it!

(*He goes. Jane Brown arrives*)

Jane Brown: The estate records for 1746 show another spurt of activity, the start of the Grecian Valley in the as-yet-unused north-eastern quarter of about 60 acres, which Lancelot had enclosed with a ha-ha. In the winter of 1746-47 Lancelot spent much of his time walking and surveying what was still rough paddocks and farmland... Lord Cobham was present as Lancelot supervised the men and their barrows as they wheeled and carted almost 24,000 cubic yards of earth, to scoop out the dog-legged valley... Trees and evergreens were planted around the rim of the vale; paths were to wander through these, while the valley itself was intended as a piece of water.

Lancelot was at last practising his favourite occupation. . .

Bridget: Of course, the intended water was never made. A lake would have needed a holding dam and lining, major works. And three years into the project, Lord C died and Earl Temple, who succeeded, had a mind of his own. Wanted his own classical Stowe, not his uncle's hybrid. (*Jane is about to leave lectern*)

Don't go dear. A quid pro quo! We'd very much like you to choose our next hymn!

Jane Brown (*extremely surprised!*): Goodness! Well... given that we've just been hearing about Lord C and all that very modern-sounding cynicism, how about something really strong like 'All My Hope On God Is Founded'?

Bridget: Lovely, dear, lovely!

Both together (*looking up at organ loft*): All My Hope On God Is Founded!

HYMN 4: ALL MY HOPE ON GOD IS FOUNDED

All my hope on God is founded.
All my trust He shall renew.
He, my guide through changing order,
Only good and only true.
 God unknown,
 He alone
Calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory;
Sword and crown betray God's trust.
All that human toil can fashion,
Tower and temple, fall to dust.
 But God's power,
 Hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.

Day by Day our mighty giver
Grants to us His gifts of love;
In His will our souls find pleasure,
Leading to our home above.
 Love shall stand
 At His hand.
Joy shall wait for His command.

READING 5 (All 9 readers: Lancelot Brown, Bridget, Jane Brown, Henry Gabell, West, Seeley, Pope, Gibbs, Mary Wayet)

Lancelot in pulpit. Gabell at lectern. Everyone else seated or standing, as suggested on p.13

Gabell: Pride of man and earthly glory!

It is a strange irony that when Lord Cobham died in 1749, he was buried in this church, in the crypt beneath the Penyston Chapel. But he wanted no memorial of himself within these walls, and still hasn't got one.

Earl Temple, Cobham's successor, soon made it clear that the new regime of Grenvilles had their own senior staff to move into Stowe. It was the right time for the Browns to move on, their departure only briefly delayed by the tragedy of the couple's third child.

(Jane Brown goes to lectern; Gabell goes to her seat.)

Jane Brown: And so, when Bridget insisted that she had recovered from the birth and death of little William, Lancelot made a long expedition, a ride to explore the heart of England and look for work. He set out at the end of the first week in August of 1750, his hack splashing through the ford and on to the Boycott Farm crossroads, where he turned north; he could see old Boycott Manor across a small valley, and then his road was up and down through the harvest fields. He passed Biddlesden, where once there had looked to be a tremendous opportunity for a lake. The going was high and dry across Northamptonshire and, barring accidents, he could easily reach Banbury in time for supper.

Lancelot: And so I did! And so I did!
(*Bridget to lectern; Jane Brown to her place*)

Bridget (*at lectern*): A new world was opening up for dear Lancelot. ‘The Pantheon of British Genius’ was awaiting ‘The Omnipotent Magician’!

Lancelot (*reflectively*): Once you’re famous, everyone wants a part of you - wants to claim you as their own! Stowe’s a remarkable case in point really! Early on, I didn’t even get my just deserts!

Bridget: It’s hard to credit this, but it wasn’t until the early 1970s that the guidebooks started recognising properly Lancelot’s contribution to the Grecian Temple (as Concord first was) and the Grecian Valley.

Lancelot: It was largely thanks to the researches of a schoolmaster here, George Clarke.

Later on, of course, Stowe has celebrated me in bucketloads.

Nowadays I’m the lauded creator of the Grecian Valley, whose portrait features large and bright beside great, glossy photographs of a landscape I certainly helped to create when I was an obscure Head Gardener with L plates on back and front, but only as part of a wonderful team that began a creation that even today, thanks be to God, CONTINUES EVOLVING.

Of course I’m deeply grateful.

But pride of man and earthly glory are awesome things.

(*A pause. Everyone stands for the prayer of thanksgiving*)

Bridget: We thank our God

Everyone: - omnipotent creator -

Lancelot: For landscapes man has made and called his own.

Everyone: We thank our God

Bridget: for all the gifts of nature

Everyone: And all the garden joys that we have known.

The men: For trees and shrubs!

The ladies: And plants for tubs!

Bridget: And all the lovely flowers we’ve ever grown!

Everyone: We thank our God - omnipotent creator -

Bridget: For water!

Lancelot: How my landscapes knew its worth!

Bridget: Man may seem great, but it’s not man-made data
That brings the sun and rain to feed God’s earth,

The ladies: To meet our needs

The men: And feed the seeds,

Lancelot: Miraculously bringing us new birth.

Everyone (*getting quieter each time*): We thank our God. We thank our God. We
thank our God.

(Gabell returns to lectern. Bridget exchanges places)

And with such thoughts we'll wend our ways. The wedding-day reunion's at an end.
We have one final hymn. And as the one-time vic-ar here, or even vick-er, - do have a
look at Conway's stone, if you can – I hope I may be forgiven if I choose a modern
favourite, only written in 1923, but one that expresses what Lancelot and Bridget
cried out in their hearts as they entrusted their hazardous new life beyond these safe
walls to the arms of the Almighty. A hymn of praise, a hymn of hope, a hymn of deep
reassurance.

(Calls up to the organ loft) 'Great Is Thy Faithfulness'

*As the organ starts the hymn, Lancelot and Bridget lead a neat procession down the
central aisle; Gabell behind them; then Gibbs and Mary; followed by Pope and West;
and finally Seeley and Jane. Perhaps the readers might go right round to the reserved
pew for the rest of the hymn?*

HYMN 5: GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.
Thou changest not. Thy compassions they fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou for ever wilt be!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
Great is Thy faithfulness! . . .

Pardon for sin, and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
Great is Thy faithfulness! . . .

SUE: CLOSING REMARKS & PRAYER

After the service: wedding bells?

MR BROWN & HIS BRIDE

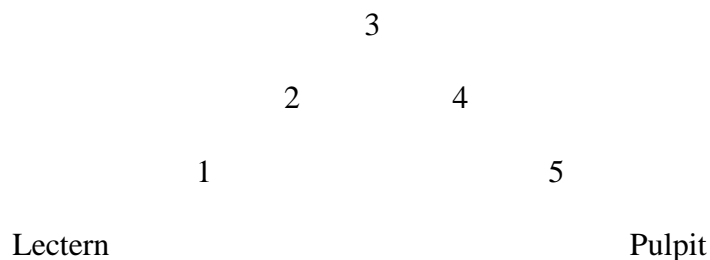
THE STAGING

VERY SIMPLE STAGING. All readings, apart from tiny section on p.11, to be made from the lectern and pulpit.

We just need three upright chairs (2-4), positioned at the entrance to the chancel, between the usual seats for vicar and speaker (1 and 5):

For each of the five readings, those involved take up their positions during the last verse of the preceding hymn.

Those not involved remain in reserved seats in a pew with bad view:



Reserved seats (in a pew with poor view!)

Reading 1 Gabell (pulpit), Jane (2/lectern), Gibbs (3/lectern), Mary (4/lectern)

Reading 2 Lancelot (pulpit), Bridget (lectern)

Reading 3 Gabell (pulpit), Pope (1/lectern), Gibbs (3/lectern), Seeley (5/lectern)

Reading 4 Bridget (pulpit), Jane (2/lectern), West (3/lectern), Pope (4/lectern)

Reading 5 Lancelot (pulpit) Bridget (lectern and 1), Gabell (1, lectern & 2), Jane (2 & lectern), Gibbs (3), Mary (4), Seeley (5), West standing behind 2, Pope standing behind 4

Beginning of Hymn 5: Procession out down *centre aisle* (& round to reserved pew)

Led by Lancelot and Bridget

Followed by Gabell

Then Gibbs and Mary

Pope and West

Jane and Seeley