

A Lay Leader of Worship writes

Hello everyone.

I remember, a few months back, enjoying reading in our magazine, a piece which gave information about some of the people named in the Calendar at the back of that month's issue. This Calendar includes dates on which the Anglican Church celebrates the lives of particular people of note. Having enjoyed that piece so much, and having been asked to write the lead letter for this month's magazine, I have unashamedly pinched the idea! Looking at the Calendar for June, I've chosen three people whose lives will be celebrated: and in the spirit of diversity, there is a mix of gender, era, and nationality.

Opting to follow the chronology of their lives rather than the order of their commemorative days in the month, let's start with Alban, remembered on 22 June. As he was quite local to us, I expect we all know that he dwelt in what's now called St. Albans, in his time known as the Roman city of Verulamium. Did you know he was the first Martyr of Britain? I didn't! He was a Roman citizen there (probably a soldier), and a pagan. A Christian priest was fleeing from the Roman authorities, and Alban took him in and hid him. Whilst there, the priest instructed Alban in Christian teaching and prayer, resulting in Alban converting to Christianity. When the priest's whereabouts were discovered, Alban dressed himself as the priest, to allow the priest to escape. Alban was taken and tortured by the Roman authorities, but he would not renounce his faith. He was executed, probably in the year 250.

We move to the seventh century, to Ethelreda, or Audrey, our second (fairly) local saint. Born in 630, daughter of King Anna of East Anglia, after reaching adulthood her first marriage, unconsummated, ended after three years with her being widowed. Committed to a life of prayer and chastity, she refused to consummate her second marriage, to a future king of Northumbria - which must have taken some courage. She took the veil and withdrew to a double monastery (for both men and women). Then in 673, she herself set up another double monastery at Ely, and was its Abbess. She died six years later. Ethelreda is remembered on 23 June, being revered as a woman of austerity, prayer and prophecy.

And lastly, some twelve centuries later, is the fascinating Sundar Singh of India. He was born into a wealthy Sikh family. After experiencing a vision, he converted to Christianity and was baptized into the Anglican Church at Simla in 1905. He wanted to take Christianity to others, in a form that Hindus would relate to, so dressed and travelled around much of India in the tradition of a 'Sandhu' or holy man. He also visited Tibet, to continue with his mission, even though he was, by then, unwell. It was there that he went missing in April 1929. He was presumed murdered. He is remembered on 19 June, as an evangelist and teacher of faith.

I hope this 'snapshot' of the lives of these three notables has interested you as much as researching it has interested me. If so, perhaps we could remember them in our prayers on their commemoration days, and give thanks for their lives, and the lives of others like them.

Sue Lennon