

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

Stargazing

Larry Wright ponders what the night sky can teach us

Saint Nicolas : From Saint to Santa

How our patron saint became “Santa Claus”.

A Bishop's Farewell

Birmingham says goodbye to Bishop David Urquhart



Larry Wright 4

Stargazing

What does the night sky teach us?

Pauline Weaver 7

Christmas Cheer

Gifts need not cost money.

Adam the Gardener 9

Wishes you a happy Christmas

...and extols the virtues of ivy.

John Adams 12

The Men's Group

...takes to the road.

Fay Fearon 16

The Day I Saw The Queen

A small eye-witness in Jamaica.

Thelma Mitchell 18

A Tale of Two Christmases

Christmas past and elsewhere.

BBC Radio WM 22

Iran : Fighting With Their Blood

An interview with Larry & Parisa.

Christine Adams 26

Parish Book Group

Recommended festive reading.

Michael Kennedy 30

St Nicolas : From Saint to Santa

The genesis of Father Christmas.

Claire Lindow 35

A 1970s Christmas

Curbing the cost of Christmas lunch.

Fay Fearon 40

A Bishop's Farewell

Bishop David lays down his crozier.

Eddie Matthews 46

Global Warming

Mariners knew about it years ago.

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Welcome

EDITORIAL

This month's edition is packed full of potentially explosive political bias. Pauline Weaver implies criticism of the Government for presiding over a pared-back Christmas and undermines the very foundations of capitalism with her suggestion that the most important Christmas gifts don't cost anything. The Men's Group risks arousing the ire of *Just Stop Oil* activists by getting all misty-eyed over gas-guzzling vintage cars. Fay Fearon reveals worrying monarchist tendencies, while Thelma Mitchell dares to suggest that Jesus may not have been born in December. Michael Kennedy's audacity in questioning the existence of Santa Claus runs the serious risk of igniting a Twitter storm. (Parents, hide this edition from your children). Meanwhile, the Book Group, in a revolutionary move, would entice you away from social media and television to read...you've guessed it...books, while Claire Lindow questions the economic progress of the past 50 years with her advice about slow-cooking your Christmas lunch. As for Eddie Matthews (climate change deniers, look away now), it turns out he's known about global warming since some of us were in short trousers.

Yes, even the most innocuous topic can be cast in a political light if you are determined to do so. On the other hand, some political realities are so serious that they demand a hearing even in that most uncontroversial of publications, a parish magazine. Larry and Parisa's interview with BBC Radio (p.22) is not seasonal, but it highlights a tragedy that is happening now and which invites our response. Just one of so many in a world which desperately needs the good news that Christmas brings. May yours be happy and peaceful.

*David Ash*

Stargazing

Larry Wright contemplates the beauty of the night sky and wonders what it can teach us.

Look up into the night sky and wonder! This has been the essence of stargazing ever since human beings had the capacity to wonder. The night sky is a rich subject for painters and poets as much as for navigators and astronomers. Astrologers may look for portents and predictions in the astral canopy. The early astrophysicists though sought to explore “what the Heavenly bodies are, not only where they are.” Space telescopes, such as the James Webb and the Hubble, have extended our gaze even further into the extremities of the universe. The pictures they send back are stunning works of art in themselves.

The Ancients pondered the night sky for evidence of the divine. In pre-scientific ages the stars and planets were sometimes seen as manifestations of supernatural beings and their power over mortal lives. A comet blazing a

trail across the blackness of space would be invested with meaning and purpose for those who saw it, a portent of tragedy or triumph. For the Jews and Christians of Jesus’ times, the cosmos was the dwelling place of God, a heavenly canopy enfolding the earth. As the author of Psalm 113 writes,

*Who is like the Lord our God,
who is seated on high,
who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?*

The earth was at the centre of this enfolding cosmos and its sun and moon revolved around our planet, God’s supreme act of creation. As science progressed, this concept of a static planet earth was questioned and a new understanding emerged. It was the sun which was the centre of a solar system around which the earth moved and the moon, or moons, around the planets.

The advent of space travel from the 1960s allowed astronauts to be the first human beings to escape gravity and reach outer space. Their testimonies of the experience of seeing the



The Revd Larry Wright is the Rector of Kings Norton Parish



PHOTO BY KENDALL HOOPES

awesome beauty of planet earth from the perspective of space are moving. The most recent explorations into space have focussed on the age of the universe. Could modern technology provide a precise date when the universe first formed? Put another way, when did the Big Bang go bang?

Whatever progress science makes, the night sky will continue to be a subject for mystery and wonder for the human mind and soul. To look up on a cloudless night in a place with no artificial light is an experience of contemplation. How do we comprehend the sheer scale of the cosmos? It may make us feel insignificant but we may

also consider we are as much a part of God's creation as the innumerable stars above us. As the writer of Psalm 8 put it,

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

As Christmas approaches, we are reminded again of the strenuous journey made by the three gift-bearers and their entourage to seek out the new born child, Jesus. Various described in popular carols and stories as the Three Wise Men, Three Kings or The Magi, they are a link to the ancient belief

in the divine nature behind the stars. One tradition is that they travelled from the Persian empire to Palestine for this momentous birth. They followed a star in the belief it would guide them to an event for which they were prepared to take serious personal risks.

Following a star has become a metaphor for our individual striving for fulfilment. The star represents the aim of an interior journey towards something we may only imagine but nonetheless long for. Ambition is good when we are young but it alters as we mature. Other aims take priority and often these are spiritual. But younger people, too, are striving for fulfilment and in this we should take comfort. Recent protests about climate change have often

involved the young and the old in a shared concern for the future of our home planet .

From time to time, maybe we should all ask ourselves what our life goals are. What will inspire us to be more than we might believe ourselves to be? Goals don't always need to be public. They can be unpretentious. We can ponder what sort of person we wish to be and include our accumulated experiences in our shopping list of personal satisfactions. What matters is that we have a lode star of values and beliefs which propels us into the future rather than leaving us to stagnate in the present.

All of us at Kings Norton Parish Church wish you a peaceful, contented and star-filled Christmas.





Christmas Cheer



PAULINE IS THE
LAY MINISTER AT
ST NICOLAS'
CHURCH, KINGS
NORTON

As many of you know, I often quote Louisa M Alcott's book "Little Women" at this time of year. It is often in relation to our Christmas Challenge and the encouragement of giving to support others who may not have any gifts to open on Christmas Day. The quotation I often use is "Christmas isn't Christmas without presents." In the book, the March family give up their Christmas food and gifts so that another family could celebrate. Although it was written in 1868, there seems to be a familiar relevance to our world some 150 years later.

For many people, this winter and this Christmas will be difficult. With rising food prices and worries over the cost of gas and electricity, it is going to be a pared-back Christmas this year. Add to this the continuing concerns over Covid, the war in Ukraine, violence and persecution in other countries and the world looks bleak. We are told that the major companies are tempering the excesses of their advertising in response, but I have to say I haven't noticed. They still seem to be showing massive tables laden with food, a decadence and extravagance that are unachievable by most. Other seem to have gone down the route of hardly featuring Christmas at all.

But it isn't all gloom. We can still celebrate and share some of the most important gifts at Christmas. Love, kindness and compassion don't cost anything. A phone call, a Christmas card, fairy lights in the window, a home-made gift, or a listening ear can mean the world. Then there is the joy of singing Christmas carols, because, as Buddy says in the film "Elf", "the best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear". There are lots of opportunities to come and sing in our Christmas events at St Nicolas' Church this month. Please join us.

Despite all that is happening, we can still reach out to each other, to those we know and those we don't. We can still



spread Christmas cheer and the message of love and hope that is wrapped up in the birth of Jesus.

In Scandinavia, the first Sunday of Advent is celebrated with the lighting of the first candle in the Advent wreath and the decorations are put up. Traditionally, the tree goes up later on Christmas Eve. Friends and family are invited to share a drink and a cake together. It is the opportunity to get together and welcome the coming season as we approach Christmas.

In church on Advent Sunday (27th November this year), we too light the first candle in our Advent wreath and, over the weeks, the light builds until we reach Christmas itself. The candle flame which represents the hope and

light of the Christ child, hope and light that are needed more than ever this year.

I hope that you all find Christmas cheer and wish you every blessing this Christmas.

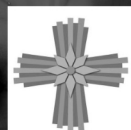


Christmas in Kings Norton 2022

3 December	10am-2pm	Christmas Handbells
4 December	10.30am	St Nicolas Day service
10 December	10am-2pm	To Bethlehem Nativity Experience
17 December	2pm	Come and Join in Nativity & Party
18 December	4pm	Festival of Carols
Christmas Eve	5pm	Crib Service
Christmas Eve	11.30pm	Midnight communion
Christmas Day	9am & 10.30am	Holy Communion
28 December	3pm	Flicks at St Nics - Nativity! (U)

All in St Nicolas Church or churchyard

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Adam the Gardener wishes you a very happy Christmas

The origins of the Christmas song “The Holly and the Ivy” are lost in the mists of time but it is still a great favourite. There is a nice version playable as a solo piano piece on Wikipaedia.

Holly and ivy have always been seen as OK to bring into the house at the turn of the year. The ivy would have been the vigorous one, seen on oak trees at the side of the road (right) and climbing to 30 metres. There is an Irish ivy rather similar to the English ivy, but it can more often be seen in old, Victorian graveyards.

Wild holly could be cut from the hedgerow and had the advantage of evergreen leaves and glossy red berries to cheer things up; but cutting the whole tree out would earn the disapproval of the farmer as holly trees have traditionally been left to grow during the annual hedge trimming. I must admit that I find it difficult to believe that holly was used as fodder by sheep during a hard winter, but if you drive

around the Lake District you will see the trees to this day.

Mixed baskets of small Chrysanthemums and some foliage plants are often given as presents at Christmas time. They will have a short life as the lack of light in the average living room takes its toll. All is not





VARIEGATED IVY

lost, however, because, tucked at the back of the display, there will be a small-growing variegated ivy and, if you re-pot it, you will have it for many years as a forgiving, cheerful inhabitant of your porch or unheated conservatory. Careful watering is required as the decorative ivy does not like soggy compost. The ideal is to have a pot-holder on a wall allowing the branches to tumble down. You will now have two choices: water sparingly so that no water collects in the holder; or take the pot to the sink for a good soak and then give it a good drain and replace in the holder.

I have talked about an unheated conservatory or

porch, but the best option is to have a low-wattage heater with a thermostat that kicks in when the temperature gets below, say, 12°C. This will keep the frost out, stop mould growth and the thermostat will limit your energy use. There are many plants which do very well under these conditions. Watch this space for a listing next month

There is also quite a selection of annual plants which are a bit slow-growing and will succeed when the seed is sown in, say, January. The low-heat conservatory could be the place to do it. Progress will be slow at first, but you will reap the rewards of early sowing as the year goes on.

The good old Sweet Pea responds very well to this treatment and, while you wait patiently for the growth to take place, you can be planning where to dig your trench and what organic matter to fill it with. Empty your compost bin and add some supermarket compost. You can't be too generous. After you have planted your seedlings there will be a pause in growth, but soon your sweet peas will be twining up their supports to 2.5 metres or more and will be covered with flowers to be cut and brought in to the house.

Another climber which responds to early sowing is *Cobea scandens*. It will be very generous with its purple or white cup-and-saucer flowers when happy. Suttons Seeds have a good list of them for January sowing and all I can add is that F1 or F2 hybrids will have bigger and better flowers

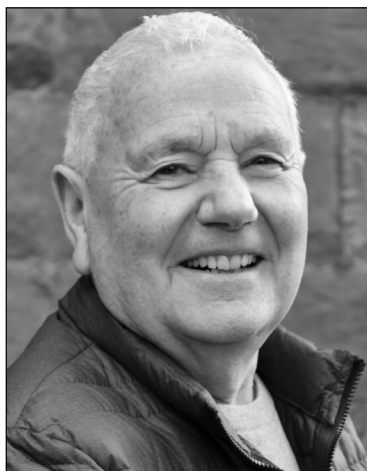
Both the holly and the ivy are, in my opinion, seen at their best in their gold or silver variegated forms and (wait for it) holly can be grown from seed in about February! Take some plump berries, wash away any pulp, wash the seeds again in lukewarm water and dry on some kitchen paper and sow on the surface of compost. Sprinkle some grit or sand on the surface and place in a sheltered corner with a loose covering to deter the squirrels. Keep the compost just moist and be patient because germination can be slow. The washing process can help by removing germination inhibitors.

It will soon be 2023 and, with a whole year of gardening interest to look forward to, we can only say Happy New Year.



THE MEN'S GROUP

Takes to the Road



JOHN IS A
RETIRED
DEPUTY HEAD
TEACHER
AND HELPS
TO LEAD THE
BOYS'
BRIGADE AT
THE
COTTERIDGE
CHURCH

When we put together the 2022 programme for the parish men's group, October seemed a lifetime away. However, after the summer break, it crept up very quickly and I was forced into action. I'd suggested it, having visited it after lockdown, so I felt obliged to organise it.

The British Motor Museum at Gaydon off the M40 was to be our most ambitious venture so far. If we could summon enough trippers then we could

get a very good group rate. We had to find a minimum number of paying customers in order to take advantage of it. "Should be easy," I thought.

There was initial enthusiasm, but numbers were slow to mount up. Some had been before, others had things arranged on the day which meant that some of the usual suspects were not going to commit. It suddenly appeared a foolish decision on my part to promise that group rate, which was to be a substantial saving. Time ticked by and numbers going did not increase. What to do?

Suddenly, a brainwave. Why not invite the ladies? In these days of equal opportunities, surely we could sell it to them! There must be some who were sufficiently interested in cars to relish this visit. I remembered, too, that there were some rumblings from the ladies when the Men's Group was formed,

so this was a chance for them to find out what we got up to.

The invitation went out and our numbers increased a little, though still not quite enough to ensure the magic number. It still needed a final master stroke. Why not swell the number, I thought, with an invitation to Cotteridge Church. It was a parish men's group after all and we had thought about opening the group to men in other churches in future.

So needs must. Bingo! We were home and dry with the extra couple of men from our neighbouring church. With all

that now sorted out, we were ready to go.

Car sharing was organised at the Lych Gate and fifteen of us arrived at Gaydon in the early morning of October 15th. It is a very impressive, modern, purpose-built museum comprising two massive halls full of British cars of every description. That's the beauty of it, the fact that they are British cars that we would have all seen on our roads or owned and driven in times gone by. It tells the history of British motor transport from the earliest rudimentary vehicles right up to the present day. Scattered

▼THE NOT-
ENTIRELY-
MEN'S
GROUP AT
THE
MUSEUM.



amongst the exhibits are some real classics: Del Boy's Reliant Robin 3-Wheeler and his Capri Ghia, Lady Penelope's Pink Limousine, and James Bond's Aston Martin. These are not copies. They are the actual cars, preserved here for posterity.

Only the observant would notice that the exhibit depicting the change in car design and sophistication since the beginning of the 20th Century to the present day has the cars parked on a subtly changing road surface, as the road engineers developed surfaces ranging from mud and gravel over cobbles to today's modern tarmac.

There are many weird and wonderful prototypes that never saw the light of day, even some of the very early attempts at electric vehicles that were shelved due to lack of interest at the time. Rally cars (Paddy Hopkirk's Mini Cooper for one) and Formula 1 racing cars are preserved in the museum too. There is even a motor bike section for those who prefer their transport on two wheels.

Among the highlights on the ground floor for me was an HA Vauxhall Viva, my first car from student days, my brother's Austin 1100 (remember them?), and my uncle's Morris Minor with the large back window and flashing indicators.

Upstairs there's a very well stocked café to which a number of our group headed almost immediately for that early morning cake and coffee. They were back again at lunchtime for something more substantial. Venturing onto the mezzanine brought us to a very comprehensive

display of Vauxhall cars dating from the 50's. Do you remember the Victor, Wyvern and Velox?

For me, the other massive hall across the car park was actually the draw, as I hadn't been into it before on my previous visit. Simply called The Collection, it resembled a multi-story car park, such was the number of vehicles crammed in.

The ground floor housed the complete Jaguar Heritage Collection donated by the company to the museum for safe keeping and display. Jaguars and Daimlers from all years were packed in. Such was the variety and age that everyone had a favourite, be it The Queen Mother's Maroon Daimler, a sleek bespoke E-Type or a massive white leathered Discovery.

The real treat, however, was upstairs where the number of old production cars and specialist vehicles was a sight to behold. Here, displayed so close together that it was difficult to negotiate the gaps between the vehicles, were all those cars that brought back memories of our youth for some, family life for others. We exchanged stories of our experiences with cars owned by us or by our fathers. It was a real trip down memory lane.

For me there was my Dad's Austin A50 in black (did they do any other colour?), his Austin Cambridge (two tone!), the Wolseley 16/60 when we went more upmarket, a rallying Hillman Hunter (not that we went rallying) and finally one of many Austin Maxis he owned (the display model in the exact same colour). Brilliant! The

visit was worth it just to see all those. At my age, nostalgia is a great comfort.

So, in the early afternoon we all met back at the entrance to exchange stories of time gone by before heading back to Kings Norton and, for some, the evening orchestral concert in the church.

Was it worth all the worry and angst? Yes, of course! The men's group is alive and well. The visit had proved a real success and next year's programme is already planned.

By the way, it's the Bus Museum at Wythall next year if you're interested.

COMING UP

Tue 17 Jan at 7.30 pm

"From Red Robbo to Royal Box; a life marketing British Leyland"
by Michael Kennedy at the
Hawkesley Pastoral Centre,
Shannon Road.

Wed 15 Feb at 7.30 pm

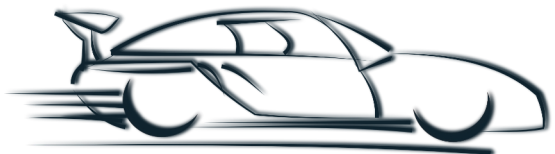
Film night at St Nicolas' Church.

Sat 11 March at 9.30am

Tour of Drakelow Tunnels,
secret factory 1939-1945 and
Government HQ during the
Cold War.



PHOTOS BY JOHN ADAMS



THE DAY I SAW THE QUEEN

It was a glorious sunny day in November 1953. And there she was, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Everywhere and everyone were just buzzing with excitement. This was Her Majesty's first visit to the little island of Jamaica in the West Indies. The crowds had been lining up waiting for quite a while from the early morning, just to catch a glimpse of her. Huge crowds of people were standing in the park known as the Race Course in Kingston. All were waiting with anticipation, excitement and awe, many clutching their little flags, ready to wave when she came into view.

My husband and I recently shared a joke about the occasion, because he said he was also there at the time. So I said that, if I had seen him, I would have said, "Do you know that, one day, I'm going to marry you?" But he just smiled.

At last, we could see her in the flesh, along with her consort Prince Philip. There was a huge outburst of cheers and much singing of "God save the Queen". When I saw her, I can clearly recall thinking, "I wish I could touch her dress", because at one point, she was in fact standing under a tree quite near where I was standing along with lots of other children. I just thought how absolutely beautiful she was, dressed in a

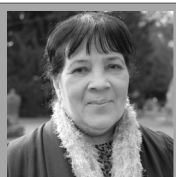
lovely floral dress, gloves and her usual little handbag hanging on her arm. She looked positively radiant, especially when she smiled.

I have no idea what result I was expecting had I got the chance to touch that dress. After all, I was just seven years old. As a child, perhaps I thought something magical would happen, because it was certainly a magical moment for me.

It reminds me of the story in Luke's Gospel of the woman who, in faith, wanted simply to touch the hem of Jesus' clothes in order to be healed of a long-standing illness. And, of course, Jesus knew her thoughts and healed her because of her faith in him.

But, looking back, I also recall thinking that this was the lady for whom my mother got my Auntie Joyce, who was a dab hand at dress making, to make me a special red, white and blue dress. I was to wear it in celebration of her Coronation the previous June. I can't recall wearing it, but my mother assured me I did when she

FAY IS A LAY
READER AT
ST NICOLAS'
CHURCH,
KINGS
NORTON



took me to the cinema, or the picture house as it was called back then, as a treat for the celebration.

That day in November was a wonderfully uplifting, sort of "dream come true" moment for us, because at last we got to see the Queen, our Queen whom we had heard so much about, admired, respected and even loved; for we were all brought up to look up to her as someone rather special.

And if you were to take a trip to the little island of Jamaica, you would still be able to see a huge picture of my cousin, the Reverend Egbert Schloss, when he was an Army Chaplain, standing very proudly with the Queen. That picture takes pride of place over the fireplace in our lounge.

However, my second encounter with the Queen was not as exciting as the first. I actually saw her and Prince Philip whizzing pass my Mum's house in my Edgbaston in a big black car. They were in Birmingham to open the new railway station in September 2015.

Many of us of a certain age sort of grew up with the Queen, so to speak. And whereas I was given the



HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN 1953

middle name Teresa after the saint of the same name, my twin sister was given the name Elizabeth after the Queen. Everyone always called her as Lilibet until her untimely passing.

I unashamedly conclude with the thought that, throughout my own life, I, like many back then, was brought up with huge respect for Her Majesty the Queen. We looked to her not only as the head of the Church of England, but also as head of the Commonwealth and of our mother country, England.

Finally, I think that her 70-year reign and her subsequent passing is one of the most memorable and unique historical events of our time. May she enjoy that rest she so deserves in the love and peace of the God whom she has always looked to and trusted in.

And my prayer continues for our new king, His Majesty King Charles III. May God bless him with wisdom, understanding, good counsel, strength, perseverance and humility in all his decision making.



A Tale of Two Christmases



**THELMA MITCHELL IS
LEAD CHAPLAIN AT
BOURNVILLE COLLEGE**

There are two Christmases each year, celebrated simultaneously. One is religious, marked with joy in churches and homes across the world, rejoicing in the Incarnation, God born on earth in Jesus, an infant amidst us, and the promise of His return in glory at the end of time.

The other is the secular Christmas, infused with myth and legend, revolving around a fourth century Turkish Bishop, Saint Nicholas of Myra, then an eastern province of the Roman Empire. And then there are the reindeer of Lapland, and the trees of the forests of Martin Luther's hometown of Eisleben in central Germany. The secular Christmas is steeped in custom and consumerism.

The choice of 25th December for the birth of Jesus is arbitrary. In St Luke's account of the Nativity there are "shepherds abiding in the fields". If Jesus had been born in December, it would have been far too cold and wintry, even in the Holy Land, for sheep to be out on the hillside. There is speculation that the Star of Bethlehem was a comet recorded on 5th April in 5 BC. In short, we don't know the actual date of the birth of Jesus, so there is no reason why we should not rejoice in the coming of the Light into the world at the darkest time of year.

The Christians in Rome in 336 AD decided to celebrate the birth of Jesus formally. Constantine was Emperor and he declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire. The establishing of the date of the birth of Jesus on 25th December had the political effect of weakening the pagan establishment who celebrated the feast of Saturnalia, which was held between the 17th and 23rd of December in honour of the Roman god, Saturn. A sacrifice would be made at the Temple of Saturn in the Roman Forum, followed by a public feast and private gift-giving. For a time, the social order was reversed, masters serving slaves as the partying continued. A King of Saturnalia was elected to direct the merrymaking. The Romans were harsh, often cruel, masters, but the provision of



a week off to party in mid-winter kept everyone sweet and compliant.

Sound familiar? If you enjoy stories of Tudor times, you will know all about the Twelve Days of Christmas, presided over by the Lord of Misrule, when anything was permissible, especially wild partying and drunkenness. This continued until the time of the Puritans in the sixteenth century, even before Oliver Cromwell. He began to legislate heavily against it, reining in the excessive, wasteful behaviour and beliefs. In 1664, the celebration of Christmas itself was banned, along with Easter and Whitsun, a law which has never been repealed. Nevertheless, this was deeply unpopular and pro-Christmas riots broke out.

The return of many Christmas customs began in earnest in Victorian times, when Prince Albert introduced the German custom of bringing a fir tree into the house to be decorated. Charles Dicken's novel, "A Christmas Carol" was a huge influence on the festive celebrations, as well as on the increased variety and availability of consumer goods.

It is the darkest time of the year in the northern hemisphere, so it is no coincidence that the festivals focus on light, its source and its promise to return. Twinkly lights of Christmas trees in front windows and decorated houses cheer the dark evenings.

A Polish Christmas

Traditions vary across the world. In parts of Europe, Christmas Eve is centre stage. In Poland, the serious

eating traditionally begins when the first star is spotted. When food was scarce and poverty rife, preparations began weeks in advance, the slow hoarding of ingredients when they were available, including a live carp kept in the bathtub! Nowadays, carp is bought pre-prepared from the fishmonger or supermarket.

The 24th is observed as a day of fast, so no meat is eaten. The meal continues all evening, all twelve courses. Families come together and each course is prepared by different households, taken to the house where the festivities are to be held that year.

The meal begins with the traditional breaking of Christmas holy bread together. There is hay under the tablecloth as a reminder of the stable where Jesus was born, and an empty chair for an ancestor or unexpected guest, a custom from pagan times. Dishes of fish, savoury pierogi, borshch, vegetables and delicious desserts of cheesecakes, sweet pierogi, gingerbread and cake take many hours to eat. Gifts are exchanged over dinner, then it's away to midnight mass, replete and ready to sleep it off on Christmas day. (On a personal note, I have always found Polish hospitality wonderful, welcoming and totally overwhelming.)

An Italian Christmas

There is a similar story in Italy, except with more focus on pasta courses, as you might expect, and eel is often the centre piece. The meal, these days often eaten in local restaurants, always finishes with a glass of sweet wine and a slice of panettone. It is the

custom to take panettone to any house visited during the Christmas period and you would see the sideboard laden with a dozen or more. When we lived there, I often wondered how many were handed on and where they finally rested!

A Scandinavian Christmas



In Denmark and elsewhere in Scandinavia, candles are lit everywhere, with real candles on the Christmas tree. After a December, much of which is spent partying with friends and neighbours, Christmas Eve is strictly family time. The centre of the meal consists of varieties of meat: duck, goose, pork and sausages, with red cabbage and caramel potatoes. A hot, cherry sauce over thick, creamy rice pudding, which has an almond hidden in it, follows. The finder is the winner. Afterwards, they gather round the tree holding hands and singing Christmas carols. At last, it is time to open the gifts that lie around the tree. The elves, known as "nisser", have a higher profile than Father Christmas in Denmark. Boots are left outside the door for the nisser to leave gifts in, if they have been left bowls of porridge in the loft to eat, in the hope of keeping them out of mischief.

Two Christmases



Does it matter that there are two Christmases? Probably not. Most Christians rejoice in the birth of Christ whilst also enjoying the festivities, the exchange of gifts and greetings cards, the seasonal meals, an opportunity to be with family and friends, sharing traditional food. The secular Christmas frequently incorporates aspects of the

Christian story of the birth of Jesus. People of other religious traditions often enjoy the Christmas traditions too.

A Cold, Hungry Christmas

It will be a cold, cold Christmas for far too many this year. How do you choose between heating and eating? Or letting children go hungry? While we pray for a fairer, more just system of wealth distribution, let us also pray that those who are able will give generously in the meantime, to homeless charities, to foodbanks, with a vision for no child to go hungry, where the safety nets are strong and holding fast, and there is a permanent reduction in poverty and an end to the need for food and places of "warm welcome". Let us pray that "the mighty are cast down from their thrones and the lowly lifted up, that the hungry may be filled with good things and the rich sent away empty" (Luke 1:46-55).

A Blessed Christmas

May God bless you and all you hold dear this Christmas and through the coming year. I close with words of another Anglican priest and poet, Robert Herrick, (1591 – 1634), written at the height of the Puritanical reaction against the excessive celebrations of Christmas controversy, words to ponder on and linger over this season.



What Sweeter Music



What sweeter music can we bring
than a carol for to sing
The birth of this our heav'nly king.
Awake the voice! Awake the string!
Dark and dull might fly hence away,
And give the honour to the day,
that sees December turn to May.



If we might ask the reason, say
The why and wherefore of all things here
Seem like the Springtime of the year?
Why does the chilling Winter's morn
Smile like a field beset with corn?
We see Him come and know Him ours,
Who with His sunshine and His showers
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.



The Darling of the world is come,
And fit it is to find Him room
To welcome Him. The nobler part
Of all the house here is the heart,
Which we will give Him and bequeath
This holly and this ivy wreath,
To do Him honour who's our King
And Lord of all this revelling.

Robert Herrick (1591-1674)



FIGHTING WITH THEIR

BLOOD

"با خونشون می جنگن"



PARISA



LARRY

Grace Smith hosts a four-hour show on BBC Radio WM each Sunday morning from 6.00 am. On Sunday 30th October, she invited two members of our Parish Ministry Team, Revd Larry Wright and Parisa Pordelkhaki, to talk about what is being done by Birmingham churches to highlight events in Iran and to support Iranians living in the West Midlands. Here is a transcript of the interview.

Grace (presenter): We've seen a lot of shocking images in recent weeks of violent clashes between security forces and protesters in Iran. The protests follow the death in custody of 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, who was arrested by "Morality Police" last month for allegedly violating Iran's strict rules requiring women to cover their hair with a hijab. Well, back here in the West Midlands, one church has been

doing their bit to shine a light on the current situation in Iran. I am joined by two people from St Nicolas' Church in Kings Norton this morning: the Reverend Larry Wright and also Reader Parisa Pordelkhaki, who moved here from Iran 14 years ago. Welcome, both!

Larry: Good morning, Grace, and thank you very much for the invitation.

Grace: It's really, really important. I'm so glad that you're here to shed some light on what's happening. Now, I want to go to Parisa first, actually. Parisa, could you tell us a bit about what you've been doing to raise awareness about the situation in Iran?

Parisa: Good morning, Grace. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to share what's happening and what can be done. Yes, of course. So, we've been trying to raise awareness through events and talks that we are presenting and we are inviting both Iranians and non-Iranian Christians to attend. We're sharing whatever footage and news that we can get from social media with them and are trying to make them aware of what is happening. I've noticed that many people are quite unaware of the tragedy. And then, from there, we're asking Iranian people about their expectations of the West and of other countries, and then we're taking it from there.

Grace: I can imagine that you, Parisa, being here, might feel a bit helpless about what we can do for that

situation all those miles away. What are you calling on people to do?

Parisa: Well, I think you are aware that all of the news and all of the footage has emerged in the West and especially in the UK about three and a half weeks after it all started. I think the very first thing that I would like people to remember is that we are all human beings regardless of our nationality or where we are.

So I'm inviting everybody to be aware of the situation and to stand with the people of Iran in their demands for basic human rights. I think the bigger request is for the people of all countries to talk to their governments, to go and contact their M.P.s and to say that, as people of this country who value diversity and human rights, we think the government should take action.

Just standing with the people of Iran in solidarity, Grace, is not enough. This needs to go further. Western governments need to state publicly that the rulers of Iran are a terrorist group. You've seen, as you mentioned previously, that blood has been shed. They're actually killing the young generation because they're requesting a very simple human right. I think that is what we would like people to be aware of.

Grace: Absolutely. Now, Larry Wright, I know that St Nicolas' Church is involved. How important is it for your church to shine a light on the current

situation in Iran and, like Parisa says, maybe go a bit further?

Larry: Yes indeed. Well, we have a number of Iranian people associated with our church. I've been working with Iranian refugees and asylum seekers for well over twelve years now and it's quite clear to me that their needs are both physical and very practical but also spiritual. As people go through the long process of becoming naturalised in the UK, which is often very long, many of them who come from a very religious background, a very religious culture, find a home in Christianity, in the churches in this country. I know from my experience around the UK, that not just Church of England churches, but many other denominations have welcomed, included and integrated Iranian converts into their congregations and provided enormous support.

But it's a two-way thing. We also learn something about their experience of journeying from a country and a culture that, by the time they get to Britain, are a long way away, despite their many associations and family connections. And so, when something like this happens, when tragedy hits their country in such a dramatic way as it is at the moment, we can all imagine, from a human point of view, what it would be like if it was our families over there. What if it was happening to some of us, our relatives who were in another country? So there's a need to support people practically, giving them advice, encouraging them to hold fast at this

time of turmoil and to offer them spiritual comfort.

There is, I think one final thing. What Parisa and I and some colleagues from St Paul's in the Jewellery Quarter have been trying to do is to encourage the Church of England, both here in Birmingham and the West Midlands and nationally, to speak out in prayerful solidarity. Obviously, churches don't have direct political influence but they do have a sort of soft power, a moral influence. And so we're hoping that we can raise awareness at both a national and a local level amongst our church leaders as well.

Grace: Really interesting. Thank you, Larry. Now, Parisa, we've said before that you moved from Iran 14 years ago; but I understand you've still got family back there. How are you feeling about that? This message is of concern for everybody, but, for people who've still got friends and family still in Iran, what would you say to them?

Parisa: Yes, I do have family and friends there who are affected and we did have some very sad news over the weekend of very young people who have been killed over the past couple of days. And it is sad, and it is really emotionally damaging, I would say. People's mental health needs quite a lot of support. I just want to say to those people that are in Birmingham, in the West Midlands, who are close to St Nicolas' or to St Paul's that, with the help of these two parishes, we're trying to offer that mental support, that social support, because this is not a time to give up. Unfortunately, there's not much that we can do



PHOTO BY SIMA GHAFARZADEH

physically, because we are miles away; but we can stand with them and provide support and hope, whilst looking to the future and giving that hope to people.

Grace: Before I let you both go, Parisa, how hopeful are you that there'll be some permanent change in Iran as a result of these protests?

Parisa: To be really honest with you, Grace, I think the people of Iran...I will say even those Iranian people who are not living in Iran... are doing their very best with nothing in their hands. I mean, they are fighting with their blood. It is up to Europe, the US and Canada to realise that these people, these young generations, who have no fear, know their history, know how, 44 years ago, this régime came to power; and they want the West and the European leaders to take responsibility and to act.

I don't know whether your listeners had the chance to see yesterday's protests all over the world about

what is happening in Iran (photo above). People made a human chain all over Europe, the US and Canada, and I was quite moved to see the Canadian Prime Minister in the front line of the protesters and being the first leader to mention that change needs to happen. I would like to quote him, actually, because I was quite impressed when he said: "The Iranian régime is desperate for all of us to move on, to forget about this, to shrug and say, 'Iran has always been complicated'. Enough is enough! We won't stop." We need this strategy from many other leaders, and I think that, all together, the whole world should recognise this. Unless we do, more blood will be shed.

Grace: Wonderful. Thank you for joining us. That was the Reverend Larry Wright and Parisa Pordelkhaki from St Nicolas' Church, Kings Norton.

(This transcript has been edited for length and clarity. The protest shown in the photo took place in Vancouver, Canada on 22nd October 2022).

Some festive reading from the Parish Book Group



CHRISTINE ADAMS IS A RETIRED PHYSIO AND HEALTH SERVICE MANAGER IN MENTAL HEALTH

As the nights draw in and the weather gets colder, what could be better than snuggling under a blanket to save money on heating and reading a festive book?

The best one has to be "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. Even if you've seen a variety of films with the same title including "The Muppets' Christmas Carol", the message is still the same. It is, however, so much better in book form. The main character, Scrooge, having tried to ignore the occasion, is shown some of his past history and how badly he has treated people. I don't want to spoil the ending, but how appropriate that the last few words in the book are "God Bless us Everyone".

The other books I'm recommending are short stories and so will not require hours of your time.

1. Christmas Days

"Christmas Days" by Jeanette Winterson is labelled as 12 stories and 12 feasts for 12 days. Each story is accompanied by a seasonal recipe to try and these range from "Ruth Rendell's Red Cabbage" to "Dad's Sherry Trifle".

The stories include a cat and a dog and a solid silver frog; frost and icicles, mistletoe, sledges and a donkey with a golden nose. There is also Yuletide, mince pies and a merry little Christmas Time.

2. The Lion, The Unicorn and Me

For our younger readers, Jeanette Winterson also wrote "The Lion, The Unicorn and Me", a beautiful story about how the humble donkey was chosen to carry Mary above all other

animals. It is an incredibly touching story.

3. A Snow Garden

Rachel Joyce has written a book called "A Snow Garden and Other Stories". The tales are wound around the festive season and are described as a gentle reminder of what really matters at this time of year. The perfect tonic for "tinsellitis", each story is warm and funny but full of bittersweet moments.

4. 'Twas the Nightshift Before Christmas

Adam Kay, well known for his "This Going to Hurt" book, has written a very short volume called "'Twas the Nightshift before Christmas". It is described as a love letter to all those who spend their festive season on the front line, removing babies and baubles from the various places they get stuck, at the most wonderful time of the year.

5. Festive Spirits

"Festive Spirits" is a book of three short stories by one of my favourite authors, Kate Atkinson. Here's a flavour: "Lucy would have challenged anyone not to cry at the sight of their child in a nativity play. Even a sheepish Maude, even a scowling Beatrice currently attempting a Chinese burn on an adjacent



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE ADAMS

angel. A shepherd shouted something incomprehensible and one of the wise men wet himself. Beatrice waved a little too enthusiastically at Lucy. It was so much better than she expected."

6. Diary of a Christmas Elf

And finally, "Diary of a Christmas Elf" by Ben Miller. Described as a laugh-out-loud seasonal story about the true meaning of gift giving.

I highly recommend all these books and I hope you get chance to enjoy a festive read.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO JOIN THE BOOK GROUP, YOU CAN CONTACT CHRISTINE VIA THE PARISH OFFICE. CONTACT DETAILS ON PAGE 28.



YOUR PARISH CHURCH

If you cannot find what you are looking for here, you will probably find it on the Parish Website (www.kingsnorton.org.uk). Alternatively, please ask questions at the Parish Office, which is open between 10.00 am and 1.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

**81 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 8RU • parishoffice@kingsnorton.org.uk
0121 458 3289 • www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam**

THE MINISTRY TEAM

Rector The Revd Larry Wright
Assistant Rector The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu
Parish Lay Minister Pauline Weaver
Curate The Revd David Booker
Honorary Assistant Priest The Revd Jayne Crooks
Methodist Minister The Revd Nick Jones
Lay Readers David Ash, Fay Fearon, Ruth Howman, Parisa Pordelkhaki
Lay Preacher Steve Wright
Music Minister Sylvia Fox
Pastoral Care Team Coordinator The Revd Jayne Crooks
Pastoral Care Advisor Susan Farrell
Learning & Discipleship Coordinator The Revd Mark Bennett

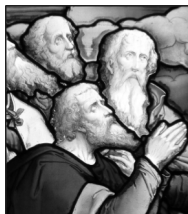
THE CHURCH WARDENS

St. Nicolas' Church Peter Hay & Julie Hill
Hawkesley Church Jim Clarke
Immanuel Church Sue Hartley

OTHER CONTACTS

Parish Administrator & P.C.C. Secretary Judy Ash
Acting Finance Officer Simon Hill
Verger and Groundskeeper Shane Williams
Safeguarding Coordinator Annette Dickens
Regular Giving The Revd Jayne Crooks
Flower Arranging (0121 486 2837) Alison Blumer

We are a Church of England Parish serving all in Kings Norton through St Nicolas' Parish Church, and, in partnership with the Methodist Church, through Hawkesley Church, meeting in the Primary Academy.



We believe that the church in Kings Norton exists to be a worshipping, transforming partnership in Christ, to live out God's radical hospitality for all and to be equipped for work in God's world

1st Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Holy Communion (Children's activity : Muddy Church)
12.30 pm	Baptisms
6.00 pm	Taizé Prayer

2nd Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Sung Matins (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Morning Praise for All Ages (Child-friendly)
6.00 pm	Holy Communion with Anointing & Prayer for Healing

3rd Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Holy Communion (Children's activity : Godly Play)
12.30 pm	Baptisms
6.00 pm	Evening Worship

4th Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion with Choir (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Outdoor Service in St Nicolas' Churchyard (Child-friendly)
6.00 pm	Compline (Night Prayer)

5th Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	United Service

All services are held at St Nicolas' Church. For further details, see the weekly newsletter on the Parish Website at www.kingsnorton.org.uk

Saint Nicolas

From Saint to Santa

Most other churches only honour St Nicolas in December, on his feast day of 6th December and, of course, on and around Christmas Day, when he is incarnated for millions around the world as Santa Claus. Here in Kings Norton, we, of course, honour him throughout the year because he is the patron saint of our church. Indeed, if you didn't know already, his image looks down upon us from the right-hand panel of the east window behind the high altar, his expression calm and serene as he holds a baby child (photo opposite).

At Christmas, in the nave or central aisle of the church, he also looks down at us in the form in which he is known and loved by millions around the world, as a Santa, dangling from our Christmas tree, a welcoming figure in that distinctive red outfit trimmed with ermine, in our case with a bishop's mitre.

Most saints are venerated as saintly and generous; but how did this man come to acquire this uniquely joyful image? Was it a gradual evolution over the centuries, or was it a sudden transformation? Of course, there are many different characters who represent Christmas around the world, including some quite alarming ones, and the overall story of their development is enormously complex, but



MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY

Santa's story is pleasingly straightforward.

First, some facts, insofar as it is possible to be certain about them. Most authorities accept that Nicolas was of Greek descent, born in Patara, a coastal city on the Mediterranean in what was then Asia Minor and is now the city of Demre in Turkey. It is most widely believed that he was born there on 15 March 270, and lived until 6th December 343, reaching the age of 63. He became one of the earliest Christian bishops.

He was the son of a wealthy family of Greek Christians, but

as soon as he inherited any of that wealth, immediately distributed it to the needy. Perhaps such generosity was not exceptional, but it acquired legendary status by the fact that, as a modest man, Nicolas almost invariably gave his gifts in secret. He became most celebrated for one specific act which involved children, or at least teenagers, and consolidated his reputation for kindness in the form of gift-giving.

He famously rescued three young girls from having to be turned out onto the streets because their father could not afford a dowry. It seems that,

▼THE FACE OF
ST NICOLAS AS
IT APPEARS IN
THE EAST
WINDOW OF
THE CHURCH
WHICH BEARS
HIS NAME IN
KINGS
NORTON



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH



St Nicolas Center

had Nicolas not come to their aid, they would have to have become ladies of the street. He helped them by dropping a sack of gold coins, on successive nights, through their bedroom windows. Apparently, each of the girls became betrothed the day after their monetary salvation arrived! This example of Nicolas' kindness has been a popular theme in Christian devotional art for nearly 2,000 years, in stained glass windows, paintings, tapestries and frescoes.

This and other miracles that involved young people came to convince people that Nicolas the gift-giver was also the patron saint of children.

Quite shortly after Nicolas' passing, in many countries around the Mediterranean, it had become a tradition that, on his feast day, people of all ages would leave shoes outside their doors and find a coin there the following day.

Incidentally, while he is not one of the most prominent saints in the traditions of our country, around the world he is also the patron saint of Greece and its navy, sailors in general, merchants, archers, repentant thieves, brewers, pawnbrokers, unmarried people, and students.

Perhaps the legend would have gone no further, but if

we look at the evolution of the image of St Nicolas into that of Santa Claus, we see that one particular Western country played a critical role. It was in the Netherlands, or then the Low Countries, that the tradition of gift giving at Christmas time became established, and with it the name of Santa Claus.

From medieval times onwards, on 6th December, every Dutch sailor took part in a church service for St Nicolas in one of the country's numerous ports. Each port held a Nicolas Fair to mark the celebration, and on their way back home sailors would buy Christmas gifts for their loved ones. It was in the Dutch language that the name of St Nicolas evolved in popular usage into the slightly easier to pronounce 'Sinterklaas'.

With their maritime heritage, the Dutch were significant empire builders from the 14th century onwards. They were one of the first nations to gain a foothold in America, where in the 1660s they established a settlement on the Eastern coast, which they called New Amsterdam. That small town soon saw the advent of Christmas celebrations and present giving Dutch-style, with Sinterklaas one of the season's prominent features. In 1664 New Amsterdam was



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

captured by colonialists from England and was re-named New York. As the English language was adopted, Sinterklaas became Santa Claus.

For another 100 years and more, America was a series of settlements with little sense of nationhood, so the Santa tradition stayed localised. But as America gained independence and its own nationhood, Santa captured the fertile American imagination.

There are some major stages. In 1809, the country's most famous writer, Washington Irving, helped to popularise the legend when he when he

referred to St. Nicolas as the patron saint of the city in his book "The History of New York". Perhaps even more significant in terms of the Santa mythology which we recognise, in 1822, Clement Clarke Moore, an Episcopal minister, wrote a long Christmas poem for his daughters entitled "An Account of a Visit from St. Nicolas," more popularly known as "'Twas The Night Before Christmas." That poem described Santa Claus as a "right jolly old elf" with a rotund figure. Before then, he was traditionally a somewhat skinny character who, though he might have manifested kindness and generosity, was

▲ ST NICOLAS AS BISHOP OF MYRA. HE WEARS A BISHOP'S MITRE ON HIS HEAD AND HOLDS A BISHOP'S CROZIER OR CROOK IN HIS LEFT HAND. HIS RIGHT HAND IS EXTENDED IN BLESSING.

never portrayed as having much fun!

Moore's imagery also included Santa flying on an open sleigh from house to house to leave presents for deserving children. The story captured the national imagination immediately and a new and enduring American icon was created.

The next key stage also occurred in America. In 1881, political cartoonist Thomas Nast built on Moore's poem to create the first likeness that matches our modern image of Santa Claus. His cartoon, which appeared in Harper's Weekly, added to Santa's chubbiness a full, white beard, a sack full of toys, his North Pole workshop, his team of elves and Mrs. Claus!

Perhaps the ultimate stage in the development of the Santa image can be laid at the doorstep of the great Coca Cola empire. In the 1920s, the company chose to include

Santa in its Christmas advertising and decided that it needed a more vibrant image. It commissioned a Dutch illustrator, Haddon Sundblom, to create the image which has now been familiar for nearly a century: the definitive bright red outfit, with all the trimmings. Before Sundblom, believe it or not, Santa traditionally wore a rather drab green!

It needs to be said that, though most people thought that Coca Cola had chosen red to reflect its corporate colours, this was denied by Sundblom and the company. But they would.

So the development of Santa was largely a Dutch-American project. But if you feel a little left out, don't forget that Britain was making many other significant contributions to the core Christmas environment and its message of love and happiness. If you need convincing, read the experiences of Ebenezer Scrooge and Mr Pickwick!



THE HUNGRY GARDENER

A 1970s Christmas

I'm sure you are experimenting with lots of ways to keep energy costs down and possibly a more frugal Christmas this year, as we are. If you are looking at ways to reduce the cost of Christmas presents, in the Parish Magazine for December 2021 (*available on the parish website. Ed.*) I wrote about gifts from the garden with lots of garden-inspired ideas for making your own presents.

But what about Christmas dinner? We normally use our double oven, the only time of the year when we do. This year, we are trying to find ways of having an energy-efficient Christmas dinner and we are planning to use our slow cooker.

Slow cookers aren't just for soups, stews, curries and mulled wine! My husband loves orzo and often cooks multiple meals in one go. My mother is

going to give us an air fryer. He will be so happy!

Matt's also been experimenting with making our Sunday roast dinners in the slow cooker. I'm not suggesting that you find a slow cooker that will fit a whole turkey! But you can find room for other cuts of meat that will still feed a family of four or five plus vegetables.

If you get your meat from a butcher, ask them what good cuts of meat they have for your family size. They're often cheaper too. This year, we may have a rib of beef or a chicken. We've moved away from turkey for the last few years as, for a family of three, it doesn't make sense and there are many delicious alternatives.

In our slow cooker, we layer the different types of food, putting the roasting vegetables at the base. We've been finding that if we put the vegetables underneath the meat they absorb the meat



Claire is a keen kitchen gardener, ably assisted by her 6-year-old son Charles.

juices beautifully. If you prefer to have everything separate you can separate your vegetables and place them in cups or mugs in the cooker. On a low setting, chicken and 1 kg cuts of meat take around 6 hours and 2 kg cuts take around 8 hours. If you would like to learn more about the wonderful things you can make, visit your local library and borrow a slow cooker recipe book. You will be surprised by the many possibilities. My favourite is a potato gratin with bacon and leeks. You can start the cooking the day before and finish off with two hours on Christmas Day to take pressure off and give you plenty of time before the King's speech.

We are using our electric barbecue to help lower energy costs. This is much cheaper than using the hob. Please don't use charcoal or gas indoors, as it creates poisonous gases. We've installed solar panels and a house battery, so switching to electricity made more sense than using charcoal. It is brilliant for fish fingers, which is one of Charles' favourites.

Perhaps you have some cooking appliances from your camping set that could help. If you have gas-powered camping appliances please use these outside. My husband is always available to talk about solar options. He is a very well read hobbyist. Just drop us a line via the Parish Office.

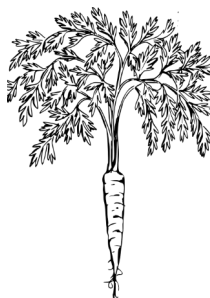
I wonder if you've had a go at growing your Christmas vegetables? We are trying to grow some Brussels sprouts. I've never quite managed to get the timing right as the seeds really need to be one of the first brassica (cabbage family) seeds you grow in very early

March. We might have some small Brussels this year. The buds have formed on the stalk, so we will see.

We are growing perennial leeks (Babbington) that are doing very well so we will have plenty of pencil sized leeks to add. Charles and I planted some potatoes in some old chicken feed bags. Under supervision, he punched some holes in the bottom and topped them up with soil. We placed them in the greenhouse. Fingers crossed for our own spuds for Christmas!

Charles is also growing some carrots and parsley roots in old wellies with spent compost in the greenhouse. Parsley roots are really delicious. If you haven't ever tried them, give them a grow and eat the whole lot, tops and all. So, we could have some home-grown food on Christmas Day. However, we were a bit late with our timings so we might feast on them in the new year and throughout January, when everything else will be growing particularly slowly due to the light levels. Whichever way it goes they will be very welcome!

However you decide to cook your Christmas meal, we wish you a very Happy Christmas and New Year.



A Jubilee Tree



Cotteridge Women's Circle approached the Rector earlier in the year to ask permission to plant a tree in our historic churchyard to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee.

Consultation with our dedicated churchyard team led to an agreement that the best option was a copper beech. After various delays due to the difficulty of obtaining a high-quality specimen, the planting ceremony took place on Friday 11th November.

The tree is situated near the Lych Gate and will provide a beautiful copper canopy to complement the other trees in that section of the churchyard. It will reach its best height and maturity after ten years.

Those Who Died

Those who died on the front line,
They slept in trenches filled with grime.
They died for us,
They cried for us.

They have seen things they can't unsee,
But this was done for us to be free,
People like you and me.

They lived their lives as people,
But then were made to carry guns.
Lethal.

Two sides of war divided.
In 1918, World War One subsided.

Jake Williams (9 years old)



Remembrance Sunday 2022



More Photos





A Bishop's Farewell

Laying Down the Crozier

It was such a huge privilege to be invited to Bishop David's Urquhart's Choral Evensong and farewell service in St Philip's Cathedral on the Feast of St Luke. It was also streamed on YouTube, where it can still be viewed. Bishop David had been the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham for 16 years, but has now moved on to pastures new in London.

The beautiful service of Evensong was quite moving. The address was given by The Most Reverend Bernard Longley, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham. Various people then spoke, including several children and the Right Reverend Anne Hollinghurst, Anglican Bishop of Aston and now Acting Bishop of Birmingham. All expressed good wishes for Bishop David in words and poetry.

I must confess that I got a little bit emotional when he laid the crozier, or shepherd's crook on the altar, knelt to pray, then walked down the aisle by himself, while the choir sang John Rutter's anthem, "The



Lord bless you and keep you". At the end of the service, Bishop David said farewell to everyone as they left the cathedral, and I was very moved when he gave me a huge hug. He asked me to pray for him and said he would pray for me as well.

Bishop David will be much missed by many people, for all sorts of reasons, including that warm, infectious smile that he has. I think he is a huge "people person", someone I have always found it easy and to talk to openly, and very approachable. He simply loved the ministry he was called to in Birmingham, where he was involved with several initiatives, social and spiritual, voicing his concerns about homelessness, poverty, racism, discrimination, care of the environment, cohesion and collaboration with other faith leaders, just to name a few.

Bishop David has a huge heart for the people of Birmingham, which he expressed as we sat and spoke together at his recent farewell dinner for the



FAY IS A LAY
READER AT
SAINT
NICOLAS'
CHURCH,
KINGS
NORTON



Kings Norton, Moseley and Shirley deaneries, to which I was invited at All Saints Church. He also gave some lovely words of encouragement to a group of Readers, including me.

The occasion started with a short time of worship, followed by good food, fun in the form of a quiz about Bishop David, and even a pantomime: Cinderella, played by various individuals, with the bishop playing the part of the Prince. During his busy schedule, the bishop had also taken the time to visit each deanery across the diocese to say farewell.

We wish Bishop David well on the next stage of his journey as

one of the shepherds of Christ's people. He leaves with our love, much gratitude and blessings for all he has done for the people of Birmingham.

I end with some words of his, as he reflects on 2 Corinthians 4:7 ("We have this treasure in Jars of clay"). "What matters is the transformation of human weakness, by God's grace in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as he saves the world he loves".

May I take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy, peaceful and blessed Christmas.



Memories of Bishop David Urquhart at St Nicolas' Church, Kings Norton



Confirmation 2014



Induction of Revd Larry Wright 2016

Funerals Oct 2022

3rd October	Margaret Carter	72	In.CY
4th October	Lynn Dorothy Smith	70	SN.In.CY
5th October	David Alan Payne	84	SN.Bu.KN
7th October	Grace Hockell	11 w.g.	Cr.WH
20th October	Barbara Evans	76	Cr.RH
26th October	Constance Jane Wilson	68	Cr.LH

Bu : Burial, Cr : Cremation, CY : Churchyard, In : Interment of Ashes,
SN : Service at St Nicolas' Church, w.g. : weeks gestation

Cemeteries & Crematoria

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Gratitude :

My recently-published book "Gratitude" is a trilogy of thankfulness. I published it to mark my Diamond Jubilee birthday this year. It is a modest chronicle of my life journey from birth until now and it highlights the various ways in which God's grace has preserved and sustained me through the low and high moments of life, for which I am most grateful to Him.

The book has three streams of thought. Each is capable of standing alone, yet they flow into one significant attitude towards God, that of thankfulness.

The opening theme, **"Thankful by Attitude"**, covers the first eight chapters. It describes my lifestyle of gratitude to God for life, from cradle to adulthood. It gives an overview, with some details of childhood experiences and can best be described as my life in retrospect.

The second theme, **"Thankful in Praise : the Garment of Praise"**, though the shortest section, is a recommended tool for spiritual exercise. It deals with depression and similar mental health challenges and highlights the overarching impact of praise, whether spoken or written, singing, dancing or any other form of joyful expression. The "garment of praise" is used as metaphor for self-preservation in critical moments of despair through the hope and comfort available in God's promises.

The concluding theme, **"Time and Change"**, can best be described as the "Be-Attitude of

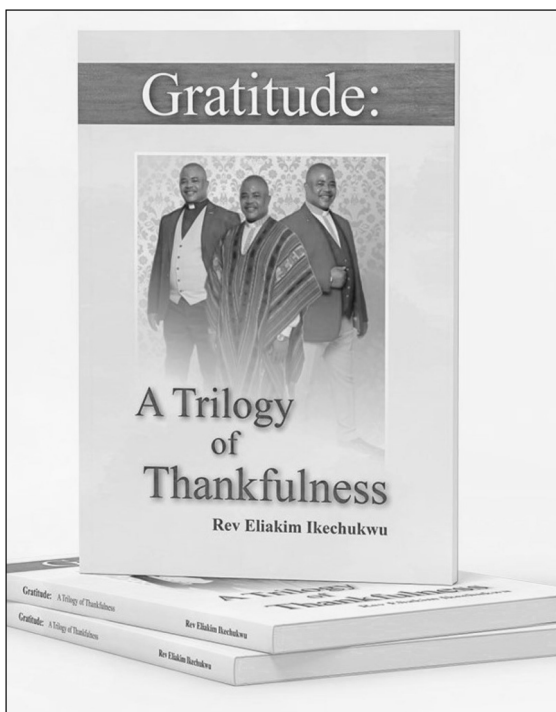


**Eliakim
Ikechukwu is
the Assistant
Rector of
Kings Norton**

Gratitude". In it, I focus on time and change as elements of life which are inevitable yet which contain underlying blessings for human beings. It goes further by unveiling the nature and place of work in enhancing human experience. Knowledge is a strong source of power and should be properly engaged with at every point in one's life.

Since its publication, this book has found more than one purpose. It started as a special edition to mark my 60th birthday; however, it has inspired further helpful and encouraging uses, as proceeds from the launch and sales of the book will be dedicated to supporting some indigenous missionaries in Nigeria, who serve under difficult circumstances.

The book is also an expression of gratitude to God for bringing me to the parish of Kings Norton in the last four years, including the experience of Covid-19. I am grateful for the privilege of serving alongside my colleagues here, both Lay and Clergy. Through their acceptance, patience, and encouragement I can boldly say that I have a large extended family in the United Kingdom. The learning experiences from my



interactive moments since my arrival, which I have tried to express in this book, are monumental in my entire ministerial life.

I am very grateful to all those who have already supported this course through voluntary donations and all who may want to support the project as well. Thank you, God, and all!



Global Warming

Global warming is not in any way a recent phenomenon. Let's go back some thirty years to when I was at sea on container ships running mainly to Australia and New Zealand. A typical global voyage meant making our way down to South Africa and across the southern Indian Ocean to Australia then back home across the same Indian Ocean, past Cape Horn and the Falklands and up to Europe on the Atlantic.

Each day at noon on these journeys, one could see a copper container being lowered from the bridge of the ship into the sea to collect a water sample. Readings were taken for salinity, purity and temperature. The data obtained were added to local weather reports and sent back to the Marine Metereological Office in London each day.

One captain, whom we all liked and respected, would pop into the Officers' Bar and join us for a few beers and a chat. We called him by his nickname, "Doogle", even though he was a Master Mariner, and we often had good conversations with much laughter at times. One particular topic of conversation, though, inspired dramatic thoughts in all of us: the changes under way in the oceans and the global currents which were monitored each day.

We were told that the planet was beginning to warm up. Over a period of more than 10 years, our captain had observed that currents were moving from their usual paths. The Gulf Stream



**Eddie
remembers
early signs of
climate
change**

was becoming more erratic and factors such as El Niño were causing storms to become more severe.

Now, this was a long time ago; and today, matters seem to be worse. As we become more aware of the problem, many of us are trying to do our bit to reduce the amount of carbon we are releasing into the environment. Electric cars are already becoming more common, to take one example.

Personally, however, I don't think there is a lot we can do, particularly given the number of planes in the air worldwide each day, each of them pumping carbon into the atmosphere. Aviation is such a vast commercial activity and yet it rarely seems to be mentioned in the media as a factor in global warming.

There is no getting away from the contribution made by shipping either. Almost all the vessels which transport the world's trade across the oceans, 10 billion metric tons annually, run on fossil fuels. In fact, maritime shipping causes about 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, even more than planes.

There are so many matters in this troubled world which need our prayers. Global warming is just one of them, I know. But, given my age, I can only hope that things will improve for the rising generations, and that they will have a future to look forward to.

A Letter to the Editor

I've only just finished reading the October Parish Magazine. A good read as always! In his article, Eddie Matthews says "I can remember a church in Ladypool Road called Saint Barnabas'. It is long gone now, I believe". He might like to know that, although the church was badly damaged by fire in 1970, it has been extensively rebuilt, incorporating what remained of the original church. It's now in a united benefice with St Agatha's church in Sparkbrook. At one time, my own church, St Alban's in Highgate, shared a single priest with St Ag's and St Barnabas' but they are in alternative episcopal oversight, whereas St Alban's has stayed within the Diocese of Birmingham, so our ways have parted again.

A.C.

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Revd Larry Wright with the organisers of the Northfield Community Partnership's Warm Welcome initiative at St Nicolas' Place on The Green.

Details on the opposite page.

More information available from the Parish Office.

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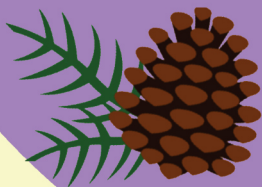
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