

# KINGS NORTON

## Parish Magazine

### Saving Christmas

The greatest Christmas gift is to be saved from ourselves.

### What Happened to Santa's Sleigh?

A Kings Norton story of Christmas nights and the Round Table.

### Advent & Christmas at St Nicolas'

Find the dates & times of seasonal services and events at St Nicolas' Church on page 7.



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# Welcome

**EDITORIAL**

Who takes on most of the Christmas preparations in your household? Are they equally shared? Barbara Wilkinson's thought-provoking poem on page 40 ("Mother's getting ready for Christmas") enters potentially explosive territory ("Father just sleeps by the fire"). But could there be a deeper message here beyond the incendiary suggestion that, just occasionally, chores might be unfairly distributed?

On page 31, Pauline Weaver, drawing on a book by the Archbishop of York, encourages us to "stop", to "find a place of quiet" and to spend some time contemplating the Christmas story. Maybe, as in the New Testament account of sisters Martha and Mary (Luke ch.10), Barbara's image of the father asleep by the fire is meant as a challenge, not to our laziness but to our hyperactivity. Could busyness be one of the self-destructive behaviours from which Christmas offers to save us, as Larry suggests on page 6?

If so, then it is time to put all guilt aside, to give yourself permission to stop, to settle into your favourite chair with a cup of tea, and to spend an hour or so scouring the following pages for the signs of hope and glimpses of joy which they contain.

We have a lot going on in and around Saint Nicolas' Church this month. Most of the details are on page 7. If you can, do join us for a celebration of the Birth of Christ which, at long last, we can share together and in person.



*David Ash*

# Saving Christmas

*This winter's uncertainty, shortages and disruption have led some to call on those in power to "save Christmas". But when correctly understood, it is Christmas which saves us.*

Do you have a favourite film you watch each Christmas? "The Wizard of Oz" perhaps or "It's a Wonderful Life?" Maybe you prefer one of the many productions of "A Christmas Carol" or possibly your seasonal fancy is for more contemporary festive film offerings? A friend of mine always watches "Love Actually" each Christmas. These heart-warming, sentimental offerings add spice to many a viewer's TV menu. During two Christmases severely constrained by Covid, feel-good films and other productions have probably been more needed than ever.

In times of uncertainty, familiar Christmas habits help

to settle our anxieties and remind us of the importance of continuity amidst confusion. Last year's Queen's speech is widely regarded as one of her finest of modern times, still well worth watching on YouTube. The sight of residents in locked down streets singing carols on their doorsteps symbolised the hope, joy and comfort the Christmas message brings being spontaneously expressed; a sense of belonging and togetherness so absent for much of last year.

This Christmas, we may have been looking forward to a more "normal" experience of the season. In Kings Norton parish, after two years of reduced Christmas services, we once again have a full programme of events and opportunities to celebrate the birth of Jesus and the message of hope and peace He brings to the world. However, Covid is still with us and this year we face supply-line problems, rising prices and shortages in the shops. One could be forgiven for feeling a bit overwhelmed by the prospect of Christmas 2021. In a society used to abundance and seemingly endless choice, the prospect of scarcity at Christmas is causing anxiety and even panic.



**The Revd Larry Wright is the Rector of Kings Norton Team Parish**



PHOTO BY JONATHAN BORBA

We read headlines declaring that “We Must Save Christmas.” Interestingly, Christians have another perspective, **Christmas saves us**. While all the cultural trappings of the Christmas season are important for creating atmosphere and a sense of expectation, would Christmas not happen without them? Those familiar with the children’s story book, *“How the Grinch Stole Christmas”* by Dr Seuss will recall that it tells the story of the Grinch, a grouchy, solitary creature who attempts to put an end to Christmas by stealing gifts and decorations from the homes of the nearby town of Whoville on Christmas Eve.

↑ **The cultural trappings of the Christmas season are important for creating atmosphere & a sense of expectation**

Miraculously, the Grinch realises that Christmas is not all about money and presents. The story ends thus:

*“And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled ‘till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn’t before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn’t come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.”*

Sadly, we don't need to imagine a Grinch-like creature removing all the trappings of Christmas in the real world of 2021. While billions will celebrate Christmas in comparative comfort and abundance, millions will also do so in various stages of poverty and desperation. In those parts of the world where scarcity is the only way of life and in places affected by natural disasters, conflict, famine or flood, there will still be a Christmas of sorts but not one we would feel comfortable with, but Christmas nevertheless.

The Bible stories of the birth of Jesus tend to concentrate upon the miraculous and on the celestial imagery of the story: angels singing, wise men bearing gifts, the natal star. In fact, there is much of the ordinary in these stories too. The human frailty of the teenage Mary, the anxiety of Joseph, the birth taking place miles from home and family with no medical support that we would recognise, the shepherds sleepy in the fields. We even know what was in the laundry basket: swaddling clothes. Then there is the long journey into Egypt for the Holy Family as refugees, escaping King Herod's wrath.

Christmas 2021 provides much for us to reflect upon. As we slowly and cautiously emerge from the pandemic,

we have all been affected to some degree by the experience, emotionally, physically, psychologically and spiritually. For some, the added fear evoked by climate change projections for our planet and other anxieties has provoked an attitude of gloom and despondency. These are natural human reactions to constant bad news and threats to our lives and livelihoods. The only antidote to such feelings must surely be a healthy belief that things can be better, threats can be overcome, there is more good news than bad, though it hardly ever gets reported.

History shows the resilience of humanity and our determination to survive and to flourish. This is fundamental to a positive nature and a hopeful, optimistic disposition.

**What does Christmas save us from?** From our human tendency towards negativity, despondency, self-destructive behaviour and arrogant self-interest. Christ comes to proclaim a different way of being human under a loving and just God.

For as the carol says, "our hopes and fears for all the years are met in Him tonight."

Christmas and New Year Greetings to all our readers!

# Advent & Christmas at St Nicolas' Church

St Nicolas' Day Service

5<sup>th</sup> Dec at 10.30 am

Journey to the Stable

11<sup>th</sup> Dec 10.00 am – 2.00 pm

Festival of Angels

12<sup>th</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> Dec

“Come & Join In” Nativity

18<sup>th</sup> Dec at 2.00 pm

Festival of Carols

19<sup>th</sup> Dec at 4.00 pm

Night of the Stars

21<sup>st</sup> Dec at 5.00 pm

Crib Service

24<sup>th</sup> Dec at 5.00 pm

Midnight Communion

24<sup>th</sup> Dec at 11.30 pm

Christmas Communion

25<sup>th</sup> Dec at 9.00 am

Christmas Communion

25<sup>th</sup> Dec at 10.30 am

Holy Communion

26<sup>th</sup> Dec at 9.00 am

Holy Communion

26<sup>th</sup> Dec at 10.30 am

All held at Saint Nicolas'  
Church, Kings Norton.

Events may be subject to  
change or cancellation.

Latest information on the  
parish website at  
[kingsnorton.org.uk](http://kingsnorton.org.uk)



Five things you need to know about the

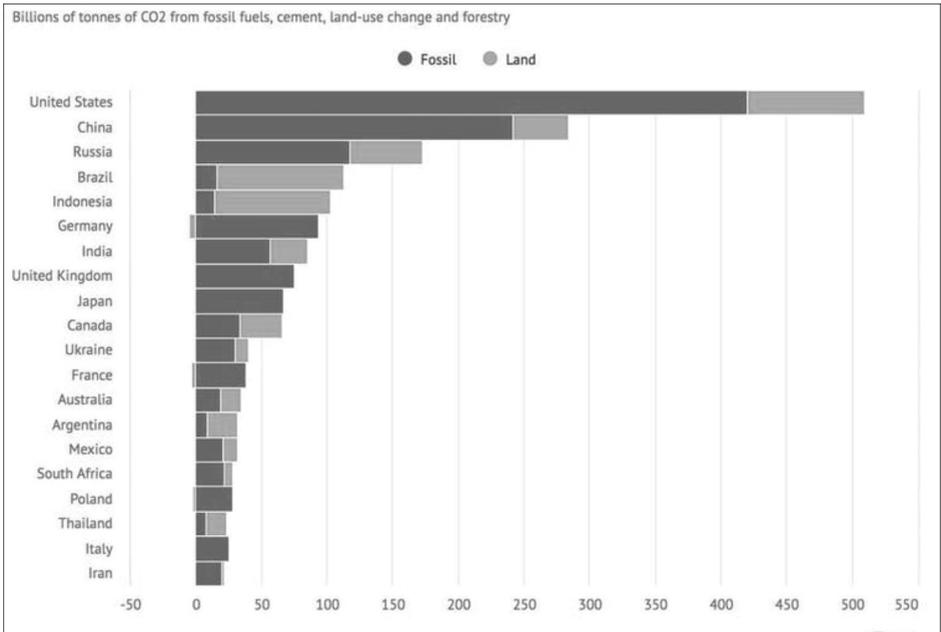
# Glasgow Climate Pact

The COP26 UN climate talks in Glasgow have finished and the gavel has come down on the Glasgow Climate Pact agreed by all 197 countries.

If the 2015 Paris Agreement provided the framework for countries to tackle climate change then Glasgow, six years on, was the first major test of this high-water mark of global diplomacy.

So what have we learnt from two weeks of leaders' statements, massive protests and side deals on coal, stopping fossil fuel finance and deforestation, plus the final signed Glasgow Climate Pact?

From phasing out coal to carbon market loopholes, here is what you need to know:



The UK has one twentieth the population of India, yet has emitted more carbon from fossil fuels. CarbonBrief, CC BY-NC-SA

### 1. Progress on cutting emissions, but nowhere near enough

The Glasgow Climate Pact is incremental progress and not the breakthrough moment needed to curb the worst impacts of climate change. The UK government as host and therefore president of COP26 wanted to “keep 1.5°C alive”, the stronger goal of the Paris Agreement. But at best we can say the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C is on life support. It has a pulse but it’s nearly dead.

The Paris Agreement says temperatures should be limited to “well below” 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and countries should “pursue efforts” to limit warming to 1.5°C. Before COP26, the world was on track for 2.7°C of warming, based on commitments by countries, and expectation of the

changes in technology. Announcements at COP26, including new pledges to cut emissions this decade, by some key countries, have reduced this to a best estimate of 2.4°C.

More countries also announced long-term net zero goals. One of the most important was India’s pledge to reach net zero emissions by 2070. Critically, the country said it would get off to a quick start with a massive expansion of renewable energy in the next ten years so that it accounts for 50% of its total usage, reducing its emissions in 2030 by 1 billion tonnes (from a current total of around 2.5 billion).

Fast-growing Nigeria also pledged net zero emissions by 2060. Countries accounting for 90% of the world’s GDP have now pledged to go net zero by the middle of this century.

A world warming by 2.4°C is still clearly very far from 1.5°C. What remains is a near-term emissions gap, as global emissions look likely to flatline this decade rather than showing the sharp cuts necessary to be on the 1.5°C trajectory the pact calls for. There is a gulf between long-term net zero goals and plans to deliver emissions cuts this decade.

## **2. The door is ajar for further cuts in the near future**

The final text of the Glasgow Pact notes that the current national climate plans, nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in the jargon, are far from what is needed for 1.5°C. It also requests that countries come back next year with new updated plans.

Under the Paris Agreement, new climate plans are needed every five years, which is why Glasgow, five years after Paris (with a delay due to COVID), was such an important meeting. New climate plans next year, instead of waiting another five years, can keep 1.5°C on life support for another 12 months, and gives campaigners another year to shift government climate policy. It also opens the door to requesting further NDC updates from 2022 onwards to help ratchet up ambition this decade.

The Glasgow Climate Pact also states that the use of unabated coal should be phased down, as should subsidies for fossil fuels. The wording is weaker than the initial proposals, with the final text calling for only a “phase down” and not a “phase out” of coal, due to a last-second intervention by India, and of

*“The taboo of talking about the end of fossil fuels has been finally broken.”*

“inefficient” subsidies. But this is the first time fossil fuels have been mentioned in a UN climate talks declaration.

In the past, Saudi Arabia and others have stripped out this language. This an important shift, finally acknowledging that use of coal and other fossil fuels need to be rapidly reduced to tackle the climate emergency. The taboo of talking about the end of fossil fuels has been finally broken.

## **3. Rich countries continued to ignore their historical responsibility**

Developing countries have been calling for funding to pay for “loss and damage”, such as the costs of the impacts of cyclones and sea level rise. Small island states and climate-vulnerable countries say the historical emissions of the major polluters have caused these impacts and therefore funding is needed.

Developed countries, led by the US and EU, have resisted taking any liability for these loss and damages, and vetoed the creation of a new “Glasgow Loss and Damage Facility”, a way of supporting vulnerable nations, despite it being called for by most countries.

#### **4. Loopholes in carbon market rules could undermine progress**

Carbon markets could throw a potential lifeline to the fossil fuel industry, allowing them to claim “carbon offsets” and carry on business as (nearly) usual. A tortuous series of negotiations over article 6 of the Paris Agreement on market and non-market approaches to trading carbon was finally agreed, six years on. The worst and biggest loopholes were closed, but there is still scope for countries and companies to game the system.

Outside the COP process, we will need much clearer and stricter rules for company carbon offsets. Otherwise expect a series of exposés from non-governmental organisations and the media into carbon offsetting under this new regime, when new attempts will emerge to try and close these remaining loopholes.

#### **5. Thank climate activists for the progress. Their next moves will be decisive**

It is clear that powerful countries are moving too slowly and they have made a political decision to not support a step change in both greenhouse gas emissions and funding to help income-poor countries to adapt to climate change and leapfrog the fossil fuel age.

But they are being pushed hard by their populations and particularly climate campaigners. Indeed in Glasgow, we saw huge protests with both the youth *Fridays for Future* march and the

Saturday *Global Day of Action* massively exceeding expected numbers.

This means that next steps of the campaigners and the climate movement matter. In the UK this will be trying to stop the government granting a licence to exploit the new *Cambo* oil field off the north coast of Scotland.

Expect more action on the financing of fossil fuel projects, as activists try to cut emissions by starving the industry of capital. Without these movements pushing countries and companies, including at COP27 in Egypt, we won't curb climate change and protect our precious planet.



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# Getting to Grips with Spring Leaf Colour

One of the joys of spring is seeing the trees with their new leaves in slightly different shades of green and yellow. Landscape painters breathe a sigh of relief as colour can be added to form, to portray the differences between our sylvan friends; otherwise, after a month or so, well, green is green. Autumn is the time when those same leaves change to fiery reds and yellows before we sink into winter. Incidentally, you can by-pass the process of composting by raking up dead leaves and using them as a mulch on your flower beds, insulating against the frosts of

winter. It allows you to leave in the ground such tuberous plants as Dahlias, a practice unheard of in days gone by. The leaves will eventually disappear, dragged underground by the worms.

All this talk of colour in shrubs and trees had me thinking about the possibility of spring colour in competition with the better-known autumn colours. In a recent article in this series, we encountered the Photinia "Red Robin" as a hedging shrub, but it is very effective as a specimen in your shrubbery, its scarlet new leaves contrasting with the glossy green of last year's foliage.

A little searching around will lead you to Photinia "Pink Crispy" which carries new leaves of a shocking



PHOTINIA "PINK CRISPY"

pink lipstick hue and looks a lot better than it sounds.

The best-performing early-colour shrub is probably *Pieris formosa* "Forrestii" brought back from China by the very brave plant hunter George Forrest, who endured hardship in the wild country of Yunnan and faced the possibility of sudden death at the hands of the suspicious locals. The bright red spring leaves, fading to salmon, are accompanied by pendant Lily-of-the-Valley-shaped flowers in a nice clean white. This is such a good plant that it was awarded the honour of Plant of the Century by the Royal Horticultural Society.

There are other garden shrubs of the *Pieris* family including *P. japonica* "Kutsura", whose new leaves are a fetching shade of pink-purple. Sufficient for now, we can include *P. japonica* "Passion". Small in size and happy in a container, it has a bonus of variegated foliage; it can even be made into a Bonsai tree for those with the patience.

There is a whole family of Japanese Maples which have a glorious display of coloured leaves in the spring



PHOTO BY THE DUCHY OF CORNWALL NURSERY

**PIERIS FORMOSA "FORRESTII"**

and the autumn. They are trees, but they make good garden trees by being slow-growing and only reaching 4 metres by 3 metres after 20 years. Gardeners need to be patient!

The big deal here is *Acer palmatum* "Orange Dream". When grown in a slightly sheltered spot it will reward you with beautiful spring leaves free from frost damage. This tree has an RHS award and is described as having spring foliage orange, with scarlet edges, turning to lime green in the summer and bright yellow in the autumn. Truly spectacular and very hardy.

Some of the Japanese Maples have good colours but very finely dissected leaves and are not as striking as the above varieties in spring.

I once bought a packet of mixed Eucalyptus seeds. Germination was fast, the small trees grew quickly and one in particular seemed suited to the climate near Rome, where we



EUCALYPTUS CITRIODORA

lived at the time. The leaves were like Willow leaves and the startling thing was that the new leaves were a striking array of colours: absolutely beautiful, red to lemon-yellow. When rubbed, the leaves had a lemony smell unlike the usual eucalyptus, decongestant smell. After much digging around on the internet I identified it as Eucalyptus citriodora. The locals told me that every ten years the winter would be hard, complete with frost and maybe snow. The dreaded bad winter finished off my eucalyptus trees and that was the end of the finest spring colour I have ever seen.

In a previous article, I promised to say a word about creating a wild flower meadow. If you have a large area the standard method is to clear all the grass and other plants and to scarify the ground, followed by sowing a

suitable wild flower seed mixture. Raking over will discourage most birds and away you go!

Most of us will have a lawn which we would like convert into a meadow and this demands a slightly different technique. In spring, cut the grass and take away the cuttings. Before doing this you will have sown named wild flower seeds in small trays and, when ready, you will have transplanted them into a larger tray (4 by 7 seedlings works out very well). Use either a narrow, sharp



trowel or a good bulb planter to take out a divot and replace the soil with a little compost added in to the hole plus, of course, your young plant, avoiding damage to the roots. Water your plants after planting and thereafter if the soil gets too dry. You should get a nice lot of flowers and some will survive for the next year. Only cut the grass once after your flowers have set seed and then only down to about 15 cm. Remove the cuttings after about a week when they have turned into hay and look forward to spring. Seeds etc can be obtained from [sarahraven.com](http://sarahraven.com), [wildflower.co.uk](http://wildflower.co.uk), and many others.

There will be periods when your meadow will look downright scruffy but that's how it is. Taking away the hay will reduce fertility and planting yellow rattle will reduce the grass population, thus encouraging the flowers. You can get wild flowers as plug plants but it can be rather expensive.

The above is a brief account so look around for more information. Here and there you will find gems.

May you have a very happy gardener's Christmas.



# B30 Foodbank News



SYLVIA FOX IS THE MUSIC MINISTER AT ST NICOLAS' CHURCH AND A RETIRED PHYSIO-THERAPIST

Operations have settled well into our new normal with distribution still at Cotteridge Friends' Meeting House on Tuesday and Friday afternoons while the warehouse continues in the the adjoining units of 9 & 17 Castle Road on the Kings Norton Business Park. Most distribution is still outdoors. The car park at the Meeting House provides vital privacy for clients.

Food donations continue to be received at the warehouse on Tuesday and Friday afternoons and are also collected by van from the various shops and businesses which host collection bins. During early Autumn we have had a large number of Harvest Festival collections from schools, all of which have been very generous. This includes our own Hawkesley Primary Academy once more. Church collection bins, such as the one in St Nicolas', have begun to refill as more congregations return to churches around the B30 geographical area and more widely. One positive outcome of the periods of lockdown is the number of roads which have grouped together to make regular donations. These collections are very generous and very targeted to our needs.

Client numbers are continuing to rise and are, primarily, single adults, including asylum seekers from various war-torn countries. They are referred to us from a large number of agencies and quite often a key worker will bring the client or come on their behalf, which means that some additional items can be taken, as they are not being carried by hand.

Our annual dedication service in October was a PowerPoint presentation again, as was 2020's service. Hopefully, in 2022, we will be able to have an attended service once again, which will allow our church supporters to come together in worship, prayer and discussion.

We are also beginning the process of becoming an independent charity, separate from Cotteridge Church. The church has

provided invaluable support in the early years, but things like independent fund raising will be much simpler if we separate. We shall still be under the umbrella of the Trussell Trust for governance and general support and will continue to support our sister Trussell Foodbanks in Erdington, Central, Aston and Quinton.

# All Bright & Beautiful

The two panels, one by the church gate and one by the Old Grammar School, which give information about the historic buildings in Kings Norton, were in a sorry state of repair. The paint on the frames was peeling and the pictures themselves were dull and dirty.

The Friends of Historic Kings Norton had money available from their fund-raising events and, after making contact with a local sign-making company, agreed that they would be restored to their former condition. The panels are now back in situ. The pictures are clear and bright, housed in new, weatherproof frames with a sturdy backing which is long lasting.

As the Friends have been unable to support St Nicolas' Place in the ways they did in the past, we are looking at other projects to enhance Kings Norton and very much appreciate your support.

CAS HAMILTON  
IS THE  
CHAIRMAN OF  
THE FRIENDS OF  
HISTORIC KINGS  
NORTON



# Children Always First

*Children Always First is an independent foster agency based in Bromsgrove. It's a small, family-owned agency that looks after its carers and always puts children first.*



CAF specialises in practicing a therapeutic parenting approach informed by Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) which is essentially about treating children and young people in the right manner to nurture them and to ensure that they can achieve their potential. It's about building positive relationships in order to develop trust and create emotional and physical safety to help children recover from trauma.

We receive all sorts of referrals, from sibling groups, teens and younger children including parent and child placements.

Our Youth Support Team consists of youth workers whose task is to create fun and memories for the young people we look after whilst coaching and mentoring them to be the best version of themselves that they can be. The team run a range of activities and social events for carers and families to keep fostering a positive experience.

At Children Always First, we offer a comprehensive training programme which is relevant and fun. There is a significant amount of mandatory training involved to become a Foster Carer and we expect our carers to embrace our reflective and therapeutic approach to parenting.

England faces a huge shortfall in foster carers over the coming years and Children Always First are looking for carers who are willing to look after children and young people of all ages and backgrounds. Carers need to be effusive advocates for fostering and to understand the challenges. There are huge rewards in fostering too, such as seeing children and young people come out of their shell, trust adults and become confident.

The initial assessment to become a Foster Carer is a



ELAINE CARROLL IS THE FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT OFFICER AT CHILDREN ALWAYS FIRST

thorough process and can seem a little intrusive, but all potential carers are supported throughout the process by a social worker. There is also a comprehensive training programme to complete before a child or young person is placed with a carer.

Children Always First welcomes enquiries from people who are over the age of 21, a UK resident or have Indefinite Leave to Remain. The assessment process will check that applicants are able to care for a child and that their home is suitable. Carers are not assessed on ethnicity, gender, marital status, religion or sexual orientation.

A Foster Carer's responsibilities include caring for a child or young person as part of a team, keeping records and writing reports, attending meetings and advocating for the child or young person, helping them to manage their behaviour and feelings and attending regular training sessions.

Children Always First would welcome enquiries from anyone who feels that they can make a difference to a young person and help them thrive.

To find out more, visit our website at [childrenalwaysfirst.co.uk](http://childrenalwaysfirst.co.uk) or call 01527 917 888.

*What happened to King's Norton's*

# Santa's Sleigh?

*As we enter the festive period, many readers will remember with a warm glow one of the sounds that heralded the onset of Christmas: that of Santa's sleigh echoing through the chilly evening air, getting closer and closer until Santa went by, and then reverberating off into the distance.*

For more than twenty years, for one precious evening in December, children would come out onto their pavements to wave to the magical sight, while their parents, (and here's a clue) were invited to show their appreciation by putting donations into buckets waved at them by Santa's elves, looking suspiciously like some of their neighbours.

For many years, it all happened courtesy of the Kings Norton Round Table, for decades an important local force in creating opportunities to foster community spirit and neighbourliness.

The first sleigh was a roughly improvised construction carried on the back of a lorry provided



MICHAEL  
WRITES  
REGULARLY  
ON LOCAL  
HISTORY

by Cliff Fleetwood, who owned a transport company based in Pershore Road in Cotteridge. One of the snags with that first sleigh was that the music and lights that it was designed to provide were powered only by conventional car batteries. Once they ran out, so did the sparkle and the sound. "We decided that we had to build something which was rather more self-contained, which could extend the period in which the sleigh could tour the district," explains Michael Bunn, a local man who was a key player in the Round Table for some twenty years, including becoming Chairman in 1979. "So we bought a trailer, incorporated a chassis from an Austin Mini onto it to give it more robustness, and then

added a generator which gave us all the power we needed”.

In its heyday, for five consecutive nights, the sleigh toured Kings Norton and further afield into Bournville, Northfield and West Heath, handing out sweets and collecting funds. To maximise awareness and fund-raising potential, Round Table volunteers hand-dropped leaflets to alert families to the date and, as far as possible, the time when the sleigh would be passing by. A commendable effort, but one which carried a risk. “For all sorts of reasons, it wasn’t always possible to keep to a strict timetable,” said Michael: “Even when we were just a few minutes’ late, you

could almost guarantee that there’d be an irate parent or six telling us off for keeping the family out in the cold!”

Representing Santa on the sleigh was usually the year’s Round Table chairman. Usually, he rode in splendid isolation on top of the trailer, but on one occasion the trailer became detached and the driver of the lorry that was towing it experienced the sight of Santa racing down the road ahead of him. Santa was still waving, but in desperation. Another time, on the final day of the tour, it was noticed that Santa had disappeared. Possibly as a result of the whisky-based warmer that was always enjoyed by the Round Tablers on the last day of

▼WHERE’S  
SANTA?

PHOTO BY NORMAN TSUI



duty, he had fallen from his perch and was found struggling to get up several hundred yards back. On the same night, one Round Table's wife also has a vague memory of a wooden reindeer being left outside her front door, having somehow escaped from duty.

Kings Norton's Santa's sleigh was only one of a number of initiatives developed by the local Round Table to raise funds for needy causes, sometimes for very local charities, sometimes as a contribution to city-wide initiatives in which all local 'tables' participated. Possibly the most impressive of these city-wide efforts was the raising of £650,000 to create a school for autistic children in South Birmingham.

Michael Bunn and his wife Rita had been involved in a number of local fund-raising activities before he joined the Round Table, but nothing as significant as that, or the initiative he managed at one stage to raise some £30,000, most of it in a single day's event, for West Heath Hospital, involving a Roman chariot race in the hospital grounds! "Each year, we also gave out thousands of pounds to dozens of little local charitable organisations, for whom even £25 could be a godsend," says Michael.

The Round Table organisation in general was founded in 1927 by Louis Marchesi, offering an

alternative social organisation to the Rotary International, founded in America at the beginning of the century. Its national headquarters, Marchesi House, is only 7 miles from Kings Norton in Edgbaston near Five Ways.

The Round Table provided the opportunity for local professional and business men, then aged between 18 and 40 (later increased to 45), to meet socially and to provide support for their local communities. When Michael joined the Kings Norton 'table' in 1969, there were 36 members, covering amongst others bank and building society management, the legal and medical professions, business and industry and building. In its heyday, there were 23 individual 'tables' across Birmingham with some 300,000 members.

Another very important community activity that was boosted by the involvement of the Kings Norton Round Table was the annual Mop Fair, always held in the first week of October. Those younger readers who have experienced this historic event only as a collection of dizzying, loud and garish fairground rides and stalls may not have realised that from the early 1970s for some twenty years the Mop contained many activities and events generated by the local community, a true opportunity for locals to mingle and feel

pride in their community. The Round Table planned and coordinated the event for many years, taking particular responsibility on the day for the traditional ox or pig roast and the “Miss Kings Norton” event that often coincided with the Mop.

Very regrettably, the contribution of the Round Table to the local community, especially The Mop, began to dwindle from the mid-1980s, when changes in the social and business environment meant that fewer people had the time to dedicate to such activities. Individual ‘tables’ across the country started to amalgamate, to the extent that now, across Birmingham there are only four. As that process developed, those delightful evenings when Kings Norton’s own Santa’s sleigh illuminated the lives of hundreds of local families became just a fond memory. Nobody seems to know where it is now.

*In case you didn’t know, the name ‘Santa Claus’ is derived from the patron saint of our very own church, St Nicolas’, a fourth century Bishop in Myra, part of what is now Turkey, who was also famous for his gift-giving. That’s him on the front cover!*

► THE KINGS NORTON MOP 2021: “A COLLECTION OF DIZZYING, LOUD AND GARISH FAIRGROUND RIDES AND STALLS”



## **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](http://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](mailto:parishoffice@kingsnorton.org.uk)  
0121 458 3289 • [www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam](http://www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam)**

### **THE MINISTRY TEAM**

Team Rector..... The Revd Larry Wright  
Assistant Rector..... The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu  
Parish Lay Minister ..... Pauline Weaver  
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 Advisor ..... Susan Farrell  
Pastoral Care Team Coordinator..... The Revd Jayne Crooks

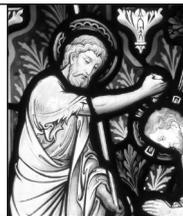
### **THE CHURCH WARDENS**

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 Dickers  
Regular Giving ..... The Revd Jayne Crooks  
Flower Arranging (0121 486 2837)..... Alison Blumer

**W**e 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*

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month</b>	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Holy Communion (Children's activity : Muddy Church)
12.00	Baptisms
6.00 pm	Taizé Prayer

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Month</b>	
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

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

<b>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Month</b>	
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)

<b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Month</b>	
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](http://www.kingsnorton.org.uk)*

# Why COVID passes are not discriminatory

(in the way you think they are)



ALBERTO GIUBILINI IS THE SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW, AT THE OXFORD UEHIRO CENTRE FOR PRACTICAL ETHICS, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

UK health secretary Sajid Javid’s plans for vaccination requirements for frontline NHS workers has reignited the political and ethical debate over COVID passes.

The requirement constitutes a kind of vaccine pass; without proof of vaccination, healthcare workers are prevented from continuing working in the NHS in a frontline role. Other types of COVID passes have been introduced elsewhere, such as the so-called “green pass” used in many European countries.

COVID passes are certificates intended to limit the access to certain spaces, including, in some cases, the workplace, to people who are vaccinated, or who are thought to have immunity from previous COVID infections, or who have had a recent negative COVID test, or some combination thereof (depending on the type of pass). The aim is to minimise the risk that people in those spaces can infect others.

A common objection to COVID passes is that they are discriminatory because they would create a two-tier society with vaccinated people enjoying more freedom than the unvaccinated.

There are many problems – both practical and ethical – with COVID passes. But discrimination is not one of them if by “discrimination” we merely refer to the differential treatment of people based on their COVID or vaccination status.

The differential treatment is not, in itself, discriminatory. The real ethical issue is about the justifiable limitations of individual freedoms. Discrimination only occurs if the limitations, and the differential treatment that follows, are

not justifiable. But that requires addressing a preliminary ethical question on whether such limitations are themselves justifiable. And that question has nothing to do with discrimination.

Discrimination means, simply, treating people differently. It is a neutral concept. We treat different people differently all the time, and often with good reason. However, the term is most often used with an implicit negative moral connotation to denote the unfair and unequal treatment of different people or groups. For example, stopping people from accessing certain spaces merely based on their gender, race, disability status, appearance, or hair colour is, in most cases, a form of unfair discrimination. When I talk of “discrimination” here, I mean “unfair discrimination”.

COVID status is different from these cases because, in principle, it expresses a morally relevant feature: the level of risk of harming other people by infecting them with COVID. The risk of harm to others is often a valid justification for limiting the freedom of certain people. Sometimes we do that precisely through some form of pass. For example, driving licences are a type of pass intended to minimise the risk drivers pose to others by ensuring that only those who have met some driving safety standards (by passing a driving test) can drive a car.

If the restriction is justified on independent ethical grounds, such as minimisation of harm, then we normally do not think it is discriminatory. For example, we do not think of driving licences as discriminatory against those who did not pass the test (assuming tests are themselves fair) or who freely chose not to take the test.

The question is always whether the restriction of freedom is justified by the kind of good (for instance, minimisation of the risk of harm) it is meant to bring about. If it is justified, then it makes no sense to say that the restriction is discriminatory, no more than it would make sense to say that driving licences or smoking bans in the workplace are (unfairly) discriminatory against those without a licence or against smokers. The only discrimination occurring would be discrimination between those who abide by a justifiable law and those who do not. But that is not unfair discrimination.



PHOTO BY KAROLINA GRABOWSKA



**↑ In the EU, the Digital Covid Certificate has been part of everyday life since it was introduced on 1 July 2021. It provides proof that a person has either been vaccinated, received a negative test result or has recovered from COVID-19 and is valid in all EU countries, thereby facilitating freedom of movement.**

So the real question is whether COVID passes are ethically justified. This is a question about (un)justified limitations of freedoms, not about discrimination.

COVID passes obviously entail limitations of individual freedoms. Depending on how they are implemented, they entail the limitation of the freedom to enjoy certain public spaces, to access public transport, workplaces, and so on. If the limitations of freedom are very large, such as prohibition to work in certain settings if one is not vaccinated, then de facto they become severe limitations of the freedom to refuse the vaccine. It would simply become unreasonable for many people to refuse the vaccine if that entails, say, losing their job.

Whether such limitations are justified depends on how we make tradeoffs between individual freedoms and the goods we want to achieve. It also depends on the risks and benefits for certain groups (for example, the risks of vaccines compared with their benefits for different age groups) as well as on how likely it is that we can achieve those goals.

The latter issue turns on factual considerations, for example, on how effective vaccines are at preventing infection or

transmission, or how such effects of the vaccines compare to immunity acquired through infection itself. For instance, if there are good reasons to think that natural immunity is at least as good as vaccine-induced immunity, then there seems to be little justification for “vaccine passes”, as opposed to “immunity passes”.

If, based on all these considerations, COVID passes are ethically justified, then their introduction is not discriminatory, or at least no more than any other justified law is.

However, if COVID passes are not ethically justified, then their introduction is discriminatory because it creates a differential treatment among individuals based on characteristics (such as immunity status, or vaccination status) that, by hypothesis, should not be considered relevant.

But the question is precisely whether they should be considered relevant, that is, whether the hypothesis is correct. And that is not a question about discrimination.

### **About the author**

*Alberto Giubilini is a Senior Research Fellow on the Oxford Martin Programme on Collective Responsibility for Infectious Disease. He has a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Milan, and prior to joining the Uehiro Centre he worked in Australia at Monash University, University of Melbourne and Charles Sturt University. He has published on different topics in bioethics and philosophy, including the ethics of vaccination, procreative choices, end of life decisions, organ donations, conscientious objection in healthcare, the concept of conscience, human enhancement, and the role of intuitions and of moral disgust in ethical arguments. He has published a book on The Ethics of Vaccination (Palgrave MacMillan 2019) and one in Italian on the ethics of end of life decisions (Morals in the Time of Bioethics, Le Lettere 2011), and he co-edited a book on The Ethics of Human Enhancement (Oxford University Press 2016).*

### **About the article**

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# Christmas Waiting

*Pauline explores an alternative to the usual Christmas whirlwind. Pause, get inside the Christmas story and find God in stillness.*

Now, I am not known for being the world's most patient person so the idea of waiting for something to happen can be quite frustrating and sitting still, well that has always been a challenge! Children can also find waiting difficult. They find the passage of time very hard to grasp. That's why knowing how many sleeps to Christmas is important.

But as we enter Advent, I wonder if waiting has to be something passive. Yes, there is much to be said for finding time amongst the busyness to be still and reflect; but there is also something important about the excitement and the anticipation of waiting that isn't just for children.

Perhaps Advent should be a mixture of both. For us to come close to finding meaning we need to be open and ready to be filled with awe and wonder. To do that we have to look for it and that may include being still and patient;

but it may also involve being active in searching for that awe, walking around to look at Christmas lights, watching a Christmas film or singing carols, even if its in out of tune in the shower.

How do we balance it all? How do we find time to be still? How do we find time to be excited rather than overwhelmed? The practicalities of getting ready for Christmas can make us feel under enormous pressure as we strive to create the perfect Christmas. The irony, of course, is that Christmas is usually far from perfect and that's OK.

For some, finding the balance at Christmas can be even harder. For some, it is a time of great loneliness and grief, of stress and anxiety, of rows and family falling out, of worries about money and trying to manage everyone's expectations. No wonder it doesn't meet up to our vision of a family Christmas in front



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



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

of a real fire, a feast on the table and snow outside.

Finding time to appreciate Advent is really tricky. It's hard to be excited when you are tired from all the extra work and when to find five minutes of peace to be still really would be a Christmas miracle.

In his book "Do Nothing! Christmas Is Coming" Stephen Cottrell, now the Archbishop of York, writes a short chapter for each day of December which gives us practical tips on how to survive Christmas busyness and stress and encourages us to stop and look at what we are doing. It offers insight, ideas and some

searching questions, tips on everything from presents to parties, neighbours to families.

At the heart of it, he encourages us to find that time to be still, to sit in the dark and to wonder. He says, "Stop. Find a place of quiet. Be still. Get inside the story. Sit down. Make yourself smaller. In your imagination go to Bethlehem. Bend beneath the lintel of the door of the stable and come in. God comes to us in the vulnerability of a child. We can come to him in stillness."

Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas full of awe and wonder.

▲CHRISTMAS SHOPPING IN BIRMINGHAM. FOR SOME, A SOURCE OF JOY AND EXCITEMENT. FOR OTHERS, A TIME OF STRESS AND ANXIETY

# THE HUNGRY GARDENER

## *Gifts from the Garden*



Claire is a keen kitchen gardener, ably assisted by her 5-year-old son Charles.

December, the second of the darker winter months within the gardening calendar. Where November was the month of reflection and remembrance, December is a month of celebration, of getting into wintery activities, Posada and socialising.

Part of these social activities are the giving of presents. The garden can really help by providing some of these gifts for your loved ones. In fact, I think this is where the idea of the Christmas hamper originated.

Did you make any delicious jams with your summer fruit or pickles with any vegetable gluts? If you have enough to spare to share, why not make a homemade Christmas hamper?

This year, I've been learning to make homemade skin creams and balms. I save smaller jars for packaging

these. I make soap with a melt-and-pour method (easier than the traditional way) and dry flower petals from the garden to decorate soaps which could be a great present for someone who may prefer this kind of present to a foodie one. You can wrap it in greaseproof paper to keep it in perfect condition and fasten with some leftover yarn.

Another idea is tinted lip balm. I will be drying some beetroot to tint it. A food dehydrator is the easiest way to dry the slices of beetroot, or use an oven on the coolest setting for a few hours.

Or why not try bath salts? Get some cooking salt that's in largish crystals and put some lavender or rosemary leaves with the salt. Leave it for a week or so and the salt will absorb the colour of the leaves as it extracts the aromatic plant oils. You can take out the herb leaves or leave them in, whatever you prefer, and put it in an empty jam jar.

You could have plants in the garden or on your windowsills that need dividing or have

been happily reproducing. An example is Aloe Vera which often produces baby plants. This would make an excellent houseplant gift. Or, if you grow perennial veg, do you have spare mini-bulbs from a Babington leek or an Egyptian walking onion?

If you grow perennial kale you can take cuttings from the main plant (the shoots closest to the base of the plant will take most easily). They start to form roots in a week. Perhaps you saved seeds from your best-performing plants and have some spare to share.

We have the shortest day of the year this month. Last year it was around this time that our hens took a few days' break from laying eggs and a well earned rest. Hens, like us, are very sensitive to daylight and, once this day passes, we will be heading into the light again. The days will grow longer. It will be time to start sowing seeds and putting into action your exciting food growing plans.

Wishing you all a wonderful and blessed Christmas. Enjoy your winter garden and I may see you if you are on the Posada list.



# CHRISTMAS HOPE

## Light in the Darkness

*Last month, in the November Magazine, our editor, David, wrote that we were to “ignore the gloom and doom mongers! Christmas is most certainly not cancelled this year.” How we would love to see, and how we pray for a return to our traditional Christmas festivities and family times together, though perhaps more modestly. The Advent and Christmas services at St. Nicolas’ Church (see p.7) are definitely events to put in the diary and to anticipate with pleasure.*

However, as I write, Covid-related deaths and hospital admissions continue to rise rapidly and worryingly at the highest rate in Europe. Cabinet ministers declare categorically that there will be no lockdown, which is also worrying, as they are obviously considering the possibility. People have begun to stockpile Christmas food. According to some sources, forty per cent of people questioned would like a return to stricter measures, including increased restrictions such as the mandatory

wearing of face masks, which is common across the European continent.

No-one wants to return to the chaotic situation of last year. I have some difficulty remembering which lockdown and semi-lockdown involved which limitations. By December 2020, areas of the country were divided into tiers, or was it levels? I remember trawling the Internet, but I could not work out which movement was permitted between the tiers. We



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

stayed at home. We were promised a five-day relaxation of the rules over Christmas, from 23rd to 27th, when up to six people in a bubble could be together. At the very last minute, frustratingly, this was reduced to Christmas Day only. Folks were meeting in motorway service station car parks to exchange Christmas gifts. Others were standing in freezing, wet, windy weather under awnings in the grounds of National Trust properties exchanging gifts, drinking prosecco and pulling crackers! As usual, most of us kept calm, carried on and made the best of it, though perhaps through gritted teeth.

What can we do if we want to save Christmas and see Covid defeated, except follow the rules and be patient? As Christians we have a very real hope, the hope that is our faith, the hope that the light of Christ has come into the **darkness** of our world, is coming, will come, finally, at the end of all time. Christ is the source of truth, which is not the world, but the Word of God in Christ, our living Word, which will sustain us, come what may. This is a true hope and expectation which we celebrate in this season of Advent.

To cheer us as we contemplate the less welcome possibilities for the Christmas season 2021 I return to last December. I introduced you then to our dear friend, **Kevin Murray**, a gifted Australian artist and erstwhile actor, who has lived and worked in Rome since he moved there from Sydney over 60 years ago. Now in his eighties, he's an active member of All Saints' Anglican Chaplaincy near the Spanish Steps. He's still riding his scooter daily round the often chaotic streets of Rome. He writes:

“The Magic Christmas Tree. A Christmas tree exerts a special, a magical claim upon our imagination. A fragrant-smelling fir tree decked out in glittering, jewel-like coloured decorations has a universal appeal to the aesthetic sense of human beings. In a non-Christian country such as Japan, the Christmas tree is wholeheartedly embraced in the streets, shops and in their homes during the month of December. And the Christmas tree is very generous, with gifts for everyone!

“Think for one moment, just how sad and bereft children, as well as grown-ups, feel in periods of austerity during wartime, when Christmas comes without a Christmas tree. That happened to me as a child during the Second World War. When the war ended in 1945 the austerity lingered on for some years. The Christmas Tree did not immediately reappear.

“I, for one, was determined to bring back the Christmas tree, if only in our home. In the vast, historic nineteenth century cemetery of St. Steven's, Newtown, Sydney, the church where I had been baptised, there grew several splendid firs. In my mind's eye, the spreading green branches would make a lovely Christmas Tree! But how to get one of those shapely, green, sweet-smelling branches? Ask

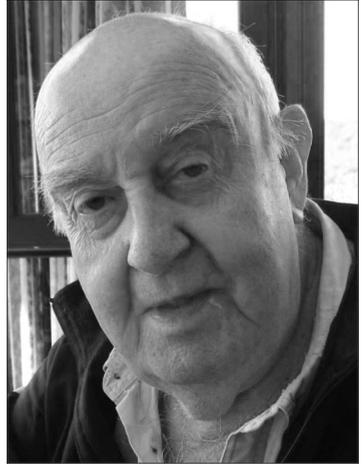
the Rector? Hardly, for they stood in a monumental and holy churchyard.

“I enlisted the aid of Jackie Samuels, my pal of a few doors away, to aid me in my plan. In the dim, summer pre-dawn light, we placed an axe in a bag and set off on foot through the empty streets to St. Stephen’s. I knew of a hole in a fence in a little laneway, hidden from general view. We slipped silently through it and paused a moment to survey the scene. Monumental tombs and vaults stood silently all around. Amidst them rose a large, upstanding, beautiful, green fir tree, whose lower branches bowed to the ground, within our easy reach.

“Carefully, Jackie and I crept through a population of sculptured angels and cenotaphs when, without warning, the Newtown Post Office clock began to strike five. The ringing sound jolted us in our tracks as it reverberated in the pre-dawn air. Swiftly however, we regained our courage and ventured on toward that wonderful fir tree.

“Finally, we arrived at the foot of the tree and crept beneath its protective lower branches. We were safe and unseen. Jackie handed me the axe, and, focusing on a bough, I swung the axe down with force. CHOP! That chop split the silence and took us aback. Would it waken anybody nearby? We stopped and listened. Silence. Then, CHOP, again and again and again. The green branch fell to the ground. I grabbed it and we darted from under the foliage.

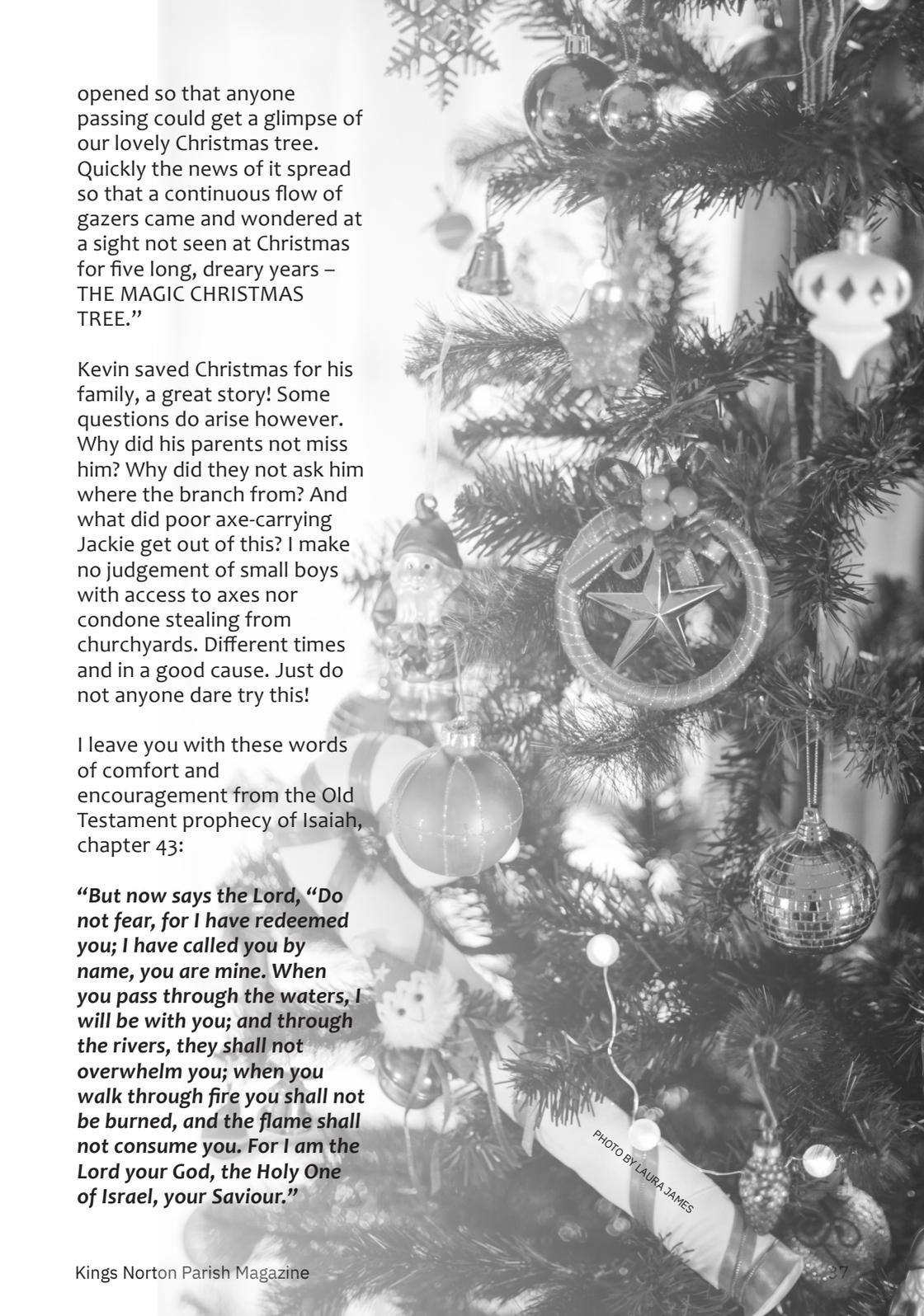
“We looked through the hole in the fence through which we had furtively entered. Between us and it something was moving. Horror! It was whitish in colour. A ghost? No, it was a piece of paper, caught in the iron grill of a grave, gently wafting in the breeze. We could see it clearly now as the sun had now risen over Newtown.



KEVIN MURRAY

“We wasted no time in clearing out of there and reached home in minutes. My parents were having breakfast when I arrived with the branch of the fir tree. We filled a bucket with soil from the garden and firmly set the end of the branch into it. It stood proud and beautiful in our front room and the fresh scent of it filled the house. We ferreted out shiny red, blue and silver glass balls from past Christmas trees and hung them here and there on this fine new post war tree. Small metal lanterns with candles inside were attached to the green branches. To top it off, a Kewpie doll with wings, bought at Sydney’s famous Easter Show, crowned the tree as its presiding angel.

“We stood back to admire the fruits of our labour of love. The Christmas Tree was back! We rejoiced and felt so very glad. Our front door was



opened so that anyone passing could get a glimpse of our lovely Christmas tree. Quickly the news of it spread so that a continuous flow of gazers came and wondered at a sight not seen at Christmas for five long, dreary years – THE MAGIC CHRISTMAS TREE.”

Kevin saved Christmas for his family, a great story! Some questions do arise however. Why did his parents not miss him? Why did they not ask him where the branch from? And what did poor axe-carrying Jackie get out of this? I make no judgement of small boys with access to axes nor condone stealing from churchyards. Different times and in a good cause. Just do not anyone dare try this!

I leave you with these words of comfort and encouragement from the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 43:

***“But now says the Lord, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.”***

PHOTO BY LAURA JAMES

# HOSPICE UPDATE

## St Mary's Hospice Has Raised A Record Breaking £243,000 Through Its Emergency Capital Appeal

Birmingham St Mary's Hospice has raised an incredible £234,000 through its recent "Raise the Roof" capital appeal which launched last spring.

The appeal was launched after the charity's annual buildings survey showed that the flat roofs of its Selly Oak Inpatient Unit had deteriorated so badly that patient bedrooms would be affected when the winter weather hit if they were not repaired in time.

The hospice, which provides expert palliative and end-of-life care to over 500 people living with life-limiting illness and their families every day, was built in the late 1970's. The buildings, although much loved by staff, volunteers and patients alike, are no longer keeping in the heat needed to keep patients and families warm and dry during their stays. Staff are having to

become accustomed to using portable radiators and to putting buckets in corridors and stairwells after heavy rain.

Katy O'Sullivan, Head of Fundraising and Supporter Experience (pictured right), said, "We launched this appeal back in April after finding out just how badly deteriorated our buildings had become. Just a few weeks after launching, we were blown away to have raised over £60,000, but to have now raised £243,000 is absolutely incredible.

"We've always known that our supporters were amazing, but to see how much our community has come together to help us, and at such a difficult time, we're overwhelmed!"

Birmingham St Mary's Hospice, which has recently merged with John Taylor

LYDIA WILLETTS IS THE FUNDRAISING MARKETING MANAGER AT BIRMINGHAM ST MARY'S AND JOHN TAYLOR HOSPICES

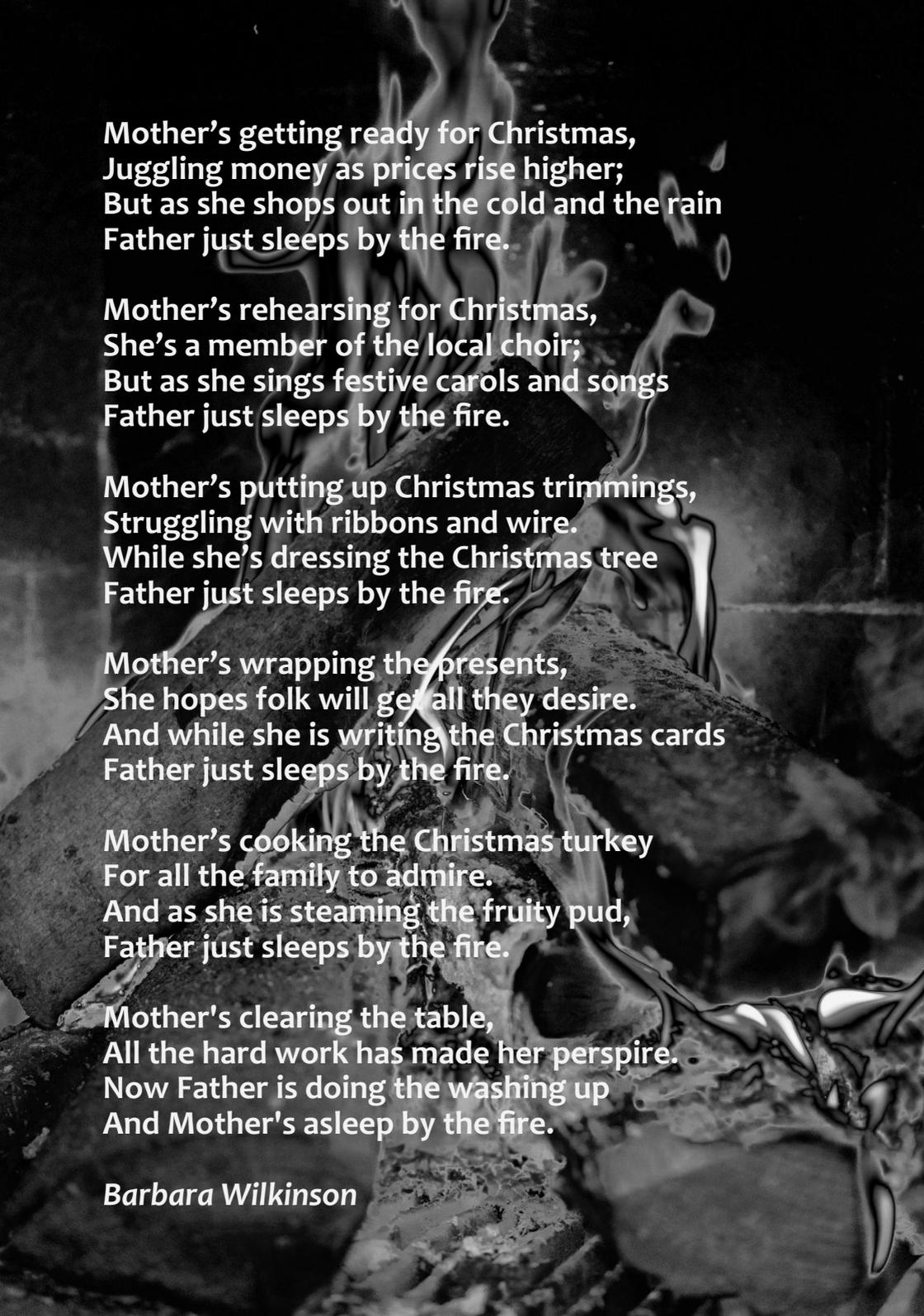
Hospice to form The Hospice Charity Partnership, faced a huge loss in income after the Covid-19 pandemic saw the cancellation of its mass participation events and the closure of its 16 charity shops.

Katy added “I’ve been up on the roof myself to see the progress and, whilst a huge amount has been completed, we’re not finished yet. In total we’re replacing over 19,200 square feet of roof, including a whole new layer of insulation to ensure those that those whom we care for are kept nice and warm throughout the winter months.

“We couldn’t have carried out this essential work without the support of our local community and so we want to say the biggest thank you to everyone who has donated in support of the Raise the Roof appeal. Whether you donated £1 or £10, thanks to you our vital services have been future-proofed, ensuring that we can continue to be there for people living with life-limiting illness and their families across Birmingham this winter, and beyond.”

To keep up to date with hospice news and fundraising activities, please visit [birminghamhospice.org.uk](http://birminghamhospice.org.uk).





Mother's getting ready for Christmas,  
Juggling money as prices rise higher;  
But as she shops out in the cold and the rain  
Father just sleeps by the fire.

Mother's rehearsing for Christmas,  
She's a member of the local choir;  
But as she sings festive carols and songs  
Father just sleeps by the fire.

Mother's putting up Christmas trimmings,  
Struggling with ribbons and wire.  
While she's dressing the Christmas tree  
Father just sleeps by the fire.

Mother's wrapping the presents,  
She hopes folk will get all they desire.  
And while she is writing the Christmas cards  
Father just sleeps by the fire.

Mother's cooking the Christmas turkey  
For all the family to admire.  
And as she is steaming the fruity pud,  
Father just sleeps by the fire.

Mother's clearing the table,  
All the hard work has made her perspire.  
Now Father is doing the washing up  
And Mother's asleep by the fire.

*Barbara Wilkinson*

# Funerals Sept-Oct 2021

1st Sep	Eric Lewis Whitehouse	80	SN.Bu.QN
8th Sep	Madison Dunning	0	SN.Bu.KN
8th Sep	Simon Andrew Hambly	53	Cr.LH
15th Sep	Catherine Anne Gemma Sweeney	79	Bu.CY
17th Sep	William John Pearce	88	In.CY
24th Sep	Raymond Peter Hinton	91	In.CY
7th Oct	Brian Colston	99	SN
12th Oct	Pamela Manson	90	SN
12th Oct	Keith Pedley	59	Cr.LH
13th Oct	Nellie Taylor	94	Cr.YD
25th Oct	Beryl Ruth Wild	80	SN.Bu.KN
28th Oct	Pamela Beynon	85	Cr.LH

**Bu** : Burial, **Cr** : Cremation, **CY** : Churchyard, **In** : Interment of Ashes,  
**SN** : Service at St Nicolas' Church

## Cemeteries & Crematoria

**KN** : Kings Norton, **LH** : Lodge Hill, **QN** : Quinton, **YD** : Yardley

# Advent Pause for Thought

During Advent, the Reverend Jayne Crooks invites you to join her each week for half an hour on Zoom. This will be an opportunity to be still amidst the busy time of preparing for Christmas, to pray and reflect.

All are welcome on Thursday evenings, Dec 2nd, 9th, 16th & 23rd at 7.35 pm for a prompt 7.45 pm start. Each meeting will last 30 minutes.

Look out for the Zoom details in the parish newsletter each Sunday. It can also be found on the Documents page of the parish website.

# Making Friends in Iraq

The M.V. Strathdoon was one of the P&O cargo ships on which I served. While I was with her, I made a visit to the Persian Gulf, one which also involved a call at the Iraqi port of Basra. The war between around and Iraq was over so it was a business as usual.

However, I'm afraid that the word "usual" did not apply to Iraq in any way at all. The ship was in port for several days during which time I became friends with a tally clerk whose job was to check freight as it was unloaded. He called himself Tony. I offered him some food and coffee, which he enjoyed and he reciprocated by asking if I would like to visit his home to meet his wife and child.

When the day of the visit came, I took along some sweets and chocolates, which were well received. Tony's family were nice people. They were also Christians.

Things could be difficult for them at times as they were part of a small group in a fervently Muslim society. They had to keep a low profile in order to meet and pray safely.

I found the streets of Basra interesting. There were lots of cafés but they were only patronised by men. I observed a few women walking in groups, but of course they were completely covered in black and their faces were hidden.

As I walked with Tony towards his small apartment, he pointed out large pictures of



**Eddie remembers the passing of an old friend**



Saddam Hussein and said that the man would be no good for Iraq if he were ever to come into power. How true those words proved to be! I had no idea who Saddam Hussein was at the time.

I kept in touch with his family for some time and, two months later, I received a letter whilst on leave. In it, Tony asked if I could help his family to leave Iraq and come to the UK. I did make enquiries but I had to tell him that there was nothing I could do to help him with his emigration. We eventually lost touch.

Later, of course, as we know, Iraq invaded Kuwait and that started a war. I could only hope that Tony and his family were safe.

It is sad to reflect that so many Christians abroad are facing difficulties. Egypt has a small minority of Coptic worshippers who often face great danger. China also has a hard policy towards Christians; and things are not too good in parts of India either.

Let us pray for our fellow worshippers to be kept safe and free to practise their beliefs, as we all are here.



*Harry L Marks*



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