



KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine

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First Class Service

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Welcome

EDITORIAL

You are not living in the same body you were living in 10 years ago. The neurons in your brain probably last a lifetime and some of your muscles may last up to 10 years; but, because of the constant cycle of cell death and regeneration, other parts of us are replaced much more often. Skin cells, for example, are renewed every 2 to 4 weeks and the lining of your gut is refreshed every few days. The 'founding myth of creation' to which Larry Wright refers on p.4 cannot, therefore, be taken to mean that creation is a finished or a finite process. Together with all life on this planet, we are part of a constant process of RE-creation which only ends when we die.

What is true of our physical bodies seems to apply, in a different sense, to our minds and our spirits too. To be fully alive and healthy, they need regular recreation. (How did you pronounce that word when you read it? There are two possibilities). One of the themes running through this edition is that of taking time out from our responsibilities to make space for restoration, renewal and creativity. Reading, music, study, travel, cooking, sport, art, gardening, immersion in nature and a host of other 'recreational' activities are not luxuries. We need them in order to thrive and grow. I hope you'll find inspiration here to try something new.

By the way, that 'creation myth', the ancient story which tells us that we are made in the image of God with a purpose and a destiny, has been finding new, receptive audiences in some unexpected places. If you're unaware of the recent resurgence of interest in the Christian faith amongst some of the world's leading

thinkers, former committed atheists among them, have a look at page 15.

*David Ash*

Sabbatical

The term 'sabbath' derives from the Hebrew word for rest. In observant Jewish families, the sabbath (*shabbat*) is a religious obligation during which people refrain from work and business between sunset on Friday evening until sunset on Saturday. Its Biblical origins are in the book of Genesis where, in the founding myth of creation, God creates the cosmos in six days and, on the seventh day, rests.

This time of resting and ease became an important concept for the Jews of Biblical times. Not only did it give families time to worship and to be with each other; it also promoted justice for workers and servants, for domesticated animals and foreign-owned servants, so that they were not overburdened or exploited. Every person deserved one day of rest a week.

The notion of a day of rest entered into Western nations over the centuries and, for most, Sunday became the day of rest. Sundays were a time for

churchgoing, spending time with family, taking part in leisure activities or simply resting. Most shops were closed as were cinemas and theatres. Though these Sunday restrictions have long been eroded in most Christian countries, there is still an expectation and desire that Sunday should be different from the rest of the week.

Taking a sabbatical is a development of this theme. The sabbatical allows us to rest from our normal working activities but, instead of a single day, it can last for months. It is an extended period of leave from work granted to employees for the purpose of personal or professional enrichment.

Sabbaticals are often used for travel, study, research, volunteering, or other activities in order to promote personal growth and development. The Church of England offers clergy the opportunity to take a sabbatical for three months to



The Revd Larry Wright is the Rector of Kings Norton Parish

pursue an agreed period of research, travel and rest.

After thirty-six years of public ministry, during which I have not taken any sabbatical leave, I have been granted permission by Bishop Michael to take a three-month sabbatical from February to April this year. The topic for my research will be Ministry in the Third Age. I will be investigating how older clergy like me prepare for retirement and what internal adjustment takes place when one ceases being a rector or vicar in a parish when that has been one's life for decades.

In my preliminary reading about retirement in the UK, I have learned that radical change has occurred in the last 20-25 years. Employment laws now allow more flexibility in setting the retirement age. The old concept of retiring on reaching State Pension age is long gone. Some people are now retiring with private pensions in their 50's while others prefer to keep working into their 80's. Age discrimination is less of a factor in the world of work. Some companies actively recruit older workers who, they believe, are more likely to interact better with their customers or clients.

For those in Christian ministry, there is the understanding that



PHOTO BY COTTONBRO

▲ BREAD
AND WINE
SHARED IN
THE
CONTEXT OF
THE JEWISH
SHABBAT
DINNER

our role and status are not like other forms of employment. We also have a vocational dimension, a calling to serve God. This calling is not exclusive to clergy. The majority of people exercising ministry are not ordained or employed by a church. They give generously of their time and talents as their response to the work of God in their lives.

Many ordained clergy are not in paid roles. They may be in secular employment combining their Christian ministry at work and in church. The Church of England relies heavily on retired clergy to support parishes on a locum basis when a parish has

Once a priest retires, he or she does not cease to be a priest. One cannot be ‘un-ordained’

no regular priest. Retired priests may be in their 70’s and 80’s while still living out their calling to priesthood wherever it is needed. Once a priest retires, he or she does not cease to be a priest. One cannot be ‘un-ordained’.

While planning my sabbatical, I researched well-known Christian historical figures for whom old age seemed to be no obstacle to a vigorous ministry in later life. It was during this research that I came across the life of St Wulstan of Worcester.

St. Wulstan was a highly-respected English bishop who lived from around 1008 to 1095. Born in Long Itchington, Warwickshire, Wulstan was educated at the Benedictine monasteries of Evesham and Peterborough. At an early age, he joined the Benedictine monastery at Worcester and later became a priest.

In 1062, Wulstan was consecrated Bishop of Worcester. He was known for

his strong moral character, dedication to social justice, and effective leadership. He was a vocal opponent of the slave trade, particularly the practice of kidnapping and selling men into slavery in Ireland, and he played a key role in ending it.

Wulstan was also a wise and accomplished diplomat. Although an English bishop, he maintained good relations with the Norman conquerors, including William the Conqueror and his successor, William Rufus, and served as an advisor to both kings. He was the only Saxon Bishop to retain his Diocese after the Norman Conquest.

Among his many achievements, he renewed the parish life in his huge diocese, greatly improved the architecture of Worcester Cathedral (where his remains lie) and improved educational opportunities for scholars. His humility was heroic and he would regularly wash the feet of beggars and the poor while praying for them.

If you are quick at mental maths, you will see from his year of birth and death that he died aged 87. He never ‘retired’ but died as he lived, in the service of others and while leading worship in church.

Next month, I will update you on how the sabbatical is going.



Sabbaticals & Retirement : A History

The concept of sabbaticals for Anglican clergy in the UK has evolved relatively recently. Traditionally, sabbaticals were not a part of Anglican life. However, as the Church of England modernised during the mid-to-late 20th century, there was growing recognition of the pressures faced by clergy and the benefits of allowing time for personal renewal. During this period, some dioceses began to explore and implement sabbatical policies on an informal or trial basis. Today, many dioceses in the Church of England have formal sabbatical policies in place for ordained ministers.

Retirement arrangements for Anglican clergy have also undergone significant changes. Before the 20th century, there was no formal pension system and many clergy continued to serve well into old age. They often depended on parish support or personal savings. Retired priests generally relied on the financial support of their families or of benevolent parishioners, and some wealthier parishes might

provide a small annuity. Remarkably, until relatively recently, it was not unusual for a serving parish priest to be required to sacrifice a significant part of his stipend to support his predecessor in retirement.

The concept of retirement and pensions for clergy began to take shape more formally in the early 20th century. As late as 1926, the Church of England Pensions Board was founded to provide a systematic approach to clergy retirement (the State pension had been introduced 18 years previously). Over time, dioceses assumed greater responsibility for supporting retired clergy.

After World War II, the Church of England introduced more structured pension schemes as part of a broader initiative to modernise and standardize clergy welfare. The Pensions Measure of 1961 aimed to ensure adequate retirement income, financed through contributions from parishes, clergy, and the Church Commissioners.

Today, the Church of England Pensions Board provides defined benefit pensions for about 43,000 people. These are centrally managed and funded by contributions from the Church Commissioners and dioceses. The Church also offers support services for retired clergy, including housing options, pastoral care, and community support.

It is important to acknowledge that many 'retired' clergy remain in active service. In many areas, including Birmingham, the church relies heavily on their continued generosity and dedication in order to function effectively.

THE QUIZ



Questions

- Q1. What are considered the birth flowers for February?
- Q2. What is the traditional birthstone for February?
- Q3. On the 16th February 1659 what was used for the first time to settle a debt?
- Q4. What happened in Britain on 15th February 1971?
- Q5. On which date in February is Candlemas celebrated?
- Q6. Who, in 1858, reported visions that led to her town becoming a pilgrimage site for Roman Catholics?
- Q7. Which popular tradition is celebrated in Canada and America on 2nd February?
- Q8. Can Easter begin in February?
- Q9. What was introduced to London in 1958?
- Q10. Which Emperor did St Valentine defy?
- Q11. Which human rights activist was assassinated on 21st February 1965?
- Q12. How did a complaint by St Brigid to St Patrick have an impact on 29th February?
- Q13. Which saint's day is celebrated on 1st February?
- Q14. Who was beheaded at the Tower of London on 12th February 1554?
- Q15. After how many years was Nelson Mandela released in February 1990?

**YOU'LL
FIND THE
ANSWERS
ON P.39**



**SHANE
WILLIAMS IS
THE VERGER
AT ST
NICOLAS'
CHURCH**



First Class Service

Ask anyone who has been away from family and friends, especially those who are serving, or have served, in the Armed Forces, what it's like to hear from home, and inevitably their answer will be along the lines of 'It's great!'. These days, communication is more likely to be electronic, but it wasn't that long ago that it was all done by 'snail mail'.

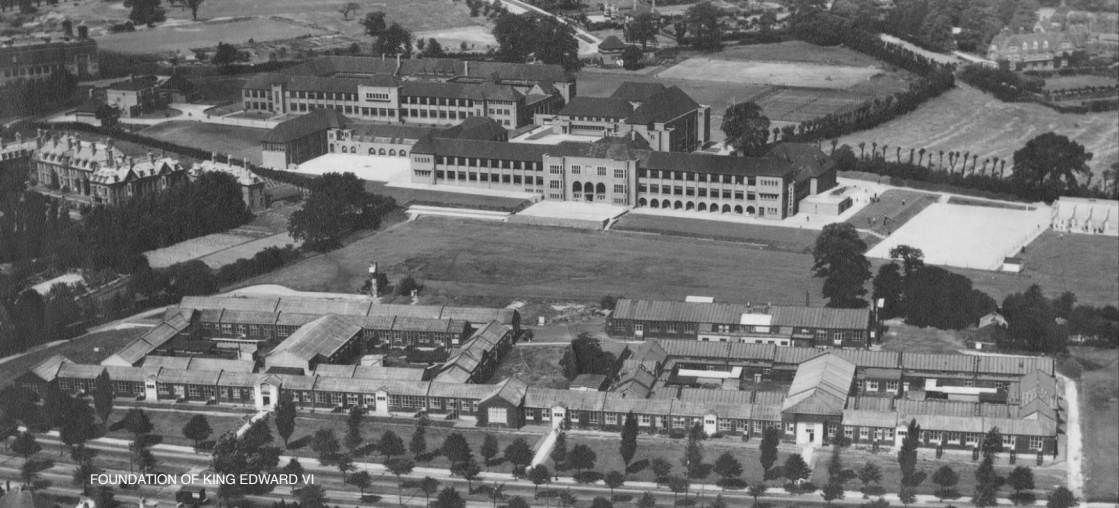
This month marks the 80th Anniversary of the arrival of the larger part of a battalion of the US Women's Army Corps (WAC), predominantly composed of African American women (there were three or four Latinas). The unit was the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, better

known as the 'Six Triple Eight', and in total it would number 855. Its members' role was to sort and send letters and packages to around 7 million US personnel, troops, members of the Red Cross, civilian support staff and so forth, in the European Theatre of Operations.

The US First Base Post Office (FBPO) in Sutton Coldfield was the main conduit through which mail was directed. As early as 1942, there was so much mail that local women were recruited to help. In April 1944, a detachment of white WACs arrived to add more capacity. Following the D-Day Landings, the problems continued to grow as Allied

▲ THE SIX TRIPLE EIGHT ON PARADE ON THE BRISTOL ROAD OUTSIDE TEMPORARY BUILDINGS ON THE GROUNDS OF KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL, EDGBASTON.

► NEXT PAGE: AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE SORTING OFFICE ON THE PLAYING FIELDS OF KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL.



FOUNDATION OF KING EDWARD VI

Forces ground their way across France and into the Low Countries, driving the Germans before them. In December, the largest amount of post handled in the parcel post section for a single day consisted of 9,100 sacks. The whole situation was compounded by a huge German counter-attack, which would become infamous as 'The Battle of the Bulge', just before Christmas 1944. Something had to be done.

Enter the Six Triple Eight. Initially attached to the FBPO, the women lived and worked in temporary buildings fronting the Bristol Road in Edgbaston, the home of the girls and boys of the King Edward VI Schools before evacuation (*photo above*). They designed a system which saw them working three-shift days, and dealing with around 65,000 items of mail per shift. Given six months to complete their task, and expected by senior commanders in the Army to fail, they finished in three. In total, the women dealt with around 17 million items. It was an extraordinary feat of commitment, ingenuity, confidence

and sheer determination to prove their commanders wrong.

The battalion's Commanding Officer, Major Charity Adams, was just 26 when she was given command of this unique battalion. The first African American officer in the WAC, she led and encouraged her women through their gargantuan effort in Birmingham and then did the same with them in Rouen and Paris.

The women of the Six Triple Eight arrived in our city as strangers and left as friends. We accepted them as equals and invited them into our homes, our churches, our university and our schools. We learned about them and they learned about us. In 1981, a few of them returned and were given a Civic Reception. There are only two known surviving veterans. In 2023, a group of descendants followed in their relatives' footsteps and stood in places where they had stood.

The women of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion provided First Class Service and lived up to their motto: 'No Mail Low Morale'.

NEVER MISS ANOTHER PARISH MAGAZINE



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Four tips for picking up that instrument you might have put down a long time ago

I started a street band in 1992 as a Community Music project. That band has gradually transformed itself into Wonderbrass, a community big band based in South Wales with around 30 active members.

The majority of players are people who developed an often impressive level of musicianship in their teens but let their musical activities lapse as they decided it wouldn't be a career for them. And then, one day, they remembered how much fun music was and wanted to have some, or all, of that back in their lives.

It is meeting people who fit the above description, alongside other musicians who I'd call late starters – people who take up an instrument, or maybe just a new or different instrument, in adulthood – that has

taught me about the joy of making music together.

Co-researching with people who make music for the hell of it (I did my PhD on community music-making and composing inclusive music) has led me to the following advice for any musical returners or late starters.

1. Do it for fun, friendship or wellbeing

Why else would you bother? There's the challenge of reconstructing the skills you had the first time round or setting yourself a goal of reaching and passing a certain instrumental grade level. But so many of my fellow music students who were performance specialists were stressed out by the process of practice and recitals. It didn't look like much fun to this observer. So, this time try to



PHOTO BY GABRIEL BUCATARU

enjoy the ride and let that be your goal, whether you're playing solo or as part of a group.

That being said, there's a lot of fun and *eudaimonia* (a Greek term for living life well) to be gained from joining and making music with a group. Researchers such as Charles Keil and Steven Feld, Thomas Turturino and GD Smith have shown the bonding potential of a group of people 'grooving' together in a musical sense.

Just locking into a rhythmic pattern, generating collective momentum and giving yourself up to that endeavour can create such a sense of connectedness and wellbeing. Its also the engine of so many other collective celebrations: carnival, worship, parties, to name just a few. And so, the connections you make go well beyond your fellow musicians.

If you're worried about what to expect before you go along, some groups, like Wonderbrass, provide learning resources

▲ PLAY AN
INSTRUMENT?
ME?



and access to some of their written music, so you can get a feel for their style at home first.

2. Try a new style or genre

There are groups out there for many different styles of playing. So why not join what's available near you, even if it's not what you previously thought of as 'your thing'.

Steel pan, gamelan, samba percussion, community choirs, these are just some of the community music groups near me in Cardiff. So why not try what's available near you and broaden your musical horizons.

You might not think a flute belongs in a New Orleans street band, or a sax in an orchestra, but you could just bring something new to the mix. A new musical genre might be a better challenge than working hard to get where you were at age 17.

3. How about improvisation?

A lot of people who have been educated to play western classical music, from scores and sometimes on borrowed instruments, feel alienated from the music they end up playing, even if they play it really well. This was often the cause of the kind of stress I witnessed in university, the striving to get nearer to the perfect performance of the canonic, set-in-stone, classical masterpiece. It's an impossible goal (and the best classical players have realised this). Other cultures don't have this.

Most other musical cultures have some room for improvisation and

self-expression within them, and not just individually but often collectively so. My research with Wonderbrass has taught me that improvisation adds value to musical participation. It is something of you (singular and plural) inside the music. You could even go the whole hog and find a group that just improvises.

4. No one will die

Finally, and this is a phrase I often use to get people to try something musically that scares them, 'No-one will die. What's the worst that can happen?' You might find something you want to work on. Yes, collective music making still benefits from alone-time and individual practice. But in a supportive environment the risk taking can be a journey of discovery.

And, like a child, you will self-critique and get better at what you are trying to do. So jump off the cliff, take that free fall of musical improvisation or public performance, and your parachute will get you down safely.

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ROBERT SMITH IS A SENIOR LECTURER IN POPULAR MUSIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH WALES

The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God

Why New Atheism Grew Old and Secular Thinkers Are Considering Christianity Again

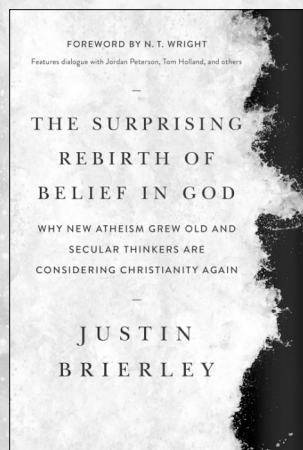
Matthew Arnold's poem 'Dover Beach' (1867) laments the 'long withdrawing roar' of the 'Sea of Faith', symbolising the gradual retreat of religious belief in England. Yet, tides are inherently cyclical: they recede only to return, and whether they are coming in or going out depends on time and place. While religious belief has been in decline for at least a century in Britain, much of Europe, and America, regions such as Africa and China have experienced a resurgence of faith. For instance, two-thirds of the world's Anglicans now reside in sub-Saharan Africa.



Justin Brierley hosts a highly-acclaimed podcast (also available on YouTube) which fosters respectful and constructive dialogue between notable atheist and religious thinkers. It deserves to be essential listening for anyone who wishes to think seriously about their faith, or their lack of it. Over more than a decade of facilitating these discussions, Brierley has observed a significant shift. The once strident tone of the New Atheists has softened, giving way to an acknowledgment of the value of shared religious belief. Even Richard Dawkins, a prominent atheist, now recognizes the cultural significance of Christianity to the England he cherishes. Figures such as Jordan Peterson, Tom Holland, Dave Rubin, and others have been surprised by the enduring resonance of the Christian faith.

In the book which accompanies the podcast, and which shares its title, Brierley outlines the dramatic decline of New Atheism and the emergence of a new conversation on whether God makes sense of science, history, culture, and the quest for meaning. People are returning to Christianity. Is the church prepared to welcome them and equipped to answer their questions?

David Ash



The Climate

The times they are a-changing

Yes, make no mistake about it, our climate is changing. Milder and wetter winters are proving to be ideal conditions for some plants to be left in the ground instead of being stored in a frost-free place until Spring. Dahlias, Agapanthus and Cannas come to mind. A mulch of dead leaves would be a help but is not essential in a south-facing border. Sadly, the slugs and snails are flourishing. You can use the new, white slug pellets which are far less harmful to small animals and birds or pick them off and deposit them in a distant field, if you don't want to hurt them.

Summers can be warmer but there can be problems of drought. Hose pipe bans are then swiftly imposed. You can use a watering can but thought should be given to planting drought-resistant perennials which are drought tolerant. You can impress your friends by knowing that they are called *xerophytes*. All plants will benefit from an occasional watering in the first year of planting. Once a

root system has been established, they will look after themselves.

February is a good month to start seeds if you have some heat in your greenhouse, conservatory or a generous window sill. If you are looking for something new or an improvement on something old here is a list, mainly culled from the seed catalogues. You may be attracted to the seed options when you check out the price of £2 - £3 each for small bedding plants:

Pansy Beaconfield, large and dramatic, purple with a white border, an aristocrat of pansies.

Foxglove Dottie Warm Rose (F1), colourful and dramatic. Sow in May and plant out for flowering the following spring. This vigorous biennial hybrid has many pretty flowers.

Dahlia Pinnata Black Forest Ruby. I like these bedding dahlias. This one



has semi-double flowers and on top of purple leaves (*photo above*).

Simple dahlias: Coltness Hybrids are among my favourites. They were first seen in 1922. This version is much improved.

Nasturtium Arizona Mix are new to me. They are star flowered.

Sunflowers. There are many new varieties to sow *in situ* and are a

great choice for younger gardeners in the family. With sunflowers, look out for the shorter varieties unless you like them very, very tall!

Nicotiana, the tobacco flower, has a newcomer, *Nicotiana Sirius Pink*. These produce masses of flowers in a sumptuous pink. They are stunning planted in drifts through the border.

Verbena Scentsation White is worth a try. They bloom freely and all summer long. As far as I know this is only available from Fothergills but there are many white verbenas out there, including *Scentsation Mixed Shade*.

Going down the seed-sowing road can be a bit tricky, but the seeds germinate reliably and are worth the effort with a much lower cost. Seeds make for a viable option and more interesting gardening.

Next month we will look at xerophyte plants for solving drought problems. Look out for *F1*. The plants will be vigorous and consistent in size and colour. They are a bit more expensive than most other seeds, but they are well worth the extra. Why? I will explain next month.



Arts for Free?

For anyone who regularly attends concerts, theatres, cinemas and so on, it will be noticeable how much ticket prices have increased in recent years. This is partly due to the after-effects of the pandemic but also the general increase in the cost of living. Despite rising revenues from ticket prices, many venues for the arts continue to struggle to make ends meet. One can almost feel that it has become a civic duty to buy as many tickets as possible to keep places of entertainment and the arts open.

For those with fewer financial resources, the cost of buying expensive tickets to see live performances is prohibitive, especially if you want to take a whole family. There are discounts available at most venues, but even reduced prices may not be enough to encourage more ticket sales.

While pondering the costs involved in the arts, it is worth reminding ourselves that, with a bit of investigative work, it's possible to find venues where there is no cost involved or

where a donation is requested. Here are a few randomly-chosen examples.

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, offers free jazz sessions on Friday evenings, fortnightly at 5pm with two sessions planned in February on the 14th and the 28th.

The Bramhall Music Building at Birmingham University hosts free lunchtime concerts in its Elgar Concert Hall. These popular programmes are sponsored by the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. In February, they have performances on the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th. With a mixture of light classical music and singing, often with commentary, they provide high-quality performances at no cost. Concerts begin at 1pm and last 50 minutes. Be advised that they are very popular, so get there early.



"MGM" writes on cinema, theatre and the arts.

All of our main **art galleries and museums** in the West Midlands offer free entry, though some special exhibitions may be ticketed. However, to promote certain exhibitions, galleries



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

occasionally offer free performances linked to a particular exhibition. Look out for them and take your family and friends along.

Various amateur orchestras ask for donations at their free local concerts. Look out for the **Eroica Orchestra's** concerts in St Nicolas' Church, Kings Norton, and for the **Asklepios Orchestra**, who usually perform at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. Both are happy to accept donations or ask audiences to pay what they can rather than sell tickets and both have accessible websites. You may know of other such orchestras or ensembles.

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham University. In addition to its impressive art collection, The Barber also offers family-friendly arts activities in the form of drop-in sessions with no need to book. They also provide free activities aimed at students and those interested in

▲ A FREE
CONCERT
GIVEN AT THE
ELGAR
CONCERT HALL
IN THE
BRAMHALL
MUSIC
BUILDING,
BIRMINGHAM
UNIVERSITY, IN
NOV 2022

knowing more about their collection through guided talks.

Online events. If you have access to the internet, it's worth looking up events online. YouTube is probably the most popular platform for watching performances of all kinds, though, if you don't use an 'ad blocker', the adverts are a distraction. It's also worth looking occasionally at the Visit Birmingham and Visit West Midlands websites to see the range of events taking place, some of which will be free. Similarly, the online ticketing platform Eventbrite lists dozens of West Midlands events and will clearly indicate those which are free.

Local pubs and cafés. These often showcase local talent including 'open mic' sessions, poetry readings (or slams, as they are often billed these days) singers or bands. Many of these are free as they are meant to encourage more customers to attend and, of course, to buy drinks.

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.

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Honorary Assistant Priests..... The Revd Jayne Crooks, The Revd Mark Bennett
Lay Readers David Ash, Cate Bennett, Fay Fearon,
..... Ruth Howman, Parisa Pordelkhaki
Lay Preacher Steve Wright
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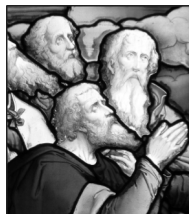
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Regular Giving The Revd Jayne Crooks
Flower Arranging (0121 486 2837)..... Alison Blumer

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

1 st Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Holy Communion
12.30 pm	Baptisms
6.00 pm	Taizé Prayer

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

3 rd Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Holy Communion
12.30 pm	Baptisms
6.00 pm	Evening Worship

4 th Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion with Choir (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	Morning Praise for All Ages
6.00 pm	Compline (Night Prayer)

5 th Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	United Service with Hawkesley Church
6.00 pm	Celtic Worship

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

Comforted by Love & Hope

'This is the solstice, the still point of the sun, its cusp and midnight, the year's threshold and unlocking, where the past lets go of, and becomes the future; the place of caught breath, the door of a vanished house left ajar.' (Margaret Atwood)

I am writing this at the turn of the year, the end of one year and the start of a new one. The Italians call it *Il Capodanno*, the head of the (new) year. The dates are arbitrary and mean nothing in themselves but, as the days lengthen, it is a good time to reflect, a reminder to look forward, to try to do better and to find hope.

It was reported in the news before Christmas that there are shoots and sprouts of new growth on the stump of the wilfully and criminally chopped-down, iconic sycamore tree which once stood proudly on Hadrian's Wall. I found this an incredibly hopeful sign and a comfort.

There is, apparently, a syndrome, *novo-anno-phobia*, which is a fear of the New Year, a fear of the unknown. The fifth anniversary of lockdown is fast approaching in March. At the beginning of 2020, we really did not know what was about to be unleashed, although rumours were beginning to circulate. There was a new time frame: BC (Before Covid) and AL (After Lockdown). In forty years' time, will our grandchildren and great-grandchildren be trying to explain our experiences to a carer?

'...and people were panic-buying toilet paper and pasta, a scotch egg became a substantial meal. Every Thursday night people stood outside and banged pots and pans, a man took a drive on a motorway to test his eyesight, a nightclub sold beans on toast to stay open, the government gave us two-for-one meals so that we would go out and catch the virus, and I was arrested for drinking coffee on my own in a park...'

'Of course, grandma, now let's get you ready for bed.'

So many were lost to Covid worldwide, as well as dear friends and family closer to home. The suffering and loss became unbearable at times. Yet the levels of care and commitment in hospitals and care homes, neighbourhoods and houses, from staff and families working in extremely difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions, were a tribute to human goodness. Some businesses closed for good, some were able to adapt and survive and working from home became the norm, thanks, in part, to modern technology.

The Anglican Church closed its doors, wrongly in my opinion. This was a time when we needed spiritual comfort and hope more than ever. But we discovered safe distancing and Zoom, and, slowly, people have returned to church worship, fulsomely in some places.

We know that many lost their confidence and their jobs. Some were arrested and paid heavy fines for taking a walk with a soft drink in their hands while it was partying-till-dawn time in Downing Street. The world changed around us in what felt simultaneously like quick and slow motion and we have mainly learned to modify, adapt and acclimatise. There is so much to reflect on at the start of a New Year, to learn from and to plan for, in the hope never to be caught out again.

Another sombre anniversary occurred on Boxing Day. It is twenty years since the most powerful, devastating earthquake ever recorded. The subsequent tsunami overwhelmed parts of the coast of the Indian Ocean. It killed a quarter of a million people in fourteen countries and even triggered earthquakes as far away as Alaska.

The earthquake struck the west coast of Aceh in northern Sumatra, Indonesia at 07.58 local time, triggering the tsunami. As I mentioned in my article last month, I went out

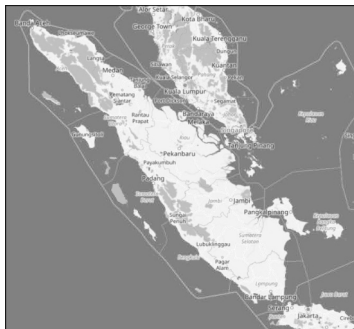


THELMA MITCHELL
WAS FORMERLY LEAD
CHAPLAIN AT
BOURNVILLE
COLLEGE.

with Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) on their short-term programme to teach English to theological students near Medan, the capital of Sumatra, in the summers of 2004 and 2005. My time there straddled both before and after the devastating events.

I was staying with my friend Gwyneth who had served for thirty-four years in Indonesia with OMF. Her bungalow was 8 kilometres north of Medan, just off the road to Banda, the capital of Aceh. Aceh is a semi-autonomous, deeply conservative Muslim province of Indonesia. It is the only province to practice Sharia law. The strict observance and practice is upheld with force by both the police and other bodies. It is very difficult for outsiders, including Indonesians, to enter the area. They had previously refused any help or support from the government, which is administered from Jakarta. Following the earthquake and tsunami, the Aceh governors had to accept help from the capital, especially medical aid, and this led to a more open dialogue between them. Officially, no foreign aid was allowed in, but I did once see a huge lorry, entirely covered in Chinese writing (including the number plates) piled high with aid items and heading towards Banda Aceh.

At the college, some of the students who did not go home at Christmas were stranded. There was a group from Nias Island, where all communication was cut off. Desperate to reassure themselves about the welfare of their families, and also to let their families know that they were all safe and well, the students pooled their resources to buy ferry tickets together with oil, rice and water which two of them would carry to Nias. On the island, the roads were blocked by fallen masonry and trees. (Ironically, Nias had become very popular in the late twentieth century with international surfers. As the island of mainly fisher folk prospered as a result, the traditional wooden buildings were replaced with concrete which now blocked the roads, as well as killing many.)



The funds raised were sufficient for the hire of two motorbike taxis to take the students across the islands with their loads to the waiting families and to return them when term began.

In Medan, the college students, many of whom were also fund raising for the relief effort, began visiting those in hospital who had no family to look after and nurse them. One very old lady told two students that she was fine because her daughter-in-law was with her. But she did long for a hot cup of tea. The students put their last coins together to buy her a small vacuum flask so that a cup of tea could be made for her at her bed!

Life changed there in a heartbeat. So much was different when I went back in 2005. I was, and am, so proud of the students, a number of whom are now ministers in their churches, of their Christian commitment and of their response to the disaster.

A note of comfort and hope as
February draws near.

The Snowdrop by Alfred Lord
Tennyson.

*Many, many welcomes
February fair-maid
Ever as of old time
Solitary firstling
Coming in the cold time
Prophet of the gay time
Prophet of the May time
Prophet of the roses
Many, many welcomes
February fair-maid.*

The emerging snowdrop
brings with it comfort and
hope as well as beauty and joy.
The anniversaries of tragic
events may also remind us of
an eternal flame of hope which
refuses to be extinguished.
Hope can become stronger,
without belittling the effects of
the tragedies.

Let us not fear the future but
be comforted on every side by
the love of God and trusting as
we go forward in prayerful
confidence through another
year.



Up (All Night) For The Cup

When you're Communications Director for a large organisation, you tend to be invited as a VIP to splendid events in noted locations. In that role for Leyland Cars/BL/Rover and Land Rover, I had many such privileged opportunities, some of them even more memorable than I expected.

In my 20-year career with the group, I visited most of the country's most significant sporting venues, including Wembley, Wimbledon, Epsom for the Derby, Silverstone for the British Grand Prix, Cheltenham and several other famous venues, usually entertaining leading business and motoring media, or sometimes simply being a nominated representative of the company.

Freight Rover was the van-producing division of Land Rover, originally known simply as Sherpa Vans. When it updated its company name in

the early 1980s, it needed some effective commercial sponsorship to give its new name a boost. I'm a football fan, so as a member of the Land Rover/Freight Rover board, I was delighted when the marketing team decided to sponsor a relatively new football trophy called the Associate Members' Cup. This was a knockout competition organised by the Football Association and run on the lines of the famous FA Cup, but with entry confined to members of what were then Divisions Three and Four of the Football League. Most exciting for those relatively humble clubs was that the Final match was to be held at Wembley stadium itself, until them an impossible dream for lower division clubs.

So, for several years, the competition became known as the Freight Rover Trophy, a very effective way of publicising the new company name. I was full of anticipation when I was invited to attend the first of these Finals as a company representative, looking forward to an exciting afternoon in the VIP facilities at



MICHAEL
WRITES
ABOUT HIS
CAREER IN
PUBLIC
RELATIONS

the famous stadium, with no real pressure.

Until, on the Friday afternoon before the big game, that prospect was transformed for me into one of the most pressurised situations I had ever experienced. The company's Sales & Marketing Director came to my office in the Freight Rover plant in Birmingham's Washwood Heath and said 'Are you going down tomorrow?'. 'Of course,' I beamed. 'Well, can you take something down for me?' Before I could reply, he pulled out from behind him a rather large item wrapped in a green velveteen cloth. 'When you get to Wembley, please give this to the Football Association people.'

I watched with growing horror when he took off the cloth with a flourish, to reveal the elegant and rather delicate looking lines of the Freight Rover Trophy itself! Why it was still in Washwood Heath, not in some tightly guarded safe at Wembley or the FA headquarters in London I didn't have the wit to ask, and it wouldn't have mattered. I was the only person in the world charged with making sure that when the Cup Final match was over, the Trophy would be there safely in place, the focus for thousands and thousands of people at the event and all the news cameras. The thought



of losing it on the way down or accidentally damaging it – the more I looked at it the flimsier it seemed – was literally frightening.

The consequence of failure was unimaginable: public embarrassment for my company and the FA, the anger of the winners with no trophy to parade. It turned out that the trophy had only been completed a few days before and there had been no time to prepare a substitute. It was down to me!

My wife Margaret, who was also to be a guest at Wembley, and I spent an extraordinarily

nervous night with the shining new trophy stuffed in a rather undignified way under our bed in our house in Kings Norton, jumping at any unusual sound. Then we were faced with transporting it down safely and in good time for the event, which involved one of the slowest and most deliberate drives down to London I'd ever made. Fortunately for me, there was an equally nervous FA minion at the other end to take it off our hands. The next time I saw it, the cup was being brandished by the winning captain!

At another Freight Rover final a couple of years later, I had a different but equally memorable sort of experience. For each final, a guest of

honour was selected to present the trophy: it was too humble an occasion for a Royal presence and one year the guest was the pop star Elton John. He was invited because he was a football fan and chairman of Watford Football Club, until recently itself an Associate Member of the Football League.

As representatives of the sponsors, my wife Margaret and I were ensconced in the VIP waiting area just behind Wembley's Royal Box, surrounded by a top quality buffet. With less than an hour to kick-off, an FA person came up to me and said. 'Have you seen Elton John, we don't think he's arrived yet?' Now, the guest of honour was an FA



rather than a Freight Rover responsibility. However, I agreed to join the search party. I soon found myself on the inside of the turnstile through which VIP guests had been told to arrive.

I clambered out over the stile to be confronted by a vast throng of people waiting for access. Fortunately, I spotted Elton John, waiting patiently in the wrong queue: if he had come to the right gate, he would have been in half an hour before. I found myself yelling 'Elton, over here!' to a famous person I had never met. He heard and fought his way through the crowd looking relieved. I led him to the VIP Suite and went off to find the FA team.

To her surprise and delight, my wife found herself offering the great Elton John a sausage roll! He was a pleasant and unexpectedly modest chap, admitting that he hadn't wanted any of his managers to accompany him to Wembley, which would have got him there in good time.

There was another treat for my wife. As I was the senior Freight Rover person at the event, we were entitled to seats to watch the match on the front row of the Royal Box, and Margaret had the use of the loo that Her Majesty had

I clambered out over the stile to be confronted by a vast throng of people waiting for access. Fortunately, I spotted Elton John, waiting patiently in the wrong queue.

used not much more than a week before!

I had several other memorable Wembley experiences, notably meeting the two great football managers Sir Matt Busby and Bob Paisley when Land Rover provided an open-topped, chauffeur-driven Range Rover to take them on a parade round the perimeter of the pitch, and having a front row seat a few feet from the great French synthesiser player Jean-Michel Jarre when Rover Cars sponsored his performance at the stadium. But the memory that lingers with me most strongly is that nervous night with the trophy under my bed!

THE HUNGRY GARDENER

Boost Your Immune System

Have you started your seed sowing yet? You may have already begun germinating your chillies and aubergines in a cosy warm spot in your home. Don't worry if you haven't, this month is also a great month to sow them and the light levels are more in your favour. I usually start germinating the tomatoes from my birthday (Valentine's Day).

In the garden, it might look cold and bleak but there are early signs. Look for the snowdrops which will be speedily joined by crocuses, and so will continue the plant relay race into spring with shoots shooting up everywhere. I love the hope of February. You can see lots of clues that nature is starting to wake up, preparing for the burst of life in March.



Claire is a keen kitchen gardener, ably assisted by her son Charles.

February is the perfect time to look after your own body and to boost your immunity as our family often seems to get poorly this month. So let's get ahead and give your body everything it needs to be in top condition to fight the nasties!

In the run-up to winter, I start making kimchi batches. I want to have kimchi in my life at this time of year, particularly for the immunity-boosting

ginger. I didn't really like it before I started fermenting kimchi but once I made my first batch I really started to love ginger and now I'm hooked on the flavour. Perhaps it's a microbe thing. Gut microbiome scientists frequently hypothesise that our microbes give us cravings for what our body needs. Ginger is so good as an immunity booster due to its antiviral and antibacterial properties. It also reduces inflammation in the body. I'm sure I'm not alone in suffering from achy joints at this time of the year and ginger helps. It is also great for aiding digestion and reducing nausea. Reducing nausea is particularly useful when fighting a cold or a flu. It can also balance blood sugar levels.

Here's my current kimchi recipe:

Ingredients: 1 cabbage, a thumb-sized piece of ginger, a finger-sized piece of turmeric (or 1 teaspoon of turmeric powder), a bulb of

garlic, 1 chilli, 5 spring onions (I also use pencil-thin leeks), roots of your choice (can be what you have in your garden or carrots and radish), 60g salt.

Chop all the ingredients to sizes you would like your fermented pickle to be. Imagine how you will use it and this will tell you what size. I use a tablespoon on the side of a plate with nearly every meal so I like them in inch-sized pieces. Friends like them in bigger chunks and other friends like everything shredded, sauerkraut style.

Prepare 1 litre of water to 60g salt and mix together. Put all the ingredients in a 1 litre jar, cover with the salt water you have prepared, weigh down with a gu pot or an object of similar weight so that all of the vegetables are submerged.

Leave for a week and then consume, preferably once a day so that you benefit from the immune boosting and inflammatory benefits of the ginger and turmeric.

This year, if I'm feeling under the weather or have nausea (it often accompanies my migraines) I put a few fine slices of ginger in a green tea. Or alternatively, add a few

slices of ginger to some lemon juice and add your boiled water.

When I have the first sign of a sore throat, I turn to garlic and prepare a gargle. I make this with a few cloves of sliced, home-grown garlic and a teaspoon of salt mixed into water. I gargle this mixture before bed and brush my teeth afterwards as otherwise my family does not hold back in telling me my breath stinks! I gargle every night until I don't feel the sore throat anymore and this usually stops the cold or flu taking hold. It's not foolproof, but it certainly has worked on many occasions.

It is really important that the garlic should be home grown. It seems much more potent and has a stronger flavour than shop-bought varieties, presumably because it is fresher when grown in the garden or allotment.

Hippocrates was said to prescribe garlic. It is effective at combating the first sign of colds and flus due to its antiviral properties and may help to prevent viruses from entering host cells or from replicating within your cells. It can also improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Not all people have a palette for garlic, however. Perhaps because of my French heritage, I have a deep love of the garlic flavour, so much so that I am a big fan of dishes with strong garlic flavours. A very recent recipe I was very happy to find was *Gambas a la Plancha* (Spanish garlic prawns). The secret to the recipe is preparing everything first as the dish cooks fast. Fry the prawns on a medium heat in the frying pan in oil and 15 cloves of garlic thinly sliced. As soon as the prawns have cooked to your liking (no more than 2-3 minutes) take the pan off the heat add lemon juice (about a tablespoon or 2), 1 tablespoon of butter and a pinch of salt. Stir the sauce all over the prawns and serve.

A BOOK IN WINTER

One of the great things about Winter is books. There is something really magical about curling up in a comfy chair with a blanket, a hot chocolate, a biscuit or two and a good book. The sound of rain on the window or a gale outside and you are cosy inside. It doesn't matter what the weather is doing outside; you can disappear into whatever you are reading. The book might whisk you off to a far-away land or a mystical castle, you might be engrossed in a mystery or learning new things. Books transport us and enlighten us.

I enjoy asking our RAF Cadets about their current reading choices, as this often introduces me to books I might not typically explore. It's fascinating to discover their diverse interests. M likes books that are edgy, often about race and discrimination. H likes fantasy, a world of magic and myths. N has introduced me to the Japanese graphic books known as Manga and R often reads books that weren't originally written in English and have been translated.

Every week at Tiny Tots at St Nicolas' Church on a Thursday morning, towards the end of the session, we stop for a story. We have a selection of picture books to read. Sometimes the older children choose a book for me, sometimes it's an old favourite, *Paddington*, perhaps, or *Thomas the Tank Engine* or *Hairy McLary*. Then there are the newer favourites: *Peppa Pig*, *The Gruffalo* and the *Apple Tree Farm* books, which are great because, as well as listening to the story, the children have to find the little duck hidden on every page.

During the first lockdown of the Covid pandemic, like almost every other activity, Tiny Tots had to go online. I used to read a bedtime story live on Facebook every evening. I gave families a choice of three books and they voted for the one they wanted me to read. It became a focal point of the day and I could see who was logging on to watch, to say hello and to wave. We carried on for over 100 days. That's a lot of books!



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

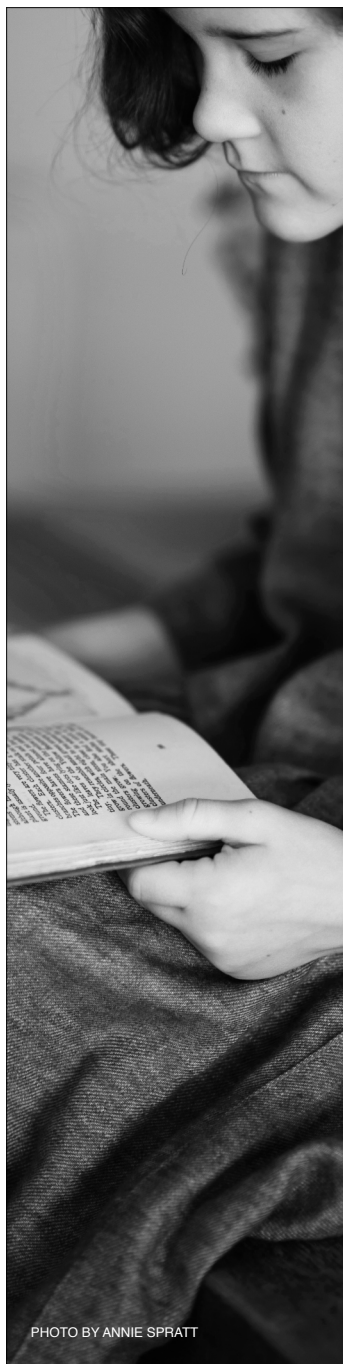


PHOTO BY ANNIE SPRATT

Then there is my story about my reading after a glass of wine or two when I really should have known better. It was on one of our parish camping trips for Tiny Tots and their families. I was given a book by the parents to read to all the children at bedtime. I launched enthusiastically into *The Wonky Donkey*. Now, if you know this book, you will know that it is

There is something really magical about curling up in a comfy chair with a blanket, a hot chocolate, a biscuit or two and a good book.

very funny but repetitive and full of rhymes. Cue: some very tricky, rhyming tongue twisters that entertained the parents much more than the children. I had been set up, the rotten lot!

I usually have two books on the go at once: a daytime book and a night-time book. My daytime book is usually about theology, the sort of reading that needs concentration, thought and reflection. My night-time book, though, is escapism, to help me unwind at the end of the day. That can often have the opposite effect when the book is so good that you keep reading and suddenly realise that it is silly o'clock in the morning.

I wonder what you enjoy reading and what you are reading right now, other than the parish magazine, of course!



FRANCES BADGER

THE BOOK GROUP

A Selection of Festive Readings

Exactly a week before Christmas Day 2024, on a very wet and windy evening, twelve women ventured out to a festive gathering at one of the members' homes. Following the success of a similar gathering in Advent 2023, the Book Group, which happens to be all female, decided to select seasonal choices of poetry or prose to read together. We were delighted that some of the recently-formed parish Women's Group were able to join in. Fingers were crossed that there would be a good variety and we were pleased to hear a wide range of readings. So much so that, during our half-time break for socialising, drinks & mince pies, many asked for details of the readings. So we now share them with you.

The poems included:

'Christmas' by Ulrich Schaffer, a contemporary German-born Canadian poet.

'Christmas Nostalgia', by John Betjeman, from 'Trains and buttered toast: selected radio talks by John Betjeman', edited by Stephen Games.

We heard the first few lines of Jack Clemo's poem **'Gulls Nesting Inland'**, followed by the poem set to music by folk singer Jim Causley in 2016 to mark the centenary of Clemo's birth. The CD is 'The Clay Hymnal'. Both Schaffer's and Clemo's work is inspired by their surroundings, in Clemo's case his

native Cornwall, and their strong Christian faith.

The prize, if there was one, for the most amusing title would surely have gone to the poem **‘To Mrs K, On Her Sending Me an English Christmas Plum-Cake at Paris’**, by Helen Maria Williams 1759 – 1827’. None of us had heard of Williams before. Apparently, she was an English poet, novelist, and social critic best known for her support of such radical causes as abolitionism and the French Revolution. The poem is a deeply affectionate and delightful appreciation of a gift evoking memories of home from abroad.

We also heard selections from:

‘A Child’s Christmas in Wales’, by Dylan Thomas.

‘The Wind in the Willows’, by Kenneth Grahame.

‘The Legend of the Beasts in the Stable’, from the compilation ‘A Gift for Christmas’.

We were also treated to **‘The Jolly Christmas Postman’** by Allan Ahlberg.

‘Good Enough’ by Jan Sutch Pickard was an imagined dialogue between Joseph and the Angel, based on St Matthew’s Gospel 1:18-23. It was taken from ‘Candles and Conifers: Resources for All Saints and Advent’ by Ruth Burgess.

An extract from **‘Oriel’s Diary’** by Robert Harrison was also based on scripture. In the entry for December 25th in the year of Jesus’ birth, Oriel, an

Archangel, is tasked with keeping an eye on God’s son. Oriel is not allowed to intervene though and he finds it very difficult sometimes to understand the workings of God.

Another reading gave an insight into Christmas 1400. Henry IV, newly King of England, had a special guest for Christmas: the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos with his entourage. United by their faith, they were nonetheless on separate sides of the East-West schism, and the article begs the question about whether they would have celebrated the Christmas Eucharist together. (Article in: History Today, Dec 2024, vol. 74 issue 12).

Quite by chance, but appropriately, the poem **‘The Journey of the Magi’** by T S Eliot was the last reading of the evening.

I hope you’ll agree that this was a wonderful selection of readings and that you may be inspired to explore some of this work over the coming year. Ready for this year’s event perhaps?

If you are interested in sampling either the parish Book Group and/or the Women’s Group please contact the Parish Office for details.

Much of the material not referenced can be found on the internet.

15 Minutes *in Nature*

The average UK person spends just 7% of their time (or 86 minutes) outdoors during the work week. This is shocking to hear, but with our busy schedules, it's no wonder many of us can only find a few minutes each day to get outside.

Spending time outside, particularly in nature, is important because it can help regulate stress, boost mental health, and improve immune function.

But the good news is you don't need to spend hours outdoors each day to see benefits. Even just 15 minutes a day in nature is enough to boost your mood, concentration and physical health.

1. Mood boost

The connection between nature and mood is the most consistent finding across all nature and health studies. Spending time in nature improves mood by increasing positive feelings such as happiness and optimism, reducing sadness and anxiety and decreasing

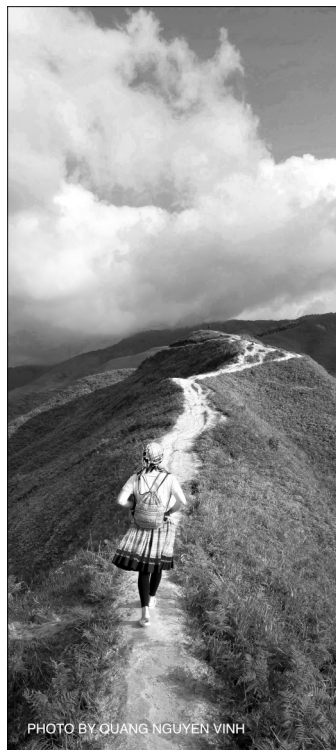


PHOTO BY QUANG NGUYEN VINH

rumination (fixating on negative thoughts). It also supports social connections by providing an open and neutral space to have meaningful interactions.

Even a one-hour break in nature can create a mental and physical distance from everyday stressors such as emails and to-do lists. It also restores and builds our capacity to handle the day's challenges.

While one study found it's most beneficial for your mood to go for a 75-minute walk in secluded woodlands, the research still showed that even walking in somewhat green areas, such as a tree-lined road, can confer mood benefits. This is important for those without access to dense forests near their homes or workplaces, as a short walk in a city park can still have a meaningful impact on mental wellbeing.

2. Better concentration

Taking breaks in nature can also improve cognitive performance. Numerous lab-based studies have found that people perform better on attention and memory tasks after viewing nature scenery versus when they looked at city scenery. Evidence also shows that



simply having access to green spaces can improve working memory and attention span in children. Taking short outdoor breaks during the workday (as little as 10-15 minutes) can improve concentration in people who work in offices, as well.

Even when there aren't opportunities to visit nature outside of the office, workplaces with more indoor plants have reported better work performance and wellbeing than those who work in an office without plants. This shows even a small presence of nature can be beneficial.

3. Physical health improvements

The benefits of spending time in nature go beyond the mind, as well. Spending time in nature, even for as little as 15 minutes, is shown to improve cardiovascular health in many ways, including by reducing blood pressure and resting heart rate. Workouts done in green spaces may also feel more enjoyable

and lower effort, even though you might actually be working harder.

In one study, participants completed an 80-minute rest in nature before returning to the lab to perform a cycling test where they exercised to the point of exhaustion. The study found that the participants who spent time in nature before their test had better endurance performance than to those who had spent time in an urban area before the test.

This means that even if your workout doesn't happen outdoors, just a short visit to a park or green space prior can have lingering positive effects on exercise performance and physical health.

The great outdoors

It's all about small, consistent steps and having fun. The mental health benefits of spending time in nature are robust.

Whether you have your lunch break in a park or choose a greener route to

and from work, evidence suggests these small changes can have a positive effect on mood and optimism from the first instance. If these changes then become a habit, this can improve motivation at work and possibly make exercising more enjoyable.

Don't be shy to try different things, too. Even activities like joining a parkrun event in your local park or getting your hands dirty by building a house plant collection can be help you get a dosage of nature.

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YVANNA TODOROVA IS
A RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
IN PUBLIC HEALTH
EVALUATIONS AT
LOUGHBOROUGH
UNIVERSITY

Funerals December 2024

4 Dec	Jennifer Ann Rudge	84	SN.Bu.CY
6 Dec	Joyce Patricia Roberts	90	SN.Bu.KN
9 Dec	Brenda Margaret Gibbons	87	In.CY
19 Dec	Christine Elizabeth Humfrey	71	In.CY
20 Dec	Patricia Brookes	74	In.CY

SN : Service at St Nicolas' Church, Bu : Burial, In : Interment of Ashes
CY : St Nicolas' Churchyard, KN : Kings Norton Cemetery

St Nicolas' Church
offers a service of
prayer in the
style of Taizé
at 6.00 pm on
the 1st Sunday
of each month.
All are welcome.

Singing
Simplicity
Silence



'An oasis of peace, a
chance to stop and
dwell with others in
the presence of Christ.'



You can buy the Parish Magazine
for the past three months in PDF
format on the Kings Norton parish
website. Scan the QR code or visit
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Discover Positive News, a website
and a magazine dedicated to
bringing you a regular diet of
good news stories to balance
more negative news outlets.



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Quiz Answers from page 8

A1. Violet Iris Primrose A2. Amethyst A3. Cheque A4. Decimalisation A5. 2nd February A6. Bernadette Soubirous A7. Groundhog Day A8. No A9. Parking meters A10. Claudius II A11. Malcolm X A12. St. Patrick supposedly decreed that women could propose marriage to men. A13. St Brigid A14. Lady Jane Grey A15. 27

‘Spending time outside, particularly in nature, is important because it can help regulate stress, boost mental health, and improve immune function. But the good news is you don’t need to spend hours outdoors each day to see benefits. Even just 15 minutes a day in nature is enough to boost your mood, concentration and physical health.’ (Yvanna Todorova, p.36)

