

# KINGS NORTON

## Parish Magazine



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# Welcome

**EDITORIAL**

This month's edition almost didn't happen. Life got in the way, as it so often does. Your January magazine may be short, rough-hewn and functional, but here it is. Please forgive any imperfections and look forward with me to a return to form in the year ahead.

A few years ago, Judy and I found ourselves in Norfolk. My brother had hired a boat on the Broads, a wetland area where we had spent many happy holidays as teenagers, and had invited us to join him and his family for a day's sailing. Sometime during that trip, we spent an hour or so at the shrine of Julian of Norwich, the 14th century recluse famous for the mystical visions which she experienced while dangerously ill and which she later wrote down under the title "Revelations of Divine Love".

This spiritual classic has had a deep impact on many lives down the centuries, including mine. Though some of the experiences she reports sound strange to modern ears, one line in particular has given hope to many. She tells of a conversation with Jesus in which she asked him why sin had been allowed to spoil the world. The answer she records is this: *"It was necessary that there should be sin; but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."* Many have chosen to take these words as confirmation that the chaos and heartache we now experience are not the end of the story. A future awaits us of which we hardly dare to dream.

May 2023 be, for us all, a year of deepening hope, new discoveries, unexpected growth and fresh beginnings.



Happy New Year!

*David Ash*

# Counting Christians

*Does it matter how many Christians there are in the UK?*

Censuses have been around for a long time. Each Christmas we hear the familiar story of Mary and Joseph travelling to Nazareth to be counted in the census which was ordered while “Quirinius was governor in Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.” (Luke chapter 2). The purpose of such registrations was normally for taxation purposes.

In English history the most historic census is the manuscript record known as the Domesday Book or the Great Survey when much of England and parts of Wales were surveyed on the orders of King William I (The Conqueror). Completed in 1086, it lists all holdings and dues owed to the crown. Kings Norton (actually listed as Nortune) is mentioned as a minor settlement in Worcestershire.

Modern censuses are more sophisticated. Governments

now gather a range of personal information from its citizens. Last month the results of the 2021 census were published and media interest focused on the data showing Christians, for the first time, made up less than 50% of the population. Those identifying as having no religion had increased. The question of religious affiliation on the census is voluntary and was answered by 94% (56 million) of the population. Of those who responded, 42.6% (27.2 million) described themselves as Christian down from 33.5 million in the 2011 census. Other faiths saw a slight increase in their numbers compared to 2011.

Commentators who relish any signs of decline in religious life in our nation were gleeful. Anxious church leaders wrung their hands at the prospect of another blow to their institution’s status and credibility. If the measure of Christian faith in England and Wales were only measured by the results of the census and if they continue to show a decline of approximately six million every ten years, then in fifty



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





PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

PHOTO BY KENDALL HOOPES

years' time there will be no Christians left.

This is nonsense and here's why.

The census asks which religion people identify as. Most of the 27 million who did identify as Christian are better described as cultural Christians. They believe but they don't belong to a church, believing but not belonging. In fact, if all 27 million adults and their families suddenly started to attend church, there wouldn't be enough places of worship to accommodate them!

The census does not record how many people go to church or are practising Christians.

▲ A FEW GAPS IN THE PEWS, BUT FAR FROM EMPTY. ST NICOLAS' CHURCH ON 4 DEC 2022.

Apart from during the pandemic years, the number of people regularly attending worship has remained relatively stable, though it has declined in some areas and has increased in others. Per head of population, London has the most numerous church membership in the country. Other urban areas are also experiencing rises and falls in regular membership. Rural areas have fared worse due to various changes in population and the drift away from living in remote rural villages to nearby, growing market towns with their better facilities and transport links.

As for the increase of those who identified as having no religion,

this may be due to a number of factors. Having no religion does not mean a person is an atheist or has no spiritual or religious feelings. The census does not ask if people believe in God. Yet numerous social surveys which ask exactly this question record that the majority of people do believe in God. I suspect that many who answered "no religion" were being more honest than previous generations. Up until the 1990s, as many of us will recall, when being admitted to hospital we were asked about our religion. Back then, many would answer "C of E" as a reflex. They were probably baptised or married in a parish church and that made them Church of England, even if they rarely attended church other than for funerals, weddings and maybe Easter and Christmas.

The census in which Mary and Joseph were involved and the Domesday Book were for taxation purposes. Our 2021 census was also for government purposes, including taxation, and will be used to inform parliament and government decisions regarding public services. It is a snapshot of English and Welsh society in numbers not a record of individual people and the quality of their lives or the values they live by.

To gain a more accurate picture of Christian life in our nation, one needs to look at the array

of activities and institutions dedicated to, or founded on the Christian faith. This will include local churches, of course, but also Christian schools, colleges and universities. It will also include the thousands of Christian charities registered with the Charity Commission. Then there are the health and social care services with Christian foundations and the sports and leisure clubs linked to churches. Christian artists and musicians contribute towards popular culture.

Then there are the hundreds of thousands of individual Christians who, in their quiet unassuming way, carry out innumerable acts of charity, mercy and kindness every day.

It's not the number of Christians that matter, it's the impact that Christians have in society which is their true measure. Jesus said his followers should be like salt and light to the world, seasoning society and showing a guiding light. He also used the image of yeast leavening a loaf as a metaphor for his followers' role in society.

It's the faithful Christians you can count on that matter, not the Christians being counted.

# Holiday Memories



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

**J**anuary is a funny old month. It is a bit dismal, cold, dark. Christmas has been and gone. I thought about what to write about January and the New Year and started several drafts before deciding to abandon the idea entirely.

What it did make me realise was that January is the time when we often turn to thinking about booking our summer holidays and dreaming of warmer climes. I was thinking back to previous holidays and reminiscing about holidays as a child.

We didn't have a lot of money as I was growing up. My dad had retired early and mum gave up work when she married, so we only had a pension as an income. We didn't go without, but holidays were not something we did. As we lived at the seaside we always had the beach so didn't need to travel for a bucket-and-spade holiday and in the summer there was always lots going on.

The few occasions when we did go away were always to stay with family, and for me the most memorable was going to a little village in Somerset to visit my aunt and uncle. First, there was the adventure of the drive. Dad wasn't the best of drivers and was quite impatient so we had a few hairy moments (including driving straight across a roundabout in Godmanchester). Then there was the thrill of following an AA route guide and not knowing quite where you were going. A bit like a paper satnav I suppose.

Staying in my aunt and uncle's cottage was always different. We had jugs of milk straight from the cows, which lived in the field at the bottom of the garden. The cows were herded down the street twice a day, stopping any traffic while they meandered down the lane. Not that there was much traffic. I



had a huge, high bed and a window with a deep sill that you could sit on.

Trips out with my aunt were an adventure. She tore around the countryside in a bright turquoise Hillman Imp with one hand on the horn, nattering ten to the dozen as she drove. But most of all, I loved walking Bessie the dog with my uncle. We would go out for hours. Goodness knows what he found to talk about with me. I was only little after all. And of course, I loved that dog. We didn't have one at home and she was just the best. She was a mongrel, full of beans and we got into all sorts of mischief together. She would do anything for a Bonio.

It is probably no surprise that holidays today involve long walks with a dog along with the simplicity of camping. I hope that this January you too have the joy of remembering past holidays and the fun of planning this year's.



# Adam the Gardener looks at the future of the rose

There are three plagues of the rose and some varieties are more susceptible than others. The plagues are Rose Black Spot, Powdery Mildew and Aphids. This last year, the aphids and particularly the black ones started very early and were particularly bad on my climbing rose and on a purple Elder bush. I used a soapy ready-to-use spray which worked quite well and of course was environmentally friendly compared with the more deadly Neonicotinoids (poisonous to bees) which, to my surprise, are still on sale in the garden centres. The fungal fellows did not show up in quantity in my garden in 2022 but some folk have not been quite so fortunate.

The leading supplier of quality roses has stopped supplying at least two well-loved varieties. Velvety crimson Munstead Wood and pale pink A Shropshire Lad. The reason? Climate change has resulted in both of them being hopelessly sensitive to disease. I suppose protective genes might be introduced into these strains but that could take years. It's very unsettling what an average increase of only one

degree centigrade can make to our garden plants.

All is not gloom however because, for instance, the Banksian Rose flowers early in the Mediterranean with arching stems of white or yellow double blooms. The flowers are not very big but are produced in abundance and would be a real asset in a sheltered corner. Worth a try.

I suspect that the rose breeders are already hard at work producing varieties best suited to our new climate. Perhaps all perennials should now be labelled with a star rating of resistance to drought. It will repay you to look out for plants from southern Africa and for tough plants from desert regions

Before you all dash out on a spending spree, however, do remember that, in a dry first year, most of the drought resisters will need some watering and then all will be well in the second and subsequent years. This also applies to newly planted trees, including the Japanese cherries.



## MINIATURE CYCLAMEN

Here is a list of bomb-proof plants from our friends in France recommended in 2021. You might like to scan the catalogues now so that you are ready to order.

*Hardy Geranium “ Rozanne ”*

*Gaura lindheimeri “Siskiyou Pink”*

*Verbena bonariensis* (easy from seed).

*Erigeron karvinskianus* (also easy from seed)

*Nepeta faassenii*. A large super-tough catmint. Cut it back in the Autumn.

I did promise some recommendations for porch and conservatory plants where the temperature can be kept above 12 degrees C. In summer, of course, you will need to ventilate to keep temperatures from soaring. Yuccas, and Cordylines are doing well and have been rescued from an office after growing very leggy indeed. The tops will root very well when separated from the leggy stem and potted up in fresh compost. My Clivia is thriving after a summer spent outside and I am waiting for signs of the bright orange flower heads. Miniature Cyclamen (above) are doing well but in winter they must be watered sparingly



and the compost not allowed to dry out; a tricky balancing act.

I enjoyed immensely a TV programme about Westminster Abbey and was surprised to discover that the Abbey has three gardens looked after by a Head Gardener and two under-gardeners. All plants are propagated in a modest greenhouse from seed or cuttings to keep costs down. You can join a tour of the gardens and see the largest, College Garden, which has been continuously cultivated for 900 years! The fish ponds and beehives have gone but the herbs and flowering perennials remain and the lawns are used for various events during the summer to help keep the Abbey going. You can also go on a tour of the roofs for some wonderful views over London.

Talking of London gardens with a view, I can recommend booking in advance to visit the garden at the top of the Walkie-Talkie building close to St Margaret Pattens church. The best time to visit the Walkie-Talkie is in mid-afternoon when you can watch the sun going down over the City. There is a bar in the garden at the top of the Walkie-Talkie. How they got all those plants up there beats me. You must book well in advance for reasons of security and heavy demand. There is no charge.

Before I go, I must remind you that there is still time to plant a specimen silver-variegated Holly. A thing of beauty for years to come!

Next month, I will attempt to answer the question "What is a garden?".

Best Wishes for 2023.



# Opening Doors



## Unlocking Lives

**An update on the work of Northfield Community Partnership (NCP) and Birmingham Pathfinders family support programmes based at St Nicolas' Place.**

It's been almost two years since these two highly effective community-based organisations partnered with Kings Norton parish to base themselves in St Nicolas' Place, next to St Nicolas' Church. Their job is to deliver "early help" to families in the South Birmingham area. They offer a range of vital support services. Once their doors opened, the work and the programmes multiplied. NCP now has 13 staff sharing the building plus 10 based at Hawkesley Old Vicarage. Pathfinders has 25 staff centred upon St Nicolas' Place and 45 working with schools across South Birmingham. I recently met with Rebecca Debenham from NCP and Rob McCabe of Pathfinders to hear more about their progress and the ethos and values which sustain their work.

Both organisations complement each other and programmes often overlap. While staff teams and workloads have increased, they are committed to being accessible and available to all who come through their doors. On the morning of our meeting, a mother with young children arrived unexpectedly needing various essentials and advice. Staff responded immediately, setting aside their current tasks.

Ideally, they prefer working with individuals and families to prevent emergencies from becoming crises. They both agreed that it is more effective to offer the right support to families at the earliest possible stage than later, when needs are greater

and risks increase. In these post-pandemic times and with the cost of living emergency, needs are being exacerbated and more families are falling behind with their lives at many levels.

Statutory social care and health providers have struggled for years to meet increasing demands. Their mode of working usually requires people to go to them for help at a centralised office and by appointment. While this works for some, the community-based approach offered by Pathfinders and NCP is radically different. Being based in the communities they serve allows for daily engagement with a range of families. Pathfinders are working closely with 35 schools in the area. This allows school staff to draw directly upon their expertise at short notice and with confidence. They have also set up six groups for families whose purpose is to foster confidence and trust while addressing very local needs. One group of families is now in the process of becoming its own community organisation; another group is aimed at dads; another is setting up a new football team in Frankley. When these families were first approached, they were sceptical. “Nothing ever gets done,” was a typical response. Two years on, things are being done and done successfully. Most readers will have seen the success of NCP’s Kings Norton Beach in the summer which attracted 23,000 people. NCP are currently running a Warm Places project at St Nicolas’ Place, providing free

▼ CHANNEL  
FOUR  
FILMING AT  
THE WARM  
PLACES  
PROJECT AT  
ST NICOLAS’  
PLACE.





food and activities five days and four evenings a week.

Each project or group are local families who have engaged with Pathfinders or NCP. They are given support to find ways of unlocking their potential and improving their lives. This is not a top-down approach. The phrase used is “shared authority”. Families are regarded as citizens not as clients or customers. For families with more complex needs, Pathfinders and NCP have a range of highly-experienced staff with specific areas of expertise. And neither organisation ever closes a file on a family. They will stay with them for years if necessary.

This model of working with families at the most local level possible allows Rob and Rebecca to acquire knowledge and evidence of changing patterns of need. This supports another crucial aspect of their work, which is to engage at the strategic level with professionals in other disciplines, politicians and policy makers and all those with power over the lives and livelihoods of families. With their combined experience and evidence, they are in a unique position to challenge systems which aren't working effectively for local people and to recommend innovative solutions.

They were recently visited by Ann Longfield CBE, former Children's Commissioner and now chairwoman of the Commission for Young Lives. The Commission's final report (available online) is critical of current government services for families and young people and calls for a radical overhaul of the services, placing the emphasis on early years to adulthood support being delivered locally in a sustained way. She envisages local hubs of excellence for families, children and young people. When visiting St Nicolas' Place, she

witnessed the reality of what her commission recommends.

There are challenges for both organisations. Space to expand is limited. Finances rely upon other bodies recognising the value of their work and there are frustrations when working with other service providers. Despite these challenges, they are determined to remain true to their guiding principles and values.

Those values are a belief in social justice for all, sharing authority with those they engage with and nurturing potential. They welcome all from any background, creed or ethnicity. For them, putting the power of love into practical action is always inclusive, even universal. Though not religious organisations, they acknowledge that the message of compassion and practical care for the vulnerable and the marginalised found in Christianity influences their ethos.

St Nicolas' Place is well positioned geographically for their services and they regard it as their headquarters. Having witnessed the dedication and care provided for so many families, it could equally be called their heart quarters.

**Ann Longfield CBE (4th from right) former Children's Commissioner and Chairwoman of the Young Lives Commission recent visit to Birmingham Pathfinders and NCP.**



# A Christmas You Can Believe In



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

When this magazine goes to press, we will still be in the Christmas season, at least until Epiphany on the 6th January or, for some, until Candlemas on 2nd February, as I have often written about in this column. I am returning to the festive theme, with no discomfiture whatsoever! I was reminded when I picked up a leaflet in a well-known German-based supermarket (other German-based stores are available). The headline read:

**“Big on A Christmas You Can Believe In”.**

A bit cheeky! As Christians, Christmas is always something we can believe in, and the church is big on it. Just look at the wonderful array of services and events being offered in St. Nicolas' alone over the festive season. The message of Christmas, that God is born as a baby in Bethlehem, Jesus the Christ, come to save the world, is as big as it gets.

Christmas opened for me when I was privileged to be in church as part of a select audience to hear the St. Nicolas' handbell ringers as they rang in the rejoicing of the nativity of Jesus. If you weren't there you missed a real treat! A warming lunch of soup, bread and homemade cake preceded a varied programme of festive music. It was a joy and a blessing to hum along with carols, hymns and songs which they played to ring in and to celebrate this beautiful season.

As we celebrate the Christmas season, 2023 is on the horizon. After the turbulence and uncertainties of the past few years, our prayer might be for peace, justice and a sufficiency for all. The Victorian Poet Laureate Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote one of his most well-known lyrical poems "Ring Out Wild Bells" in 1850. It was inspired by his grief at the untimely death of his



dear friend and fellow Cambridge student Arthur Hallam, who died of a stroke at the age of 22. Even though it inclines towards Victorian mawkishness and sentimentality, we can all identify with the notion of ringing out the all the destructive negatives around, making room for a fairer world.

It is an English custom to use English Full Circle Bells to ring out the old year and ring in the new. Sometimes the bells are half-muffled for the death of the year past, then the muffles are removed to ring in the birth of the year to come. Tennyson's "Wild Bells" are ringing out the old year, with its inequalities and suffering, then ringing in the new year, filled with hope and the possibilities of better things, not just for us but for everyone, as he deals with his grief.

I digress slightly at this point to reflect on the FIFA World Cup. Despite justified misgivings of the changing of its timing to winter, the mid-season of local football, and being held controversially in Qatar, I am enjoying it! New, top talent is emerging and there have been any number of nail-biting games. Overall, though, I am yet again struck by football as an alternative religious faith. The god of football would now be the VAR, whose word is always final, the messiah figure would be the team captain and the devil the referee. There are the chants, the hymns, the prayers for success and the adoration of the players, those saints of football. The sacred texts, the football programmes, are treasured. Football has its false prophets, those pundits and friends who predict defeat and

## RING OUT WILD BELLS

*Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light;  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out wild bells and let him die.*

*Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go:  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.*

*Ring out the grief which saps the mind  
For those that we see here no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.*

*Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.*

*Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.*

*Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the truth of love and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.*

*Ring out old shapes of foul disease;  
Ring out the harrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.*

*Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.*



PHOTO BY MIKE B

doom, or the wrong results. There are the icons of football, the kits, the key rings, the associated paraphernalia. The winners traditionally kiss the most sacred icon of all, the silver trophy, handed over by the high priest or priestess. It's all there ... and I can still watch a match and enjoy it!

I write this before the clash of the Titans, when England meets France in the quarter finals. Will England at last shake off once and for all the heavy shirts of perpetual defeat for the triumphant jumpers of success? We shall see. Let's just be good, generously spirited, winners or losers.

Life can change in a heartbeat. In November we had a very sad bereavement of a dear loved one. We have found strength in the love, kindness, and the many, and sometimes unexpected, comforting messages sent. We are carried, surviving, on a wave of prayer.

I close with some words from a little plaque, given to me at my baptism.

The letters are almost faded and it's not high poetry. Yet I keep it propped up in front of me on my desk. May its words bring you some comfort as the bells ring us into the unknown and uncertainty of a new year.

*God hath not promised skies  
ever blue,*

*Flower strewn pathways always  
for you;*

*He has not promised sun  
without rain,*

*Joy without sorrow, peace  
without pain.*

*But He hath promised strength  
from above;*

*Unfailing sympathy, undying  
love.*



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

Parish Pilgrimage to the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Lazarica, Bournville, Saturday 18th February 2023

The church of the Holy Prince Lazar, known as the Lazarica, is one of many Serbian Orthodox churches dedicated to the Holy Prince Lazar. It is the first Serbian church in the UK.

There will be a pilgrimage to this nearby hidden gem on Saturday **18th February 2023**.

Itinerary: 10.00 am: car share to the Lazarica church, Griffins Brooks Lane, Bournville. The price will include a guided tour led by Fr. Nenad, the Serbian priest at the Lazarica, followed by refreshments in the church hall of the Lazarica. For more information, prices and booking forms speak to Sylvia Fox or contact the Parish Office.

## **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.

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0121 458 3289 • [www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam](http://www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam)**

### **THE MINISTRY TEAM**

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

### **THE CHURCH WARDENS**

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

### **OTHER CONTACTS**

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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*

### **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month**

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

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Month**

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

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Month**

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

### **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Month**

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

### **5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Month**

9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
10.30 am	United Service

*All services are held at St Nicolas' Church. For further details, see the weekly newsletter on the Parish Website at [www.kingsnorton.org.uk](http://www.kingsnorton.org.uk)*

# The Hardman Windows of Saint Nicolas'

## A great design heritage

From time to time, these articles describe aspects of our church that are significant not only to the West Midlands, but in national and even international respects. It is to me a constant fascination that, while our church is now perceived as a relatively conventional parish church, in fact it has a remarkable history that transcends today's Kings Norton and has often overlooked depths which elevate it to a much wider significance.

For me, the latest of these depths is the importance of its stained-glass windows, particularly those in the Baptistry and South Aisle, with more in the area of the Chancel. They were designed and manufactured by a local company which became a renowned producer of stained glass for cathedral and churches around the world. Even more, believe it or not, the design of most of those windows was directly influenced by the of the most distinguished Victorian architects and designers, the neo-Gothic specialist Augustus Pugin, the man who was a major influence on the style of the Houses of Parliament, was completely responsible for the interior design of that

► THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH TOLD IN STAINED GLASS.



MICHAEL WRITES REGULARLY ON LOCAL HISTORY



SARA OBEYED ABRAHAM CALLING HIM LORD



ABRAHAM OBEYED GOD AND WENT OUT



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

building, and was wholly responsible for one of Britain most iconic structures, Big Ben (or, if you must now, the Elizabeth Tower).

If that sounds like an unreasonable flight of fancy, let me explain. The windows in question were all designed and made by the famous Handsworth-based company of Hardman's, specifically by possibly the country's most celebrated specialist designer of ecclesiastical glass, John Hardman Powell. He is distinguished by the fact that he was, in all probability, the only pupil of the great Pugin. You can see Pugin's influence on John Hardman Powell in those St. Nicolas' windows.

The firm of Hardman & Co was founded in 1838 in Handsworth, then in Staffordshire, by John Hardman senior as a fabricator of metalwork, a typical example of the West Midlands tradition of manufacturing and "metal-bashing", with no particular orientation to window-making. Yet, as it developed, it became, for well over a century, one of the world's most prominent suppliers of ecclesiastical fittings generally and stained glass in particular. The business closed as recently as 2008.

Around about the time Hardman's was founded, the

London-born Augustus Welby Pugin, already well established because of his direct involvement with Sir Charles Barry, the principal architect of the Houses of Parliament (actually the Palace of Westminster) was commissioned by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Birmingham Thomas Walsh to design a suitable church in the city to house the remains of St Chad. When the new building was consecrated in 1841 as Saint Chad's Cathedral, it was the first Roman Catholic cathedral to be built in England since the Reformation. For the recently-converted Catholic Pugin, it was a commission of great importance.

It was during the St Chad's project that Pugin first had contact with the Hardman company. John Hardman junior, (1812–67) had left his father's company because he wanted to focus specifically on metalwork for churches. Pugin used the new company to provide metalwork for St Chad's Cathedral.

Pugin loved designing stained glass for churches, but did not have the time to focus on that activity; not surprisingly, because his design portfolio was a vast one. It included not only churches, chapels and rectories, and windows, but furniture, clothes, tiles, jewellery and interiors for



stately homes and country houses.

Pugin clearly saw something special in Hardman junior's metalwork, because he urged him to enter the nationally-growing market for stained glass, something that the Hardmans as a family had not hitherto considered.

Significantly, Hardman junior was joined in 1849 by his nephew, John Hardman Powell, a promising designer who, illustrating the closeness of the Pugin and Hardman families, married Pugin's daughter Anne in 1950. With that personal connection, Pugin himself designed some of the new Hardman company's first commissions.

Powell claimed to be Pugin's only pupil, and this is likely to be correct because Pugin was working so hard as his career developed that he would have little inclination to train students. And he was not destined to do so because, tragically, he died at the age of only 40 in 1852. In fact, his last ever commission was perhaps his greatest ever achievement, Big Ben.

Pugin must have had a comprehensive influence on the work of his son-in-law Powell, an influence that would never have faded. Powell had a long career: he was still designing windows for his company in the early

1880s, when the authorities at St Nicolas', with laudable ambition, employed the company for the suite of windows on the south side of the church. By then, the Hardman company had moved to central Birmingham, with premises in the Jewellery Quarter. This commission produced all the windows now visible in the Baptistry and South Aisle, with the exception of the large circular window overlooking the altar there. The other windows in St Nicolas' produced by Hardman's during this era include the two windows on the immediate left side of the Chancel, and most probably the glorious "Angel of Kings Norton" (p.27) in the first of the two Norman windows on the same side of the Chancel.

The circular window at the east end of the South Aisle was in fact also designed and produced by Hardman's, but some 70 years later, when it was still a leader in its field. John Hardman Powell had retired by then, and tastes in ecclesiastical window design had changed, so there is no real comparison between the style of the circular window and the other windows in the South Aisle.

The Powell/ Pugin style reflects the great era of Gothic architecture and design, particularly the 13th and 14th centuries. Powell's stained

glass is highly refined and elegant, featuring curving, flowing lines. His biblical figures have vestments that were highly distinctive in terms of stained glass design of the time; his brushstrokes have been described as 'calligraphic', using brilliant colour, such as blues and reds, reflecting Victorian taste. These are all reflected in our windows.

The direct working relationship between Hardman's and Pugin went much further. As the major interior designer of the Houses of Parliament, Pugin of course used Hardman's to supply the great majority of its stained glass. Hardman's maintained its relationship with Westminster for decades, repairing and replacing glass damaged or destroyed during World War II.

Apart from the windows created for many Pugin-designed churches in England and Ireland, two of Hardman's major commissions were to come from the other side of the world, a sign of the company's pre-eminence. These included no less than 27 windows, including a six-light West window and a seven-light East window, for St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney in Australia, installed for its consecration in 1868. Hardman's also produced three large rose windows and a vast East window for St Mary's Roman

►PART OF  
THE KINGS  
NORTON  
ANGEL  
WINDOW, AT  
THE FAR EAST  
END OF ST  
NICOLAS'  
CHURCH

Catholic Cathedral in the same city. Based on the style of comparable windows in the 13th Century Lincoln Cathedral, the East Window is considered to be one of the pinnacles of Gothic Revival stained glass.

So, several of our church windows carry national significance. That's not to neglect our other windows, for example the magnificent window overlooking the main altar in the Chancel. This was designed by another major 19th century designer, Charles Eamer Kempe, who also designed windows for several English cathedrals such as Lichfield, Winchester, Wells and York. Equally dramatic are the windows in the north aisle, which were produced in the late 19th century by another local company, Swaine Bourne.

Many readers will be aware that there is comprehensive information about our windows in "A Guide to the Stained Glass Windows of St Nicolas' Church", compiled by the Reverend Jayne Crooks. Copies can be purchased inside the church or from the Parish Office.

A full set of colour photos can also be found online at [tinyurl.com/knpmwindows](http://tinyurl.com/knpmwindows).



## Funerals Nov 2022

1st November	Mark Leonard Withey	59	SN.Bu.KN
3rd November	Doreen Taylor	88	Cr.LH
8th November	David John Knowles	77	SN.Bu.KN
11th November	Angela Victoria Smith	80	In.CY
21st November	John Smith	90	Cr.RD

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

Cemeteries & Crematoria

KN : Kings Norton, LH : Lodge Hill, RD : Redditch

# THE HUNGRY GARDENER

## Our Hopes, Dreams &

## New Shared Adventures

January, the reflection after Christmas, the cold outside and for some inside this year, traditionally the month of New Year's resolutions but this year maybe just getting through it. I don't like New year's resolutions, I like to make New Year plans for the adventures that are on the horizon in the coming year. Hope for the new growing year and hope for our family year. It is the time to gather your dreams, to be imaginative and creative with your ideas. You are important. The shortest, darkest days of the year are behind us, we are journeying towards the light. Every day that passes now is a day closer to the spring equinox when our hens will start laying their eggs. One of my hopes for this year is that the asparagus on the allotment will be thriving (I planted 3-year-old seedlings in the autumn) and we can have some with some runny yolk fried eggs super fresh from our hens.

For the hopes and dreams in the garden and the allotment, it is a great time for planning ahead and thinking what seeds you would like to get hold of. The light in the day is short, growth of vegetables and weeds is incredibly slow which gives me plenty of time to ponder and think while I garden and get a head start before things bloom in spring. This is the perfect time to let your mind reflect upon what worked well last year and what didn't work so well, without judgment. Just drift through it and plan your hopes and dreams for the great gardening adventures to come this year. I daydreamed at school and my son daydreams at times. Daydreaming is okay and perhaps should be encouraged! Ask your family what they would like to go on your list, what they want to grow. Charles has asked for sweetcorn, peas, cabbage,



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

strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and apples. I'm sure he expects it tomorrow but we will plant in old toilet tubes and watch them sprout. The journey is all part of the adventure!

Some excellent growing advice I stumbled across is to plan for a temperate, wet summer and a hot, dry summer and then you will have something no matter what the weather throws at you. If I were to put it another way, we are hedging our bets! Now you might be building a large list for seed shopping but, before you do, does anyone you know grow food too? Could we seed swap with each other? Maybe meet for coffee with seed boxes. It doesn't have to be in person. There are Facebook groups for seed swaps too such as UK Seeds Savers, Gardeners and Food Growers where you seed swap via the post. I love a good seed swap! A Saint Nicolas seed swap is something that would be such fun!

When we get to the cropping months, if things don't go to plan, that is okay. Every day is a school day and a

learning opportunity. Keep a note or a gardening diary as a memory aid. There is always next year, which will be the best year ever in the planning.

Our local food banks are bracing themselves for a tough time in January and February, anticipating that these will be the months with the greatest need. Do you have any abundance? Maybe a lot of rhubarb, a huge haul of Jerusalem artichoke, a kale plant that has gone unexpectedly berserk as the light levels change towards the end of January or early February? Think of neighbours and strangers who may be struggling and share your surplus food ... and also your hope. We are living in such tough times at the moment. Kindness towards others will have more impact than you may ever know.

Your hopes and dreams will help you and others. The light is coming and it will be okay! If you are struggling and need help there are friends, strangers and organisations out there to help you through the dark months.





# WHY MOURNING A PET CAN BE HARDER THAN GRIEVING FOR A PERSON

Many pet owners know that our connections with animals can be on an emotional par with those we share with other humans, and scientific research backs this up.

The key ingredients of human attachment are experiencing the other person as a dependable source of comfort, seeking them out when distressed, feeling enjoyment in their presence and missing them when apart. Researchers have identified these as features of our relationships with pets too.

But there are complexities. Some groups of people are more likely to develop intimate bonds with their pets. This includes isolated older people, people who have lost trust in humans, and people who rely on assistance animals.

Researchers have also found our connections with our fluffy, scaled and feathered friends come with a price, in that we grieve the loss of our pets. But

some aspects of pet grief are unique.

## **Euthanasia**

For many people, pet death may be the only experience they have of grief connected to euthanasia. Guilt or doubt over a decision to euthanise a cherished companion animal can complicate grief. For example, research has found that disagreements within families about whether it is (or was) right to put a pet to sleep can be particularly challenging.

But euthanasia also gives people a chance to prepare for a beloved animal's passing. There is a chance to say goodbye and plan final moments to express love and respect such as a favourite meal, a night in together or a last goodbye.

There are stark differences in people's responses to pet euthanasia. Israeli research found that in the aftermath of euthanised pet death, 83% of people feel certain they made

the right decision. They believed they had granted their animal companion a more honourable death that minimised suffering.

However, a Canadian study found 16% of participants in their study whose pets were euthanised "felt like murderers". And American research has shown how nuanced the decision can be as 41% of participants in a study felt guilty and 4% experienced suicidal feelings after they consented to their animal being euthanised. Cultural beliefs, the nature and intensity of their relationship, attachment styles and personality influence people's experience of pet euthanasia.

### **Disenfranchised grief**

This type of loss is still less acceptable socially. This is called disenfranchised grief, which refers to losses that society doesn't fully appreciate or ignores. This makes it harder to mourn, at least in public.

Psychologists Robert Neimeyer and John Jordan said disenfranchised grief is a result of an empathy failure. People deny their own pet grief because a part of them feels it is shameful. This isn't just about keeping a stiff upper lip in the office or at the pub. People may feel pet grief is unacceptable to

certain members of their family, or to the family more generally.

And at a wider level, there may be a mismatch between the depth of pet grief and social expectations around animal death. For example, some people may react with contempt if someone misses work or takes leave to mourn a pet.

Research suggests that when people are in anguish over the loss of a pet, disenfranchised grief makes it more difficult for them to find solace, post-traumatic growth and healing. Disenfranchised grief seems to restrain emotional expression in a way that makes it harder to process.

Our relationships to our pets can be as meaningful as those we share with each other. Losing our pets is no less painful, and our grief reflects that. There are dimensions of pet grief we need to recognise as unique. If we can accept pet death as a type of bereavement, we can lessen people's suffering. We're only human, after all.

*Sam Carr, Reader in Education with Psychology and Centre for Death and Society, University of Bath.*

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# Energy Saving Tips *on a budget*

We are in an energy crisis. This has been caused by a lot of different things. I'll be honest, the causes don't matter right now. What matters is keeping warm and ensuring everyone has enough to eat. What matters is you and your families.

If we look back at December, the whole month was a bit of a shock to the system. Our family energy went through the roof. January and February will be cold and getting through these months will lead us into Spring. Spring is beautiful.

I am going to suggest some simple ideas that may save you some money and keep some extra warmth in your home.

Ideas that won't cost you a lot of money.

First, I would suggest, understand your bill. The Energy Saving Trust is a great place to start ([tinyurl.com/knpmenergy](https://www.tinyurl.com/knpmenergy)). There are some great tips on this site. I found the videos really useful.

In our home we have an off-peak tariff. Think of Economy 7. We pay 7.5p each evening between 0030 and 0430 for our energy. We put the dishwasher on then and use the washing machine. Changing your energy usage time can really save you some cash.

If you have a bath, leave the water in there as this will act as

an extra radiator. Consider leaving the bathroom door open as the heat will spread. If anyone has respiratory challenges be aware the extra water vapour may have an impact on their health.

If you are running your heating less, open the windows, just a crack. It will allow excess vapour to escape and prevent the build-up of mould.

If radiators are running, get the most out of them. A couple of options are to buy some radiator reflector film or to get a bit of old cardboard and cover it in tin foil, shiny side on the outside. Drop either behind the radiator and they will both reflect the heat back into your room and also act as an extra layer of insulation ([tinyurl.com/knpmreflect](http://tinyurl.com/knpmreflect)).

Draft proof windows and doors. We have French Doors in our lounge. They are draughty, super draughty! I have sealed the edges with some tape to minimise these draughts. We have a wood burner in our lounge, so I have ensured that we have a carbon monoxide detector in the lounge and in any room someone sleeps in. If you have a gas or wood fire, please make sure you have a carbon monoxide detector. You should have one next to your

gas boiler too. They aren't expensive but will save lives.

Curtains. Make sure you close them every night and don't rush to open them in the morning. Once the sun has come up, make sure they are open to benefit from the free heat.

I recently had a kitchen fire. It was only small but still created a lot of smoke. I had brought the electric BBQ into the kitchen and popped it on the hob. Unfortunately, I turned the wrong hob on by mistake. So please don't bring BBQs inside or other types of outdoor item in an attempt to save money. You are much more important than saving a few pounds. Fortunately, I had a smoke detector in the kitchen that alerted me.

Tumble driers cost a lot to run and your clothes don't last as long if you use them. We bought a heated air drier from Lakeland but Aldi were doing a pretty good one. They dry your clothes and heat your house too. The energy they use isn't a lot.

Martin Lewis is the Money Saving Expert. He is great and has some really good tips, which range from bank accounts to free water saving devices from Severn Trent: ([tinyurl.com/knmputilities](http://tinyurl.com/knmputilities)).

# Acapulco!

I have very happy memories of this beautiful Mexican resort which date back some 60 years. The P&O liner "SS Canberra" called there several times when we were on cruises from the USA. We would anchor in the harbour about half a mile from the shoreline. Passengers would then be ferried from the ship to the land by motorised lifeboat. Some 50 passengers at a time would make the trip. A call would go out to the crew inviting anyone who held a lifeboat certificate to take the helm. I did, indeed, have this qualification but I never had any intention of using it in this way! Besides, as a First Class Cabin Steward, my duties were a good excuse to stay on board.

One of the crew who came forward on the occasion I am thinking of was a chap called Willy, a junior leading hand in the catering department. Willy was known as a "born loser" among the crew. So there he was, in his smart, white uniform, ready for action. Unfortunately, while at the helm of his fully-loaded lifeboat, he approached the quayside too fast and at the wrong angle. His boat crashed into the concrete steps. Passengers were thrown from their seats, sun hats flew into the water and ladies were left in the most undignified of positions. Luckily, nobody was really hurt and the damaged boat stayed afloat.

Crew members were usually not allowed ashore until after 2.30 pm, but my friends and I were eager to disembark. Acapulco had a small



**Who would have guessed that Eddie can waterski?**



marina which organised water-ski sessions with tuition and practical lessons. There were two super speedboats with experts on hand to drive them. The cost was \$40 US for a couple of hours, a lot of money back then; but, as my chums and I had generous American passengers who tipped well, we could afford to indulge ourselves. Over the course of three stops at Acapulco, we became adept at being towed by a speedboat, and even circled the ship at one point (posers!). Our little group of water skiers grew to six or more enthusiasts.

I got to know a good friend, Pedro, who was the "head honcho" of the water ski business and I was invited to visit his home and family one evening. We agreed that he would bring his boat to the Canberra at 6.00 pm to bring me ashore. It turned into such a pleasant evening. I met his wife and children and enjoyed tapas and some of the local beer. In the small settlement where he lived, close to the beach, there were some Mexican musicians who used to play too. They created a super atmosphere.

When the ship returned to Acapulco on its next trip, I brought gifts of American beachwear and some toys for Pedro's children. As the Canberra entered the port, he was there, waving from his speedboat! I went up on deck up in the bow and shouted and waved. We agreed that he would collect our little group at



PHOTO BY CLAUDIO SCHWARZ

1.00 pm and we set off for the gangway at this time.

When we got there, a rather toffee-nosed third officer said that no crew were allowed to take a boat ashore until after 2.30 pm. I replied that we had our own transport, if only he would care to look down at the bottom of the gangway! By 2.00 pm, we were once again water skiing around the ship's hull. By this stage, I was also able to take turns at driving the boat at some 30 mph. What fun!

At the end, Pedro said a fond farewell and told us that we were all in his prayers for safety and good luck. When I had been in his house, I had noticed a small Madonna figure on the wall lit up with a candle. No doubt he and his family were Catholic Christians. They were so kind and welcoming. Such a moving and happy memory, never to be forgotten.

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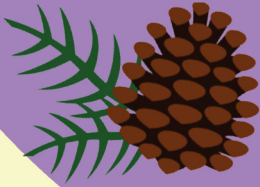


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