

KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine



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Welcome

EDITORIAL

In one of the most remarkable anecdotes to have surfaced over the past few weeks about the life of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the former Archbishop of York, previously Bishop for Birmingham, John Sentamu, told of asking the Queen's permission to step down from his post because of "a huge burden of matters that maybe one day will be revealed." In an interview on BBC television, he described the encounter. "I knelt down, and I said 'Your Majesty, please pray for me.' So I put my hands together and she put hers outside mine, and we were silent for three minutes. At the end she said 'Amen'. When I got up, the burden had lifted."

On p. 19, in an article written for children, the Bishop of Norwich tells of his own conversations with the Queen. In simple language, he reveals that Her Majesty "often said that she looked to Jesus to help her to know what to do."

As a nation, we have lost so much in recent years. In Queen Elizabeth, we may have lost one of the rarest and most precious things of all, a Head of State who prayed for her people and who looked to God for the wisdom to rule. Who can doubt that her prayers were answered?

But so were ours. Our National Anthem is a prayer. Throughout the Queen's long reign, whether people of faith or not, we stood to ask God to "save our gracious Queen", to pour out upon her his gracious gifts. "Long may she reign!" we sang. He heard us and gave us a monarch like no other, whose loss is only just beginning to reveal what a gift she was to this country. Let us cherish and learn from her example. And let us pray God's blessing on The King.



David Ash



The Queen is Dead

God Save the King!

With these traditional words, we move from the second Elizabethan age to the new Carolean age of King Charles III. It is time of change and also a time of continuity. While we are overshadowed by grief, the light of hope is not extinguished.

Charles now takes on the mantle of Supreme Governor of The Church of England and Defender of the Faith, although both Queen Elizabeth and King Charles have always expressed a deep interest in and a respect for people of all faiths.



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

Queen Elizabeth's faith in God and in his son Jesus Christ were, in her own words, "an inspiration and an anchor in my life." Furthermore, in 2008 she summarised the essence of what Jesus' life and witness meant to her with these words: "I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life ... He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving,



PHOTO BY MARK DE JONG.

more in serving than in being served."

The life of dedicated service she embodied, the graciousness she radiated and the commitment to her duties and responsibilities to her people and her family drew deeply from the wellsprings of her faith.

For 90 or more years, she attended church every Sunday, official duties permitting. In the 70 years of her reign, she would have listened to at least 4000 Sunday sermons and if we add up all the official church services she attended, we would probably have a similar total. Not for her the modern practice of seeing church as a cultural pastime. For her, church worship was essential prime time. Her faith underpinned many memorable

quotations from the thousands of speeches she gave:

"Although we are capable of great acts of kindness, history teaches us that we sometimes need saving from ourselves — from our recklessness or our greed."

In 2011 she said, "Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families; it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love."

And, in a revealing comment on her inner life, she said, "Each day is a new beginning, I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God."

Words which echo 2
Corinthians: "Our inner nature
is being renewed day by day."

By exemplifying and
personifying the best of what a
person and monarch can be, I
suggest she did something
further. She became a living
model of what Christians know
as the Incarnation. The belief
that the essence, spirit and
character of God became "flesh
and lived among us" in the
person and life of Jesus of
Nazareth. Put another way, in
her long life, Queen Elizabeth
came to embody the highest
values and virtues of humanity
and godliness. In doing so, she
affirmed the power and reality
of the Incarnation.

The challenge before all of us
who rejoice in the name of
Christian is to strive for our
own spiritual progress day by
day. The extra challenge for the
church which bears Christ's
name is that we ourselves
embody the highest values and
virtues which Christ taught and
lived.

In her 2013 Christmas
message, The Queen said, "For
Christians, as for all people of
faith, reflection, meditation and
prayer help us to renew
ourselves in God's love, as we
strive daily to become better
people. The Christmas message
shows us that this love is for
everyone. There is no one
beyond its reach."

Now she is at rest. The
promises she made in this
world have all been fulfilled. We
commend her to God and know
her to be secure in the promise
given by Jesus, "This is the will
of the Father, everyone who
sees the Son and believes in
him will have eternal life; and I
will raise them up on the last
day."

Finally, let our late Queen's
words conclude this address
with the universal message she
lived by, from her 2012
Christmas message:

"This is the time of year when
we remember that God sent his
only son 'to serve, not to be
served'. He restored love and
service to the centre of our lives
in the person of Jesus Christ. It
is my prayer this Christmas Day
that his example and teaching
will continue to bring people
together to give the best of
themselves in the service of
others. The carol "In The Bleak
Midwinter" ends by asking a
question of all of us who know
the Christmas story, of how God
gave himself to us in humble
service. 'What can I give him,
poor as I am? If I were a
shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man, I would do
my part.' The carol gives the
answer: 'Yet what I can I give
him – give my heart.'"

The Queen is dead. Long live
the King!

The Constant in All Our Lives



Today is the 9th September 2022. The Queen has died. We have a new King. It doesn't feel appropriate today, even though writing for next month's issue, to write about anything else but the historic events we are living through. This week in the space of a few days we have witnessed two prime ministers and two monarchs. For the first time, for the majority of us, we will need to sing the words "God save the King" and will see our first coronation. We are about to witness events some of which we have never seen before by the public. This is a time of tradition and ceremonial with proclamations and arrangements not seen for decades but which date back centuries.

But despite the pomp and grandeur, this is also a time of grief and mourning. Many people will pay tribute to The Queen over the coming days, to her sense of service and duty, to her faith. I know that not everyone is in favour of the monarchy, but even so, her death seems to have touched everyone.

Despite the fact that we all knew that The Queen wouldn't live for ever there is a sense of shock at her death and a deep sadness, as if she were part of our own family, which, in a way, she was. She was a constant in all our lives.



PHOTO BY DAVID ASH

I remember talking to a group of air cadets following the death of Prince Philip and was struck by how they had all been touched by the sight of The Queen sitting alone at his funeral. One said "It was like it was our Nan sat there all alone." That was how we all felt. A compassion for someone we didn't know, even if it felt as if we did.

On social media today I made two posts. One was a beautiful illustration of the backs of The Queen and Prince Philip sitting on a picnic rug looking into the distance with a corgi beside them. The caption said simply, "Hello again, Lilibet." The other was this prayer from the Church of England.

Gracious God, we give thanks for the life of your servant Queen Elizabeth, for her faith and her dedication to duty. Bless our nation as we mourn her death and may her example continue to inspire us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Of the two, it was the prayer that people responded to the most. In our time of sorrow, uncertainty and change, in a world that we

think of as increasingly secular, it is prayer that matters. It is prayer that touches people, and it is to churches that people turn to pay their respects, to pause, reflect and pray.

As we head into a different tomorrow with a new King, we hold on to the fact that church, faith and prayer still matter; and we pledge ourselves anew to respond to that need

<p>PAULINE IS THE LAY MINISTER AT ST NICOLAS' CHURCH, KINGS NORTON</p>	
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Adam the Gardener has an apology

Yes, I referred last month to a fine sea holly as Mrs Wilmot's Ghost. This should have been Miss Willmott's Ghost.

Ellen Ann Willmott (1858 – 1934) was the daughter of a solicitor and in 1875 the whole family moved to Warley Place at Great Warley in Essex. The fine house was accompanied by 33 acres of land and this was to be Ellen's home for the rest of her life. The family developed the land into a large garden and, later in her life, Ellen acquired and planted two more gardens, one in France and the other in Italy. She was helped in these projects by a large inheritance from her godmother, Countess Helen Tasker, and became a prominent member of the Royal Horticultural Society, sponsoring many plant hunting expeditions. She purchased and gifted land at Wisley to the RHS. The Wisley gardens are open to the public to this day.

At one time Miss Willmott employed 104 gardeners, all men. She once said that women would be a disaster in the borders. Any weeds seen growing in the borders could result in the sacking of the hapless gardener.

Many fine garden plants carry her name and she is said to have cultivated over 100,000 plant species in her gardens. Ellen received many honours for her service to horticulture including the Victoria Medal from the RHS.

Sadly, the money ran out and, in the last years of her life, many of her assets were sold off to pay debts. She died in poverty in 1934. There is a short account of the life and work of Ellen Willmott on Wikipedia and Sandra Lawrence has written a highly-rated biography "Miss Willmott's Ghosts", available from Amazon.

As I write, the drought is continuing. I have lost half a dozen roses and a number of perennials. There are even fully grown trees succumbing to a lack of water hereabouts. I have decided to replant the south-facing border (the only border) with perennials and small shrubs, both with drought resistance. Although many such plants are really dull in appearance I am going all-out for flowering species. I have grown some *Cistus* in pink and white from seed and, although they are only about 10 cm tall, I am hoping to get them through the winter and to plant them



CONVULVULUS CNEORUM

out in the spring. If I were to plant out ready-potted specimens from the garden centre, £200 would be needed.

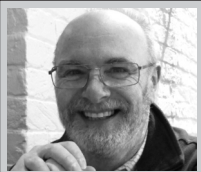
This month's plant recommendation is the perennial, shrubby *Convolvulus cneorum* or Silverbush, a native of the Mediterranean region. The silver leaves are matched with flowers of a dazzling white and, apart from a little watering in the first year, the only care they need is to be cut back in the autumn after flowering. You will be rewarded with a mound of flowers rich with pollen for the bees. My neighbour has planted one this year and it has shrugged off the drought. Hilliers describe it as "a stunning plant" and I agree. A nice one in a 3-litre pot will cost you about £13 but smaller plug plants can be had for a lot less. Given some time in a pot

in a sheltered spot, they will soon catch up.

Building up a stock of perennials can take some time. This is true of some drought resisters, so you might like to grow some annuals to fill in the gaps. One suggestion is to grow some *Gazanias*. Easy from seed and very tough, these multicoloured beauties come in a dazzling range of colours and you only need to look at the seed shelves of your garden centre for proof. Of course, they seem to prefer hot, dry soil. They only have one disadvantage: the petals fold over when the sun goes in.

That's it for now. My miracle phone tells me that it will rain for 30 minutes in 25 minutes' time. I will believe it when I see it. In the meantime, I must give the little cherry tree out at the front another bucket of water.

Flicks at St Nic's



Steve Wright is a retired teacher and a Lay Preacher at St Nicolas' Church

Back in 2019, a few of us at church talked about bringing the cinema back to The Green. Those of you with long memories will remember the cinema which stood where Grosvenor Court now stands. We got all the legal bits in place and started putting together a wish list.

We decided to have an inaugural screening in the Autumn, to test the concept. We had a well-attended evening, at which we showed "Irene's Ghost", a documentary made by Midlands film maker Iain Cunningham. It was a personal journey to find the story behind his mother Irene's death. Iain was present at the screening in St Nicolas' Church and answered questions afterwards. Representatives from Action on Postpartum Psychosis, the illness that led to Irene's death, talked from personal experience of PP. A retiring collection raised much-needed funds for the charity.

Covid put paid to our planned programme for 2020 and we could only wait until times were better to reopen. We began talking again at the beginning of this year and finally got going in August. A short family-focused programme towards the end of the summer holiday brought in small but enthusiastic audiences. The comments received encouraged us to keep going. So we have, with a short programme of films based on true stories that explore racism from different angles.

I'll be hopeful and say (since I am writing this before the event) that we had a big audience in September to watch "Hidden Figures". If you were there, thank you, and we hope to see you again at our October and November screenings. Both start promptly at 7.00 pm. On Tuesday 18th Oct you can join us in church to watch "Miss Virginia" (12 - 1h 42m), the true story of single mother Virginia Walden who, losing her son to a life with Washington DC gangs, launched a movement to change the system that was responsible. On Wednesday 16th November, we are showing "Green Book" (12 - 2h 9m), the true story of Tony Lip, a working-class Italian-American bouncer who took on the job as chauffeur for Dr. Don Shirley, a highly-educated African-American classical pianist. We're also putting on a family film day during the October half term holiday. Films and date to be decided, so look out for publicity.

There'll be something in the run-up to Christmas and we'll carry on next year, when we have plans to run another charity evening.

Mark Bennett says hello

As a newcomer to the parish and the Ministry Team here, I thought it might be fun to introduce myself by means of some of the things I love about life, church and being a Christian, in no particular order.

Curiosity

When I first became a Christian back in 1981, I had a sense that even though I knew that Jesus was at the centre of this faith movement, there was so much more that I needed to learn. Needless to say, I'm still learning. It strikes me that staying curious, questioning and exploring are an essential part of being a grown-up and it amazes me that we squeeze these things out of Christian faith so comprehensively.

Diversity

One of the most powerful lines in the New Testament is found in St Paul's letter to the Galatian church. In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female... But all are one in Christ Jesus (my paraphrase). The rich diversity



The Revd Mark Bennett is the Coaching Lead for the Anglican Diocese of Birmingham

of humanity is a blueprint for God's plan for the church. I am excited by the church's ability to connect with people across all our communities, especially here in the city of Birmingham. There is a huge difference between "welcoming" people from different backgrounds across our threshold and recognising that our diversity is our strength. As a white, male, privileged person I'm learning how to be an ally to those whom the system does not favour.

Failure

My favourite quotation of late has been one of Samuel Beckett. "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." If we are not careful, we swim in a soup of success stories which alternately inspire and depress us, depending upon what kind of a day we're having. Social media, the mainstream press and television all conspire to suck us in to the worship of achievement. And yet I find myself learning far more from my failures than my so-called successes. Failure is my most productive classroom, my go-to laboratory of life, where truth is tested alongside character and ambition. I'm hoping to fail much more often as I lean into my seventh decade.

Hope

In John Cleese's classic film "Clockwise" (filmed partly in Birmingham), his character, a somewhat stereotypically repressed head teacher, laments at one point, "It's the hope that gets you". This somewhat despairing look on life rings bells with us for the reason that we can perhaps identify with the inevitable disappointments that come our way.

But faith, Christian faith in particular, is about hope in things unseen, the belief that

the best is yet to come, the power of redemption and of good in the face of evil. As Christians, we can believe in this because of the unlikely-but-true story of Jesus's death and resurrection, a foretaste of our own redemption and the promise of life which only God can give. In the midst of all the bad news, my faith gives me hope.

If you've read this far then thank you. I've already got to know some wonderful folk in and through St Nicolas' over the past few months. You may have spotted me or my wife, Cate, on your travels or in church. If you do, please don't be afraid to say "hi" and introduce yourself.

As a priest, I'm going to be involved in learning and discipleship, preaching, praying and presiding alongside the various ministers and ministries which Kings Norton has to offer. My day job is coaching and training church leaders and that keeps me occupied for most of the week around Birmingham and beyond.

For more information about Pathways, the Church of England's initiative to support leadership development and discipleship in Birmingham, scan the QR code shown here or visit www.cofebirmingham.com/pathways



Pathways

40 Years with the CBSO Chorus

In the middle of October 2022, I reach my 40-year milestone in the CBSO (City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra) Chorus. I could comprehend the 30 year milestone, but this one seems huge and rather unbelievable. It means I have been in the Chorus for well over half of my life and the hundreds of pieces of music I have met during that time have helped to shape that life. The Chorus has been part of family life for almost 50 years, as my Dad was a founder member. He joined in 1973. The first concert took place in 1974. I was deemed old enough to go to many of the concerts back then and it didn't take me long to realise that music was going to be central to my life, even if I couldn't have expressed it that way at the time.

As with any long-service commitment, there have been times when it has been more duty than joy, but the times when that new piece, or that new reading of a favourite work has drawn me back into the magic of telling stories through music has far outweighed the duty moments.

There are too many highlights now to list them all and much of the detail has blurred over time. In the 80's we did a lot of European tours. Money for the arts was much more available in those days and we had sufficient free time to explore the places we were visiting. It meant that Dad and I had some pretty good shared memories of music, places and meals in Germany, Austria, Holland and Belgium, including those mad moments when the translation doesn't quite work and you find yourself eating something which the phrase book insists is "roast-rifleman".

One tour took place in the first few months which I spent as organist here. It meant that I had to miss a St Nicolas' Day,



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

something I would not have planned had I known I was going to be organist at the time. Celebrating St Nikolas Day in Holland enabled us to come home with many customs new to us which we could introduce into our own household and share with the choir (shoes left by your door filled with tiny gifts of food; chocolate St Nikolas figures; the story of the Sweep who accompanies St Nikolas; and so on). I shared many of these tours with my good friend Gill. Her completely unexpected death in 2020 has meant that I have had wonderful memories to fall back on as I get my head around the large gap she has left.

Britten's "War Requiem" has been a piece we have sung in several very significant settings, including Coventry Cathedral for the 40th and 50th anniversaries of its first performance, and also in Germany as a special mark of reconciliation between our countries.

Being part of the story of Symphony Hall right from the days of its creation is very special, it is still one of the finest concert halls in the world. We need to be super-proud to have it on our doorstep.

Very recently, we sang the UK premiere of a work first written in the 1930's by a Black-Canadian. I wrote about this in the pages of this magazine

earlier this year. ("The Ordering of Moses" by Robert Nathaniel Dett). This performance was definitely a high spot, a great work. It left us feeling that we were very much part of the composer's journey back to fuller recognition in the world of western classical music.

Trips to sing at the Proms in London have always been special moments. To be part of all that the Proms are is very uplifting and it was one of my biggest personal disappointments in 2020 when our two proposed concerts were, like all large events that year, cancelled. By the time this is published, I should have sung Mahler's Second Symphony with Sir Simon Rattle.

Through the CBSO Chorus, I effectively have regular masterclasses in how to take rehearsals and in how to read and bring a new score alive. I sing very regularly, which ensures that my sight-reading and other technical skills are kept up-to-scratch. For the commitment I give, I gain much more.

And what do I like singing best? Big stories, especially Biblical ones. Mendelssohn's "Elijah" and Walton's "Belshazzar's Feast" are probably joint Number 1 as they are so dramatic. I then met both for the first time as a very small child and found them spell-



CBSO Chorus

binding in the way a child might find that a dramatic storybook catches their imagination. For me, the musical setting was the key to opening the door of the story. Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius", Haydn's "Creation" and the Passions of Matthew and John by Bach are very close 2nds, with Mass, Requiem and Canticle settings always being good to sing to, especially the really jolly ones by Haydn or the very thoughtful ones. Conversely, opera really doesn't do it for me. The storylines are usually so spectacularly crazy. If only the characters would actually speak to each other and stop telling lies! But then you would have no opera.

With my 40th anniversary, I get a new "badge" and one more star in the programme listing. I hold a quiet hope that I might just manage another 10 years, earn one more badge and star, and enjoy 10 more years of meeting new pieces, soloists and conductors, as well as singing old favourites.

AMANDA FEATHERSTONE

Come to Bolivia

with the Diocese of Birmingham

It was so wonderful to have Bishop Walter and Adela with us in our churches this summer (photo opposite). I have heard many positive comments about the impact they made and how God has been at work. This is a dynamic and growing link between Birmingham Diocese and the Diocese of Bolivia and we are excited to see how it continues to develop.

We are proposing a trip to Bolivia in the Summer of 2023. Bishop Walter is very keen for this visit to take place and we are working together with him to plan it.

The purpose of the trip is for Birmingham link parishes to visit their link church and, through two-way sharing and learning, to strengthen the partnership. Also, for churches not yet specifically linked, it is a chance to visit Bolivia with a view to the creation of future links. It is intended that there should also be a gathering of all churches in one location so that mutual learning and training can take place.

As St Nicolas' Church, Kings Norton is linked to La Trinidad, Cochabamba, we are enquiring if there is anyone who would like to find out more about this proposed visit to Bolivia.



Some Questions for You to Consider

Are you keen to learn about another culture?

Would you like to meet with Christians in another part of the world to share in the worship and witness of the church?

Do you have a particular interest in Bolivia?

Are you willing to share what you've learnt with your home parish and play an active part in continuing the link with Bolivia on your return?

If so...

The trip would take place in July and/or August 2023.

The duration of the trip would be 16 to 17 days.

There is some funding available but some self-funding or fund raising would be required.

We are looking for up to four people to visit each region. These could be from different churches in Birmingham.

The deadline for an expression of interest is Thursday 20th October 2022. This would be followed up with further conversations.

Any questions? Please contact:

Amanda Featherstone
Bishop's Advisor for Global Mission Learning
0121 413 3287

NIELSEN : SYMPHONY NO 1
BEETHOVEN : SYMPHONY NO 2

WWW.EROICA.ORG.UK



NO TICKETS
PAY WHAT YOU FEEL

SAT 15TH OCT 2022
7.30PM
ST NICOLAS CHURCH
KINGS NORTON

From the Bishop of Norwich

I keep bees in my garden in Norwich and over the holidays they were busy making lots of honey. One bee is different from all of the other bees in the beehive and she is called the Queen Bee. All the other bees look to her to help them know what to do.

For seventy years we have had someone in our country who we have looked to for help. She was called Queen Elizabeth II.

Last week Queen Elizabeth died at her castle in Scotland. Balmoral is a beautiful castle, surrounded by purple heather-covered hills and rivers with salmon swimming in them. There are lots of old pine trees, and eagles soar in the sky. Queen Elizabeth loved being there.

She also loved being at her home in Norfolk. At Sandringham, Her Late Majesty enjoyed seeing her foals being born and walking her dogs. Sometimes I went to see her there and we always had a good chat. I felt I was speaking to a very special person who was very wise.

She often said that she looked to Jesus to help her to know what to do.

I always took The Queen a jar of my bees' honey. She served the honey for tea.

Last weekend I went to tell my bees that The Queen had died. A lot of beekeepers tell their bees important

news. The bees were very quiet when I told them.

I felt sad because I can't take Queen Elizabeth any more of their honey. I imagine you might have also felt sad in the last few days. It's okay to feel sad and to cry when someone dies.

I told the bees also about King Charles III. He is a very kind man. He cares for the environment – and for bees. He wants to be a King who serves with loyalty, respect and love – just like his Mother.

I've been saying 'thank you' to God for Queen Elizabeth's life and how she served our country and the Commonwealth. She has gone now to be with God in heaven, where she is held in God's love, along with Prince Philip.

I have also been asking God to look after King Charles and his family. That is why we sing 'God save the King!'

Thank you for reading this and I hope you will remember happy things about Queen Elizabeth. Now we look forward to the happy things that King Charles will do.

With every blessing,

Bishop Graham

The Right Reverend Graham Usher
Bishop of Norwich

Waiting...

My husband kept bees. He had three hives at the bottom of our garden in Lincolnshire. We had some good honey. He kitted himself out with the proper gear when he wanted to check honeycombs and hive activity and was stung only once or twice. The bees busied themselves through the summer and never bothered me until a stray one was caught in my hair. There was loud buzzing as it tried to escape. I shook my head vigorously in an effort to release it. My husband came to help but couldn't find it. The buzzing turned to a high-pitched frantic whine and I waited for the inevitable, the painful sting. There was silence and, within minutes, an extremely large swelling on the back of my head. Not pleasant.

I am now living in one of 40 flats built for the over 55s. A few weeks ago a friend phoned from one of these flats to say that she had Covid. She wanted to warn me, because we had spent time together two days previously. Shortly afterwards, another friend called with the message, "I have Covid". We had had daily sessions playing Scrabble. I took a test, which was negative, then put on a mask, nipped out to the local shop for a few essential items, and stayed at home, waiting. Sure enough, in an afternoon, tiredness and feeling out of sorts came over me, followed by coughing, a runny nose and stuffiness. The miserableness lasted three days. Two tests were positive. Online advice: stay home for five days or until testing negative. Vulnerable people were close by so the three of us were avoiding contact with anyone. Another time of waiting.

I enjoy going out and about, engaging with others, but the thought of some quiet time in my own space had its appeal. As I am an ageing individual, this could be a practice time for months or years ahead when inability restricts. But at the start of Covid that's where we all were, told to stay home, anxious about the invisible threat, relying on family, friends



PHOTO BY ANETE LUSINA



and deliveries for supplies. We are waiting then, uncertain as to the outcome.

We spend a lot of time waiting. Some waits are filled with eager anticipation, others involve fear, worrying, even anger. Waits can be lengthy or short-lived. Many pass us by because they are just a part of life. It's interesting to reflect on our "waits". What are you waiting for now?

After five days, I had my negative Covid test and could emerge. My time I've been occupied with sleeping, watching TV, reading and I had knitted a poppy tea cozy requested by my son. My two friends also slept and busied themselves with books, puzzles and craft activities.

I'll end with a poem which one of them, Barbara Wilkinson, was inspired to write.

*Oh dear, I'm stuck in here.
I cannot go out of the door.
I'm fed up and feeling blue.
I really can't stand any more.*

*The weather is sunny and hot.
It's what everyone's waited for.
I just look out of my window
While temperatures still soar.*

*Stopping in is not much fun
And word-searches are a bore.
There is television, of course,
Full of adverts and repeats galore.*

*Now the Covid has gone at last!
I can go out of my door.
Off I pop, feeling great.
Straight into a heavy downpour!*



PHOTO BY MERUYERT GONULLU

YOUR PARISH CHURCH

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

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

THE MINISTRY TEAM

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 Advisor Susan Farrell
Pastoral Care Team Coordinator..... The Revd Jayne Crooks

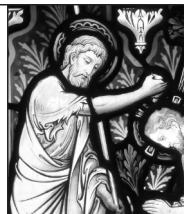
THE CHURCH WARDENS

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

OTHER CONTACTS

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Artist Bernard Sleigh

The man who mapped Fairyland

You have probably never heard of Bernard Sleigh, but in certain ways he was one of the most remarkable people ever to emerge from Kings Norton, a man who overcame modest beginnings and a life-threatening brain operation to become one of the very few people in the world to have both his art and his books stored in the most significant library in the world, the Library of Congress in Washington DC.

He was born here in 1872, when Kings Norton was still a relatively isolated rural community. There's no record of where he lived or who his parents were, but it is safe to say that he was from a working class family because, after a minimal education, he was apprenticed to a wood engraver at the age of 14. Within a matter of years, he had become successful locally, but then as a young man of 24 he suffered a brain aneurism and had to undergo the very risky process of trepanning to ease the bleeding inside his head. He survived to live to the age of 82 and to achieve international recognition for his talents.

During his apprenticeship, Bernard had the initiative to become a frequent user of Birmingham Library, then a dour edifice in Union Street. Despite its sombre atmosphere, he came to call it his "second home, a spiritual one for more than 40 years". He also began to broaden his horizons by attending Birmingham School of Art to expand his skills, under the

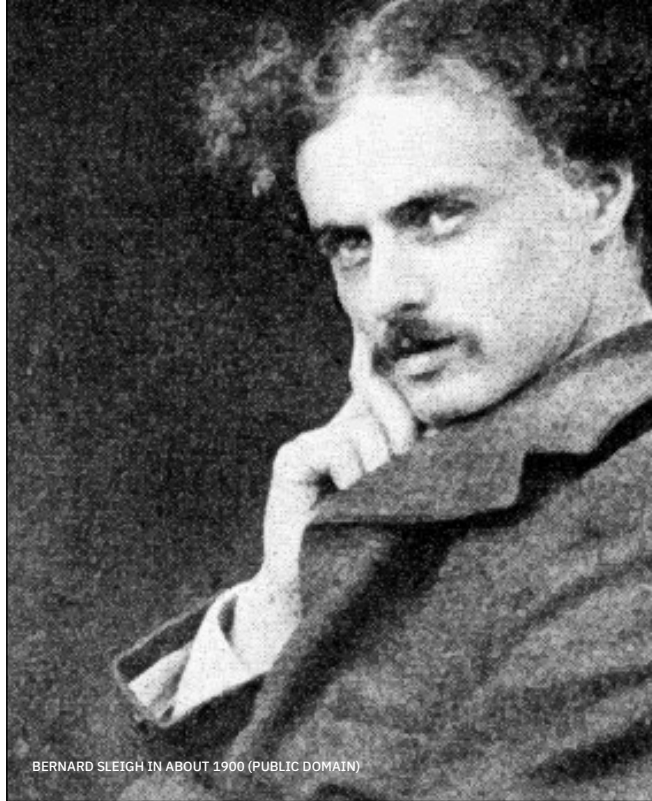


MICHAEL
WRITES
REGULARLY
ON LOCAL
HISTORY

mentoring of the celebrated local painter Arthur Gaskin. His skill of wood engraving was at that time a long-established process for creating prints and illustrations for books, and even in his teenage years he obtained many commissions to produce material for these purposes. One of his major achievements was the cutting of more than 100 illustrations for a two-volume edition of Hans Christian Andersen's stories in 1893, at the age of only 21.

But he also developed much wider abilities. By 1918, he was promoting himself as capable of producing wall paintings, or murals, stained glass windows, engraving on metal surfaces and furniture inlays. He loved to travel across Britain and Europe and illustrated these journeys with a series of very attractive watercolours. He received a number of commissions from the Birmingham authorities, including historic maps of various areas of the city, including one of the city as a whole as it would have been in 1760.

At Birmingham School of Art, he was heavily influenced by the great Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones, prompting his own artistic style. He was also influenced



BERNARD SLEIGH IN ABOUT 1900 (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

by medieval art and by a strong Christian faith.

He had always been interested in mythology and folklore, particularly fairy tales. Indeed, after his trepanning, he claimed that the section of his brain on which the operation took place remained undeveloped from the age of 24, while the other section developed normally. He said that this condition orientated him toward legends and fairy stories.

These abiding passions prompted the work that was to bring him international recognition. It was called "An Ancient Mappe of Fairyland,



The Mappe



▲ LANDSCAPE
WITH
MIEVEAL
PROCESSION
TOWARDS A
PRIORY, 1953

Newly Discovered and Set Forth". A massive work of art, originally published in 1918, it is a remarkable bird's eye view of a mythical land with an extensive variety of scenes from literature, fairy tales, and Norse and Greek mythology in a beautifully-imagined landscape. Every area of the map is covered with images: Red Riding Hood's cottage; Avalon, complete with Kings Arthur's sword Excalibur; the Sea of Dreams; Valhalla on the horizon, Peter Pan's house; Cerberus, the guardian of the Underworld; and literally dozens of others. There are illustrations of fairy grottoes, wishing wells, elfin temples and shrines. Despite a number of somewhat inevitably rather frightening images, it is generally regarded as an optimistic work, showing the triumph of good over evil. There are

explanatory notes and comments around the perimeter. Its original publication was accompanied by "A Guide to the Map of Fairyland", a short pamphlet written by Bernard and dedicated to his two children.

Published at the end of World War I, "An Anciente Mappe of Fairyland" provided a charming and delightful antidote to the recent horrific images of the war, evoking the innocence of childhood. It was the product of years of Bernard's visions. His daughter Barbara wrote in a memoir, "One wet holiday (in 1912) my father drew a Map of Faeryland for us. On it were marked the sites of all our best-loved fairy-stories."

While the Mappe brough Bernard enhanced recognition across the United Kingdom, it

► A DETAIL
FROM "AN
ANCIENT
MAPPE OF
FAIRYLAND"

was also to bring him much wider acclaim. Its popularity spread from England to the U.S. in 1919-1920 after Ethel Sidgwick, wife of one of the Mapped's publishers, gave a copy as a gift to the New York Public Library's children's section. There it caught the eye of a New York publisher, who soon distributed the map in the United States, where it had a considerable impact. Since then, a copy has been stored in the art collection of the Library of Congress. It can be viewed on the library's website, along with other of Bernard's art works.

Bernard was also a prolific writer, producing books ranging from instruction on the art of wood engraving to his own fairy stories, "The Gates of Horn", published in 1927. Probably because of the success of "The Ancient Mapped", some of his books are also stored in the library, making him one of the rare instances of an individual who has both his literature and his art stored there.

Despite this major recognition, Bernard never seems to have been too concerned about building on his international reputation, contenting himself by being elected as a member of The Royal Society of Birmingham artists during the 1920s. He retired in 1937 to Chipping

Campden, living remarkably in the same house that had been occupied by his mentor Arthur Gaskin, The Old Forge House. On the Chipping Campden History Society website, there is a charmingly relaxed picture of Bernard outside the house, taken the year before he died in December 1954. It is accompanied by the memories of a local youth, whom Bernard paid to light his Aladdin paraffin stove and to boil a kettle, so that the kitchen would be warm, and the water ready to make tea, when he got out of bed.

Many of Bernard's works are held in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. You can also see prints of some of them, including his map of Birmingham in 1760, in the newly refurbished Navigation Inn on Wharf Road. Just look for the area with the leather armchairs!



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Black Sabbath

Bright Sunday

The Commonwealth games, held in various venues around Birmingham and the West Midlands, were by any measure a great success. Let's pray the legacy of these games will be something our city and region benefit from for years to come. Well done, Brum!

Organising such an extravaganza has taken years, two of which were dominated by the pandemic. A great deal of the creativity associated with the games goes into the planning of the opening and closing ceremonies of this festival of sporting prowess. The ceremonies bring together something of the history and culture of the location of the games and, in doing so, provide a snapshot of its sense of place and confidence. They are congratulatory and upbeat.

After all the medals have been won and the moments of

triumph and disappointment endured, the closing ceremony is where the celebrations are brought to a dramatic and spectacular conclusion. The final act for the closing ceremony is expected to seal the games with a last, breathtaking display. Who was chosen for this gig? Two of the original members of the heavy metal band Black Sabbath, Ozzy Osbourne and Tony Iommi.

As Birmingham and the West Midlands have a high proportion of people of faith, it was intriguing to note that the choice of Black Sabbath presented us with a band which, for 40 years, has been associated with the occult, satanism, drug and alcohol abuse and the worst excesses of heavy metal culture. The organisers' reasons were, presumably, that the band formed in Birmingham in the



Osbourne at CG

mid-1970s and has turned up there from time to time ever since. There is a Black Sabbath bench on Broad Street near Brindleyplace. It was their Birmingham roots and star appeal which prompted their invitation rather than any sensibilities about the content and character of their music or lifestyles.

As someone who has never understood the appeal of heavy metal music, I decided to research Black Sabbath's history and Mr Osbourne and Mr Iommi's appeal. The results were surprising and revealing. They were both products of industrial working class Birmingham, factory workers who saw the potential of

▼BLACK SABBATH IN JULY 1970. FROM L TO R: GEEZER BUTLER, TONY IOMMI, BILL WARD, OZZY OSBOURNE

music as an escape from the daily grind. They were not interested in the “bubble gum” sunny pop music being played by bands such as the Beatles in the 60s and early 70s. They experienced the darker side of industrial Birmingham and what it did to people and they were pessimistic about the way the world was going. This is the time of the Vietnam war, the civil rights movements, the start of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the constant fear of nuclear warfare. They thought the devil was ruling the world.

One of the other early band members who had dabbled in the occult saw a demonic



PUBLIC DOMAIN

apparition which so shocked him when he shared it with the band that they made a song about it called "Black Sabbath". The audience's reaction to the song was such that they recognised a market for such quasi-occultist music and changed their band's name to the title of the song.

Black Sabbath were one of the most successful heavy metal bands of the 70s and 80s. Though the band eventually split up, Ozzy and Tony remained on good terms. Perhaps their friendship endured because, surprisingly, they both professed an interest in Christianity. Mr Iommi was born into a Roman Catholic family (his parents were Italian) and its influence stayed with him. As early as 1982, Mr Osbourne told a reporter he was an Anglican and prayed before each concert.

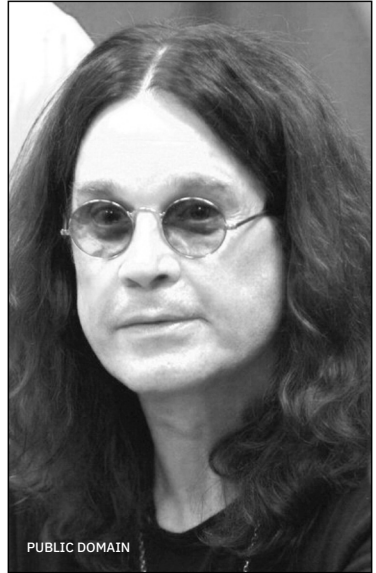
In 2002, they both performed a special concert in Birmingham. If you watch it on YouTube, it is clear that Mr Iommi's guitar had white crosses along the fretboard. Also, the same cross symbol was on the bank of speakers behind him. As the main vocalist, Mr Osbourne ends the concert by proclaiming the benediction "God bless you all!" These were also his last words at the closing ceremony of the Commonwealth Games.

In 2017, Mr Iommi wrote a special piece of choral music based upon one of the Psalms for Birmingham Cathedral choir. It was an act of thanksgiving after he had undergone successful treatment for cancer. Both men are now in their early 70s with dyed hair and still wearing the black "goth" outfits which marked them out when they were much younger. They have each been on a journey through stardom, fabulous wealth, drug and alcohol abuse. Yet they have found peace and meaning in a sort of Christian faith. It would be a neat story of redemption: from rags to riches, to drugs and depravation, to God and peace. But I'm not convinced that this is the whole story.

If anyone takes the time to read the lyrics of their songs, another story emerges. These are stories of subversion. Rather than glorifying the occult, their lyrics are often a warning against it and against the drug induced states which are so self-destructive. Mr Osbourne passed through the worst aspects of this himself, survived and sobered up. The last verse of their hit song "Paranoid", with which the Commonwealth Games closing ceremony ended, is a lament by someone who has glimpsed happiness but couldn't embrace it because their mind was too spoiled by excess.

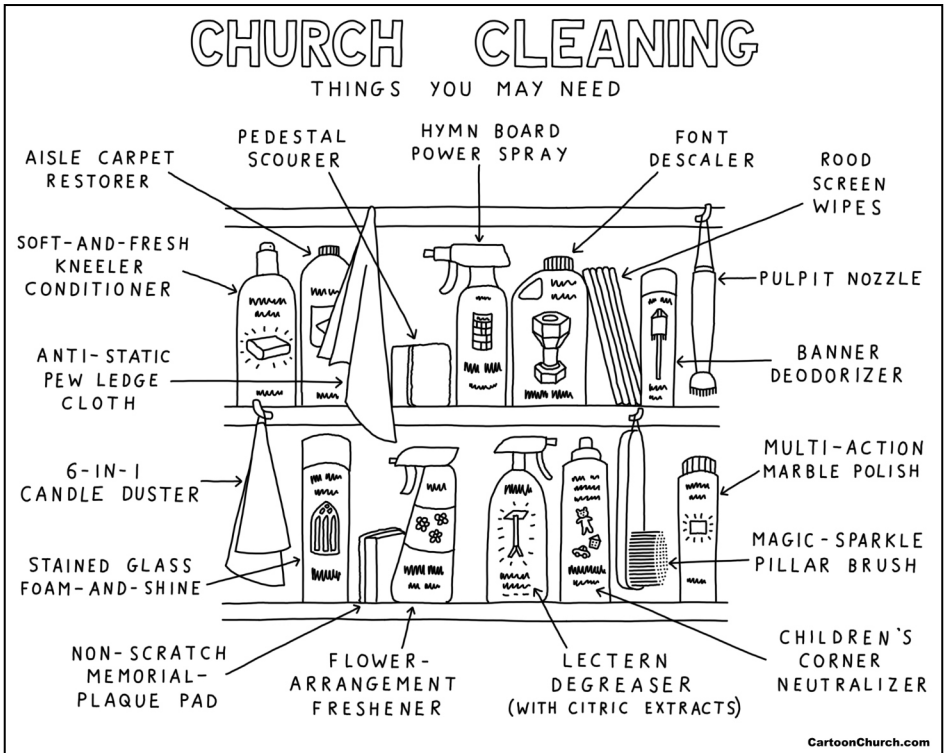
“And you will laugh
 And I will cry
 Happiness I cannot feel
 And love to me is so unreal
 And so as you hear these words
 Telling you now of my state
 I tell you to enjoy life
 I wish I could but it's too late.”

► OZZY
 OSBOURNE IN
 2010



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Though I'm now more sympathetic towards these two musical stars, other Birmingham and Black Country bands could have been invited to end the closing ceremony. How about UB40 or Slade? Maybe they were simply unavailable.



THE HUNGRY GARDENER

Free Up Your Freezer



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

With all the talk about rising energy bills, our family has been looking at ways to make savings. Fridges and freezers use a lot of energy. However, they are a relatively modern invention; so it got me thinking. How can we preserve some of our food so we can store food on our shelves and be more energy efficient with our fridges and freezers? What did people do before fridges and freezers?

There are alternative ways of storing cold food that doesn't require energy. When the weather is colder, we use the greenhouse. Surprisingly, sometimes food keeps better in the greenhouse than it will in the fridge. In Alys Fowler's book "Abundance" (which is a fountain of knowledge on the topic of storing and preserving without modern appliances) she creates an "in-ground cold store" by digging a hole the size of a dustbin and then putting the dustbin inside the hole. Other items than

dustbins can be used instead as long as they have a lid.

There are many ways to preserve food. I find the easiest to be dehydration. I dry a lot of my herbs and chillis in the kitchen by hanging them up from string and letting them dangle from a shelf. Great candidates for this are oregano, sage, thyme, chillis, fennel seed, coriander seeds, to name but a few. This works well for small things and also looks fantastic. If your runner beans have dried on the plant, empty them into a roasting tin and let them dry. If your peas and broadbeans dried in the pods, jar them up. To prepare them to eat, just soak them in water overnight before you plan your meal.

We use a dehydrator. I got a very cheap one from Amazon about five years ago and it is still going strong. I use this to dry all sorts of things. Favourites are cherry tomatoes, apples, bananas

and kale. Kale chips are delicious. To prepare them for dehydrating add flavourings of your choice e.g. cider vinegar, salt, vegetable oil (whichever you use in your kitchen), mix all together in a bowl so the kale absorbs all the flavour and then lay them in the dehydrator. If you don't have one, the lowest setting on your oven will do the job. A sunny window sill also works well. You can dehydrate almost anything and the beauty of it is that once it is dehydrated you need use no more electricity to store it.

Sugar will preserve your fruit in the form of jam. This can be stored on a shelf or hidden away until you want it. Strawberry is my all-time favourite jam and I won't open it until January to remind me of their summer flavour six months later. We also make raspberry and blackberry jam. This year, the quince tree is brimming with fruit so we will be making quince jam this month. This is a great fun family activity. To make jam, get your biggest pan out, measure your fruit and put it in the pan, add sugar to exactly the same weight as your fruit. Put the cover on your pan and leave overnight. This will allow the fruit to macerate in the sugar and will draw out the liquid from the fruit. Next morning, boil your jam and when it bubbles test

the jam by dipping a teaspoon into it. Remove the teaspoon and pour the jam from the teaspoon onto a plate, then push the jam with the tip of the teaspoon. If it wrinkles your jam is ready. Some fruits don't contain pectin and pectin sets the jam. Strawberry, raspberry and blackberry don't have pectin so we add an apple, which contains pectin, to the fruit of each of these jams.

Vinegar is a great preserver. Think pickled onions, pickled gherkins, pickled beetroot, and so on. All vegetables can be pickled with vinegar. I have recently learnt that, with a bit of preparation, the unintentional creation of mushy pickles can be avoided. Place your vegetables in a dish, sprinkle some salt over them and leave overnight. Next day, remove them from the dish and place them in the pickling jar. The vegetables often make liquid. You can use this in the pickle if you wish. The following day, place your vegetables in your jar and pour vinegar over them until it completely covers them. If the vinegar is too tart you can add sugar to your taste. This will keep on the shelf for about six months. Buy the vinegar in bulk for a fraction of the cost.

Fermentation in salt is another way to preserve your food.



There is the traditional cabbage sauerkraut. However, you can ferment most fruits and vegetables too. There are different salt preparations for different vegetables and I would strongly encourage you to have a look at recipes online or borrow a recipe book from the library. Sauerkraut has a 2% salt content to the weight of cabbage and courgette or cucumber pickles have a 4-5% salt content. If your kitchen is cool your fermentation will be slow. Warmth speeds up the fermentation. The flavour will keep evolving. You can stop fermentation when you like the flavour by placing it in the fridge but your food will remain preserved on your countertop and carry on fermenting. It will become progressively less sweet and, if you are not sure about the flavour directly from the jar, you can cook with the vegetable and add other flavours. If it's really not a winner in your household, put it on the compost and start another fermentation experiment. This winter I am planning to try and make a Korean ferment called kimchi and I am trying to grow some Korean radishes and Asian mustards especially.

Preserving is so much fun and you may discover some new family favourites. Maybe ask your relatives if they have any recipes you can try. Swapping preserves is also a great activity and giving someone home-made jam in the middle of winter is a great gift.



Back to the Plastic

When we lived to the south of Rome we worshipped at the Anglican chaplaincy, near Piazza di Spagna (photo opposite), in the heart of the city. The chaplain there told the story of an invitation he had received to an official function at the Vatican. The seats were numbered and he found himself on a plush seat near the front of the Papal reception. The seat next to his was unoccupied. It was labelled as intended for a Romanian Cardinal. As the event was about to begin, a young diplomat leaned over and asked if it was free. The chaplain pointed to the name on it. "Doesn't look as if he's coming," said the young man and promptly sat on it with a happy sigh.

A few minutes after the occasion began, there was a rustle and a bustling, and muttered exclamations of 'Scusi! Scusi! Scusi!' ('Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!'). In an impressive flurry of red robes, the behatted Cardinal had arrived! "Ah well," said the diplomat with resignation, "it's back to the plastic for me!" The first was definitely made last here!

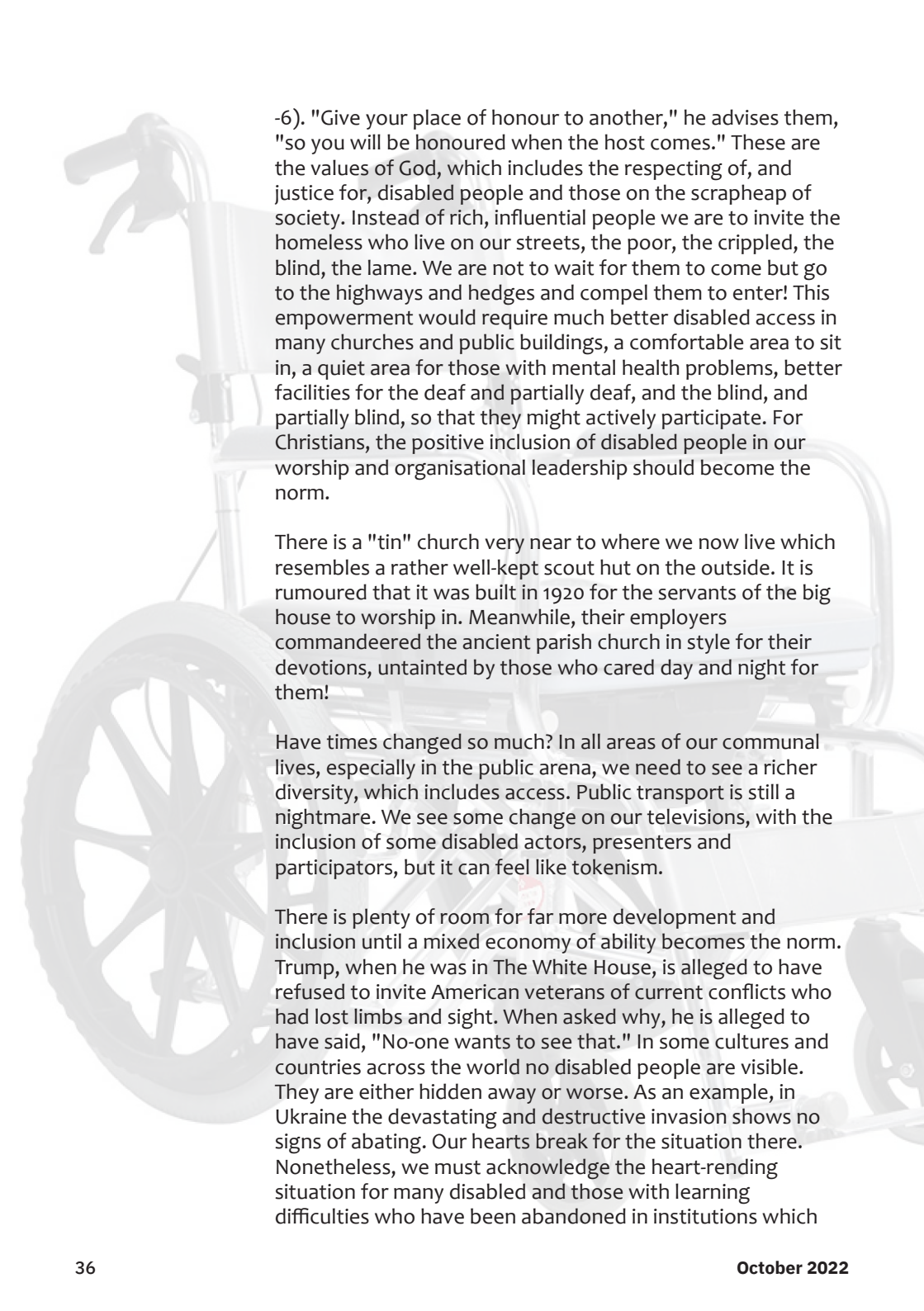
I was reminded of this recently in the Gospel reading from Luke 14: 1-24. These verses are well worth a re-read. Included amongst them are the parables of the Wedding Feast and the Great Banquet. Jesus is invited to a posh supper at the house of a high-ranking Pharisee. The invitation is a poisoned chalice, however, as he is being watched carefully. Everything he says and does is noted.

Jesus is well aware of this. He does not temper his clear message throughout, that the self-important will be humbled and the humble exalted. This is not a teaching which goes down well in parts of our modern society.

We can't claim the high moral ground here. The House of God often appears to shut out disabled people by its inaccessibility. Jesus had a great deal to say about giving the seat of honour, which would include the best access, to those the world values least. He noted how badly the Pharisees treated a disabled man they had invited to dinner (verses 2



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



-6). "Give your place of honour to another," he advises them, "so you will be honoured when the host comes." These are the values of God, which includes the respecting of, and justice for, disabled people and those on the scrapheap of society. Instead of rich, influential people we are to invite the homeless who live on our streets, the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. We are not to wait for them to come but go to the highways and hedges and compel them to enter! This empowerment would require much better disabled access in many churches and public buildings, a comfortable area to sit in, a quiet area for those with mental health problems, better facilities for the deaf and partially deaf, and the blind, and partially blind, so that they might actively participate. For Christians, the positive inclusion of disabled people in our worship and organisational leadership should become the norm.

There is a "tin" church very near to where we now live which resembles a rather well-kept scout hut on the outside. It is rumoured that it was built in 1920 for the servants of the big house to worship in. Meanwhile, their employers commandeered the ancient parish church in style for their devotions, untainted by those who cared day and night for them!

Have times changed so much? In all areas of our communal lives, especially in the public arena, we need to see a richer diversity, which includes access. Public transport is still a nightmare. We see some change on our televisions, with the inclusion of some disabled actors, presenters and participators, but it can feel like tokenism.

There is plenty of room for far more development and inclusion until a mixed economy of ability becomes the norm. Trump, when he was in The White House, is alleged to have refused to invite American veterans of current conflicts who had lost limbs and sight. When asked why, he is alleged to have said, "No-one wants to see that." In some cultures and countries across the world no disabled people are visible. They are either hidden away or worse. As an example, in Ukraine the devastating and destructive invasion shows no signs of abating. Our hearts break for the situation there. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge the heart-rending situation for many disabled and those with learning difficulties who have been abandoned in institutions which

are totally inadequate to meet their needs. As well as a lasting peace, there need to be both immediate and long-term solutions of compassion.

I close with a personal story of the last being first. In the 1990s, a dear friend from student days had been appointed to cover his first curacy at St. Paul's Cathedral. If I remember correctly, his title was Junior Cardinal Precentor. I went to the cathedral in London with another mutual friend. The gimlet-eyed woman at the ticket counter was rather put out when we were swept past the front of the queue by our friend (which raises the vexed question of having to pay large sums to visit some cathedrals; but that's for another time).

He gave us the full tour of St. Paul's. We were shown Christopher Wren's building plans to replace the earlier cathedral, which had been lost in the great fire of London, from the original designs to the proposals eventually used. There was a magnificent, full-scale model up in the eaves of one of his prototypes. Ancient manuscripts and books were being lovingly restored and preserved by volunteers. This included an early copy of Queen Catherine Parr's prayer book, the first book published in England by a woman, a reformer, under her own name. There were ancient chunks of stone and fragments of wood from the original church. This tour proved to be a much bigger privilege than we realised at the time, as these areas are no longer accessible to staff, let alone visitors.

Afterwards, we went for some refreshment. We had been invited to

sit in the chancel area for Evensong, a service over which our friend was presiding. We joined the queue in good time, but we were turned away at the door by the verger. He rather curtly told us that there was no room left and instructed us to sit in the main body of the church. This seemed odd to us as we could see some seats free but thought they were reserved, though not for the likes of us! We're British. We didn't argue but slunk off quietly and took our places down the aisle. There were building works in the main body of the church, so we found ourselves a long way back from the chancel, definitely in the lowest place.

The Evensong choir and clergy began to process in. Suddenly our friend spotted us. He left the procession and walked straight up to us, escorting us to a prominent place in the chancel. It was hard not to throw a triumphant look the verger's way but instead, we apologized! "And the last will be made first ..."

In the words of Jesus in Luke 14, "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." In truth, none of us wants to go back to the plastic seats. We would rather be welcomed to eat at the resurrection of the righteous. Amen to that!

Meanwhile, a blessed and safe autumn to all.

Food, Glorious Food!

I am going back in time to the late 1940s. Rationing was still in force, which allowed only a limited although a quite healthy diet. We could have one egg a week, 2 ounces of sugar and butter per person, and so on. Sweets were a luxury for us kids in those days, but we had sherbet dabs and licorice rods. Can you remember those? (A question for those of certain age, like myself).

My family lived in the Sparkhill area of Birmingham. Ladypool Road was the main shopping street. It ran from the Stratford Road up to Church Road. It is all rather different these days and has become known as the Balti Belt.

I can remember a church in Ladypool Road called Saint Barnabas. It is long gone now, I believe. One of the older boys in our little gang boasted of how he earned five shillings a week by pumping the organ in church. There was a long, wooden handle at the side of the organ and a chair for the pumper. However, he got the sack because, on one Sunday, he was unwell and had to rush home. As a result, there was no hymn singing in the service that day. But I digress and I must continue as advertised.

On Saturday mornings, I was sent by Mum to queue up at a butcher's shop situated in Church Road. The main attraction was the cold meats.



Eddie ponders childhood memories and preserving food

A line of mainly housewives and children snaked along the pavement outside Rowbottom's. Cold ham, corned beef and pork were rationed to four ounces each. Those who arrived late and who found themselves at the back of the queue would end up with a few slices of brawn. Mother would not be pleased and I would not get my usual bribe of sixpence! So I was keen to be early.

These days, we have no rationing. Or do we? We may be starting to see a form of restriction in our food shopping. Some foods are becoming less available in some places. Prices are rising. Are we perhaps entering a period of self-rationing? And will we also be rationing our gas and electricity as bills increase?

When I was at sea, preservation of food was important in order to avoid shortages. Here are a few tips

drawn from those days which apply to food which does not need to be deep frozen. Have you a thermometer in your fridge? Five degrees is the temperature you should aim for. Thermometers are cheap to buy and, with their help, you can turn your fridge down, especially at night or when you go away, to save power.

Cold meat should be placed loose in plastic containers lined with kitchen roll. This is especially important when storing bacon and will ensure a longer shelf life. If you buy iceberg lettuce, remove the plastic wrapper, trim it well from the base, and then wrap it in clean newspaper, renewing the paper regularly as needed. The lettuce will keep for more than a week or even a fortnight. At sea, this was one of the first things we did after loading our stores. Fresh lettuce would then be available for extended periods during a long voyage.

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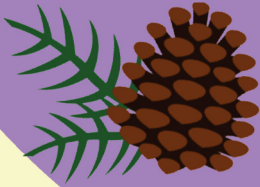
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