

# KINGS NORTON

Parish Magazine



Your Magazine is Changing

New rhythm! New price! New writers?

Tomb Shifters Get it Wrong

Facing the wrong way in church

The Future of the Church of England

Danny Kruger MBE MP on the nation's need for Christian faith

August 2025 • £1.50 • [kingsnorton.org.uk](http://kingsnorton.org.uk)



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Text & images for publication should be emailed as file attachments or entrusted to the Parish Office, sealed and marked for the attention of the Editor.

**Submission Deadlines**

Items for inclusion in the Sept-Oct 2025 edition must reach the Editor by midnight on **Friday 7th Aug.**

Items for inclusion in the Nov-Dec 2025 edition must reach the Editor by midnight on **Friday 2nd Oct.**

# Welcome

**EDITORIAL**

Tucked away at the back of this edition (p.36) is an article by a plant expert who confirms what we know instinctively: plants with deep roots are better equipped to survive difficult conditions. It is the roots that matter. Keeping them fed and watered is the key.

Danny Kruger MP made a similar point in his powerful speech during a recent Commons debate on the future of the Church of England (p.14). Our nation has deep Christian roots. If Britain is now, in his words, “at risk economically, culturally, socially and... morally,” it is because those roots have been severed or damaged. His urgent appeal to reconnect with them—a call for a revival of faith for the good of the nation—deserves our full attention and a wider audience.

Just as plants and civilisations have roots, so do we. If we cultivate them, we thrive; if we neglect them, we become vulnerable. On p.32, Josiah Trenham, an Eastern Orthodox priest, reminds us of our spiritual roots, which nourish us only if we pray. He claims that prayerlessness lies at the root of much human suffering. We become who we were designed to be by learning to pray.

Our parish is about to enter a challenging time as we embark on an interregnum, a period of waiting between one Rector and the next. Whether we grow as a church during this time—in compassion, patience, commitment, wisdom, trust, and in many other ways—will depend, to some extent, on the depth and health of our roots. It is a good moment to remember the image from Jeremiah 17: the tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream does not fear when heat comes and never ceases to bear fruit.

*David Ash*

# Your Magazine is *Changing*

**T**he Kings Norton Parish Magazine has been a monthly publication for at least the past century. During much of that time, it reached a wide audience. In the mid-1950s, for example, St Nicolas' Church was printing and selling almost 3,000 copies a month.

The vicar of the time, The Reverend E.G.Ashford (1949-1965), estimated that the magazine was read by up to 10,000 people as it passed from hand to hand. This delighted him, because it enabled him to reach a broad cross-section of his parishioners with his frank and uncompromising Vicar's Letters, in which he didn't shrink from sharing his deeply-held convictions with his flock.

## **A vicar with strong views**

Here is an example from February 1950, an era when the village Parson could berate the souls in his care without much

fear of contradiction, a decade in which deference had not yet died and one could still appeal to 'Christian duty' in public.

*'My dear friends, [...] I value the increasing distribution of our Parish Magazine, in that it gives me the very opportunity to reach the minds and hearts of those who are careless of their duty to God. If any of you church-goers know such people I should be particularly grateful if this month you would contrive to bring this letter to their notice.'*

*'They fall into many categories. First of all there is the group who would find it very difficult to come to God's house on Sunday, well nigh impossible to come even once, but not quite impossible. I have yet to meet the man or woman who cannot arrange to do the things they want to do, if they want to do it urgently enough [...].'*

*'Then there is a second group for whom a visit once a week to God's house would present a certain modicum of difficulty. But of these I would say even more readily that, if they really wanted to, they could come.'*



*These people tell me that it is the only day they get to wash their stockings, clean the house thoroughly, have one comfortable family meal together, get a round of golf, or even relax a little. In the generation of a growing five-day working week these excuses wash even thinner than they did before.*

*‘There is a third group, who just could not care less, as the Americans say...’*

For Edward Ashford, the magazine was a megaphone through which to broadcast the church’s presence and the Christian Gospel to the Kings Norton community. I have sometimes wondered what would happen if we dared to imitate his no-nonsense style in today’s magazine. How would a modern audience respond to his way of straight talking about duty and commitment? It doesn’t seem to have done his sales figures any harm!

### **Our shrinking readership**

I have been the Editor of this magazine for almost 12 years. During that time, the largest number of copies we have printed has been about 600. For the past year or so, we have been printing 270 and, as the piles of unsold magazines at the back of church will tell you, we struggle to sell or give away more than 240 or so these days.

Those piles are getting bigger every month.

The magazine’s success relies on the creativity and willingness of a very small core group, smaller now than before the clergy departures of the past month or so. Of our group of writers, three are well into retirement and cannot be expected to continue indefinitely. Others are about to take on greater levels of responsibility as the Rector leaves and the interregnum begins. Despite regular appeals over several years, few new contributors have come forward. It is therefore reasonable to assume that there will be fewer articles to print in future.

### **Advertising & online sales**

Meanwhile, our advertising has been in decline for a while. It stopped completely in December 2024, when the three remaining contracts came to an end. No enquiries have been received from former advertisers about continuing to place adverts with us. Given the size of our audience, this should come as no surprise.

You may ask why, in our attempt to attract a broader readership, we have not put the magazine online. The answer is that we have. We have been selling the Parish Magazine in digital form via the

parish website since April 2024. In all that time, we have sold 4 copies.

### **It's time to reflect**

We've reached the point where we need to pause and take stock. And that is what we have been doing.

In May of this year, I put together a report for the Parochial Church Council about the recent history of the magazine and setting out where I thought it was headed. It included detailed costings and projections. The PCC gave the report careful thought and accepted the following recommendations, which will be implemented at the end of this month.

### **Two months at a time**

The Kings Norton Parish Magazine will become a bi-monthly publication with effect from September. You will therefore see a Sept-Oct 25 edition, followed by a Nov-Dec 25 edition, and so forth into 2026.

Subscribers who have paid in advance for a certain number of copies will receive those copies, but over a longer period. For example, if you have just taken out a 12-month subscription, the 12 copies you have paid for will be delivered over the next two years at no extra cost to you. You will not

be asked to renew your subscription until you have received all the copies you have paid for.

### **Two pounds per copy**

Printing costs continue to rise. For the past few years, the parish has been subsidising the magazine when sales revenue has fallen short. Given the current pressure on finances, we need to review this practice. The cover price of the magazine will therefore rise to £2 in September. Regular subscribers will benefit financially, since the current subscription price of £18 per year ( $12 \times £1.50$ ) will drop to £12 ( $6 \times £2$ ).

A retail price of £2 will allow the parish to make a modest profit every two months as long as most issues consist of no more than 40 pages, as at present. In other words, a small percentage of your £2 will contribute towards the work of the church.

### **Planning ahead**

Because we will no longer be going to press every month, a degree of forward planning will be necessary.

Details of Advent and Christmas services and activities will appear in the Nov-Dec edition. The deadline by which that information must reach me will be the beginning of October.

Details of Holy Week and Easter events will be printed in the Mar-Apr edition, for which the submission deadline will be the beginning of February.

The PCC considered other patterns, including the possibility of producing a quarterly magazine, and decided that the arrangements set out here were the best fit for our needs.

### **Quality before quantity**

My submission to the church council concluded with these words:

*'I hope that, as a result of this review, the parish will continue to offer a well-written, visually appealing, and affordable magazine, one that "takes the walls off the church" by engaging with the local community and providing content of genuine interest and value to the people of Kings Norton.*

*'With the Ministry Team, Wardens, PCC, and others soon to be fully occupied by the interregnum and its challenges, it is sensible to reduce their workload wherever possible. Regular contributors to the magazine will benefit from a less demanding schedule, and recruiting new writers may become easier if articles are only required every two months.'*

### **Writers needed**

Which brings me to my last point. Now that there is no longer any risk of your being asked to write for the magazine on a monthly basis, would you consider becoming a contributor? If you're interested and have an idea that you think might work, please contact me and I'll explain the sort of material that we are looking for. If you need inspiration, peruse the extensive library of back copies on the parish website.

### **For what has been, thanks**

There is a poster in the window of the Parish Office on The Green which claims that we have 'one of the best parish magazines in the country'. I believe that to be true, and I receive regular feedback from readers who encourage me to think so.

I cannot finish, therefore, without expressing, on your behalf, our gratitude to all those whose generosity, hard work, creativity and goodwill have made the Parish Magazine what it has become in recent years. You know who you are; and so do our readers.

Thank you for keeping the show on the road, and for making it such a good one. Let's see if we can make it even better in the years ahead.

# Tomb Shifters Get It Wrong

Our beloved church is some 900 years old, so has perhaps more than its fair share of historic monuments and artefacts. I thought I knew most of the key facts, so it was something of a revelation when we were visited in June by the Church Monuments Society.

It's a national group, created to cater for those many people who love the tradition, history and just the 'feel' of church monuments of all sorts, from the small and simple to the sizeable and spectacular. It was a tribute to our church that, when the group's organiser wanted to organise a members' visit to Birmingham, we were one of only three churches to be selected.

Our Verger Shane Williams and I welcomed a group of some thirty visitors, warning them that they would probably know more about our treasures than we did! That quickly proved to be the case.

For example, when we guided them to one of our two main internally-located tombs in the space under the church tower,

the 'table' tomb built by Humfrie Lyttelton after his wife Martha died in 1588, we showed them the striking and rather charming incised alabaster images of the couple on the top. The group was fascinated to learn that Humfrie had built the tomb to share with Martha when he died but that, in fact, he lived for another 30 years or so. By then, he had become a significant landowner in Pershore and was buried there. So Martha has been on her own at St Nicolas' for some 437 years! We also told them that Humfrie's descendant, the great jazz trumpeter and radio personality Humphrey Lyttelton, had visited the tomb of his ancestor and had come away wanting to emulate his natty goatee beard!

Almost immediately, one visitor stole our thunder by saying that the Lyttelton tomb is the wrong way round! Now, we knew that the tomb had originally been in the church's North Aisle, and had had to be moved, possibly when the North Aisle was restructured in the 19th century. But how could you tell that it's the



**MICHAEL  
WRITES  
ABOUT  
LOCAL  
HISTORY**



wrong way around? The answer, explained our expert visitors, was that the faces of Humfrie and Martha look towards our west door (the one under the tower), but that's the opposite of church practice over many centuries. The convention is that, where a tomb has illustrations of its occupant or occupants, they must always be looking towards the east end of the church, where the main altar is located. So those who had the rather doubtful privilege of shifting the tomb forgot one of the key principles!

There was a similar surprise when our guests turned round to look at the spectacular tomb of Sir Richard and Lady Anne Greves, built around 1632 when Sir Richard died. Looking down on their effigies are two sets of

four figures carved in stone. These are their eight children, four boys and four girls. But that carved memorial is also the wrong way round! The tomb was originally in our chancel, close to the main altar, but was moved, along with the other monuments related to it, when the church was effectively remodelled in the 1870s. Those who moved the tomb did make sure that Sir Richard and Lady Anne were looking towards the high altar to the east, but there was another important error.

Apparently, the tradition had been established for hundreds of years that effigies of male figures should always look towards the east, while female figures should look in the opposite direction. When Sir Richard and Lady Anne were in





the chancel, their tomb was probably positioned by the left-hand wall and they would have been looking towards the east. This meant that the carved effigies of their children were also sited on the left hand wall, so that the boys were looking east.

The problem might have been that, by the time the Greves tomb was moved in the 1870s, the Lyttelton tomb had most likely already been moved to its current location under the tower, so that space was no longer available. The Greves tomb therefore had to be located on the other side. The Greves children's memorial should have been located on the wall above the Lyttelton tomb if the boys were to have faced east, but with their parents located by the opposite wall, their children simply had to be positioned the wrong way around.

We might never have realised these errors without the visit from the Church Monuments

Society, and Shane and I waited to see if any others came to light. Fortunately, none did. The group was thrilled by the extremely modern plaque to the Reverend Wilbert Awdry, creator of 'Thomas the Tank Engine' while he was a curate here in the early 1940s. They were also grateful to be able to see the oldest visible tomb in the church, that of chantry priest Humfrey Toye, who died in 1513. The tomb is under the temporary altar at the east end of the south aisle, but that altar was moved so that our guests could have a clear view.

There was an unexpected degree of interest in another monument, the dramatic eagle lectern to the right front of the chancel as you face it. Because it is rarely if ever used for services, we couldn't tell the group much about it, but we have found out since the visit that it was created and presented to the church in 1872 and was most probably made by the world-famous Birmingham-based firm of Hardmans, a firm that was responsible not only for many of the stained glass windows in our church but for the windows in some of the world's most famous churches and cathedrals.

An intriguing and informative visit in several ways.

**CRAIG WILSON**

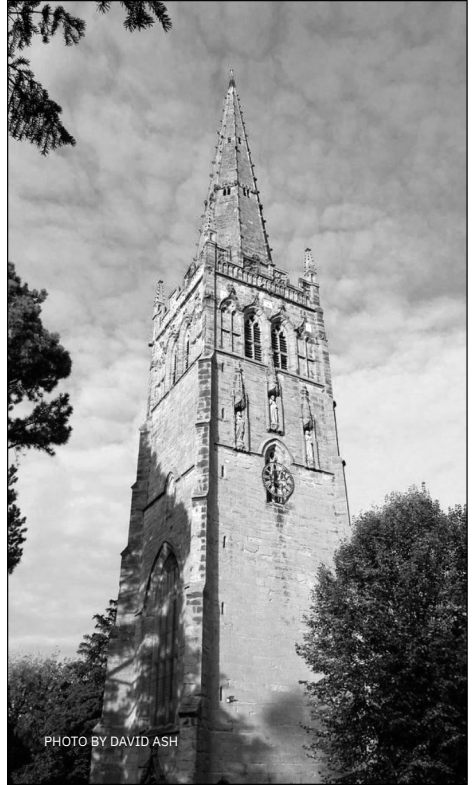
As I wonder about the things it's seen  
Standing high above Kings Norton Green  
Throughout a thousand years of history  
To me it is no mystery  
What makes this crumbling steeple  
Mean so much to all those people.

How many sweethearts here were wed,  
Or weeping came to bury dead?  
How many children have been bathed  
In holy waters before the nave?  
Who has marvelled at the painted glass  
Through which the warming sunbeams pass  
And paused for a moment of reflection  
At the story of the resurrection?  
How many have sat in silent prayer  
Seeking sanctuary from despair  
Or sung rejoicing songs of praise  
On long forgotten summer days?

Who else walked the grounds in spring  
To hear the feathered songbirds sing  
And felt the fervent gentle breeze  
That scatters blossom from the trees?  
Who beheld the beauty of the flower  
That rests in the shadow of the tower,  
Watered by the summer rain  
Dripping slowly from the window pane?  
Who sang carols in the snow  
Deep in winter long ago  
And heard the church bells chime  
For Christmas in another time?

Did soldiers at the altar stand  
Before they left for foreign lands?  
Just as the Christian knights before  
Called to battle in ancient war  
Clad in armour, riding noble steeds  
To save the world from evil deeds  
Now long memorialised in stone  
In a place they once called home.

# The Tower of St Nicolas'



Though a shadow of its former glory  
Still a constant in our village story  
Loved by countless generations  
Who restored with careful renovations  
To preserve the toil, joy and tears  
Of those people for a thousand years  
Who hoped and prayed this ancient door  
Would stay open for a thousand more.

*February 2024*

# Hello August!

'Welcome to August, where every day feels like a Sunday!' (anon). That's as may be, but there are so many things which need doing this month as we look towards 2026.

Keep Camellias and Rhododendrons watered throughout late summer because that is when the flower buds are formed for the following year.

Trim lavender when the flowers have turned brown, to contain its shape. Avoid cutting into the old wood.

Prune rambling roses where necessary, removing up to one third of the stems which have flowered. Check that all stems are attached to a support.

Keep pots and hanging baskets flowering by watering, deadheading and fertilising regularly.

Water newly-planted perennials when necessary for the first twelve months.

August is seed-sowing month for biennials. These hardy individuals will continue to grow, albeit a bit slowly, during the winter months and,

amazingly, will be untouched by frost and snow. My favourite is the *Bellis perennis*. It is great for the front of the border and there is even a giant variety.

Following on from a recent month's advice about greenhouses, if yours has a plastic cover, now is the time to strengthen the join between the cover and the frame and between the frame and the base. Plastic cable ties are great for the cover. If you have been supplied with guy ropes, check that they are well secured. The winter winds can be very strong, especially if you live at the top of a hill as we do! (The name of the hilltop, Windy Arbour, should have been a giveaway.) It is a bit embarrassing to have to ask your neighbour if you may have your greenhouse back, please!

Tomatoes can be grown in your greenhouse to overlap with that time when your bedding flowers have been planted out and when your tomato plants, which were sown two months earlier, can be transferred into bucket sized containers or grow-bags. Water regularly. Open the greenhouse door during the days of sunshine and feed with liquid tomato



fertilizer. Any ventilators can be left open all of the time. The taste of home-grown tomatoes straight off the vine is incomparable.

Tomatoes can also be grown outside in a sheltered spot which is in sunshine most of the day. Use the wonderful peat-free compost. Your plants will be smaller, the tomatoes will ripen later, but they will be the same size with that wonderful flavour.

As I write at the beginning of July I am wondering if we are going to have a summer drought announced soon and a hosepipe ban. Next month we will look at ways to minimise the damage caused by low rainfall.



A recent cake sale in St Nicolas' Churchyard, when combined with other donations, raised upwards of £750 for the Church Tower Appeal Fund. Thank you to all who took part! To contribute towards our fundraising efforts, visit [www.justgiving.com/charity/knpcc](http://www.justgiving.com/charity/knpcc).

# *The Future of* **the Church of England**



*On 17<sup>th</sup> July, Danny Kruger MBE MP, Conservative Member of Parliament for East Wiltshire since 2019, stood almost alone in the House of Commons to contribute to a debate about the future of the Church of England. An edited version of his speech is reprinted here under the Open Parliament License. The full text can be found at [hansard.parliament.uk](https://hansard.parliament.uk).*

It is an honour to stand here in this empty Chamber to speak about the original purpose of this space, when it was a chapel in the Church of England. The old Chamber of the House of Commons, on which this space was modelled after the great fire of 1834, was St Stephen's Chapel, formerly a royal church. [...]

When I speak of the Church of England today, I am not speaking about the internal politics of the Anglican sect; I speak of the common creed of our country, the official religion of the English and the British nation, and the institution, older than the monarchy, and much older than Parliament, which made this country. It is no surprise that both the Church and the country itself are in a bad way, divided, internally confused and badly led. The Church is riven by deep disputes over doctrine and governance, and is literally leaderless, with even the process of choosing the next Archbishop of Canterbury unclear, confused and contended. The country itself reflects that; unclear in its doctrines and its governance, profoundly precarious, chronically exposed to threats from without and within. It is at risk economically, culturally, socially and, I would say, morally.

Last month, in the space of three days in one infamous week, this House authorised the killing of unborn children—of nine-

month-old babies—and it passed a Bill to allow the killing of the elderly and disabled. I describe those laws in those stark terms not to provoke further controversy, but because those are the facts. We gave our consent to the greatest crime: the killing of the weak and most defenceless human beings. It was a great sin. If, standing here, I have any power to repent on behalf of this House, I hereby repent of what we did.

In the reaction to these votes, and all around us in reaction to the state of the country and the world, something else is happening. There is a great hunger in society for a better way of living, and I want to use this opportunity to explain what that better way is and why we here in England have the means to follow it.

The Jewish and Christian God is a God of nations. He is interested in people as individuals, but also as groups, as communities not only of kinship but of common worship, with a common God. Uniquely among the nations of the world, this nation, England, from which the United Kingdom grew, was founded and created consciously on the basis of the Bible and the story of the Hebrew people. In that sense, England is the oldest Christian country and the prototype of nations across the west. The story of England is the story of Christianity operating on a people to make the institutions and culture that have been uniquely stable and successful.

The western model was forged and refined in England over a thousand years from the 9th to the 19th centuries. What is that model? It is simply this: that power should arrange itself for the benefit of all the people under it, and specifically for the poorest and weakest; that the law is there to protect the ordinary person against the abuse of power; and that every individual has equal dignity and freedom, including, crucially, the freedom of conscience, religion and belief, which makes space for other religions under the Christian shield: a secular space. Indeed, the idea of a secular space is a Christian concept that is meaningful only in a Christian world. These are ideas that only make sense if one accepts that we have some intrinsic value, a value that is given to us and is not of our own making or invention.

Throughout the long years from the time of Alfred to the time of Victoria, it was assumed that a nation was a community of common worship and that our community, this country, worshipped the Christian God. Then, in the 20th century,

another idea arose: that it was possible for a country to be neutral about God; that the public square was empty of any metaphysics; and that the route to freedom lay through the desert of materialism and individual reason: “no hell below us, above us only sky”. That idea was wrong. The horrors of the 20th century attest to that, not least in the west, where we escaped totalitarianism but have suffered our own catastrophes of social breakdown, social injustice, loneliness and emptiness on a chronic scale.

Ugly and aggressive new threats are now arising, because we have found that in the absence of the Christian God, we do not have pluralism and tolerance, with everyone being nice to each other in a godless world. All politics is religious, and in abandoning one religion we simply create a space for others to move into. [...] Abandoning one religion we simply create a space for others to move into as the dominant faiths. There are two religions moving into the space from which Christianity has been ejected, and one is Islam. In a debate yesterday, I said how much I find myself in agreement with Muslim colleagues in Parliament on moral and social matters. But as I have been saying, this is a Christian country, if it is a country at all, and I cannot be indifferent to the extent of the growth of Islam in recent decades.

It is the other religion that worries me even more. This other religion is a hybrid of old and new ideas, and it does not have a proper name. I do not think that “woke” does justice to its seriousness. It is a combination of ancient paganism, Christian heresies and the cult of modernism, all mashed up into a deeply mistaken and deeply dangerous ideology of power that is hostile to the essential objects of our affections and our loyalties: families, communities and nations. It is explicitly and most passionately hostile to Christianity as the wellspring of the west. That religion, unlike Islam, must simply be destroyed, at least as a public doctrine. It must be banished from public life, from schools and universities, and from businesses and public services. It needs to be sent back to the fringes of eccentricity, like the modern druids who invest Stonehenge in my constituency with a theology that is seen as mad but harmless because its followers are so few and no one serious takes them seriously.

We can no longer pretend, as people did in the 20th century, that we can be neutral or indifferent to God or to the public square being a godless desert. The fact is that the strong



gods are back, and we have to choose which god to worship. I suggest we worship the God who came in the weakest form, Jesus Christ. This God is a jealous god—it is him or nothing—and we have to own our Christian story, or repudiate it. Not to own it is to repudiate it, and to repudiate Christianity is not only to sever ourselves from our past, but to cut off the source of all the things we value now and that we need in the future, such as freedom, tolerance, individual dignity and human rights.

Without the Christian God, in whose teaching these things have their source, these are inventions, mere non-existent aspirations. To worship human rights is to worship fairies; but if we own our story and remember the real sources of our civilisation, we can have these things and make them real: real freedom and tolerance and dignity, a culture of love and, crucially, a culture of humanity. We are in the age of the machine, and a great choice confronts us: whether to make machines in the image of fallen man, bent on exploitation and domination with mankind in its sights, or to make them what they properly are, the servants of mankind able to help us make a better world.

To conclude, a wind is blowing, a storm is coming and when it hits we are going to learn if our house is built on rock or on sand, but we have been here before. The reformers of the 11th and the 16th centuries, the Puritans in the 17th century, the Evangelicals in the 19th century all brought this country back from the edge, from idolatry, error or just plain indifference, and from all the social and political crises that indifference to Christianity brought about; and they each in their generation restored this country to itself.

A new restoration is needed now, with a revival of the faith, a recovery of a Christian politics and a re-founding of this nation on the teachings that Alfred made the basis of the common law of England all those centuries ago. This is a mission for the Church under its next leader, whoever that is; it is a mission for this place, the old chapel that became the wellspring of western democracy, and for us, its Members; and it is a mission for our whole country. It is the route to a prosperous modernity founded on respect for human dignity, responsibility for the created world and the worship of God.

# The Remission of Sins

Last month in this column, we looked at the meaning of the words ‘begotten not made’, which form part of the bedrock of the church’s teaching. They appear in the Nicene Creed, a statement of belief which Christians have recited for centuries. Creeds distil the church’s core teachings and remind us, as we repeat them during worship, of some of the unshakeable truths on which our faith is built, truths which have been tested by time and experience for the past 1,700 years.

This month, we explore the significance of another word which is little used in modern English. In each service of Holy Communion, towards the end of the Nicene Creed, we declare our acknowledgment of ‘one baptism for the remission of sins’. What do we mean when we use the word ‘remission’ in this way? Is its meaning similar to what we imply when we say that a disease is ‘in remission’? Is it just a synonym for forgiveness?

The verb ‘to remit’ is derived from the Latin ‘remittere’, which means ‘to send back’ or ‘to send again.’ Over time, it has

developed various senses in English, such as sending money back, letting go (waiving a penalty), or causing something to lessen or slacken, such as symptoms.

In the context of the Church of England’s liturgy, especially as found in the Book of Common Prayer, the phrase ‘the remission of sins’ refers to the act by which God, through His mercy and by the work of Christ, **wipes away** or **cancels** the guilt and penalty attached to sins for those who sincerely repent and place their faith in Jesus. This concept is at the heart of all Christian worship. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century language of the Book of Common Prayer, for example, we are told that God, *‘of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him.’*

Remission, pardon, and forgiveness are closely linked in Christian teaching, though some subtle differences are worth noting.

The word ‘forgiveness’ most often emphasises the restoration of a relationship. It is an act of



DAVID IS A  
LAY READER  
AT ST  
NICOLAS’  
CHURCH

grace in which God (or a person) no longer holds the offence against the offender.

'Pardon' is closely aligned with forgiveness. It's more of a legal term. It describes God's merciful decision not to impose the deserved penalty for sin. A debt is cancelled, a guilty party is set free.

'Remission', on the other hand, emphasises the **complete removal** of guilt and penalty. To remit sins is to treat the offender **as though the offence had never been committed**, thus erasing both the guilt and its consequences.

In Anglican thought, the terms *remission*, *pardon*, and *forgiveness* largely overlap. They are often used together in our liturgical texts to highlight the fullness of God's mercy. However, I find particular comfort in the meaning of 'remission': it expresses the thought that God's mercy is so inexhaustible and all-encompassing that, if we turn away from our disobedience, **He chooses to see us as if we have done nothing wrong**. You might say that He continually wipes our slate clean and that He's willing to do it as often as necessary.

There is an old trope which I have heard preachers use to explain what the Bible means by 'justification', particularly in the

Letters of St Paul, who taught that we are justified in God's sight by our faith and not by what we say or do (Romans 3:28 & Galatians 2:16).

It goes like this. To say that I am **JUSTIFIED** by faith in Jesus Christ is to say that, as a repentant sinner, I am accepted and welcomed by God **JUST-AS-IF-I'D never sinned**. That is the essence of 'remission'. It's one of the reasons why we use the word 'Gospel' to describe the New Testament. A derivation from the Old English *godspel*, 'gospel' means 'good news' (*god* = *good*, *spel* = *story*, *message*). The word originally signified a royal or public proclamation of joyous news such as a military victory. In the church, it refers to the announcement of the new life which Christ offers to all who choose to trust and follow Him. What better news could there be?

Finally, to put the word back in its context, the Nicene Creed gives us this phrase: 'I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins'. It is important to understand what is and is not being said here. The church does not teach that the rite of baptism alone is effective in washing us clean from the guilt of our disobedience. Baptism is not a mechanical process or a magic trick with water. Neither is it simply a ceremony with which to name a child. It has far deeper power and significance than that. It is a public declaration of repentance and faith; but, to use a theological term, it should not be understood as the 'efficient cause' of forgiveness. It does not automatically cleanse us from sin, for it must be accompanied by the faith and repentance which it symbolises.

Once again, unpacking a single phrase from the church's rich treasury of traditional liturgy reveals deep spiritual riches. How much we lose when, in less formal worship, we reduce creeds or 'declarations of faith' to a few simple sentences. For all their accessibility, they cannot hope to do justice to the subtleties of meaning and layers of understanding that the church has accumulated over a very, very long life.

## **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 2.00 pm, Monday to Thursday.

**81 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 8RU • [parishoffice@kingsnorton.org.uk](mailto:parishoffice@kingsnorton.org.uk)  
0121 458 3289 • [www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam](https://www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam)**

## **THE MINISTRY TEAM**

Parish Lay\* Minister .....Pauline Weaver  
Curate ..... The Revd Christine McAteer  
Honorary Assistant Priest ..... The Revd Jayne Crooks  
Lay\* Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers) ..... David Ash, Cate Bennett, 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

## **THE CHURCH WARDENS**

St. Nicolas' Church.....Annette Dickers, Mark Sandilands  
Hawkesley Church .....Jim Clarke

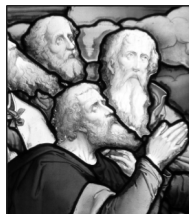
## **OTHER CONTACTS**

Parish Administrator..... Cate Bennett  
Treasurer ..... David Badger  
Finance Officer ..... Amanda Kaye-Wright  
Verger and Groundskeeper ..... Shane Williams  
Safeguarding Coordinator ..... Annette Dickers  
Regular Giving ..... The Revd Jayne Crooks  
Flower Arranging (0121 486 2837)..... Alison Blumer

(\*Lay = not ordained as a priest)



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



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

1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) - Said
10.30 am	Holy Communion with Choir
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
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) - Said
10.30 am	Holy Communion with Music Group & Choir
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	Morning Praise for All Ages
6.00 pm	Compline (Night Prayer)

5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Month	
9.00 am	Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) - Said
10.30 am	Holy Communion with Hawkesley Church & Choir
6.00 pm	Celtic Worship

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

# Two Women of Distinction

## 1. A New Bishop is Installed

I was very blessed and privileged recently to accompany my godson to the installation of the tenth Bishop of Coventry, Bishop Sophie Jelley. The bells were pealing out joyfully in anticipation as we arrived at Coventry Cathedral. We climbed up and into the magnificent space and perceived that this twentieth century cathedral has its roots in the medieval past, shaped by the mission of St. Chad in the seventh century. There is an awareness of centuries of work, worship and prayer embedded in its modern fabric. Yet it is firmly meeting the visions and needs of the present whilst looking to, and planning for, the future.


The wide expanse of the etched window, which opens up the view from the interior into the ruins of the old cathedral, enabled passers by to observe the unfolding pageant. Quite a crowd gathered there to watch the proceedings.

There was a warm, friendly welcome for everyone before the start of the service. Arriving in very good time, we were moved up into the VIP seats near the front so had a great view of the proceedings from right in the heart of it. And whom should I meet there but a former curate of St. Nicolas' Church, The Reverend Catherine Matlock, who has just moved into the diocese. I don't know which of us was more surprised, and I was delighted!

The service of installation was solemn, joyful and glorious, with its own occasional comic moments. For instance, amongst the gifts given to the Bishop to represent her new home was a cross of nails, that powerful symbol of peace and reconciliation, the nails originating from the ruins of the old cathedral after the terrible bombing of Coventry in 1940. There was a toy car to represent Coventry's automotive industry; a goose quill for the playwright, local lad Will



**THELMA MITCHELL  
WAS FORMERLY LEAD  
CHAPLAIN AT  
BOURNVILLE  
COLLEGE.**



Shakespeare; and also a teeshirt with a quote from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'Though she be little she is fierce'.

There were numerous robes of many and varied colours as representatives of other denominations, faiths and local institutions welcomed Bishop Sophie. I found the tribute paid by the German Ambassador especially moving. He referred to the community of the Cross of Nails in Germany, where seventy or more groups are part of the praying network, committed to peace, justice and reconciliation.

The music throughout, as you would expect at Coventry Cathedral, was outstanding, inspiring, glorious, a mixture of ancient and modern. The service was exciting, colourful, exhilarating and motivating, with a promise of great things to come in the diocese. And the culmination? Yes, in the heart of the Midlands, the refreshments included a Midlands' ministry of cake in abundance as well as ice cream! It was an honour and a pleasure to be able to participate, and I know I speak for everyone in our neighbouring diocese when I say that we send Bishop Sophie our heartfelt prayers and support for her time in the Diocese of Coventry.

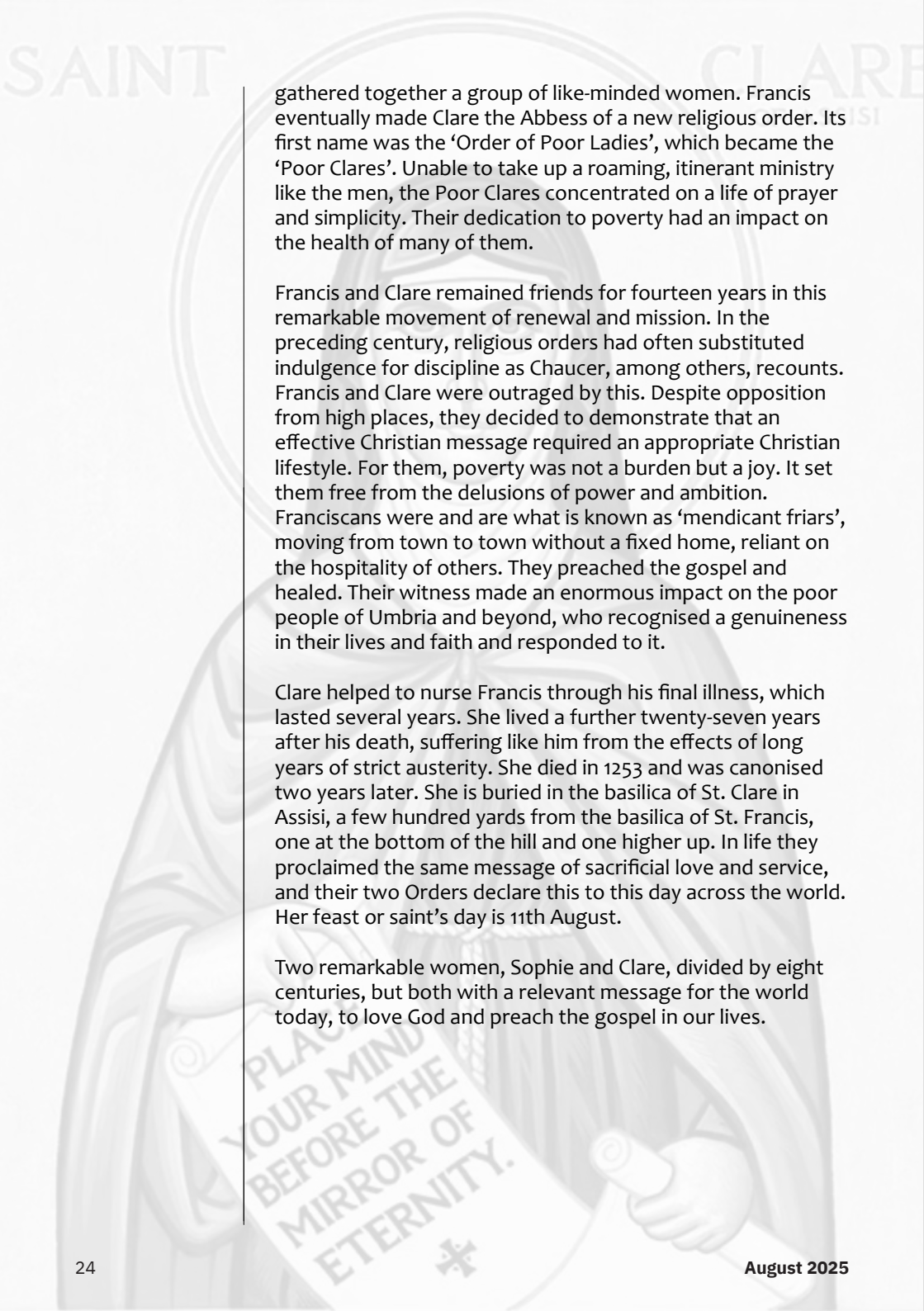
## 2. A Saint is Remembered

In the year 1212, Clare, the eighteen-year-old daughter of Count Favarone di Offreduccio, heard a young preacher called Francis. A few years earlier he had caused a sensation in the centre of the town of Assisi where they both lived, in Umbria in Italy. He had stripped himself of his robes of wealth and declared that from that moment on he would live the life of a peasant. This, he said, was in obedience to the call of Christ, for whom the poor are 'blessed' and the rich in peril of judgement. A message as apt today as it was then.

Francis had gathered a group of seven men who were prepared to embrace what he called 'joyful poverty' for Christ's sake. That day he enlisted a female disciple. He saw Clare as a chosen soul from God when she expressed her eagerness to embrace the same strict rule as his followers.

After some time in a Benedictine convent with her sister Agnes, she moved into the church of San Damiano in Assisi. Francis and his friends had restored the church and in it Clare





gathered together a group of like-minded women. Francis eventually made Clare the Abbess of a new religious order. Its first name was the 'Order of Poor Ladies', which became the 'Poor Clares'. Unable to take up a roaming, itinerant ministry like the men, the Poor Clares concentrated on a life of prayer and simplicity. Their dedication to poverty had an impact on the health of many of them.

Francis and Clare remained friends for fourteen years in this remarkable movement of renewal and mission. In the preceding century, religious orders had often substituted indulgence for discipline as Chaucer, among others, recounts. Francis and Clare were outraged by this. Despite opposition from high places, they decided to demonstrate that an effective Christian message required an appropriate Christian lifestyle. For them, poverty was not a burden but a joy. It set them free from the delusions of power and ambition. Franciscans were and are what is known as 'mendicant friars', moving from town to town without a fixed home, reliant on the hospitality of others. They preached the gospel and healed. Their witness made an enormous impact on the poor people of Umbria and beyond, who recognised a genuineness in their lives and faith and responded to it.

Clare helped to nurse Francis through his final illness, which lasted several years. She lived a further twenty-seven years after his death, suffering like him from the effects of long years of strict austerity. She died in 1253 and was canonised two years later. She is buried in the basilica of St. Clare in Assisi, a few hundred yards from the basilica of St. Francis, one at the bottom of the hill and one higher up. In life they proclaimed the same message of sacrificial love and service, and their two Orders declare this to this day across the world. Her feast or saint's day is 11th August.

Two remarkable women, Sophie and Clare, divided by eight centuries, but both with a relevant message for the world today, to love God and preach the gospel in our lives.

# Funerals June 2025

3 June	Celia Marion Phillips	77	SN.Bu.CY
6 June	Bryan Greves	92	In.CY
9 June	Stanley & Lilian Manders	87 & 93	In.CY
9 June	Anthea Harby	77	Cr.LH
17 June	Susan Jane Cook	64	In.CY
23 June	Barry John Packham	85	SN.Bu.KN
25 June	Ena May Snook	85	Bu.HW

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

## The Reverend Imogen Smith



Another woman of distinction, known to us all simply as Immy, our 'ordinand in training', became The Reverend Imogen Smith when she was ordained Deacon at Lichfield Cathedral on 28 June 2025 by the Bishop of Lichfield, the Right Reverend Dr Michael Ipgrave. Immy will serve her first curacy in central Wolverhampton.

# Looking Back 5

## *September 1950*



▲ ALF  
ROGERS.  
FROM A  
CHOIR PHOTO  
TAKEN IN  
1944.

*In our April 2025 edition we printed the first in a series of articles entitled 'Looking Back : By An Old Chorister', originally published in these pages in the 1950s.*

*In the fifth of these monthly reminiscences, C.A.P.Rogers recalls the farms and estates which used to surround the Worcestershire village of Kings Norton. The names of some of them, such as Pool Farm, Moundesley Hall and Bells Farm, will be familiar to many readers, even though the use to which their land has been put in recent decades has brought radical change to the area.*

Walkers Heath Road is still one of the most charming and unspoilt roads in our parish, but I still like to picture it as it appeared before the modern houses were built at the commencement of the road. There was a field on the corner of this road and Bells Lane which belonged to the Church. It was used for some time as a sports field by the C.L.B., the choir and other church organisations. Local clubs also rented it from time to time.

During Canon Dunn's ministry here, the field was mainly used for grazing and it was decided that the land would produce a greater income if houses were built on it. On the opposite side of the road was Ardath House owned by the Hough family. This was demolished a few years ago and a row of modern houses erected on the site. These are the only changes in the road that have taken place in my lifetime. Lifford Grove still remains, but has changed hands several times since my boyhood days, and amongst the



families I can recall are Proctors, Bates and, in recent years, the Sly family.

Across the road are two cottages, one of which was occupied by the Bullock family for some considerable time. Mr. Bullock was gardener at Moundesley Hall for many years. Several of the sons still live and work in the district and Jack, who became the local milkman, still serves his customers in and around the village. Ellesmere, the large house on the opposite side above the cottages, surrounded with some fine trees and shrubs, belonged to the Young family, who resided there for many years, and at the side of the house, with the pool in the foreground, are two cottages, Rose Cottage and Mere Cottage. Mrs. Collette White lived in the latter cottage for a time. In the spinney across the road there used to be an excellent row of fir trees, but many of these were destroyed and brought down during a severe gale which caused much damage at the time.

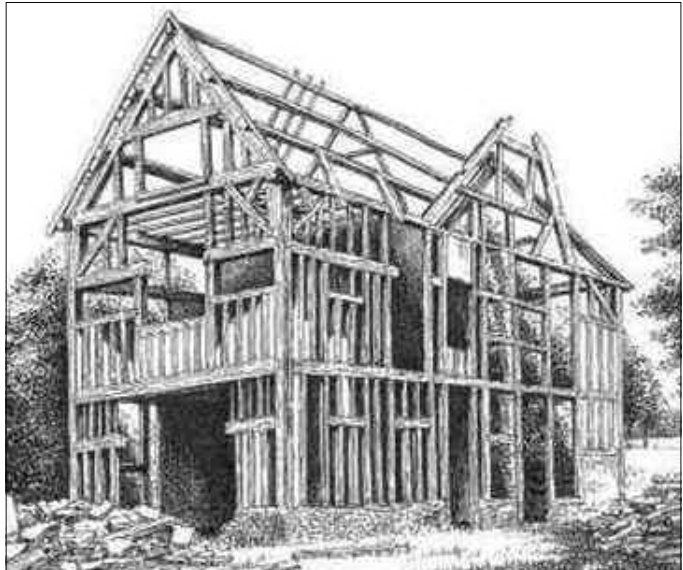
Most of the land on this side of the road belonged to the Moundesley Hall Estate, owned then by the Pelham Lane family. Much could be written about the excellent services and benevolent work rendered by this noble and respected family, both to church and village during the lifetime of the Squire and his wife. The splendid example of regular attendance to church, when every Sunday morning the family would be seen walking down to church irrespective of the weather, and again in the afternoon, when Mrs Lane would return to take her Bible class in the Old Grammar School.



◀ MOUNDSLEY  
HALL IN THE  
1930S

Although the Hall could not be seen very clearly from the lodge gate, an excellent view of the park, with its beautiful avenue of trees and a fine herd of Hereford cattle peacefully grazing, was an outstanding picture. While the Hall was being demolished just before the late war, the workmen discovered under the brickwork a skeleton framework of the house made up of old English oak and in a good state of preservation. A new house and modern farm have since been erected on this estate.

► A SKETCH  
MADE BY  
W.A.GREEN OF  
THE OAK  
SKELETON  
FRAMEWORK  
FOUND WITHIN  
MOUNDESLEY  
HALL DURING  
DEMOLITION,



WWW.EMGREEN.ORG.UK

Headley Fields Farm adjoins the estate and the Rabone family lived here for many years. On the opposite side from here is Pool Farm, which at one time belonged to the Moundesley Estate and was tenanted by Cheshires, but at present is occupied by the Boffey family.

The cottages above this farm were mainly reserved for the coachman and farm staff attached to the Hall. I can remember Mr. Harbun and later Mr. Phillips (as coachmen) and Mr. Fox, a typical farm worker, living in them, also Mr. Chattaway, who was a roadman working for the old Urban District Council and later the City Council, occupied the end cottage.

On the corner of Gay Hill Lane is Walkers Heath Farm where the Bushell family lived for many years. Both Rabone

and Bushell were local milkmen too. Gay Hill is still a beauty spot and a favourite place for picnics and walks. I can remember as a boy picking watercress from the brook that runs through the fields at the bottom of the hill. There were quite a number of children from the cottages and farms in this district who walked daily to and from Kings Norton School as there was no other means of transport.

I must mention about the old postman, Mr. Cooks, who lived in Wharf Road and served this district so faithfully. His round commenced in Bells Lane and extended beyond the top of Gay Hill, and it took him most of the day to deliver and collect the mail in this area. This walk, starting from the Post Office in Pershore Road, was done regularly every day by Mr. Cooks in all weathers, and I can picture him returning back from his round during the afternoon complete with bag, walking stick, and whistle which he blew to remind the residents to bring out their letters for post.

As I write a few ancient facts about Bells Lane, please excuse me mentioning a little family history too. Just over 70 years ago, my grandfather, Alfred Perkins, who was a family grocer in the city, decided to buy a plot of land and build a country house in Kings Norton. A site in Bells

Lane was his choice and thus the first house in the lane was built. The only other dwellings at that time were the farms and the old cottages near to the Maypole. My grandfather lived in this house (now number 42) for about 50 years and died here at the age of 93 years. Other houses were erected on either side of his house as time went on. My parents occupied one of these when they were married and, in March 1900, I was born there.

Bells Farm, one of the oldest buildings in Kings Norton and dating back to the Tudor period, is now part of the Monyhull Hall Estate, but it still retains much of its old grandeur. The fine Elizabethan chimneys and interior oak panelling are still to be seen, but many of the massive oak and elm trees which surrounded the farm when I was a boy have been cut down and the old moat, in which I used to fish, has been filled in. The farm was occupied for some time by the Greaves family, but I can best remember playing around the farm and in the meadows, also paddling in the little brook with the Amott children when they lived there. The name Bell is supposed to come from a family of that name who owned estates in Northfield and Kings Norton many centuries ago.

# Open Air Art

August is a month for being outdoors, so why not use the opportunity to look out for the open-air art in our fair city. If you are planning a visit to the city centre for shopping, meeting friends, having a meal, or finding things for the (grand)children to do, why not consider an art and statue trail? You will not be disappointed.

If you have ever wandered through Birmingham and thought, 'Is that a statue or a very still street performer on strike?', congratulations, you have stumbled into the city's open-air art gallery. Birmingham, often dubbed the 'City of a Thousand Trades', might just as well be called the 'City of a Thousand Sculptures (and the Occasional Confused Pigeon).'

Let's begin in Victoria Square, where Queen Victoria herself stands in bronze, looking mildly unimpressed since 1901. Originally carved in marble, she was recast in bronze in 1951, presumably because even

monarchs deserve a glow-up. Nearby, Dhruva Mistry's River and Youth ensemble features abstract figures and sphinxes that have baffled and delighted passersby since the 1990s. Some say it's a meditation on life and flow; others say it's a wonderful place to sit and eat a Greggs sausage roll.

Just a few steps away looms Iron: Man, Antony Gormley's 20-foot tribute to Birmingham's industrial past. Erected in 1993, it's made of—you guessed it—iron and has been mistaken more than once for a Transformer mid-nap. It's a stoic figure, gazing eternally into the middle distance, wondering if he left the oven on.

Then there's the Boulton, Watt and Murdoch statue on Broad Street, affectionately nicknamed 'The Carpet Salesmen' by locals. This golden trio of Industrial Revolution pioneers appear to be huddled over a blueprint, or possibly an exceptionally large takeaway menu. Either way, their contribution to steam



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

power is immortalised in bronze, and their fashion sense in 18th-century breeches.

No tour would be complete without a nod to The Guardian, better known as The Bull outside the Bullring shopping centre. Sculpted by Laurence Broderick, this six-tonne bronze beast is arguably Birmingham's most photographed resident. It has been dressed in everything from Santa hats to superhero capes, and once even sported a giant face mask, because even bulls respect public health guidelines.

For those who prefer their art with a side of whimsy, the Stretching Balloon Dog outside Birmingham Children's Hospital is a 14-foot red canine that looks like it escaped from a particularly ambitious birthday party. Created by Whatshisname (yes, really), it's a joyful nod to childhood and a reminder that not all art has to be serious. Sometimes, it just needs to be delightfully inflatable.

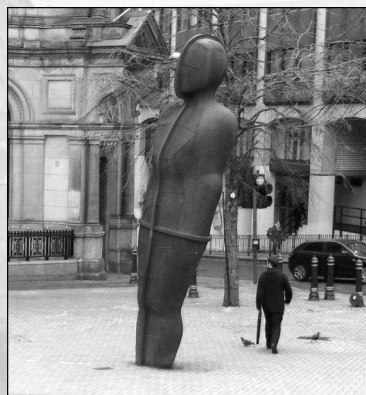
And let's not forget the Tony Hancock statue in Old Square, honouring the legendary comedian born in Hall Green. Cast in steel and forever mid-quip, Hancock's likeness stands as a tribute to Birmingham's comedic legacy. One suspects that he'd have something dry to say about being immortalised next to a bus stop.

Birmingham's public art isn't just

about statues, though. Murals, mosaics, and reliefs pepper the cityscape, from the abstract panels of Lower Bull Street to the Tree of Life sculpture on Edgbaston Street. Each piece adds a splash of colour or a moment of reflection, sometimes both, depending on the weather and your caffeine levels.

In a city where art is as likely to be found on a roundabout as in a gallery, Birmingham invites you to look up, look around, and occasionally do a double-take. Whether it's a bronze monarch, a balloon dog, or a sphinx that looks suspiciously like it's judging your outfit, the city's outdoor art is a celebration of creativity, history, and the occasional artistic oddity.

So next time you're in Birmingham, skip the museum queue. The city's greatest gallery is already beneath your feet and possibly staring back at you with a bronze gaze.





# The Oxygen of a Christian

*Father Josiah Trenham is the pastor of St. Andrew's Orthodox Church in Riverside, California. This article is taken from an interview with him conducted earlier this year.*

Prayer is the heart of Christian life. Prayer is like the oxygen of a Christian. It's how we live. There's a beautiful definition of prayer given by St Theophan the Recluse (Russia 1815-1894) that I love very much: true prayer is to stand before God with your mind in your heart and to go on standing before God forever.

His description shows that prayer is the movement of the whole person. You're standing, so this is a bodily action. Then he addresses the mind. Prayer is not irrational: it can be beyond the mind, but it's not without the mind. And then he addresses the heart. So, to stand before God with your mind in your heart and to go on standing until forever. This is prayer.

Prayer is the chief expression of a Christian's desire for God. If you love God, the Church Fathers say, that's measured by prayer. If we don't pray, it's a clear sign, the clearest sign, that we don't love God. If we do love God, that will show itself chiefly by being committed to prayer and to quality prayer.

We see, then, that prayer is what a human being is fashioned to be and to do, and this is very important. We shouldn't think of prayer as something for the super-spiritual people, for a certain kind of human being with some sort of interior disposition. This is not the understanding of the Church at all. [...]



For us now, we imagine prayer to be something we decide to do: 'I'm going to go and pray'. And then we stop, finish our morning prayers, and go have our coffee or breakfast and, in our mind, coffee and breakfast are not prayer. But that is not how the Church sees it. For us, all of life is to be prayer. That's what it means to be an authentic human being: to do everything for God, everything with God, everything in God.

Unfortunately, our fallen existence means we now live in a new, horrible reality, a torn reality, where sometimes we're with God (sometimes we pray) and sometimes we're not. This is



what the Church understands by the sacred-secular distinction. The heart of secularism that we are now paying for terribly in our society is prayerlessness. That is the core of secularism.

Prayerlessness leads to many terrible things: violence, depression, mental illness, the breakdown of relationships, war, destruction. All of those things are downstream from prayerlessness. This is where the secular monster has its birth: abandoning the human reality of doing everything with and for God.

Prayer is therefore a step towards being human. It's a step towards being the way God made us to be: communal people, not radical individuals. Communal people who want to think with God, love with God, move and act with God, because that's the way God made us to be.

Anyone who's serious about prayer has to think deeply about how to do it: the method of prayer, the intention behind prayer, the heart's disposition in prayer, and the actual accomplishment of prayer. These are all things that our Lord Jesus, our Master, taught us to do. Prayer is at the very core of His teaching.

In the Gospels, the disciples specifically ask Jesus, 'Lord, teach us to pray, like John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray.' And in His most important and well-known sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, right in the dead centre of that sermon, our Lord Jesus expounds for us how to pray through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

He taught us to pray not like the pagans, who just multiply words, thinking that if they use many words, somehow it's going to be a benefit. He taught us not to pray like the Pharisees, who were self-righteous. He taught us to pray as a child to God as our Father. This is family communication, an intimate communication.

He also taught us to esteem as the subject of prayer the most important things: God's kingdom, God's name, God's will. These are the chief concerns in prayer for any Christian. We want God's name to be loved and hallowed, chiefly in ourselves. 'Hallowed be Thy name' means, 'Lord, please let Your name be treated with the greatest reverence, love, and devotion, because it's so dear.' A Christian who sincerely prays that every day is seeking to be a blessing to God's name, to honour His name, to cherish His name.

Then we seek His kingdom; we want His kingdom to be manifest here. His kingdom is a matter of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, as St Paul tells us. This is how you see the kingdom of God on earth. So a person who's praying, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' is asking that righteousness might abound, peace might be established, joy might be spread, first and foremost in the life of the person who is praying. This is what we're seeking: righteousness, peace, and joy.

*For the full interview, visit: [tinyurl.com/christianoxygen](https://tinyurl.com/christianoxygen)*

# Looking Forward To The Future

This month we begin a new 'period of vacancy', traditionally known in the Church of England as an 'interregnum', a Latin word meaning 'between reigns'. The Rector has moved on, but we have yet to appoint someone new. In July, we said goodbye to Larry & Amanda as they began their new adventures in retirement. We wish them every happiness and blessing.

So what of the future? There will be a few changes to our worship pattern as we navigate the need to find visiting clergy in the months ahead. These alterations are only temporary. If they affect a service that you enjoy, please bear with us. In our deanery (local group of parishes) there are five other churches without a priest, so cover is not easy to find. Only ordained priests may preside at a service of Holy Communion.

We will have lots of visiting clergy over the coming months. We are grateful to them all for giving up their time to come and lead our worship. Hopefully, experiencing different styles of leadership will help us to decide what we want from our next incumbent, as the Church of England calls vicars and rectors. We will be working on discerning this in the months ahead and there will be lots of opportunities for everyone to join the conversation. It is time to start looking forward and thinking about what we want our parish to be like in the future.

Our churchwardens, Mark and Annette, and the Area Dean, The Reverend Mark Bennett, will take responsibility for the parish during the vacancy. It's a lot of additional work for them and for our much-reduced Ministry Team. If there is



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

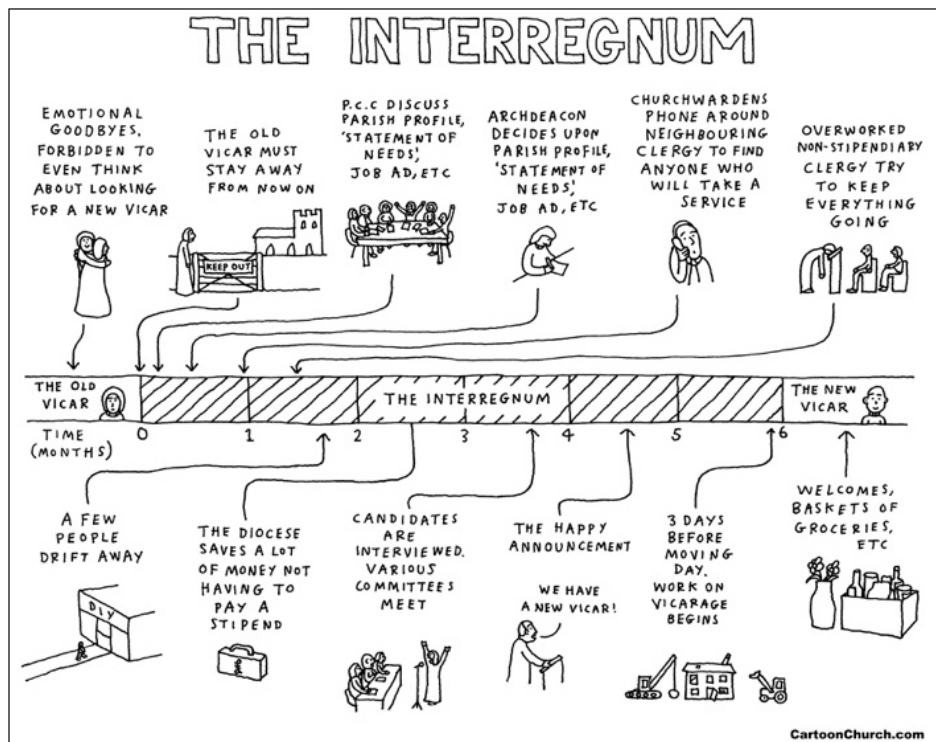
anything you can help with, please do speak to them. We always need more volunteers and there is always something to be done. Perhaps there is something you have always wanted to help with or learn how to do. Now might be the perfect time to step forward. During such periods, churches often experience unexpected growth amongst the congregation as they take on new roles.

When Canon Rob Morris, Larry's predecessor, retired, I wrote the following words. My message is the same now. 'The final hymn from Rob's

final service appropriately focused on these words reminding us that "through the love of God our Saviour all will be well". In Kings Norton, it is very much business as usual as we all adjust to the interregnum. The church wardens and the Ministry Team are still in place and will be working closely together to ensure that the life of the parish continues in all its fullness during the months ahead.

'Please give the team your full support and do pray for them. It will feel different and there will be challenges to face but, as the hymn goes on, it offers us further words of encouragement: "Though we pass through tribulation all will be well" and "We expect a bright tomorrow".'

Wise words for us all to remember. All will be well.



# Hosepipe Ban Survival Guide

With hosepipe bans in force across several English regions and more restrictions likely to follow, gardeners face some tough choices. When every drop counts, which plants deserve your precious water from the water butt, and which should you leave to fend for themselves? As someone who has researched how British gardeners need to adapt to respond to our changing climate, I can tell you that not all garden plants are created equal when it comes to water needs. Some plants will bounce back from a summer scorching, while others may never recover.

## Plants to prioritise for watering

### 1. New woody plants

Any woody plant installed in the last 12-18 months should be your absolute priority. These haven't yet developed the deep root systems needed to find moisture reserves and going without enough water the first year or so after planting could kill them. Water thoroughly and add a deep mulch of wood chips to help the soil hold water. For young trees you can install a

watering bag around the trunk but you still need to top it up.

### 2. Hydrangeas

Hydrangeas adopt a conservative strategy when it comes to drought. They shut their stomata (leaf pores) rapidly when they sense dry soil, and keep them closed until consistent moisture returns. They often drop their leaves too. This can mean many weeks without growth, after even a relatively short drought period. So if you want to keep them looking at their best, they need consistent watering. You can cut growth back to reduce water loss, and save the the plant at the cost of flowers.

### 3. Moisture-loving trees

Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*), along with other moisture-loving trees like birch and beech, are prone to serious die-back during summer droughts. Their shallow root systems and large leaves make them particularly vulnerable to water stress. Water and mulch them.



**Dr Alastair Culham is Associate Professor of Botany at the University of Reading**

#### 4. Soft herbaceous plants

Astilbe, dicentra, filipendula, heuchera, primula, trolius and many other soft herbaceous plants require good moisture levels and may not survive prolonged drought.

#### 5. Shallow-rooted shrubs

Rhododendrons and azaleas are shallow-rooted shrubs particularly susceptible to drought stress, especially the large-leaved evergreen species which are also prone to wind damage when stressed.

#### 6. Clematis

Many clematis varieties struggle with drought. Since they're often grown for their spectacular flowering displays, maintaining adequate moisture around the roots is crucial, especially for autumn-flowering varieties, or spring-flowering varieties which flower on the previous year's growth. A gravel mulch can help keep the roots cool and damp. However, clematis orientalis, terniflora, and evergreens such as C. cirrhosa can be surprisingly tolerant of a hot dry period.

#### 7. Ripening vegetables

If you're growing vegetables, prioritise crops approaching harvest and those that split when moisture returns after drought, such as carrots. Runner beans and courgettes need moist soil to keep cropping and potato yields

are heavily influenced by water levels.

#### 8. All the pots

Anything in pots has limited access to soil moisture reserves and will need regular attention. Move containers to shadier spots if possible. Always use a pot saucer to hold water and prevent it draining away.

#### Plants that can survive without extra water

Research into plant water-stress shows that many common garden plants are surprisingly resilient. Forsythia adopts a risk-taking strategy. It keeps growing and photosynthesising even when soil moisture becomes limited, gambling that it can regrow after damage. This makes it remarkably drought-tolerant. It is also tolerant of heavy pruning which can save it in severe conditions.

Mediterranean shrubs like lavender, rosemary, sage and thyme are naturally adapted to dry conditions. Their grey, hairy or waxy leaves are evolved to conserve moisture. Soil conditions are crucial though. If the plants are deep rooted they will draw water up, but if your soil is shallow or compacted they might well be less drought tolerant.

Sedums, sempervivums and other succulents store water in their fleshy leaves and can

survive extended dry periods. RHS research identifies Sedum spectabile as particularly reliable under stress.

Ornamental grasses generally have efficient root systems and many species actually prefer drier conditions once established.

Established shrubs including cistus, phlomis, buddleja, cotoneaster, berberis and viburnum have deep roots and proven track records for drought survival. The RHS report identifies these as garden stalwarts, with high stress resilience.

Some trees, including eucalyptus, bay (*Laurus nobilis*) and holm oak are remarkably drought tolerant.

### **Plants to sacrifice**

Grass lawns are thirsty and can be left to go dormant. If you have a newly seeded or turfed lawn from this year, some limited watering may be justified. But in general, embrace the golden colour of water-stressed lawns. As long as you don't create too many bare patches from over-use, the green colour and growth will come back when it rains.

Annual bedding plants like busy lizzies and begonias have shallow root systems and high water demands. However, they are only there for one season and are easily replaceable, so prioritise them for watering only if they're

particularly important to your garden's summer display and you can spare the water. You could save some by potting them up and enjoying a display that needs less water.

When you do water, research shows that technique is crucial. Water thoroughly but less frequently to encourage deep root growth. Focus water at the base of plants rather than on leaves, and water in early morning or evening to reduce evaporation.

Consider "split-root" watering for established shrubs – water one side of the plant thoroughly, then switch to the other side two to three weeks later. This keeps plants hydrated while chemical signals from the dry side's roots prevent excessive new growth that would increase water demands.

This drought is a taste of Britain's gardening future. The plants struggling most in this year's drought are likely to become increasingly unsuitable for British gardens without intensive irrigation.

Be willing to swap out plants that suffer in drought for new plants that are more tolerant. Refresh plantings to adapt to the new climate.

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# Pitch, Putt & Paddle

A new Heritage Lottery funded project delivered by

## ARTS 50 ALIVE!

You are invited to an introductory creative session of our new Heritage Lottery Project. It focuses on the history of The Fairway, Kings Norton, the canals and the old golf course.

We are looking for your stories, memories and local history to produce creative artwork to preserve the local heritage area.

Join us to find out more. Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August from 1.30 to 3.30 at Oddingley Hall, 18 Oddingley Road, West Heath, B31 3BS. All are welcome.

If you're planning to come, please book with **Janice** on **07 969 026 245**, or with **Bev** on **07 970 616 153** or email **arts50alive@gmail.com**.

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