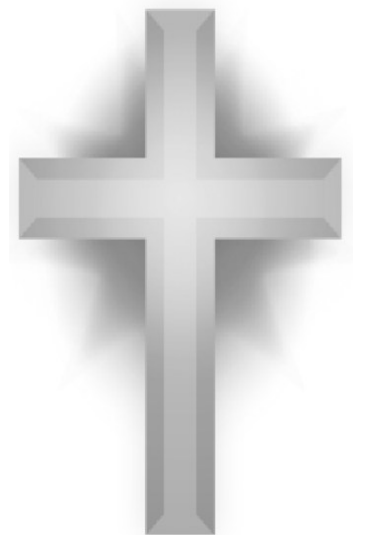
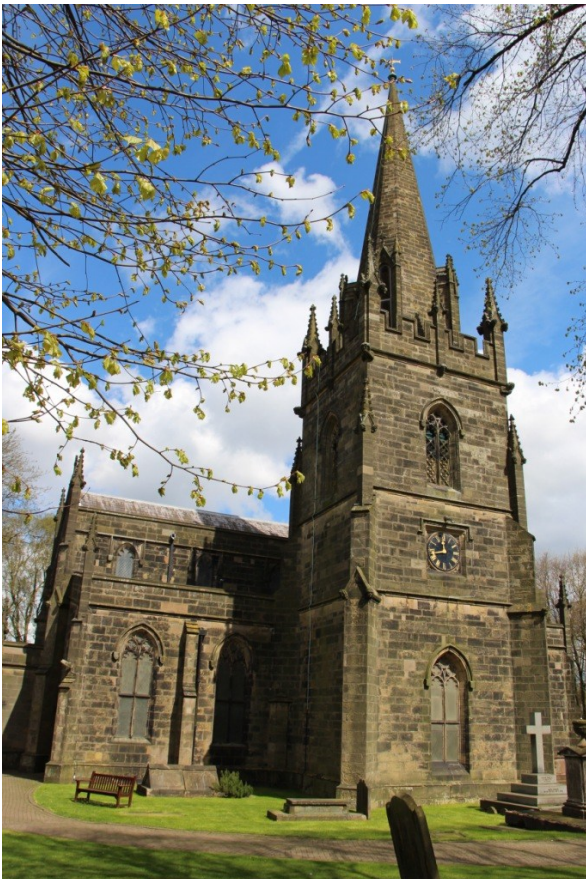


THE BEACON

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS, SEDGLEY
ST. ANDREW'S THE STRAITS & ST. PETERS UPPER GORNAL

Registered Charity Number 1179471



Worshipping God
Welcoming All
Serving our Community

50p

June 2025

PARISH WIDE WHO's WHO

Team Rector and Renewal Leader	Rev'd Canon Diane Cooksey	07894 666505
Vicar	Rev Catherine Mitchell	01902 677897
Licensed Lay Minister	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Barbara Baker	01902 882847
Pastoral ALM	Tracey Bate	01902 880727
	Kath Apperley	01902 663253
	Joan Sullivan	01902 661094
Worship ALM	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
Youth ALM	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
PCC Secretary	Stuart Hutchinson	07772 497688
PCC Treasurer	Sheila Moss	01902 893570
Parish Office	Gail Griffiths	01902 540289

St Peters

Who's Who

Parish Warden	VACANT	
Treasurer	Sheila Moss	01902 893570
Children's Advocate	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
DCC Secretary	John Powell	

St Andrew's

Who's Who

Warden	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Treasurer	Alan Turner	01902 670938
DCC Secretary	Rosemary Reed	01902 679007

All Saints Who's Who

Parish Wardens	Keith Tomlinson	01902 673366
	Steve Castle	07971 899072
Treasurer	John Anderson	01902 677666
DCC Secretary	John Anderson	01902 677666
Bell Ringer	Mary Zielonka	01902 672541
Youth Leader	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
Ladies' Society	Geraldine Baker	01902 674608
Mothers' Union	Liz Williams	01902 672880
Server/Verger	Steve Castle	07971 899072
Noah's Ark		
Parent & Toddler Group	Linda Edwards	01902 672556

SAFEGUARDING

The Parish of Gornal and Sedgley is committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults. We follow the House of Bishops guidance. If you or someone you know feels unsafe, please contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer:

Barbara Baker, Tel 01902 882847, safeguarding@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

or Acting Team Rector Rev Catherine Mitchell

Tel 01902 677 897, vicargornalandsedgley@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

(other contacts available on our website www.gornalandsedgley.org.uk)

Funerals in May

1st David Robert Wragg - Gornal Wood

THE BEACON

If you are interested in having the magazine delivered to your home on a regular basis please contact:

Karen Evans: 01902 678056

The Beacon is published ten times a year and the cost for the year is £5. A larger typeface version of The Beacon can be provided on request.

Articles for the magazine need to be sent to:

admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

by

Friday 27th June

and needs to be in Arial typeface, size 18.

Do not send files in pdf format

WEBSITE: **www.gornalandsedgley.org.uk**

CHURCH OPENING

**Friday mornings from
10.30am to 12.30pm**

The church is open for quiet prayer & coffee and a chat.

St Peter's District Church magazine

St Peter's also publishes a magazine which is more particular to Upper Gornal. If you would like to receive that magazine (which is not available electronically), in the first instance please contact a St Peter's Church warden details on page 2 of this magazine.

**If you wish to enquire about a wedding or baptism
please contact**

Gail Griffiths

At the Parish Office - tel 01902 540289

email admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

Vicars Ponderings June 2025

Dear friends

By the time you read this I will be coming to the end of my time with you. I have been in the parish for 8 years, during which time we have gone through a lot together, including the Covid Pandemic.

It feels like the right time for me to step down from full time ministry and seek what new things God might have for me to do in the next phase of my life.

It also feels the right time for the parish to begin the new phase in its mission and ministry with a new team, it feels that in the time I have been with you has been a time of preparation and preparing the ground for new seeds to be sown.

All Saints is being blessed by the award of a significant grant to enable the renewal project to happen which will primarily concentrate on ministry to families and young people at All Saints. How this will look will of course be shaped in the coming months by Rev'd Diane who is now in post as Team Rector and Renewal Leader for All Saints.

With my moving on to pastures new, also enables a new Team Vicar to be appointed, responsible for St Andrews and St Peters. It would be great to see all the churches in the team grow with this new injection of energy and new ideas across the parish. In due course the new position of a Children and family's worker will be filled, and along with Jan as LLM, two new LLM's in Kath and Matt will also be part of the ministry team, I feel that the parish is in a good place to grow and live out its vision statement of Worshipping God, Welcoming All and Serving our Community. For those who were able to attend Rev'd Diane's licensing service on Sunday, I hope that, like me, you felt uplifted by the worship and had a sense of things moving forward.

I hope that many can join me for my final service with you on Sunday 8th June 11:00 All Saints. This will be a joint service, and we will give thanks for all that God has done in the parish and look towards all the new things God will do in the future.

Most of all, remember to keep your eyes on Jesus!!

With every blessing for the next part of the journey!

Rev Catherine

A MESSAGE FROM CANON JAN

As we begin a new chapter in the life of Gornal and Sedgley, we say farewell to Rev'd Catherine, wishing her and Bramble a very happy early retirement.

A warm welcome to Rev'd Canon Diane and pray she will soon be very settled in her new home and look forward to everyone getting to know her.

Change is always a little daunting, but we need to open our eyes and look out into the community, knowing that God is walking in front of us. I have a lovely little book that is many years old, *Pause For Thought*, foreword by Sir Terry Wogan, and compiled by Lavinia Byrne. I came across this written by Rev'd Ruth Scott, It made me think about our community and the world today.

This is an age old recipe but it's a real classic. You'll need one pair of unblinkered eyes~ the sort that aren't blinded by bigotry or prejudice. One pair of listening ears

One mouth big enough to speak out against injustice, but small enough to stop you putting your foot in it. One determined chin. One nose for adventure. A pair of broad shoulders that can carry the rough with the smooth.

One chest ,or as Sarah Kennedy says, one pair of chesticles, full of the milk of human kindness. One belly~ it's essential you get the kind that's good for laughing. One bottom that won't sit down on the job in hand. Two arms you'll need the variety that are better at reaching out to others, than clutching everything to themselves. One pair of hands with a gentle touch. Two legs that can walk the extra mile for friend and stranger. A pair of feet that will tread carefully through someone else's sacred space.

Stir everything up with a little liquid courage, making sure you don't beat in a lot of hot air.

Then add two crucial ingredients that compliment each other very well~ an intelligent brain and a big heart . I understand female brains are cheaper than their male counterparts. Apparently this is because used items always costs less . If you can't find a good brain don't worry, but don't settle for anything less than the best when it comes to the Heart.

A fool with a heart is often a great asset, whereas a Heartless bright spark is a walking disaster.

Finally, don't forget the condiments. They add a good bit of spice to life, but must be used with care and sensitivity otherwise they'll ruin the recipe.

Mix everything together with Love, making sure it's not the cheap kind that's full of artificial additives. The costly variety is well worth the price because it can turn the most disastrous ingredients into a recipe fit for a King . Simmer gently for as long as it takes to produce a half decent human being.

It's not an easy recipe but it is well worth all the effort.

God bless you ~~~~ Canon Jan

Regards,

Canon Jan

Thank You

A huge Thank You to all those who were able to come along and support me on Sunday 18th May at my licensing service.

It was very joyful occasion and a great start to my ministry here in team Gornal and Sedgley. The refreshments were amazing and demonstrated great hospitality and generosity. Thank you to all involved in organising and serving them and baking cakes!

I am very much looking forward to journeying alongside you over the coming years as we seek to deepen our understanding and experience of Worshipping God, Welcoming All and Serving our community.

Every Blessing

Diane

Rev'd Canon Diane Cooksey

Team Rector of Gornal and Sedgley Parish and Renewal Leader at All Saints Church.

07894 666505

Nays and Ayes

The new pastor at a country church had some exciting ideas for the future. At the elders meeting he presented his vision with great energy and passion. The senior elder then called for a vote. All 12 elders voted “NAY”; only the pastor voted “AYE.”

The pastor was crestfallen, but just at that moment the clouds darkened, thunder rolled, and a streak of lightning burst through the window and struck the table at which they were sitting, throwing the pastor and all the elders to the ground.

As they all got up and dusted themselves off the senior elder said, “Well, that’s 12 votes to two then.”

**

Beware of the new Amazon scam. I asked my husband to order me some expensive jewellery, but motorcycle parts came instead! Thankfully, they fit his bike.

Mothers' Union

In April Rachel Cramp, a Licensed Lay Minister at Claines, and Mothers' Union Communication, Publicity and Policy Coordinator, spoke to us about 'Understanding Dementia and how we can help'. This was an excellent talk in which Rachel made us aware of how the world looks to someone with dementia and ways that we can help, without taking away a person's independence. Rachel gave us the analogy, to understand dementia, of a tall bookcase where the books you had as a child are on the bottom shelves, the ones from your 20's, 30's and 40's on the next shelves, followed by those from your 50's and 60's, the books on the top shelf being the latest ones. Imagine the bookshelf starts to wobble and the books on the top shelf, representing the most recent years of one's life, fall off, followed by those on the middle shelves, one's midlife memories. The only books remaining on the bookcase are those on the bottom shelves, those memories from years ago. We were shown several examples of day-to-day situations which were upsetting and frustrating for someone with dementia, and how they could be alleviated with understanding and patience. People do not suffer with dementia; they live with dementia with our awareness and help.

Andrew Bethan came to our May meeting to tell us about 'The Pitfalls of being a Gay Christian'. Andrew was confirmed last year and gave a testimonial of his faith journey at the service, which he shared with us again.

Before coming to All Saints', he went to several churches where he was not made welcome. Then one day sitting outside All Saints' he felt this may just be the church for him, so he came along to the Sunday morning service where he was made welcome.

Andrew said that he and his partner, Scott, have been made very welcome by everyone in the church. Andrew's deep-rooted faith and knowledge that God is by his side at all times was an inspiration to us all. Thank you, Andrew, for sharing your experience with us, we are truly blessed to have you and Scott with us.

~~~~~



## **A Gift of Peace**

Thank you for the donations for the Mothers' Union 'Gift of Peace'. We sent £50 to the appeal.

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Lent Collection for the Women's Refuge

Thank you to all who donated to our Lent Collection for the Women's Refuge. I received the following email from Emily.

'I just wanted to say huge thanks for the donation of household supplies and the £50 cash.

The items are going to be so helpful, it literally is just what we needed.

Thanks again so much for your continued support and kindness 😊'

~~~~~

## **Mothers' Union Afternoon Tea with**

**'Sedgley Morris'**

**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July**

**2.30pm** (in the church hall)

**Tickets: £6** (from Liz Williams)

### **Dates:**

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2.00pm 'Cowpats, Corals, & the Climate Crisis,'  
Christian hope for our Beautiful World, Jill Crofton

**Liz Williams**

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## **Get a grip**

It was said that Archbishop Tench of Dublin, in his later years, had a fear of sudden crippling paralysis. One night at a formal dinner he sat looking more and more forlorn. Finally, he confided to the guests around him: "Well, it's come at last – total lack of feeling in my right leg."

Whereupon the lady sitting next to him said soothingly: "Not at all, your Grace. It will comfort you to know that during the whole of this meal it has been *my* leg that you have been pinching!"

## **‘Firing’ Sedgley Bells for VE Day**

6 Sedgley ringers gathered to ring for VE Day on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm. It was suggested that we could try ‘firing’ our bells as part of our ringing. I am not a fan of this as it makes a very discordant but dramatic sound. Also, it has been suggested that it can cause structural damage as all the bells are swinging at the same time. We used to do it regularly for weddings as Doug Smith liked to do it. Apparently, Westminster Abbey did it so we decided to give it a go.

Westminster Abbey ‘fired’ their 10 bells 80 times. This means all 10 bells were sounded simultaneously to produce a powerful clashing sound. The gesture is generally reserved for great celebrations, anniversaries and rejoicing. It also requires great skill and timing. If one bell is out it can sound odd. All the ringers have to hold their bell up and wait to ring at the same time as the tenor, the heaviest bell. It was a little easier for us as we only had 6 of our bells ringing. We only fired for a short time before we reverted back to rounds and normal ringing. Some of our ringers had never tried it before and enjoyed the new challenge.

I am still not a fan. **Mary Zielonka**

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## **Crooked politicians**

The editor of a small country newspaper, furious over several government bills that had recently been passed, printed a scathing editorial with an enormous headline: ‘HALF THE LEGISLATORS ARE CROOKS.’

Many local politicians were outraged and exerted tremendous pressure on him to print a retraction. He finally gave in to the pressure and ran his apology with the headline: ‘HALF OF OUR LEGISLATORS ARE NOT CROOKS.’

# Understanding the Trinity

Trinity Sunday has its place in our liturgical calendar (15<sup>th</sup> June), yet we do not often hear sermons on the Trinity. The term 'Trinity' isn't found in the Bible, and the Early Church took nearly 400 years to come up with a clear understanding of it.

However, there are hints of trinitarian language in the New Testament, e.g. Jesus instructs His disciples to baptise 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matt 28:19). Our understanding of the Trinity arises from God's activity in our world, as reflected in the creedal questions:

'Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the One for whom we exist?

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

So why should the Trinity be important for us? If 'God is love' (1 John 4:8) it means that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in a community of love together. Their relationship has been expressed as a divine dance, as they interact with one another, expressing love for each another and complementing the work each one has to do. As people made in God's image, we are called to live this community of love in our lives and churches.

The Trinity also provides the basis for our mission, 'As the Father has sent Me, so send I you.' Just as God the Father sent Jesus into the world, so Jesus sends us into the world to do the Father's work, equipped and accompanied by the Holy Spirit. In sharing God's love, we share the life of the Trinity. Augustine spoke about the Spirit being the love between God the Father and the Son.

'At the heart of reality lies the love between the Father and the Son. The Spirit unites us with Christ so that we begin to experience the same depth of love that exists between the Father and the Son.' (Graham Tomlin).

# Thank You

I would like to say an Enormous thank you to all the wonderful friends of St Andrew's who came to help make our Summer Fayre a great success.

To those who prepared the Stalls, made beautiful Cakes, made things for the craft stalls and brought things for the Tombola.

For those who ran the stalls on the day-- the Girls who sold raffle tickets, the waitresses, and those who cooked the lovely food and did all the washing up!

Everyone who got the church & hall ready and cleaned it all away afterwards.

So much Kindness-- we couldn't do it without our wonderful Friends and community.

So again Thank You-- we raised a wonderful amount.

May God Continue To Bless You All

**Canon Jan**

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## Notices in a church newssheet:

- Organist required: to work with small but trying priest and congregation.
- The Low Self Esteem Support Group meets Thursday. Please use the back door.
- Weight Watchers to meet at 7pm in the church hall. Please use large double door at the side entrance.
- There will be a shared supper at church this Sunday – with prayer and medication to follow.
- The minister would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.
- The students will be presenting Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the church basement Friday at 7pm. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

# Living with sight loss?

The Beacon Centre is here to support you with the advice and guidance you need. We'll connect you to services that will enable you to navigate your sight loss journey



- TALK THROUGH YOUR CONDITION
- LEARN ABOUT SUPPORT SERVICES
- ADVICE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
- SOCIAL CARE PROGRAMME

- SIGHT LOSS ASSESSMENT
- HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACTIVITIES
- EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS SUPPORT
- DIGITAL ASSISTANCE



- TALKING NEWS
- BEFRIENDING SERVICE
- TRANSPORT PROVISION

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**WOLVERHAMPTON**  
**WV46AZ**

**01902 880 111**

**[enquiries@beaconvision.org](mailto:enquiries@beaconvision.org)**

Registered charity number: 216092



## **Ladies Society – May 2025**

On May 8<sup>th</sup> we met to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day at a party in the Community Room.

The room had been decorated with bunting to commemorate the day and we were treated to a lovely, and rather emotional, presentation created by Barbara Price and her team of helpers. Members had been invited to dress in wartime dress and it was so nice to see the array of headwear and aprons on display. We also had someone in military uniform and our youngest member was dressed as an evacuee.

We enjoyed singing along to those wartime songs which everyone knows so well, interspersed by the stirring speeches made by Sir Winston Churchill. We sang along to Anne Shelton (Kiss the boys goodbye), Vera Lynn (Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye; When the lights go on again all over the world; White Cliffs of Dover; and We'll meet again), The Andrews Sisters (Don't sit under the apple tree; and Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy), Glenn Miller (Moonlight Serenade) and many others. Many of our members also joined in by dancing and then we all stood and waved flags as we sang Land of Hope and Glory.

This was followed by a street party/lunch where we chatted away and enjoyed the company of those present. Anne Wakefield introduced some of the younger members to the joy of spam sandwiches!

Thanks so much to Barbara and the people who helped her to organise the event – it was a wonderful party.

Our group continues to grow and we would love to see anyone who is interested in joining us. We meet on the first Monday of each month at 11.30am in the Community Room – do come along.

**Karen Evans**

## *Times Past*

WOLVERHAMPTON CHRONICLE, Wednesday, June 13, 1849  
SEDGLEY

CHANGE RINGING.- On Sunday last the Junior Society of All Saints Ringers, Sedgley, accomplished their second attempt at change ringing, when Mr. Taylor's peal of grandsire triples consisting of 5,010 changes with 190 bobs and 50 singles, was executed in the short space of two hours and fifty-one minutes, the party being stationed as follows:- namely, treble, George Devonport, 2d George Johnson, 3d Charles Fellowes, 4<sup>th</sup> Francis Roden, 5<sup>th</sup> Thomas Goodman, 6<sup>th</sup> Charles Johnson, 7<sup>th</sup> Joseph Devonport, tenor Benjamin Slater. The peal was conducted and called by Charles Johnson, weight of tenor 19cwt. 3qrs.

WELLINGTON JOURNAL AND SHREWSBURY NEWS, Saturday, June 1, 1907

WANTED, Farm Waggoner, good wages to competent, sober man. –  
Apply,  
Joshua Payne, Brown's Wall Farm, Sedgley, Dudley.

BIRMINGHAM DAILY POST, Monday, June 25, 1962

### UNDERTONES TO SEDGLEY CIVIC SERVICE

Climb into the bell chamber in Sedgley parish church and one can see where the rolling tide of industrialism, having spent its force in the bowl of the Black Country, rolled back and left the green and gracious countryside.

From the louvres, looking west, stretches only the Shropshire countryside, with the Clees and Wrekin framing the distant hills of Wales; to the east the louvres show only chimney stacks and the squat factories of the Black Country.

Yesterday it was with thoughts to the east that one watched the civic procession of Coun. Allan J. R. Hickling, chairman of Sedgley Urban Council, wind its way into church for Civic Sunday.

Soon the Local Government Commission will publish its findings on this very conurbation, and should they go a certain way, this could be the last such civic procession in Sedgley.

Sedgley, aided by Brierley Hill and Coseley, has fought against amalgamation with Dudley.

The sermon was preached by the Vicar, the Rev. G. S. Lloyd. He warned the councillors present against arrogance and pride, against the self-sufficiency so rife in the world to-day, and told them it was no use starting a council meeting with prayers if they did not then approach that meeting with humility and a desire only to serve their fellow men.

---

## **Father's Day – what we most value in our fathers**

Father's Day is 15<sup>th</sup> June – a day to honour and appreciate our fathers and father figures, such as grandfathers and fathers-in-law. Many of us will make a special effort to see them on the day.

No two fathers are alike, of course, but various polls across the internet reveal some interesting similarities of what people have most valued in their dad.

These traits include: being dependable, approachable, protective, patient, affectionate, honest, willing to listen, compassionate, and having spent time with them when they were young.

That's quite a list! People whose fathers had even some of those strengths have a lot to be thankful for.

Thankfully, our Father in Heaven certainly has all those traits. Jesus said the Father is totally dependable and protective of us, longs for us to turn to Him, and is full of compassion and love. And we are to call Him 'Abba' – Daddy!

## Barnabas – a very likeable disciple

This month we remember St Barnabas, whose real name was Joseph, a wealthy Levite from Cyprus. However, he was better known by his nickname, which means ‘*Son of Encouragement*’ (Acts 4:36). Throughout Acts we see him encouraging others in different ways.

Barnabas was an example of *generous giving* (Acts 4:36-7), when he sold property and offered the money to the church for those in need. In the midst of an already caring and sharing community, he was singled out as a symbol of generosity. Are we known as somebody who is generous to those in need around us?

Barnabas later *encouraged a new Christian* in the person of Paul (Acts 9:27). After Paul’s conversion and knowing his reputation, Barnabas came alongside him and brought him into the fellowship of the church. Are we ready to help those who are new in the faith to find a place in our church?

Finally, Barnabas was sent to the church in Antioch where he ‘*saw the evidence of the grace of God*’ (Acts 11:23). It was a church which brought Jewish and Gentile believers together for the first time. Like Barnabas, do we rejoice when we see God doing new things in people’s lives? Are we also willing to embrace these things and facilitate change?

Encouragement is one of the spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Romans 12:8). It can be greatly undervalued, but it is crucial in growing the church. Like Barnabas, will we nurture gifting; strengthen the doubters and those tempted to give up; show generosity to God’s people and beyond the church; alongside strengthening people to move beyond their own comfort zones to help those in need?

Let’s be prepared to ask the following questions: ‘*Are there people alongside us who will encourage us?*’ and ‘*How can we be encouragers to others?*’

## **Funerals pilot in Pershore & Evesham**

**A pilot project to support parishes and increase the number of church-led funerals will be starting in Pershore and Evesham Deanery in the summer.**

It is hoped that the project will help to reduce the amount of admin surrounding funerals for parishes as well as make it easier for funeral directors to find a CoE minister to lead a funeral. The project has already been running in the Diocese of Gloucester since 2019/20 and since that time, there has been around a 10% increase in church-led funerals for those taking part. This contrasts with a decline of approximately 11% nationally over the same time period.

Area Dean, Sarah Dangerfield explains why she wanted to be involved. “In church-led funeral services, people hear a message of hope at a time of profound loss. They are offered a glimpse into God’s generous love which continues beyond death and brings the living and the departed into one community, and that, I think, is a message of great comfort and is about saying our life is more than our short span of years on earth. We know that the number of church-led funeral services is in sharp decline, and this means people are not hearing this message. Any help churches have available to them to increase church-led funerals is a good thing.”

During the pilot, the plan is to work with the team in Gloucester, who will have a Worcester phone number which will be the initial point of contact for funeral directors. They will be responsible for contacting the local ministry team to find someone to take the funeral and will also invoice the funeral director. The pastoral contact with the family will still be with the local minister if they wish, who will also liaise on the order of service as happens currently. Sarah continued. “Research with funeral directors looking into the decline in church-led services highlighted the fact that ministers can often be hard to get hold of. Finding someone to take the service can take funeral directors a long time, particularly if the first person isn’t available.



With the new system, the admin team will have a list of available ministers who are happy to make themselves available for funerals, which means the families will still hear the Christian message if the local minister doesn't have capacity."

The Gloucester-based team is recruiting an extra person to oversee our pilot, as well as one in the Diocese of Hereford. The two dioceses will contribute to the cost of this – there is no charge to the parishes involved and it is expected that the upturn in funeral fees will cover the cost of the administrator. The team strive to get back to the family within 24 hours.

"I really can't see any disadvantages to this scheme," said Sarah. It's still possible for families and funeral directors to approach ministers directly if there is a personal connection – the minister will just send details to the funerals team for invoicing etc. We still keep the relationship with the families, but the reduction in administration should free up teams to focus on supporting bereaved families and other missional activities."

Clergy in Pershore and Evesham can decide whether they want their parish to take part in the pilot. Those that do are being asked for a list of funeral directors they work closely with as well as details of how they'd like to be contacted and who should be contacted if they are unavailable.

The Diocese of Gloucester is also providing some training to increase the number of funeral ministers. A meeting is being held with funeral directors to introduce the plan in June with the aim of going live in July. The pilot is planned to run for two years. If it is successful, the hope is that the service can be made available to other deaneries.

---

## **Sweets**

I gave my four-year-old grand-daughter money for sweets and the church collection plate. Later, seeing her enormous pile of sweets, I got suspicious and asked if she hadn't also given some money to God in church that morning. "No," she replied sweetly, "He wasn't there."

## New patio

My husband was attempting to build a patio for the first time. He bought 100 cement blocks. Laying them out in a pattern, he discovered the chosen area was too small.

He stacked the blocks against the house and cleared more space. The next day he put the cement blocks back down, only to find that the ground was too hard to keep the patio level.

He ordered a truckload of sand to be delivered the following morning. Again, he stacked the 100 blocks against the house.

Observing all this, our next-door neighbour asked, “Are you going to put your patio away every night?”



New business owner Tracy took over the salon almost two years ago.

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## **Persecution of the Church today?**

*In the first of a series of articles, Kenneth Harrod, Head of Theology and Media at Release International, the voice of persecuted Christians, reminds us of the realities of persecution today.*

We've all read the biblical story of Stephen, the first martyr in the New Testament. We've probably heard that Christians in the early centuries suffered all manner of atrocities at the hands of Roman emperors. We know Protestant Reformers were martyred in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. But what about today?

We live in a country where Christianity has been an accepted 'part of the furniture' for centuries. Church buildings are obvious and visible landmarks in our towns and villages; Christian festivals are part and parcel of the calendar year—even for people who profess no Christian allegiance. In many ways, we enjoy the fruit of God having blessed gospel ministry in this land in times past.

But in many parts of our world, life can be very different for Christians—particularly for those who seek to obey the Great Commission of Jesus Christ by proclaiming Him.

In some countries, opposition to the Christian faith might come from extremists of another religion; in other countries it might be the authorities themselves. Christians can suffer on-going oppression and violence. Christians may be forced to flee. Christians can find themselves languishing in prison for no other reason than the fact that they *are* Christians. In some places in our world today Christians may pay the ultimate price—martyrdom.

What is our response to all of this?

One of the New Testament images used to describe the Church is that of the 'Body of Christ'. In his first letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul wrote of that body: 'If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.' (1 Cor. 12:26; ESV)

Out of sight should not be out of mind. Spiritual brothers and sisters suffering because they love and worship the same Saviour that we do should be of concern to us

# **Fourth Most Dangerous Country in the World for Christians**

After North Korea, Somalia, and Yemen, where in the world is it most dangerous to be a Christian?

The World Watch List puts Libya in fourth place.

Libya has a population of nearly 7.5 million people. Of those, 35,500 are Christians (0.5%). The official religion of Libya is Islam, and its government is currently in some crisis, with two groups fighting for control. There are also numerous violent clashes with nearby Sudanese forces.

In Libya, following Jesus is a huge risk for anyone. Libyan Christians with a Muslim background face violent pressure from their families and communities to renounce their new faith. Foreign Christians are targeted by Islamist militant and criminal groups, who may kidnap and even kill them.

Christians in Libya are at risk everywhere, but the city of Sirte is notorious for the presence of radical Islamist groups. Groups linked to the now-defunct Islamic Dawn Coalition control areas around the capital city, Tripoli, and parts of the city itself. In the east, radical groups are present in Benghazi city.

Migrant Christians trying to reach Europe often end up in overcrowded detention centres around Tripoli, or are handed over to criminal officials or human traffickers.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership and discipleship training, livelihood support, legal aid, trauma counselling, Bibles and pastoral care. If you want to help, please

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## **Understand**

Sometimes I think I understand everything – but then I regain consciousness.



## **Our polluted water systems**

Raw sewage continues to pour into our rivers and lakes. Water pollution is up by a third, with some 2,487 incidents recorded in the last year alone.

Last year, although firms were given an Environment Agency (EA) target of 40 per cent *reduction* in pollution incidents, instead such incidents rose by 30 per cent *more*. (Figures obtained under freedom of information laws.)

EA figures released in March showed that storm overflows spilled sewage into England's rivers, lakes and coasts for a new high of more than 3.61 *million* hours in 2024.

Meanwhile, water bills are going up by about £86 this year, and water companies face accusations of having let their critical infrastructure crumble over many years.

### **THE SEDGLEY EDUCATIONAL TRUST**

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# **The simple pleasures of Ordinary Time**

One great phrase of the Church of England, which is little-known but carries a wealth of rich meaning, is ‘ordinary time’. While the seasons of Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Advent all have their fixtures and moments for focus and concentration, the bulk of the summer months is ‘ordinary time’! A very evocative phase – nothing particularly to focus on or to celebrate.

Just because it is ‘ordinary’, it does not mean it is not important or of no significance to how God wants us to use our lives. For most of us life is lived between high and low points: we look forward to something on the horizon or we are seeking to recover from something. So, it should be no surprise that ordinary time is the longest season in the Church calendar. Abraham Lincoln once said that: “God must love ordinary people because He made so many of them”!

Ordinary people, it seems to me, need ‘ordinary time’. Sundays and weekdays in-between, to sense God’s presence with us in the day-to-day mundane, and ordinary comings and goings of life. He is there in the heights of resurrection joy and celebration. He is with us in the vulnerability and frailty of human weakness, modelled in the incarnation. He is with us in our efforts to discipline ourselves and be moulded by him (Lent) but He is also with us whenever we are conscious of life just being ordinary. When our eyes are opened to these things, we will see what an extraordinary God we have!

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## **Encore!**

The new curate had visited the local prison and taken along his electric guitar. He was so pleased with the applause that he responded: ‘Thank you very much for your appreciation. I so hope that I will see you all back here again next year.’

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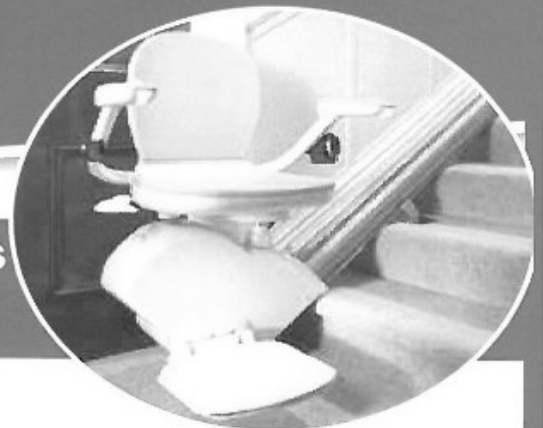
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*Romans 1:20*

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From The Rectory  
St James the Least of All



My dear Nephew Darren

Much against my better judgement, after a recent series of small thefts, we have installed security cameras here at St James the Least of All.

Thank goodness the suggestion for trip wires that opened the gate to Mrs Poppleroy's garden next door, thereby setting loose her deranged Pekingese, was narrowly defeated – though I had to use my casting vote. So now we have a complete record of everything that goes on when no one is about. It makes such interesting viewing that I have cancelled my television licence and spend every evening watching the antics of my parishioners. I wonder if there is some niche television channel which would be interested; it could help the tower restoration fund no end.

Miss Margison seems to imagine she is now part of some theatrical performance every time she cleans the church; her body language as she wields a feather duster is of operatic proportions, as is her final bow to the cameras as she leaves.

I have at last found the several hiding places where Mr Prentice secretes his bottle of whisky every week when he comes to wind the tower clock.

Colonel Wainwright, who served for some time in the security services, is now worried that photographs of him cleaning the brass will be circulated in Russia. He fails to appreciate that his disguise as a French onion seller, with striped jersey, beret and waxed moustache does tend to make his presence rather more interesting than he imagines – to us, if not to the KGB.

The flower arrangers seem to imagine that we are recording sound as well as pictures and so whenever they are in church together, all gossip is written down and passed round by hand as they work in total silence. So far, they have remembered to take their pieces of paper home with them. One slip and I shall probably learn more about my parishioners in five minutes than I have done in the last five years.

The cameras have also solved the mystery of who has been pilfering the items – and even the nest where they have hidden it. If only I could teach the magpies to extract money from pockets and place it on the collection plate.

Your loving uncle,

**Eustace**

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## **Gen Z drivers hesitate to park their own cars**

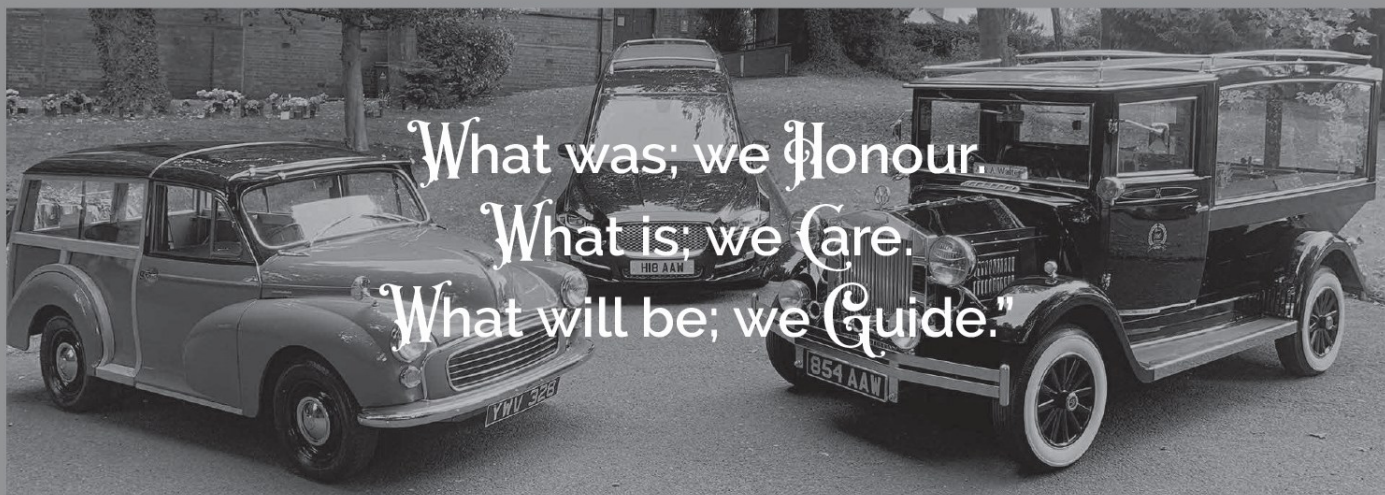
Two thirds of all Gen Z drivers (aged 18-to-28 years old) have asked their parents or friends to park their car for them. 96% admit they are anxious about parallel or reverse parking.

This compares to 28 per cent of Generation X (aged 45 to 60) who have asked for help in parking, and 14 per cent of Baby Boomers (aged 61 to 70).

The research, carried out by online British car retailer Cazoo, also found that Gen Z drivers get most anxious about ‘parking while others are waiting’ (47 per cent), ‘parking between two cars close together’ (43 per cent) and ‘parallel parking’ (40 per cent).

97 per cent of Gen Z drivers admit that they even sometimes park further away from their destination, in order to find a roomier space.

Another recent survey, by Enterprise Mobility, has found that Gen Z drivers are paying thousands extra for an electric car, rather than use a petrol or diesel model. Some under-25s are even spending more than £16,000, to buy an EV as their first car.



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6.30PM EVENSONG ALL SAINTS

## **WEDNESDAY 4TH**

10AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

## **SUNDAY 8TH - PENTECOST**

8AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

11AM TEAM SERVICE REVD CATHERINES FINAL SERVICE ALL SAINTS

## **WEDNESDAY 11TH**

10AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

## **SUNDAY 15TH**

9.30AM WORSHIP FOR ALL ST ANDREWS

11AM FAMILY SERVICE ALL SAINTS

## **WEDNESDAY 18TH**

10AM HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS

## **SUNDAY 22ND**

8AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

9.30AM WORSHIP FOR ALL ST ANDREWS

10AM HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS

## **WEDNESDAY 25TH**

10AM HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS

## **SUNDAY 29TH**

8AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

10AM TEAM SERVICE ST PETERS