

PARISH NEWS



NOVEMBER 2021

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Picture credit: Ian Taylor, Unsplash.com

CHURCH OF THE HOLY SAVIOUR, TYNEMOUTH

www.holysaviours.org.uk

Worship at Holy Saviours: November 2021

[correct at the time of going to press – Tuesday October 26th, 2021]

The relaxation of Covid 19 rules last July has allowed us to return to a measure of normality in church. For now, our worship pattern is as follows:

SUNDAY: 1000 Parish Eucharist: said, with sung hymns and an anthem

Communion is received under both kinds, using an intinct wafer. Until further notice, communicants will receive the sacrament standing, will be stewarded to and from the altar, and be invited to sanitise their hands both before and after receiving.

1800 Evening Prayer: said, with sung hymns

WEDNESDAY: 1000 Communion, said using the Book of Common Prayer

Face-masks and hand-sanitising: neither of these customs is now required, but worshippers may wear masks and use hand-sanitizer should they wish. Mask-wearing at **Evening Prayer** is optional, as the small attendance makes it easy to observe social distancing; hand-sanitising is still available to those who wish it.

Singing: For the moment we are singing two hymns at *Parish Eucharist*, and three at *Evening Prayer*. The wearing of masks is encouraged while we are singing. Anyone preferring not to sing is invited to sit near the back of church.

Other features of our worship – altar servers, Crucifers, Gospel and Offertory processions – have now been re-introduced, and rotas for these are in operation. For the moment, retiring collections will continue rather than passing the plate. At its most recent meeting the PCC resolved to adopt a contactless payment system in the near future, and details of that will be published soon.

Dioceses and arch-dioceses continue to recommend our best practice, but we all need to remember that responsibility for managing the later stages of the pandemic has now been placed entirely on individual parish priests by the senior officials of the church. Moreover, the national emphasis in recent weeks has changed. Rather than preventing the spread of Covid 19 by restrictions on social mixing and movement, the policy now is to limit and control its effects on those who contract it by an expanded vaccination programme. In effect, we are aiming for national herd immunity. It is our Christian duty [as well as common sense] for us to do our utmost to make sure that Revd. Steve is supported in his intricate and difficult task of applying national policy to suit local needs and wishes. Since March 2020 Steve, Joan and Malcolm have bravely shouldered an enormous workload, and have served us nobly and without stint during these atrociously difficult times: our task now is to return this support to them all.



THE VICAR WRITES...

Do you, like me, ever get irritated by phoning an organisation only to be frustrated by one menu of choices after another? Once I was on the phone to the tax office for over twenty minutes, pressing 1 for this and 4 for that, only to find myself directed to their website yet again, before it hung up without me ever speaking to a human being (sorry for the rant). A recent BBC report brought to my attention the prospects of Artificial Intelligence (hereinafter referred to as AI) in religion. The video showed a Buddhist

temple where a robotic monk gave a sermon to a congregation and a miniature robotic prayer companion assisted worshippers in a Polish Roman Catholic church. I now suddenly find myself feeling more sympathetic toward those low skilled workers who have been replaced by robotics on production lines.

So, the question flashes across my mind: should I set up a menu system on my phone which funnels callers through a series of frequently asked questions until they speak to a robotic voice offering solace and counselling? After my comments last month about the reductions in clergy numbers, the prospects of assistance from AI suddenly sound somewhat more appealing than they did.

It was fascinating to hear some of the views expressed in the report. A (real) Buddhist monk thought it wonderful that AI will only get better, as it is always learning. The reporter suggested that 2,000 years of knowledge could be invested in a robot. Some young people thought it was a good way of bringing religion to younger generations. Others were more sceptical; suspicious of a machine without soul offering advice and support. One person commented that artificial intelligence can, after all, be artificially stupid and mistaken as well as being intelligent. After all, the creators of such AI are themselves far from being all-knowing and perfect. Another found the AI responses to be very vague, but recognised that this might lead people to their own answers.

But how might AI in religion progress? How easy would it be for AI to travel down the slippery slope toward starting a cult? Some human followers may even begin to worship a robot. The Bible warns of following inanimate idols made of wood and stone, so how easily some might fall into idolatry with a moving, talking god of silicone and electronics? It might be that this has already happened in some senses with smart phones; many young people seem to be unable to function or interact without them. But can AI really offer empathy when it has no experience of genuine experiences and emotions - suffering and joy?

It may be that some organisations might want us to think that we are speaking to a real human being, when in fact we are conversing with a machine. I would hate to think that any religion might try to fool its adherents into believing they were receiving human counsel. Absolute honesty would be a must.

However, there are those who are finding some relief from loneliness in having an AI companion and I would suggest that, for such people, some limited use of AI might be of benefit. With the advent of voice activation such as Amazon's *Alexa*, even those with no computing skills can communicate with machines. It is also crucial that we discover ways which will help young people find faith through a medium which connects with their world and culture.

I am no Luddite when it comes to technology, but I remain unconvinced that AI will ever replace the effective relationship with another human being who is fashioned after the likeness of God. Don't worry, you won't arrive at church on a Sunday morning any time soon to find a robot at the front to lead the worship!

If you would like to explore the matter further for yourselves, then see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/technology-58989691>

Steve

Praying and Listening for Mission Prayer Meeting

9:30 – 10:00 every Saturday:

THIS MONTH: NOVEMBER 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th



Picture credit: Hannah Busing, unsplash.com

If you would like to contribute to this prayer group but cannot attend on Saturdays, why not set aside the time at home? either on Saturdays or another regular time during your week?

EDITORIAL

John Pearce writes: If *Gogglebox* [Channel 4, recurring] is not already compulsory viewing for all politicians, broadcasters, television “personalities”, actors, writers and assorted programme makers, then it ought to be. Like all the best formats, it is very simple. Two high-definition cameras watch viewers as they watch television, recording their facial and verbal reactions to programmes varying from the heaviest of current affairs [Andrew Marr’s *Sunday Politics*], through infotainment programmes [*Nigella: At My Table*] to weightless nonsense like *I’m a Celebrity*, *Get Me Out Of Here*, or *Made in Chelsea*. We also see viewers’ responses to drama and film, which are, as often as not, as entertaining as the shows themselves. Best of all, viewers’ responses to documentaries on a variety of subjects are both revealing and sometimes almost unbearably moving.

The panel of viewers is a cross-section of the British public, comprehending working-, lower middle- and middle-classes, married and cohabiting couples of various sexualities, family groups comprising age-ranges of forty years and more, pairs of brothers, sisters, cousins, friends, with ethnicities reflecting the diversity of modern Britain. Educational standards can really only be judged from the internal evidence of the comments made by viewers. It is safe to say, therefore, that these range from the spectacularly ignorant [*“The only thing I know about Jesus is he were something to do with Israel, weren’t he?”* says a young white Yorkshire-woman] to the apparently well-read [*“The World’s Wife was Carol Ann Duffy, not Ursula Fanthorpe”*, scoffs a viewer at a *University Challenge* contestant]. But what makes the programme so watchable – and so enlightening - is the complete lack of inhibition in viewers’ reactions and comments.

That dis-inhibition, spontaneous and blunt, is the reason why everyone who appears on television ought to see *Gogglebox*. It is not, obviously, Nigella Lawson’s fault that her upbringing and education have given her a voice plummy enough to make jam, with the result that, try as she might, she never fails to sound condescending. But she doesn’t help herself when she purrs *“I find that the kind of pasta shape I want to eat is a function of the mood I want to express in the dishes I make”*. That, slice it where you like, is piffle, pretentious piffle, piffle in *excelsis*. Had she heard the loud derision of the Goggleboxers at this statement she might have learned something to her advantage and hence, ultimately, to ours.

Likewise, politicians tempted to bluff, waffle, bluster, prevaricate, evade and lie their way through yet another interview with Andrew Marr or Emily Maitlis might be deterred from doing so by the scorn and contempt [sometimes unprintably

expressed^{1]} with which their performances are dismissed by viewers .It is notable too that this scorn and contempt is politically impartial: Boris Starmer and Keir Johnson both get the rough ride their public performances deserve. Politicians, however, get off lightly compared with those who script, act and direct the formulaic jigsaw-puzzles that pass for drama in our times. When a play or film is featured, the programme sometimes acquires the air of Elizabethan theatre, with the viewers' panel taking the role of the groundlings, the ordinary people crowded into the standing-room of the theatre, who cheered the hero, hissed the villain and barracked bad acting with merciless and cheerful relish.

Gogglebox viewers are quick to heckle lazy or improbable plotting, clumsy or pretentious dialogue and, often and hilariously, the over-wrought face-pulling that so often passes for acting these days. All aspirant screenwriters, directors and actors would learn a great deal more about their craft from this kind of trenchant feedback than from a dozen focus groups or audience appreciation surveys. Ten minutes with the *Gogglebox* groundlings might also have the salutary effect of deflating a few of the over-sized egos that abound in television.

All of which suggests that the programme's chief appeal is negative, enabling its viewers to enjoy the dubious pleasure of hurting others' feelings without taking responsibility for doing so. It would be idle to deny that this is a significant part of the programme's appeal. You would need to be made of stone not to enjoy seeing politicians reduced to stammering incoherence by the remorseless questioning of Andrew Marr; and when such as the egregious Laurence Fox have their intellectual emptiness exposed by an audience heckler, what's not to like? When celebrities – people who are well-known merely for being well-known and for nothing else – exhibit shallowness for the sake of being seen on television, it is healthy that the rest of us be encouraged to recognise the triviality of that process.

There is, however, another aspect to the programme which is more positive, and this is the unstinted, genuine admiration accorded by the *Goggleboxers* to the sight of the genuine article when it appears. David Attenborough, for example, has earned the respect and trust of the public because of his complete lack of pretension, his lightly-worn scholarship, and his ability to explain complex scientific issues without talking down to his audience. His appearance on the screen is greeted by viewers with respectful attention, an attitude evident even in their body language. It is the more impressive for being both spontaneous and universal. Mr Attenborough's [entirely unsought] personal authority shows up the

¹ Some of the participants in *Gogglebox* habitually use language for which I was severely punished when, as a child, I was heard to use it by my parents. I could understand if some people found that it made the programme unwatchable. At the same time, I don't think that using "bad language" necessarily means that what is being said is wrong, inappropriate, or deserves to be ignored.

artificial nature of the “television personality” for what it is – an artifice, inhabited only for so long as the cameras are rolling. It is instructive that the Goggleboxers recognise this, even if – perhaps because - the recognition is instinctive.

More heartening than this, however, is the response of the *Gogglebox* panellists to documentary programmes dealing with personal or national tragedies; natural disasters, famine in the developing world, life-threatening illness. It is part of the skill of the editing of the programme that quite often [as in life] we move from the trivial to the tragic in a heartbeat. So it is that, moments after joining in the mockery of the latest hapless celebrity, we are pitched into the story of a nine-year-old child facing terminal cancer. The involvement, the empathy, the admiration for the bravery and determination of victims and, as often as not, the tears shed without shame, show us a communal experience affirming a common humanity among its viewers; their tears, like ours, are the real thing.

In short, possibly without intending to, the producers of *Gogglebox* have created a programme that, as well as being variously and richly entertaining, also allows us to look at a microcosm of a significant part of our society as it operates in the early twenty-first century. And, perhaps surprisingly, the picture that emerges is an encouraging one. Contrary to the picture sometimes conveyed by much of the media, we are, perhaps, less gullible, more shrewd, less patient of the bogus, more respectful of the genuine, less selfish, kinder and more responsive to the pain of others than sometimes we might imagine. In times like these we need to be thankful for small mercies, and *Gogglebox* is, perhaps, not the least of these.

Notes and News

The Living in Love and Faith course aims to help Christians to think more deeply about what it means to be human. It provides a structured and accessible way for local groups to engage in and reflect on a major new exploration of Christian teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. It takes place over five sessions, each one exploring a key topic, including reflection, teaching, discussion and Bible study. Meetings will take place as shown below:

TUESDAYS: 1.30 pm in the Parish Centre:	November 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th, December 7th
THURSDAYS: 7.00 pm in the Vicarage:	November 11th, 18th, 25th, December 2nd, 9th

The *Living in Love and Faith* course book will be used as a basis for the course, though there will be no need for participants to have read it. All you will need to bring to the course is an open mind and a willingness to think, listen and talk.



LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour [Romans 12.10]

HARVEST FLOWERS

Janice Torpy writes The Flower Team would like to thank everyone for their donations to the Harvest Flowers. We were so pleased to be able to decorate the church for harvest in a fitting manner, all down to your generosity. We hope you liked what was done. As most of you will know we take down the window-sill arrangements and make up bouquets to be distributed to those who have had a trying year whether through illness, bereavement or with the pandemic loneliness. We have been thanked by various people who received a bouquet for the lovely surprise when they arrived. I also wish to thank those volunteers who gave up their time on the Monday morning to play 'Postman' and deliver the flowers. A total of over twenty bouquets was distributed. Thank you once again Holy Saviours – you never disappoint.

THE JIGSAW COMPETITION

The Editor writes: Carol Davidson's long-awaited Jigsaw Puzzle Competition fully justified our anticipation; it was an excellent evening. As my pictures show, there was a full turnout, and I have never seen so many Holy Saviour's folk concentrating so hard for so long [except, of course, during Sunday sermons]. Each team attempted a 500-piece jigsaw, and competition was strenuous but good humoured. A well-stocked bar aided concentration, and helped to raise over £200 for church funds. A more lasting dividend though was the renewal of our social life as a parish, and for that we thank Carol and all those who helped her.





My pictures show *[top left]* Michael, Diane, Joan and Alan toasting their victory, *[top right]* Claire and Bruce Sands on their way to a worthy second place, *[bottom left]* Malcolm, Glynis and Rebecca in third place, only fifty-three pieces short of a solution. Fourth place was taken by husband and wife team Peter and June Sykes. At bottom right, Michael Bayley spoke for us all when, accepting his team's prize from Steve, he said how wonderful it was to be socialising in company again. Very well done, Carol, and we are looking forward to the 2022 competition already.

STILL WANTED: HOLY DUSTERS.....



Reprinted from the October Parish News..... *The Holy Duster* team meets fortnightly on a Friday morning, the salary is attractive – the pleasure of team fellowship and the satisfaction of a well-mopped floor – and there is a bonus scheme in which recipients get the chance to score with one of Ian Crawford’s prize-winning cheese scones. If you would like to volunteer to help please contact Karen Bilton on 0191 258 0270 or at kebilton58@gmail.com or speak to Stuart Crozier in the church office.

George Herbert’s poem *The Elixir* – our well-loved hymn *Teach me, my God and King* – shows a metaphysical conceit in action, likening the grace of God to a precious liquid which cleans and purifies everything it touches. “*Nothing can be so mean which with this tincture – for Thy sake – will not grow bright and clean*” – in everyday terms, a sort of spiritual elbow grease. So: become a *Holy Duster*, help to keep our church the clean and welcoming place we all love, and take part in a metaphysical conceit as well. Who can resist a package deal like that?

THE PARISH LUNCH-CLUB...

...was one of the parish activities closed down by the Covid epidemic, and so it is very good news that it will be starting up again this month, on Wednesday November 3rd from 1200 onwards. Other things being equal, it will meet eight times before Christmas on the following dates:

NOVEMBER 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th

DECEMBER 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd

The menu will be following the tried and tested formula established when the club began many years ago – home-made soup, a tray-bake of some kind, and tea or coffee. As this is written, cooks and bakers have been arranged to cover the month of November and the first Wednesday in December, but if you would like

to volunteer as a cook and/or baker then please speak to Liz Parr at church or telephone her on 0191 257 7908.

For the moment we can allow only two people in the Parish Centre kitchen at one time, and so cooks may wish to make their offerings at home and bring them in to defrost or reheat, rather than make them on the morning of the club meeting. We also have a small freezer in which we can store any left-over soup which can be used up at future club meetings. In the past, weekly membership of the club has fluctuated between fifteen and twenty, and accommodating a group of that size will not be a problem even if social distancing is required.

It is important to note that the lunch club is open to anyone who wishes to come along – it is not restricted to parishioners or members of the church. If you would like to come, then please come along at noon on November 3rd, and you will be made more than welcome. Equally, if you know of anyone who you think would enjoy the club, then do not hesitate to put them in touch with Liz, or bring them along if you prefer. For many customers in the past the fellowship has been as important a part of the club as the food.

THE AUTUMN FAIR 2021...

WILL BE HELD ON

SATURDAY 20th NOVEMBER

IN THE PARISH HALL

FROM 1000 - 1300

**We need money-making ideas - stalls,
stallholders and assistance with
refreshments and entertainment.**

**ALL IDEAS ARE WELCOME:
PLEASE SPEAK TO STEVE DIXON
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL 2021

Chris Benneworth writes: This is to be held in the church from 14th to 16th December on the theme *The Light of the World*. We are inviting church organisations, families, uniformed organisations, schools, businesses and clubs in the parish to join this celebration of Christmas by decorating a tree and displaying it in the church. There will be refreshments and a puzzle-trail for children (*Find the Snowmen*) to encourage them to look hard at the trees. If you would like to be part of what has become a key annual event, then please contact me, Chris Benneworth, at Holysavioursfestival@gmail.com and let me know.

There will also be a virtual Festival (like last year's): so take photographs of your tree at home, make an Advent calendar, or encourage your children to paint pictures. Submit the photographs to Holysavioursfestival@gmail.com as well.

Our organist, Malcolm Soulsby will, as ever, provide suitable Christmas music for both the real and virtual festivals. It is also possible that Newcastle Concert Band will provide live seasonal music on the opening night, Tuesday December 14th.



Picture credit: Linda & Chris Benneworth

A full-dress Holy Saviour's Church at the 2019 Festival

Mothers Union News

From Linda Benneworth: Fiddle mitts [also known as twiddle muffs] are knitted cuffs or hand warmers, which can have different textures and materials attached, such as beads, ribbons and buttons. People with dementia can wear, hold and fiddle with them, and this can help to soothe any restlessness and agitation that they might experience. They can also be used to cover intravenous drips at the point of insertion, which helps to stop patients scratching and dislodging them. Members of our Mothers Union have recently been producing these on an industrial scale, as the letter below from the consultants and ward manager of Ward 15 at North Tyneside General hospital acknowledges.



June Norton made the colourful and attractive fiddle mitts below:



And at last month's meeting on October 4th, Revd Malcolm Railton looked back at his police career as a dog-handler:



Members and guests were treated to a most interesting, informative and entertaining talk from Malcolm Railton at their regular monthly meeting on October 4th. He talked about the training which he and his German Shepherd Max [see picture on page 16] received when he worked as a dog handler in the police. He covered the huge range of aspects of his work including averting a riot at a football match, searching for criminals in hiding and

saving a lost, injured and vulnerable man. We learned about the differences in the way the dog was trained for apprehending criminals compared with working with the firearms unit. Malcolm has been invited to come back and talk about his work with his dog in the drugs squad. We are all looking forward to this immensely. Why not come and join us? Watch for details.

Cathy Duff writes: This month's meeting is on Monday 1st November at 2 pm in the Parish Centre. The speaker is the Mr Laurie Mcleman who will speak on *The Royal Engineers (Volunteers)* All are welcome.



GOD'S AGENTS [III]: JACOB – PART TWO

[A series of articles on the ways we meet God]

Clive Harper writes: On reflection, I could not leave Jacob as I did last month without revisiting him once more, as he is so significant in the Bible story. Jacob was lying on his death-bed and he called his sons to him to give his final blessings. No doubt his mind went back to the time he had fled from the wrath of his brother Esau to his uncle Laban, where he fell in love with Laban's daughter, Rachel. But the uncle tricked him: for when he woke up from his wedding night, there beside him was Laban's elder daughter, Leah. Uncle Laban brushed it off with the promise that, if Jacob served him for another seven years, he could marry Rachel as well; and so it transpired. We might well conjecture: 'what was going on

here?’ Didn’t Jacob know? Or did he just trust – unlikely as it may seem – that God knew what He was doing?

For the significant thing about all of this was that the Blessing, which we spoke about last month, came through the union of Leah and Jacob; in fact, Leah was very fruitful and bore him many children and it was only later that Rachel gave birth; to at least two sons, Joseph and Benjamin.

As we all know, Joseph wore the ‘coat of many colours’ and through the treachery of his brothers, who were no doubt jealous of him as his father’s favourite, he was sold to slave traders, taken off to Egypt, where he rose to become a ruler in Egypt and where, in due course, Jacob and his family were to settle.

So, the years go by and Jacob is dying and he addresses each of his sons in turn; the question is: where does the Blessing go? Who is to be the chosen one to take on the mantle in the line leading to the coming of the Messiah; it is a crucial moment! Will it be the eldest son, Reuben? Or will it be Joseph, who has achieved such fame? Or Benjamin, the youngest and so close to his father’s heart, the other child of his true love, Rachel? But none of them is chosen and, as we saw above, it was to one of Leah’s sons that the blessing was given.

Jacob does indeed give a sort of blessing to each of the sons encircling his bed but, no doubt inspired by God who is clearly at the centre of all of this, Jacob pronounces this blessing upon Judah, the fourth son: *‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff until Shiloh comes’*; in Christian theology Shiloh is ‘the one to whom it belongs’; we would identify Him as the Jesus, the Messiah. There is an echo of Jacob’s blessing in modern literature. He speaks of Judah as being like a lion: and in his book: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, C S Lewis portrays Christ as Aslan, the lion.

INSTITUTIONAL SHAME...

Malcolm Railton writes: Firstly, I must begin with an apology to our editor John, for submitting an article in good time. I hope that this doesn’t throw the whole publishing process into disarray. The reason for this timely submission is that I am going to be on leave when the deadline arrives; and so for once I am trying to be well organised and look ahead.

Upon my return to work, I will be attending Chapel at Kings Priory School and talking to a different year group every morning. Steve and I do this on a regular basis, and it is a great opportunity to interact with our children and young people. My given topic for the week is “Tolerance”, so I am beginning to think about this, and how I can talk about it. It is perhaps strange for me, a sixty-one-year-old white

male, to be talking about tolerance to groups which can in so many ways be more tolerant and open minded than people of my age-group. And in any case, thinking of things to talk about is easy. However, establishing a rapport, a bond, or a sense of mutual respect, is much more likely to be problematic. Why should they listen to me? Why should they care what I think?

Aside from family and friends, the major callings of my life have been first to serve as a police officer, and recently to train and serve as a priest in the Church of England. Until quite recently I was – and am – proud to have served in both vocations. However, in the last few weeks I have been forced to question this pride and to reconsider a number of things that I had perhaps taken for granted.

I recently completed my safeguarding training update, as part of which I was encouraged to watch the extremely disturbing *BBC Panorama* documentary about sexual abuse, mismanagement, and cover ups within the church. I was absolutely appalled by what I learned, as a former police officer, a priest, above all just as a human being. I was left with a powerful feeling of being almost ashamed to be a part of organisations that could allow these events to take place.

This was closely followed by the revelations which emerged after the conviction of the police officer for the murder of Sarah Everard. She was abducted from an area where I used to work in the 1980s and 1990s. This, and other subsequent revelations, has again caused me to question my earlier stated feelings of service and pride and have them replaced with disgust and shame. Although I have no personal involvement with such events either as police officer or priest, I feel tarnished, like the reputations of both of these institutions. What will it take for us to regain the trust and faith of those we are appointed to serve? With regard to children, young people, in fact just people in general, I return to my earlier questions: why should they listen to me? why should they care what I think?

If, as a church, we are to reach out to people, I am left feeling that we have a great deal of work to do in regaining the trust and respect that we once held almost automatically. I have pondered for some time whether we as a church are merely considered as irrelevant by many of the population; but the events of the last few weeks have suggested to me that it might be even worse than that. Worse than being irrelevant, could we be considered to be part of the problem? or even the enemy by some? rather than part of the solution?

Please do not think that I am suggesting for one moment that we give up. I am merely pointing out that through our own fault we have made our job of sharing the love of Jesus Christ more difficult. I believe that we can and will overcome all of this and get back on track, but we need to think again, work harder and pray for God's help to show forth that love more truthfully.

SAVE THE PARISH – UPDATE

The Editor writes: Following the well-publicised launch of this campaign, things seem to have gone a little off the boil. My own researches into the matter, based on reading the document GS2222, have so far not been very enlightening. As Emma Thompson's *Spectator* article [referenced in the October *Parish News*] suggested, the very language of this document seems designed to obscure rather than elucidate, and more than that often so vague as to be capable of a wide variety of interpretations. What, for example, are we meant to make of this statement? *"The Mission and Pastoral Measure is an administrative piece of legislation which enables bishops and their diocesan teams, with the support of the Church Commissioners, to organise certain aspects of mission and ministry in their dioceses, to enable greater flexibility in the use of church buildings, and to manage the disposal of churches no longer needed for regular public worship."* What is missing from this statement is any sense of where parishes fit into it if, indeed, they fit into it at all. Parishes are the frontline of mission and ministry and moreover do the heavy lifting in raising the bulk of the money to finance the dioceses. The inclusion of a phrase such as *"following consultation with the parishes involved"* after the words *"bishops and their diocesan teams"* would have been reassuring. It follows that its omission cannot fail to disquiet, given that as it stands the *Mission and Pastoral Measure* appears to gather a considerable amount of power into the hands of diocesan hierarchies, not all of whom inspire confidence.

For one version of how the *Mission and Pastoral Measure* might play out, I am indebted to James Burnell-Nugent, who published the article below in *The Times* of October 14th last. His distinctive name enabled me to find him using Google – he is a churchwarden at the church of St Peter and St Paul, Ermington, in Devon. He not only gave me generous permission to reprint his article but also very kindly contacted the *Times* on my behalf to obtain their consent for my doing so. In his previous professional life, Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugent was Commander in Chief of the Fleet [in effect deputy to the First Sea Lord] from 2005 – 2007, and I know that *Parish News* readers will find much to ponder in his article.

Thanks to Church of England accounting, parishes are disappearing

by James Burnell-Nugent, published in *The Times*, Thursday October 14 2021

Last Saturday was a sad day for the Church of England. In Leicester diocese, the governing body voted in favour of a plan to fold 234 parishes into the embrace of 20 to 25 huge groups, called minster communities, by 2026. One in five local vicars will disappear, creating what sounds like a clerical car pool. "Thank you for calling the minster community helpline. Press 1 for help with a very sick relative or friend.

Press 2 for help with bereavement. Press 3 to arrange a funeral.” *This could be the future for the people of Leicester’s historic parishes.*

An alternative option, to cut Leicester’s diocesan administrative costs by 10 per cent, was rejected. The Church of England behaves like a socialist republic: demanding increasing “tax” (parish share) from dwindling numbers of church-goers, then spending too much of it on its own bureaucracy. Moreover, as The Times reported last month, in 2017-2020 it spent £248 million on “renewal and reform” projects that failed to increase church attendance.

Bureaucracy and waste deter donors. Yet Leicester hopes to increase giving by 2 per cent — how? The church’s own studies show that donations correlate to numbers of paid clergy. The one identifiable Christian in the community is a priest in a dog collar. Grouping parishes empowers dioceses to sell parish-owned assets, incontinently using the capital to pay their own running costs, but it disincentivises donors. A 1,000-year-old system of independent parishes could be collapsed by short-term panic thinking and inadequate projections.

Other dioceses are considering the minster model. Better to wait and see how Leicester fares over the next five years. The church’s growth policy report, From Anecdote to Evidence, confirms what rural parishioners like me witness: that parish amalgamations and building sales establish a spiral of decline. Selling a parsonage signals “game over” and leaves a community unlikely to have a vicar again.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said, “I am passionate that the parish is essential.” In the Archbishop of York’s current General Synod update GS2223 he calls for “priest and people working together”. These exhortations from our spiritual leaders, the trend towards localism and the church’s own empirical evidence are all being ignored.

[reprinted with permission from *The Times* and James Burnell-Nugent]

The Times being the newspaper that it is, correspondents were not slow to pick up on many of the points in Sir James’s article, and I summarise the main points of their reactions below. I have omitted names because I have not had time to obtain permission to use them.

A layman from Northampton said that the Church of England seems to have lost its way, pointing out that diverting funds from parishes to diocesan administration and unworkable evangelical projects is incompatible with its mission. Not only that, the opportunities to convert unwanted church properties into low cost or affordable housing for young people were missed when disused vicarages and other redundant church buildings were sold off. His final observation was a jolting

one: *“I can’t help feeling that if Jesus popped in these days he would have no idea that the established church was his legacy — which may explain its decline”*.

A parishioner from the Leicester diocese instanced an example of the misapplied spending referenced in the article: *“Work has already started on a ‘monstrous carbuncle’ to be raised up alongside Leicester cathedral, to ‘improve the visitor experience’ at the tomb of Richard III”*. Such a project is only possible because church buildings are exempt from planning legislation. In my view rightly, he described as anathema the idea that money spent on this project could have been diverted from funding the actual ministry of the church.

Another layperson from Hampshire offered a sharply dissenting view on the matter. He pointed out that the Bishop of Leicester’s scheme had received 72% support in the Diocesan Synod, and suggested that the church’s main problem was *“a short-sighted reaction to change and vision for the future by those who ignore the facts of church attendance”*. For this reason the renewal of mission proposed by the bishop’s plan deserved support both within and outwith his diocese.

A fourth layperson, this time from Liverpool, aimed her discontent squarely at parish clergy. She lives within walking distance of three Church of England churches with tiny, elderly congregations, where little happens apart from Sunday and weekday services attended by very few. She went on claim that *“although there were clergy who stretched out a helping hand during the pandemic, on the whole they hid behind guidelines while workers in the supermarkets, bus and delivery drivers, care workers and many others, often the low-paid, put their lives at risk day after day”*. Obviously, this lady must speak as she finds, but my own observation is that, if she is right, then she has been very unlucky in her clergy. On the other hand, it is difficult to disagree with the two general points she makes at the end of her letter: *“The Church of England now employs the management techniques of business. It has been losing its way for decades”*; although I would add the qualifier that this may be truer at national than at local level.

The only priest to reply did so trenchantly and is worth quoting in full: *“James Burnell-Nugent expresses the fears of so many about the Church of England’s future: that, given its track record and its proposals for its future, it is in the hands of those who lack the competence and character to solve its problems. The House of Bishops has many erudite members but it is their judgment, especially in a crisis, which so concerns the laity. Clergy have been reduced to silent pawns in an ever more centralising power grab. Local congregations should withhold what is after all a freewill offering if they are not being well and faithfully served”*.

The radical suggestion that parishes should withhold their parish share if they feel that the diocese is not spending it wisely is one that a part of me would like to see

happen, if only to find out what would happen next. The experience of Jesmond Parish Church, financially and spiritually in “impaired communion” with our own diocese these many years, suggests that this would amount to not very much. Possibly this might be because while our bishops and archbishops are not good at thinking the unthinkable, they are even less good at dealing with it.

It is instructive though to apply the Leicester model to our own diocese, and to speculate as to how this might work out in practice. If we followed their plan of forming “minsters” each containing about ten churches, we would, perhaps, find the Tynemouth Deanery [consisting of twenty parishes] divided into two, although how on earth this division would proceed is a question to boggle the mind. I quail at the thought of some nightmarish formula based on an arcane calculus involving geography, churchmanship, theology, physical size, finance and clerical preferences. The very scale of the problem more or less guarantees that we will fail to solve it, or, worse, solve it ineffectively. Moreover, it is a sobering reflection that, whatever diocesan scheme is devised, the parishes will probably be the last ones to hear about it, but first in the queue when it comes to paying for it.

THE NAME'S THE SAME...

Crkva Svetog Spasitelja, Dubrovnik²

John Pearce writes: The Church of the Holy Saviour, Dubrovnik, is a votive church – that is to say, it was built as an act of thanksgiving for God’s mercy. In this case, the Dubrovnik Senate voted the funds for its building in thanksgiving for the city and province having escaped the worst results of an earthquake which devastated much of the region in 1520. The solidity of the city senate’s gratitude was amply demonstrated when the church was one of the very few of the city’s buildings to be left intact by a later, even more catastrophic earthquake in 1677, which killed five thousand people. Four fifths of the city’s buildings were destroyed at that time, and the economic effects of the disaster weakened the republic of Ragusa, of which Dubrovnik was the capital, to the extent that it could do little to resist its conquest by the Napoleonic French Empire in 1808.

Svetog Spasitelja is an authentic example of a Renaissance church, completed in 1528. Legend holds that the building of the church was very much a communal effort; even aristocratic ladies were involved in carrying uncut stone and baulks of timber during the building process. Its later resistance to the 1677 earthquake may partly be due to its partial incorporation into the city walls. In common with many other churches in the region it is not used for worship, but its cool, tranquil interior is used for art exhibitions and chamber music during the summer months.

² The Church of the Holy Saviour, Dubrovnik, Croatia



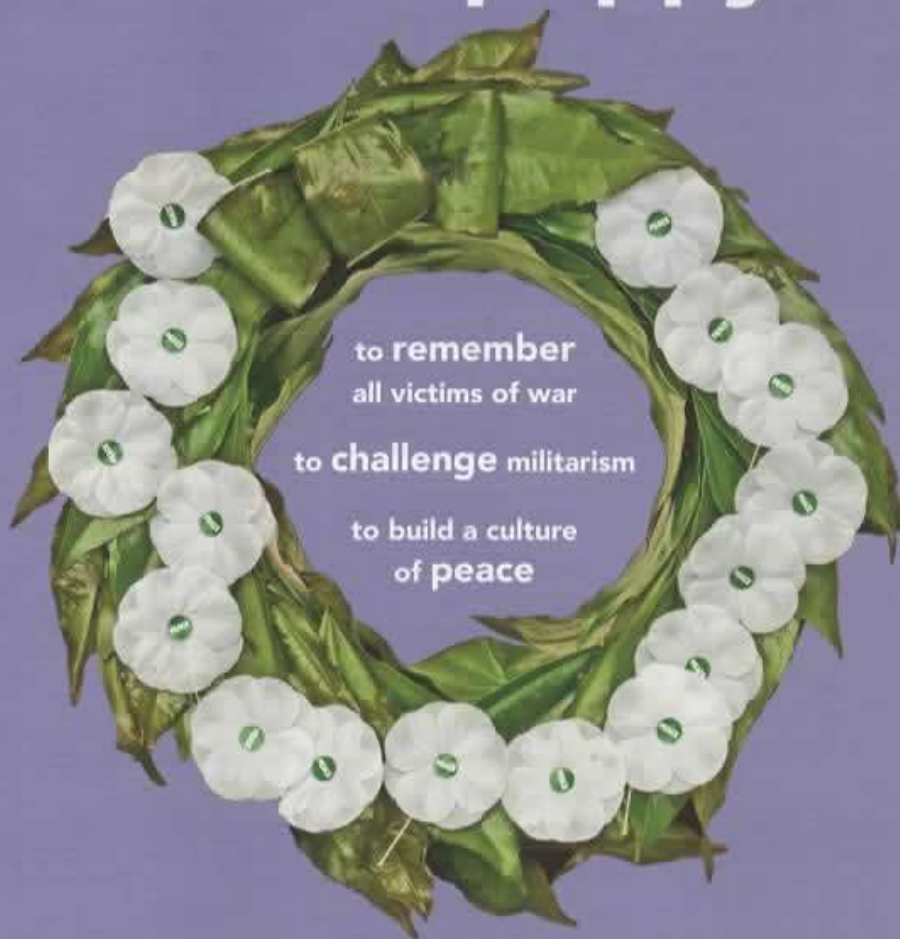
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning...

John Pearce writes: At Remembrance-tide I buy and wear two poppies. I wear a red British Legion poppy in remembrance of and gratitude for those young men and women who, in the words of the famous Kohima prayer, gave their tomorrows that I might enjoy a today. I also buy some white poppies, wear one of them, and leave the rest, along with a poster and some car stickers, at the back of church for anyone who wishes to take and wear or display. In the words of the Peace Pledge Union poster, I do so to remember all victims of war, to challenge militarism, and to make a tiny contribution to building a culture of peace.

I am aware that my privilege of holding pacifist beliefs has been bought at the expense of many lives and the spilling of much blood. As George Orwell said of pacifists, *"People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf"*. However arguable this may be, we need also to bear in mind the words of Ghandi: *"I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent"*.

At the same time I believe it to be vitally important to keep in mind the differing meanings of the two poppies. The red one says *lest we forget*; but the white one also says *never again*. We should hold both ideas in our hearts and minds not only at Remembrance tide, but also in our daily prayer-lives.

On Remembrance Day, wear a
white poppy



Copy for the December edition should be posted either to the Parish News Mailbox, or to JCPrintmail@gmx.co.uk by **Thursday November 25th**. Completed artwork will be sent to the printers overnight on Sunday November 28th for publication in church on Saturday December 3rd.

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Sunday at 1000	Parish Eucharist
Sunday at 1800	Evening Prayer
Wednesday at 1000	Said Eucharist according to the Book of Common Prayer
Saturday at 0930	Prayer and Listening for Mission Prayer Meeting

Vicar Revd. Steve Dixon
Email vicar@holysaviours.org.uk
Telephone 07729 393 580
0191 697 4562
Curate Revd. Malcolm Railton
Email curate@holysaviours.org.uk
Telephone 0191 262 3028

Parish Administrator Stuart Crozier
Church Office Tel. 0191 257 6250
Email office@holysaviours.org.uk
Church website: www.holysaviours.org.uk

Churchwardens:

Janice Torpy
Tel: 07920 049 341

David Bilton,
19 Ashleigh Grove
Tel. 2580270

PCC Vice Chairman:
Chris Bennenworth

PCC Treasurer:
Karen Bilton, 19 Ashleigh Grove
Tel. 2580270

Church Flowers:

Janice Torpy, janicetorpy@gmail.com
Tel. Tel: 296 2462
Barbara Walker, 2 Monkstone Crescent,
Tel. 257 4159



Here dead we lie, because we did not live
And shame the land from which we sprung.
Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose;
But young men think it is, and we were young

A E Housman, 1914

ACTIVITIES

Mothers' Union

1 st Monday	2.00pm	Parish Centre
3 rd Thursday	2.00pm	Parish Centre
Cathy Duff	Tel 0191 257 4811	

W3 – Women's Group

1 st Thursday	7.30	Parish Centre
Eleanor Hayward	Tel 0191 2571720	

Rainbows

Lucy Skillen	Tel. 07891101262
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Brownies

Pat Corbett	Tel. 0191 2800510
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Guides

Grace Paul	Tel. 07803371929
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Rangers

Grace Paul	Tel. 07803 371929
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Beavers

Gillian Smith	Tel. 296 1426
tynemouthbeavers@gmail.com	

Cub Scouts

Fiona Lydall	Tel 257 3047
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Scouts

David Littlefield	Tel. 257 8740
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Explorer Scouts

Lucy Mace	Tel. 258 5948
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Group Scout Leader

Michael Dyer	Tel. 259 6236
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Asst. Group Leader

David Littlefield	Tel. 257 8740
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Scout Hut bookings:

Helen Preston	Tel: 257 0574
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Tynemouth Village Day Centre – Parish Hall

Tel. 259 5569

Mother & Toddler Group – Parish Hall

Friday 9.30am

ARTICLES FOR THE PARISH NEWS

These should be submitted to the editor, **John Pearce**, at JCPrintmail@gmx.co.uk – the deadline will be published each month. Post written contributions in the Parish News Mailbox outside the Parish Office or to 9 Selwyn Avenue, Monkseaton, NE25 9DH.

All queries to

0191 291 2742 or 07903 227 192.