

# PARISH NEWS



OCTOBER 2021

Price £1.50

## Prayer (I)

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,  
God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth  
Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,  
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
The six-days world transposing in an hour,  
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;  
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,  
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,  
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,  
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,  
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,  
The land of spices; something understood.

George Herbert [1593 - 1633]

CHURCH OF THE HOLY SAVIOUR, TYNEMOUTH

[www.holysaviours.org.uk](http://www.holysaviours.org.uk)

# Worship at Holy Saviours: September 2021

[correct at the time of going to press – Tuesday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021]

The relaxation of Covid 19 rules in late July has allowed us to return to a measure of normality in church. For now, our worship patterns have changed as follows:

**Worship:** A single Sunday celebration of **Parish Communion** now takes place at 1000. We are no longer required to observe social distancing in church, so there is room for everyone at this service. For now there will be no 0800 Eucharist, but should the demand for it arise, this may be reinstated later. Parish Communion will continue to be live-streamed on YouTube and our website. There is also a said **Book of Common Prayer Eucharist** each Wednesday morning at 1000. **Evening Prayer** is also at offered at 1800 each Sunday in church.

**Face-masks and hand-sanitising:** neither of these customs are 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 morning services, and the wearing of masks is encouraged while we are singing. Anyone preferring not to sing is invited to sit near the back of church.

**Communion:** although the use of a common cup is now permitted for communion under both kinds, we are taking a more cautious approach. Communicants will be given a wafer intincted by the celebrant from a chalice held by a server. Stewarding of communicants continues, as will our receiving communion standing up. Kneeling for communion and using the chalice may resume soon. As with many other aspects of our church life, we need to feel our way forward bearing in mind always the emotional comfort and physical protection of our worshippers.

**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. 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 this intricate and difficult duty. Since March 2020 he, Joan and Malcolm have bravely shouldered an enormous workload, and 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.....

It is a real privilege to be able to walk around our parish and constantly bump into people I know, both from the congregation and wider community. During September we enjoyed a wonderful Indian Summer and on my sunny strolls round Tynemouth I met many people. Even those who I assume are day trippers sometimes see the dog-collar and stop me for a chat. To be a visible Christian presence in our community is an essential part of parish ministry. Those visible signs are seen in our church building, our community events,

our participation in schemes like Nite Bite and the Food Bank, and not least in simple conversations we share with others that show our concern and care.

My thanks go to John Pearce, our Editor, for highlighting the debate about the campaign to *Save the Parish* in the September edition of Parish News. As you've probably realised, I'm a fan of the Church of England's parish system. However, I do remember sending a lecture room into silence twenty years ago when a lecturer asked where we thought the Church of England would be in a couple of decades. I suggested that the parish system would be unsustainable and I don't think we are too far from that position now. We cannot have failed to notice that we have declining church attendance, an ageing membership, fewer clergy and fewer resources, at least in material terms.

One thing is clear: something has to be done and whatever it is it will mean change. Among other things, the campaign to Save the Parish is a symptom of the anxiety there is within the national church about what change will mean for us all. We are having to think through some very complex and convergent issues concerning mission, finance, vocations (both lay and ordained), training, and organisation. The urgency of tackling these issues has been heightened by COVID.

In his article, John quoted that in a century the church has gone from having 25,000 clergy to below 7,000 today. With around 12,500 Parishes across England, I would suggest that the church must have been rather overstaffed in 1820. Nonetheless, clergy numbers are still falling and change must happen if we are to move forward together as a church nationally and locally. The current shortage of clergy isn't simply a matter of how we arrange our finance, it is equally about vocations. As congregations grow older, so there are fewer people who are in a position to offer themselves as clergy. In the North East we also suffer from a lack of clergy willing to move north from further afield to fill vacancies.

The *Save the Parish* group is lobbying for less central administration and I agree that we need an administration system which is nimble and fit for purpose. However, we cannot operate as a regional and national institution without some form of bureaucracy. For instance, I have often heard people ask about how we share and learn from good practice within the church. This needs facilitation from those with oversight.

I am not trying to launch you into a spiral of depression at this point. Rather, I am continuing to suggest that we need positive, life enhancing change. Our Diocese is currently undergoing a 'Transformation Agenda' as we look to the future. A greater emphasis is being placed on lay leadership, working in partnership with clergy. New ways are being proposed for churches to work together to support parish ministry. The next few years will bring about some significant change, but changes that, I pray, will bring us new hope and inspiration.

In the meantime, it is our responsibility to hear and do what God is calling us to in our Parish. No centralised system or Diocesan programme can ever bring the word of God to the people of Tynemouth in a way which is relevant to our particular community. Only we can do this, and in so doing, we will be showing forth and building the kingdom of God in our parish.

*Steve*

## Praying and Listening for Mission Prayer Meeting

9:30 – 10:00 every Saturday:

THIS MONTH: OCTOBER 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>



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:** The decision of the BBC, in April 2019, to axe its weekly spiritual programme *Something Understood* on BBC Radio Four was a cruel blow. I say “spiritual” rather than “religious” because in its audience it assumed no belief, expounded no creed beyond requiring listeners to have receptive and open minds, and, rarely among broadcast media of any kind, made spaces for the listener to reflect and think during the broadcast. Nor, crucially, did it set out to preach or convert: rather, it offered spiritual reflections on various aspects of themes touching the lives of most of us. It illuminated them using poetry, prose, songs, stories and ambient sound, which could be natural or artificial. Themes visited in its last months included motherhood, faith and finance, equality, challenging perceived truths [scientific and religious], the benefits and drawbacks of open-mindedness, warrior women, endings and beginnings, hope in a hopeless time, the physical cosmos. Presenters included a rabbi, an imam, a Sikh, a Buddhist, a atheist philosopher, an Anglican monk and a brain surgeon. I rarely listened to it at its first broadcast time of 0600 on a Sunday, but the late night repeat at 2330, as a meditative postscript to a long and sometimes difficult day, took some beating. The BBC’s decision to axe the programme has, of course, been ascribed to financial necessity, an argument which has failed to convince at least this listener.

Finding out how much BBC programmes cost to make is a mystery wrapped in an enigma, which strikes me as odd in a corporation financed by what amounts to a compulsory poll-tax [which on the whole I am very glad to pay]. My researches however revealed two facts; one: that the programme had a regular audience of three-quarters of a million people, and two: that the cost of a BBC Radio Four programme is averaged, for accounting purposes, to 1.4p per listener-hour. From these facts I deduce [I hope, correctly], that *Something Understood’s* weekly notional cost to the BBC was £5,250 for each half-hour broadcast, or approximately one-fifth of Mr Gary Lineker’s weekly BBC salary before tax<sup>1</sup>. Saving a notional £275,000 a year by axing one of the few programmes still to meet the three-fold criteria of John Reith’s original BBC charter – to educate, to inform and to entertain – strikes me as an economy which is false in every sense of the word, something not so much hard as impossible to understand.

Which leads me, at length, to the Welsh poet, priest and politician George Herbert. As attentive readers of this month’s cover will realise, the final two words

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<sup>1</sup> I cite Mr Lineker’s salary only because he is the BBC’s most highly paid broadcaster. I imply no criticism of the consummately professional and very likeable Mr Lineker, whose appearances as chair on *Have I Got News for You* do much to enliven a moribund format, and whose broadcasting on football does much to enhance the enjoyment [for all I know] of the game for BBC viewers.

of George Herbert's wonderful poem, *Prayer (I)* were chosen as his programme's title by *Something Understood's* original begetter, Mark Tully. Herbert's poetry is actually very well known, even though many people who know it probably don't realise. But anyone who has sung *Let all the world in every corner sing, Teach me my God and King, King of glory, King of peace, Come my way, my truth, my life or The King of love my shepherd is* has sung his work. Although he lived for only forty years, he filled his life with various achievements: precocious Oxford scholar, don and theologian, parliamentarian, parish priest, poet. His godfather was the poet John Donne and, like him, Herbert used the poetic conventions of the time to explore the nature of faith, humankind's relationship with the eternal, and the interaction of God with man. Both Donne and Herbert used a poetic technique called the metaphysical conceit, in which abstract ideas – love, faith, fear – are conveyed using physical metaphors. In connection with lost love, for example, a broken heart may be compared to a stopped clock – an idea which is arresting if far-fetched to begin with, but which grows more apt the more you think about it.

George Herbert's *Prayer (I)* is one of a sequence of poems on the subject of prayer, and even judged simply as verse, it is a remarkable technical feat. A single, ninety-seven-word not-quite-a-sentence [it lacks the main verb a sentence requires], strings together twenty-seven separate and diverse images connected with prayer, each image in itself being complex and multi-layered. In its lack of overtly-logical development or narrative sequence it resembles, superficially at least, the stream of consciousness which personal prayer often becomes. But in fact it mirrors the richness, depth and breadth of an active prayer-life, and the multitude of functions that prayer can fulfil in enriching our relationship with God.

Time and space prevents me from doing more than offering a brief glimpse of this poem's complexity and depth, and I would urge interested readers to explore for themselves Herbert's reflections on prayer and its centrality to our faith. Take, for example, just one of the metaphysical conceits in the poem – *church bells beyond the stars heard* - as explained by the priest, poet and critic Malcolm Guite:

*"George Herbert also had this sense that the sound of the bells might be going both ways and so he made them an emblem of prayer. His phrase church bells beyond the stars heard is deliberately ambiguous: it might mean that our prayers rise beyond the stars, as the sound of our church bells rises to the skies, or it might mean that our ears are opened at last to hear the bells of heaven."*

And, you could add, there is also the sense that prayer is [to use a little metaphysical conceit of my own] a duplex circuit – that is, an electronic connection that allows for communications between points in both directions at once. Notice too, that Revd. Guite and I, between us, have used well over a

hundred words to say what George Herbert says in six. This is the best possible measure of the concise power of the poet's idiom. It would require a similar expense of words to explore the other twenty-six conceits in *Prayer (I)*, so if you want any more you will have to sing it yourself. On the other hand, readers who might care to explore George Herbert further could begin by looking up the Wikipedia entry on him, which provides an admirable summary of his life and work, and you can find an excellent analysis of the whole of *Prayer (I)* at <https://interestingliterature.com/2017/12/a-short-analysis-of-george-herberts-prayer-i/> which is couched in refreshingly direct language.

As for the BBC and *Something Understood*, you can still listen to a selection of recent programmes on the BBC Iplayer, but you will need to be fairly quick to do so. For myself, I am left to reflect that the axing of the programme ended a small but very significant contribution to my spiritual life, and further that it will take time and effort to find a way of replacing it. Whatever this replacement may be, I hope that it will be as thought-provoking and enriching as was this weekly exploration of what Graham Greene called "the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God", so that week upon week a little more of the mystery of God incarnate and crucified can become something understood.

**HARVEST CELEBRATION 2021  
SUNDAY 10<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER AT 1000  
PARISH COMMUNION  
PLEASE BRING CONTRIBUTIONS OF  
NON-PERISHABLE FOODS AND TOILETRIES  
AS YOUR HARVEST OFFERING  
YOUR OFFERING WILL BE PASSED ON TO  
LOCAL FOOD BANKS AND NITE BITE**



## Notes and News

**David Littlefield writes:** I would very much like to thank those fellow parishioners who sent me kind messages and cards following the sudden death in September of my brother Rob Littlefield. Rob was baptised and confirmed at Holy Saviours but spent much of his adult life in Scotland where he taught at Glasgow Academy. He leaves a wife, Tessa, and two adult children, Richard and Peter, as well as four grandchildren. Janet and I are very grateful to Steve and Malcolm, as well as friends at Holy Saviours, for their kind support during a sad family time.

**Harvest flowers: Janice Torpy writes:** As our Harvest Festival – Sunday October 10<sup>th</sup> - is fast approaching, the flower arrangers are hoping to be able to decorate the church for this celebration. We would be very grateful for any donations to help us with what is a joyful task. Baskets will be placed at the back of church and in the Parish Centre for those who wish to contribute.

**The Mothers Union: Cathy Duff writes:** The Mothers Union meeting on Monday 4th of October will be a talk by Revd. Malcolm Railton on "Police Dogs". As usual the meeting is in the Parish Centre at 2 p.m.

**Whitley Bay Street Pastors** are seeking volunteers as they expand their remit to cover the Fish Quay. You can try a taster night with them if you want to see the kind of work they do before signing up for the training. Please contact Chris Lincoln on 07549 015 896 or [whitleybay@streetpastors.org.uk](mailto:whitleybay@streetpastors.org.uk)

**The Nite Bite project** which provides meals for the homeless of North Shields is looking for additional cooks. If you feel that you might be able to help with this, please speak to Revd. Malcolm Railton.

**WANTED: HOLY DUSTERS.....**



Picture credit: londonanglican.org



**The Editor writes:** It is a pleasing coincidence [or is it?] that I should have written an editorial about the poet George Herbert this month, when I have also been asked to put a note in the *Parish News* asking for volunteers to help with church cleaning. The past eighteen months saw us disinfecting the church after every service, but our phased return to normal has seen this practice discontinue, not least because research suggests that surface-borne infection of Covid-19 may be a very minor factor in its transmission. As a result we have returned to the pre-pandemic fortnightly cleaning routine, and we need some additional members of the cleaning team. The 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 cheese scones. If you would like to volunteer to help please contact Karen Bilton on 0191 258 0270 or at [kebilton58@gmail.com](mailto: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<sup>2</sup>. So: become a Holy Duster, help to keep our church the clean and welcoming place we all love, and become part of a metaphysical conceit as well. Who can resist a package deal like that?

## FROM THE VICAR’S PCC REPORT, 12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

**Sunday 8.00 Eucharist:** Two enquiries have been received about restarting this communion service, and so it has therefore been suspended indefinitely. Should interest in its reinstatement revive, then this decision could be reversed. An early celebration has its place, the quiet calm of the service solacing those who, in the words of the late Hugh Dillon, like to “take their worship neat”.

**Home Communions:** Home Communions have now resumed, and have been much appreciated by recipients during the summer. If you would like to receive home communion, or know of someone who would, then this can be arranged easily. Please contact Steve [07729 393 580] or Malcolm [0191 262 3028].

**Living in Love and Faith:** It is hoped that this five session programme will run throughout November. The book and the course material can be accessed online at <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>.

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<sup>2</sup> Serious students of English Literature should note that this comparison is made at least partly in jest, although Herbert’s conceit is one we should take seriously always.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Church of the  
Holy Saviour



Tynemouth Priory

[holysaviours.org.uk](http://holysaviours.org.uk)  
0191 257 6250



# ARE THE MISSING PIECE

Tickets  
£10 per team  
(max 4 persons)

JIGSAW COMPETITION

Bar available

**FRIDAY 8TH OCT**

**HOLY SAVIOURS PARISH HALL**

**6PM**

## CALLING ALL DISSECTOLOGISTS<sup>3</sup>: This week is your last chance to enter...

**The Editor writes:** .....the long awaited Jigsaw competition, which will take place next **Friday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, at 6.00 pm in the Parish Hall**. Tickets cost £10 per team – a team may contain a maximum of four members [not three, as stated by mistake in last month's *Parish News*] and each team will solve a five hundred-piece puzzle. Get your ticket from the Parish Office any morning up to 1130, or from Steve, Malcolm or Carol after morning or evening services. A bar will be available to aid the assembled dissectologists in their competitive inter-lockery.

### The Autumn Fair two years ago...

...on November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019 featured books, bottles, bric a brac, bat the rat, and a brainteaser or two - including the photographs below of two very well known Holy Saviour's personalities in the *Parochial Church Council Childhood Photographs Quiz* compiled by Christopher and John Pearce [answers on page 24].



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<sup>3</sup> I have not made this word up. Originally, jigsaw puzzles were called dissected puzzles or dissected maps, as they were often used to teach children geography. They became known as jigsaw puzzles once mass production using power tools superseded the old-fashioned treadle-powered jigsaw.

**THE AUTUMN FAIR 2021...  
WILL BE HELD ON  
SATURDAY 20<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER  
IN THE PARISH HALL  
FROM 1000 - 1300**

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

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

## **THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL 2021**



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

Picture credit: Linda & Chris Benneworth

**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](mailto:Holysavioursfestival@gmail.com).

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 and submit the photographs to [Holysavioursfestival@gmail.com](mailto:Holysavioursfestival@gmail.com).

Our organist, Malcolm Soulsby will, as ever, provide suitable Christmas music for both the real and virtual festivals.

## THE HOLY SAVIOUR'S AFTERNOON TEA, SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 5<sup>th</sup>



**The Editor writes:** Our long-delayed afternoon tea was well worth the wait. A sold-out event was blessed: with fine weather, a good humoured afternoon with





excellent refreshments and happy fellowship, with ambient music from Julian Brown, Alan Dotchin [guitars] and Malcolm Railton [double bass]. It was an especial pleasure to welcome as guests various NHS professionals and volunteers who have given unselfishly of themselves in the last few appallingly difficult months. Thanks to Linda Benneworth for this fine selection of photographs.



**ALL ROADS LEAD TO**  
HOLY SAVIOURS PARISH HALL, MANOR ROAD, TYNEMOUTH  
FRIDAY MARCH 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 AT 7.00 pm  
FOR  
**A NIGHT AT THE MUSIC HALL**

**Don Charlton writes:** The great British Music Hall was and is still a cultural phenomenon that began and thrived in the early Victorian era. The popularity of the music hall made it a vital institution embedded in social history. It became synonymous with affordable entertainment for all social classes, and the public was treated to a wide range of performances, from comedy to dancing routines, with singers, acrobats, magicians, ventriloquists and jugglers to spice the mix.

One of the stars to emerge was Marie Lloyd, whose voice, good humour and abundant personality made her an audience favourite. She was famous for her trademark parasol and quick wit. This latter was essential to success in the music hall, as performers were rarely in any doubt as to how their act was being received. If the public enjoyed the songs and jokes they would join in, laugh and cheer; those who gave lacklustre shows were booed off the stage in short order.

During this dreadful pandemic which has denied everyone the chance of attending and enjoying live music and theatre, the social committee at Holy Saviours has been planning a series of light-hearted entertainments which we hope you will feel able to attend and enjoy with family and friends. Some will be competitive, some will aim to raise funds towards the upkeep of the church, but the underlying theme will always been fun and friendship in a safe environment.

I hope that this article has enthused you, your family and your friends to put March 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 in your diary, and be ready to purchase tickets when they become available early next year. More than that we hope that many of you will volunteer to provide entertainment yourselves and take part in the show. As this is a fundraising event, an adult ticket will cost £10, which will include a free drink on arrival; refreshments after that will be available at a cash bar. Children under 14 years will pay £4 and receive a soft drink too. All adult entertainers will be requested to purchase a performers' ticket at the reduced price of £8.

We hope that as many of the audience as possible will attend in some version of Victorian or Edwardian costume, although hats will need to be removed during the performance for obvious reasons. See [www.fancydressandparty.com](http://www.fancydressandparty.com) and also the picture overleaf of a Victorian picnic party off to the Music Hall.



picture credit: dreamstime [public domain]

## **GOD'S AGENTS [II]: JACOB**

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

**Clive Harper writes:** In the County of Herefordshire there stands the small town of Bromyard and it was there, some forty-odd years ago, in the Church of St Peter, that I served my title as a Curate in the Church of England. The reason I am mentioning this is that, at the back of the Church, was a mural depicting a time-line, a sort of golden thread, tracing the lineage of our Lord back to Abraham. A similar line can of course be found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but it is a dramatic presentation and the remarkable fact is that the line is unbroken, though it does include some surprising individuals showing, I believe, how God works his will despite apparent incongruities.

In Jewish history, as in English law, in the past the title to the family fortunes passed through the eldest son, so Jacob is an unlikely beneficiary. It happened in this way; Jacob was the second son of Isaac the son of Abraham; Esau was the eldest and therefore entitled to the birthright of the eldest son and the blessing that went with it. One day Esau, who was 'a red and hairy man' came back from a day's hunting; he was famished and he desperately wanted something to eat; Jacob had prepared some appetising stew a portion of which Esau demanded. But Jacob, seeing his opportunity, only gave him some of the stew on condition that Esau gave him his birthright, which demand Esau agreed to. Thus, the Bible



records, Esau despised his birthright and, in the dramatic language of the St James Bible, he 'sold his birthright for a mess of pottage'.



Picture Credit: *Jacob sells his birthright to Esau*, Rembrandt van Rijn, British Museum Collection

Subsequently, when Isaac was dying, he called Esau to confer upon him the blessing, as befits the first born; but Jacob, with the connivance of his mother, tricked Isaac into giving him the blessing. Skulduggery indeed and yet, despite his scheming and dishonesty, Jacob turns out to be the man who really valued the birthright and blessing. He fathered many children, with at least two wives, and through him, and not Esau, the time line of God's purposes unfolded.

One other fact about Jacob should be recorded here; one day, on a journey home from years of endeavour, he had an encounter with God as a result of which his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. You can read about it in the Book of Genesis as you can the many other adventures and experiences of this remarkable servant of God.

**Malcolm Railton writes:**

## **A SORT OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP.....**

In the last week I have been to the theatre and to a concert for the first time in a year and a half, although it seems like much longer. I think I had forgotten the joys of live music and theatre. I must admit to some trepidation at the thought of attending indoor events again, but it was definitely worth it.

On September 21<sup>st</sup>, Glynis and I went to the “Palace of Arts” at Wylam Brewery, in the Exhibition Park in Newcastle to see Eddi Reader (formerly of *Fairground Attraction*). She was wonderful: and the joy and emotions of live music came flooding back to me. I can remember when *Turbinia* [or *The Ocean Greyhound*] was in that building, prior to its move to the Discovery Museum in Westgate Road.

However, what I want to talk about is a wonderful theatre production which we saw last Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> September at Northern Stage – what used to be the Playhouse and before that, the University Theatre. How we came to see it is a strange tale; perhaps it was fate, perhaps something else was at work. A couple of days earlier we had been having lunch in Newcastle when Glynis struck up a conversation with a lady at a neighbouring table. They discussed menu choices and the lady, whose name I still do not know, told us that she had been to Northern Stage the evening before and seen *The Ballad of Johnny Longstaff*. She described it to us and although I remained sceptical, even despite her enthusiasm, I booked tickets for us upon my return home. I didn’t really know what to expect but I must admit that I was completely blown away by the performance. It made me happy, sad, and angry, it made me laugh and cry. The joy of live theatre is a unique and powerful one; I hope it won’t be too long before our own theatre in Tynemouth resumes productions.

*The Ballad of Johnny Longstaff* was an amazing story written and performed by three folk singers from Teesside, the *Young’uns*, who began by explaining the extraordinary way in which they came by the story in the first place. They explained that they had been playing at a gig in Somerset in 2015, when a man, Duncan Longstaff, approached them and handed them two pieces of paper. One of them was a photograph of a man, Duncan’s father, Johnny. The other sheet contained a list of achievements outlining some of the defining moments of

working-class struggle in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Duncan's hope was that the *Young'uns* could write a song about his dad. Instead the band ended up writing seventeen songs about Johnny and his incredible life, and in the process creating the remarkable show which we saw last week. The songs narrating this epic story were interspersed with projected artworks and audio-clips of Johnny himself telling his extraordinary story. These were edited from six hours of tape recordings of Johnny telling his story, which are housed at the Imperial War Museum.

Johnny grew up in Stockton on Tees in abject poverty and like so many in the twenties and thirties was no stranger to want and hunger. As a fifteen-year-old he took part in one of the hunger marches to London in the early thirties, after which he remained in London, sleeping rough on the Embankment. He became involved in the *Right to Roam* protests and the associated mass trespasses that were instrumental in setting up the National Parks system. He was then involved in the infamous battle of Cable Street, where Sir Oswald Mosley's black shirts had set out to target the Jewish community of the East End. Anti-semitism was not confined to Germany. Johnny then went to Spain to fight against the Fascists in the civil war, still only seventeen years old. When the Spanish civil war ended, he enlisted in the British Army and was decorated whilst serving in the Second World War. After the war he became a civil servant and lived a more settled life.

The whole evening was truly an emotional rollercoaster ride and as I said earlier, it made me angry, happy and sad, as well as laugh and cry. There is a great deal of pain, suffering and tragedy in Johnny's story although at no time did he seek sympathy or pity. I think that from an artistic point of view, the show was wonderful but perhaps even more importantly the amount of historical information and educational material shared was phenomenal. There is so much that we can learn from our own past, otherwise we are destined continuously to repeat our own mistakes. Coincidentally, when in York last month I bought a copy of George Orwell's *Down and out in Paris and London* and this trip to the theatre has made me start reading it.

**Editor's note:** *I had never heard of Johnny Longstaff, but if the term working-class hero means anything, it must apply to him. Six weeks before World War II started, he went to the House of Commons to meet his local MP, having just returned from fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Hearing footsteps behind him, he turned to see Winston Churchill approaching; he looked the teenage soldier up and down and said 'Would young men like you be prepared to fight against Hitler?' The lad took a deep breath and answered; 'Mr Churchill, I've been fighting Hitler all of my life.' As manifestations of fascism in our own time become visible again, we need to be on our guard, because men like Johnny Longstaff, prepared to risk their lives for their principles, are a great deal thinner on the ground in 2021.*

<b>FROM THE REGISTERS, JULY – SEPTEMBER 2021</b>	
<b>BAPTISMS</b>	
11 <sup>th</sup> July	Ethan David Renwick
18 <sup>th</sup> July	Florence Alice Sturrock
25 <sup>th</sup> July	Heidi Jane Noutch
8 <sup>th</sup> August	Rein Wilson
15 <sup>th</sup> August	Poppy Jean Banks
22 <sup>nd</sup> August	Roy Adrian Malcolm Young
5 <sup>th</sup> September	Harper Lily Shiells
12 <sup>th</sup> September	Fredrik Alexander Bilton
12 <sup>th</sup> September	Oscar Samuel Goodwin
26 <sup>th</sup> September	Isabella Rose Jones
<b>WEDDINGS</b>	
24 <sup>th</sup> July	James Wigzell and Sophie Howard
7 <sup>th</sup> August	Michael Gibson and Joanne Evans
14 <sup>th</sup> August	Peter Elliott and Megan Togwell
2 <sup>nd</sup> September	Shaun Young and Paula Anderson
18 <sup>th</sup> September	Kate Newman and Oliver Rickett
30 <sup>th</sup> September	Philippa Burnell and Steven Allen
<b>FUNERALS</b>	
5 <sup>th</sup> July	Douglas Brennan
10 <sup>th</sup> July	Margaret Gibson
17 <sup>th</sup> July	Henry Little
31 <sup>st</sup> July	Ian Davis
15 <sup>th</sup> August	Morris Taylor
18 <sup>th</sup> August	Valerie Hollings

## **THE NAME'S THE SAME.....**

### **Църквата на Светия Спасител, Несебър, България<sup>4</sup>**

The Church of the Holy Saviour in the town of Nessebar, Bulgaria, on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, was built in 1609. As a city which has often been on or near a frontier, Nessebar testifies to three millennia of varied history. The church itself is tiny, partly because, having been built in 1609, what time Bulgaria was part of the Ottoman Empire, the building of large Christian temples was forbidden by law. It measures only forty feet by twenty, which means that it would just about fit into our chancel. It was designed so as not to attract unwelcome Ottoman attention, the windowless eastern end being originally built half-buried in the ground.

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<sup>4</sup> The Church of the Holy Saviour, Nessebar, Bulgaria



Picture credit: Wikimedia Commons

As my picture shows, the disguise was successful – even at a second and third glance no-one would mistake this building for a church. Inside, however, it is a different story; the entire church is decorated with a series of vivid frescoes depicting the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary. Although the paintings have been refreshed as to colour, the original designs date to the church's 1609 foundation.



Picture credit: Flickr Creative Commons

The lack of an altar and any other furniture tells the rest of this remarkable building's story: it was deconsecrated many years ago, and is now open only as a museum, albeit a strikingly beautiful one.

## SAVE THE PARISH - UPDATE

**The Editor writes:** In my coverage of the Save the Parish group last month I made clear my wariness of pressure groups, which are liable to being hijacked by charismatic individuals or sub-groups with concealed agenda. I shall continue to cover the movement as matters develop, but at the same investigate and comment on what I may perceive as hidden agenda among its supporters. For the moment, the website *English Churchman* [<https://www.englishchurchman.com/>] has provided us with this useful summary of *Save the Parish's* aims and objectives:

*"The Save the Parish Campaign is still hoping to find members of the laity and clergy to stand for General Synod. They are looking to find laity candidates for, among others, the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle. Clergy candidates are also being sought in fifteen Dioceses including Newcastle. Save the Parish summarises its goals to five points.*

- *To support the archbishops in keeping their pledge to support the parish as the best means of evangelism.*
- *To put the "frontline first", ensuring that resources that properly belong to and are generated by the parishes remain at parish level, freeing up laity and clergy for mission.*
- *To ensure that laws and projects which initiate from the centre all support and enhance the parochial system by integrating the Strategic Development Fund into the parish and opposing the revision to the Mission & Pastoral Measure which would make it easier and quicker for the dioceses to close churches, make priests redundant, and throw priests out of their homes.*
- *We believe that effective mission requires the prioritisation of spending on good theological education as a crucial investment.*
- *We will call for a Church-State commission to agree a national plan to protect and preserve historic parish buildings."*

The English Churchman website provides an interesting case in point about covert agenda. Their review of the book *Living in Love and Faith* describes the book as part of the archbishops' sustained attack on orthodox Anglican views on sexuality, an attack designed to sideline and exclude traditional believers. Anyone who writes such intemperate nonsense as that has an agenda which he would do well to acknowledge more honestly. I hope it is atypical of *English Churchman* views.

At the same time, those who worry about hidden agenda in the proceedings of the General Synod will not be reassured by an article in this week's *Spectator* magazine by Emma Thompson. Ms Thompson gives little away about herself, but from a previous article published last February, it seems evident that she lives in

the Chelmsford Diocese where she is described as a “rural parish volunteer”. A quotation from her earlier article will make clear her personal stance:

*“In February this year, the General Synod heard the Archbishop of York’s plans to impose a management system on its parishes nationally, rolling out Chelmsford-style cuts on parish clergy and selling assets owned by the parishes, to fund yet more managers. Retained parish clergy would be stretched over larger areas in a managerial role. This would effectively end the C of E as we know it, converting a precious network of parish churches into a remote institution which controls everything centrally. The church had problems before lockdown, but with more people working from home there is a trend towards localisation. The church commissioners could use some of the church’s investment income to regenerate the parishes. If allowed to keep more of their own money, freed from endless fundraising to pay diocesan bills, and liberated from the struggle with bureaucracy, parish clergy and volunteers might be able to take advantage of a mood of post-pandemic renewal. Instead, we face a policy of withdrawal, embarked upon in haste, behind closed doors.”*

The reference to “Chelmsford style cuts” needs some explanation. It refers to the sixty-one clergy posts that were cut in the Diocese in November 2020. Three months later, with quite extraordinary crassness, the Diocese advertised the post of Chief Executive Officer at a salary of £85,000 – a sum which would have paid for three priests with enough left over to run their cars for a few months.

Ms Thompson’s current article deals with a forty-page discussion document – crisply entitled **GS2222: CHURCH OF ENGLAND MISSION IN REVISION: A Review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011**, which was brought to Synod in July, is currently undergoing public consultation, and is due to return to Synod next February. Ms Thompson is even more cynical than I am, so I know what she means when she says of the paper’s ponderous title that the Church of England has “mastered the art of shrouding significant changes in bureaucratic language so dull that few bother to read on to discover what is actually happening”. Her own title for the paper is a great deal snappier, and considerably more disturbing: it is, she says, **The Church Closers’ Charter**.

She bases this idea on the executive summary which says that the church needs to make legal changes in order to “simplify existing legislation so as to manage the disposal of churches no longer needed for regular public worship” for which we need “faster processes which will allow for an increase in closures over time”. More than that, Ms Thompson claims that a close reading of the document [something she has evidently done, but which I have yet to do] reveals that it is

*“an un-transparent, anti-democratic piece of proposed legislation which will, if implemented, shift power from the local [parishes] to the centre [dioceses]. It is a stealthy power grab...the Church’s dioceses are collectively considering tripling the rate at which churches are closing. It...earmarks up to 356 churches for closure...It also envisages more clergy dispossessions[dismissals], and considers possible limitations of rights of representation and appeal.”*

I am not saying that Ms Thompson’s reading of the document is correct; I shall know better whether it is when I have read it myself but, if it is, then it is hard to square GS222 with Justin Welby’s assertion to the *Church Times* that he is *“passionate that the parish is essential”* or with Stephen Cottrell’s claim that he sees the parish as *“the beating heart of England”*. It is particularly difficult to take Cottrell’s claim at its face value, given it was he, when Bishop of Chelmsford, who instigated the redundancies of sixty-one of his parish clergy and then, three months later, presumably signed off on the job description and advertisement for eighty-five thousand pounds-worth of Chief Executive Officer.

As it is, I find myself in the uncomfortable position of finding it very hard to believe anything I am being told by any of the contending factions in our current difficulties, something I actually find very sad. Scepticism, cynicism and instinctive disbelief are the necessary toolkit I need when considering the sorry and chaotic shambles that is our political process; but to be moved to apply those tools to an organisation whose members are supposed to have in common a commitment to a higher truth than *two plus two equals four* is a frightening state of affairs.

As it is, I now have my homework set for the next four weeks, which is to read GS222 thoroughly and form my own judgement as to whether Emma Thompson has the right idea about what it really means. I pray that she is wrong; but I am very afraid that she may well be right. Watch this space<sup>5</sup>.



Picture credit: Juliette Herlem, unsplash.com

**Copy for the November edition should be posted either to the Parish News Mailbox, or to JCPrintmail@gmx.co.uk by **Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup>**. Completed artwork will be sent to the printers overnight on Sunday October 24<sup>th</sup> for publication in church on Saturday October 30<sup>th</sup>.**

<sup>5</sup> The baby photograph on page 11 is the infant Steve Dixon; the little lady is Karen Bilton



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Sunday worship has resumed with celebrations of Parish Holy Communion at 1000 and of Evening Prayer at 1800, both services including the liturgy in full and with hymns and anthems. A said Holy Communion Service according to the Book of Common Prayer will be celebrated at 1000 in the chancel each Wednesday. The 0800 Sunday celebration of Holy Communion will be restored only should there be a demand for it.

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 19 Ashleigh Grove  
 Tel. 2580270

**PCC Vice Chairman:**  
 Chris Benneworth

**PCC Treasurer:**  
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 Tel. Tel: 296 2462  
 Barbara Walker, 2 Monkstone Crescent,  
 Tel. 257 4159



Picture Credit: Cullen Smith, unsplash.com

## ACTIVITIES

### Mothers' Union

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

### W3 – Women's Group

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday 7.30pm Parish Centre  
 Debbie Baird Tel. 296 1663

### Rainbows

Lucy Skillen Tel. 07891101262

### Brownies

Pat Corbett Tel. 0191 2800510

### Guides

Grace Paul Tel. 07803371929

### Rangers

Grace Paul Tel. 07803 371929

### Beavers

Gillian Smith Tel. 296 1426  
[tynemouthbeavers@gmail.com](mailto:tynemouthbeavers@gmail.com)

### Cub Scouts

Fiona Lydall Tel 257 3047

### Scouts

David Littlefield Tel. 257 8740

### Explorer Scouts

Lucy Mace Tel. 258 5948

### Group Scout Leader

Michael Dyer Tel. 259 6236

### Asst. Group Leader

David Littlefield Tel. 257 8740

### Scout Hut bookings:

**Helen Preston Tel: 257 0574**

### 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](mailto: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.**