



A MESSAGE FROM BARRY DRYDEN ON HIS RETIREMENT

His last service will be Easter Sunday Holy Communion at St. John's

Dear Friends

They say that God moves in mysterious ways and in my case that has been true. He has enabled me to meet some wonderful people and be part of many wonderful occasions. The 25 years of my ordained ministry has been exciting and full of ups and downs as was my 20 years of Readership.

The journey began whilst I was in Rugby and meeting the Revd. Rex Jarvis who encouraged me to follow my heart. Janet was behind me and very much part of my ministry, I could not have accomplished many of the things we did without her. A very special memory was cooking a Burns Night Supper for 70 when at the Ascension in Warrington. We were extremely tired but we did it and raised a wonderful £700 for Church funds.

The second Sunday of Lent Collect in many ways expresses my understanding of ministry and the way we as Christian's should go about our lives.

"Grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever".

As many of you know I did change my profession and gave my life to the work of God and throughout that time guided by Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit he has walked with me and guided my work so well.

His work has taken me from Formby to Warrington, Moira and the Woodfield team in this country. Madrid, Nerja, Almunecar in Spain, Montreux in Switzerland and Las Palmas in Gran Canaria also featured as well. God has allowed me to see the world not only in my early profession but in my ministry and enjoy his wonderful creation. In all of these places that I went it was met with some trepidation knowing not what was expected of me but knowing he would guide me and in that he did. Sure to be true that was what to happen, as I have enjoyed every moment and met some wonderful people who have welcomed me and made me feel at home. The one regret has been in the later part abroad not having Jan by my side, she would have loved the places.

One memory that comes to mind was taking a wedding in Nerja of an English guy and a French lady, I did it in English and French in a Spanish Catholic Church with all its legalities. I said he works in mysterious ways. I have met some wonderful people who have influenced the things I have accomplished, Revd Paul Ormrod, Revd Vivien Elphick to name two and the many wonderful ordinary people who guided by God have helped my journey.

The last 3 years have been very exciting and tiring in helping to make the "The Village Heart @ St. John's" come to fruition. It has encompassed all of those words in the collect above. When I first came to St John's as a visitor in 2009 I thought then it needed a lick of paint, but when the scaffolding was removed and I saw the revelation of the work I was moved to tears seeing that lick of paint. The next milestone was when they switched the lights on in the Chancel. But for me the most wonderful was sitting quietly on the balcony on Friday night the 30th August seeing it almost complete, it was extremely moving. Seeing St. John's as it is today has shown me that we can accomplish so much guided by God.

I have enjoyed working with you all over the years it has been an absolute pleasure and I urge you all to follow your dreams and put your trust in God, because you never know when those mysterious ways will affect you. I wrote to the Bishop on my 81st birthday saying that the time had come for me to relax, play some golf and

start painting again and that's what I hope to do. I will still be around praying for you all. Thank you and may God continue to be part of your lives.

Barry.



FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

LUNCH LIGHT our group that supports folk who are bereaved, plan to meet on **Friday 25th April between 12.30pm – 2.00pm**. So, if you have lost a loved one and would like some company, a chat and

a bite to eat, why not drop in or Telephone Janet 01283 215000, if you want to know more and would like to join us, or if you wish to help out. There is a charge of £3

COFFEEANDCHAT@CHURCH will meet in church on **Tuesday 1st April between 9.30 and 11.00am**.

APRIL SERVICES ACROSS THE WOODFIELD TEAM. (all starting at 10am unless otherwise stated).

Tuesday April 1 st	Coffee & Chat at St. John's Donisthorpe at 9.30am
Thursday April 3 rd	Lent Course – Final Session 10.15 for 10.30am at St. John's Donisthorpe
Saturday April 5 th	St John's Prayer Group meeting Winnie Meadows home at 10am
Sunday April 6 th	Donisthorpe (MP), Measham & Snarestone (HC), Packington, (Breakfast Church), Normanton (MP)
Tuesday April 8 th	St. Johns AGM 7.15pm in church
Sunday April 13 th PALM SUNDAY	Donisthorpe (HC), Appleby & Swepstone (HC), Packington (MP), Measham (MP Lay Led)
Thursday April 17 th MAUNDAY THURSDAY	Donisthorpe, (Agape Supper 7pm), Swepstone, (Agape Supper), Normanton, Maunday (HC)
Friday April 18 th GOOD FRIDAY	The Way of The Cross Measham 10am, Donisthorpe 2pm, Norton 3pm, Packington 6.30pm., Appleby (Family Worship 10am)
Sunday April 20 th EASTER SUNDAY	Donisthorpe (HC), Measham, Normanton, Appleby & Swepstone (HC)
Friday April 25 th	Lunch Light at St. John's Donisthorpe (12- 30 – 14.00)
Sunday April 27 th	Donisthorpe (HC), Measham (Breakfast Church), Packington (HC), Appleby (MP).

ANNUAL MEETING

It's coming up to that the time of year for our church annual meeting. It would be wonderful to see you at the meeting – it's a chance to hear what we've been up to in the last year, to encourage each other as well as do the business of accounts and elections. The meeting will be on **April 8th at 7. 15pm** in church.

THE THIEF ON THE OTHER CROSS: A GOOD FRIDAY MONOLOGUE

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

I don't belong here. I really don't. Paradise is the last place I expected to end up after all I've done. Let me tell you my story.

I am — I was — an armed robber, I guess you'd call it. Me and Jake and the others would live in caves in the Judean hills near the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. We made our living by violence. We wouldn't take on people in the big groups that passed. They travelled together for safety. But a family alone would be an easy mark, as well as anyone fool enough to travel by himself.

Brandishing a strong staff would usually do the trick. Threaten them with a beating and they'd give up without much of a fight. But I've been known to break a few bones in my day, God forgive me. I don't think I actually killed anyone, but then I never stayed around long enough to find out.

The first time I meet Jesus is when I am invited to a party in his honour in Jericho at the home of a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus. I am introduced, we shake hands, and Jesus looks me in the eye for a *long* moment. He can see right into me, who I am, every crime I have ever committed. Then he smiles this big friendly smile. "You know," he says, "there's forgiveness for you in my Kingdom. How about it?"

I drop my eyes, say something non-committal, and shuffle away. The next day I'm in the crowd, hanging on every word he says. Jesus is talking about his Kingdom, comparing it to a mustard seed, calling it the Kingdom of Heaven. I want so much to go up to him after he has finished and take him up on that forgiveness thing, but I just can't bring myself to do it.

I wish I had. It isn't much later when me and my friend Jake -- the guy on the third cross -- get caught by a Roman patrol. The others run off, but they catch us, beat us silly, drag us into Jerusalem, and throw us in prison. No mercy for the likes of us.

And so it happens that on the same day that they crucify Jesus, they crucify me and Jake -- one of us on his left, the other on his right. This isn't any normal crucifixion. Mobs of people are there just because of Jesus. Self-righteous Pharisees are swaggering and mocking. "If you're some kind of messiah," one sneers, "come on down from that cross. If you're a saviour, save yourself — *if you can!*"

Jake begins cat-calling, too, if you can imagine that. I yell over at him, "You miserable thug, don't you have any fear of God? Can't you see that we're going to die just like he is? Show a little decency! We're getting exactly what we deserve, but he ain't done nothing wrong."

Jake quiets down and the Pharisees lose interest. But I can't get Jericho out of my mind. I can't forget Jesus' eyes, his words, his invitation. And so I call over to him, though it's getting hard to breathe and talking makes it that much harder.

"Jesus!" I say. He turns his head towards me. "Jesus, I was there in Jericho. I met you at a party at Zacchaeus' house. Remember?"

He looks at me for a moment and then nods his head just a little. He *does* remember.

"I never forgot what you said. I wanted to say yes, but just couldn't. And now look at me — look at *us!*"

He is in bad shape — exhausted, in excruciating pain, back oozing, breath laboured. He isn't going to last long. I can see that. But somehow I can see *beyond* all that. He *was* the Messiah, *is* the Messiah, no matter what those priests and Romans and Pharisees have done to him. And when he dies, he will be with God. In a few hours, maybe less, he will be vindicated. He will reign in that Kingdom he told us about.

"Jesus," I call again, quieter now.

He opens his eyes. They are the same eyes, the same piercing, loving, honest eyes.

"Jesus," I say, "when you come into your Kingdom, would you remember me?"

His words are laboured, his lips parched, but I can still hear him pretty well. "Truly, I say to you...." His voice cracks, then is stronger for a moment. "Truly, this very day you will be with me in Paradise."

His eyes droop. He is fading quickly now. But I believe him. *I do!* That's what gets me through those next few hours until they break my legs to kill me. I *do* believe him!

And then I find myself here in heaven, in Paradise. I sure don't deserve to be here, but here I am anyway. I guess that's what a man like me gets when the King himself grants a pardon. Full forgiveness. Pretty amazing, don't you think?

This story is fictional, of course, though it is based on the account in Luke 23:32-43.

THE REVD. PREBENDARY LINDA COX

I am pleased to report that Linda Cox, Rector of Baschurch and Weston Lullingfield with Hordley, Rural Dean of Ellesmere, and of Oswestry (Lichfield), and erstwhile Curate of Woodfield Team, was installed as Prebendary of Pippa Parva at a service in Lichfield Cathedral on 26th January 2025.

Prebendaries are honorary posts which recognise substantial contributions to the life of the church in Lichfield Diocese. Linda tells me that Prebendary is the title that Lichfield Diocese use as an alternative to Honorary Canon.

Pippa Parva was an area from which rents were collected to pay priests linked with the cathedral to ensure there were enough priests to take the daily services. This area is understood to be the area around what is now known as 'Muckley Corner'.

The cathedral has 'Prebendal Stalls', which are seats named after each area that has a Prebend. These are situated in the choir chancel.



Prebendaries are instrumental in maintaining close links between the Cathedral and the parishes. This means Linda will act as an Ambassador for the Cathedral as well as participating from time to time in the worship there and attending the annual meeting of the College of Canons.

Prebendaries are entitled to wear their black cassock with red piping, buttons and trimmings, along with the Cathedral crest on their black preaching scarf.

So Linda's official title now is The Revd Prebendary Linda Cox. And she gets to wear a cassock with piping to match her hair and her Pippa Parva seat cushion.

I'm sure we all wish her well in her extended role and let's try to remember her in our prayers.