



# St. Hilda's Newsletter

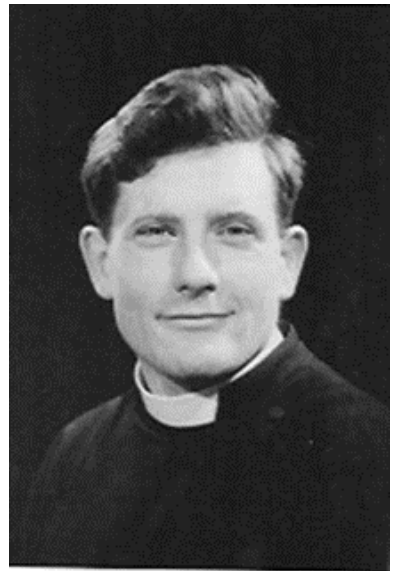
July 2023

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## Remembering The Reverend Stephen John Blood, MA Oxon.

**10th May 1928 - 2nd April 2023**

May saw the funeral of our beloved Fr Stephen Blood who passed away on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023, aged 95. Some of our members will remember him for his magic tricks and others for his passion for athletics during his youth. However you remember him, he was a huge character who joined St Hilda's in 1961, becoming the welcoming face of the church until his retirement in June 2000. Fr Stephen Blood was a devoted, steadfast leader and faithful servant. On the following pages are some excerpts from the funeral and the letter of thanks from his daughter Gill.



## **Fr Blood – a brief timeline**

**1928** - Stephen was born on 10 May 1928 to Edward Lewis Blood and Mary Blood nee Tattersall. Sadly, Mary died in childbirth so he never knew his mother.

His father remarried and he was brought up by his stepmother Daisy of whom he was very fond. He had an older sister Mary (born 1925).

The family lived in a vicarage in Aston, at the time, a poor part of Birmingham with slum housing. His father was vicar of St. Stephen's, Newton Row.

**September 1939 – March 1947** Attended King Edward School, Birmingham.

**1947 - 1949** Completed National Service in the RAF.

**1949-52** Read physics at Keble College Oxford, gaining his degree.

**September 1952 – June 1955** Studied at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, Yorkshire.

**1955 - 1959** Curate, Holy Cross, Greenford. On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1958 he married Mary at Holy Cross, Greenford.

**1959 - 1961** Curate, St Edmund, Forest Gate. In December 1959 Frances Anne was born.

**1961 - 1999** St Hilda's, Ashford. In September 1961 Gillian & Peter were born. In 1966 he took up magic. He joined the Zodiac Magical Society and, in 1969, the Magic Circle where he gained the Associate of the Inner Magic Circle degree.

He went on to serve as Chaplain at Ashford Hospital.

After over 40 years as a parish priest Stephen retired. He and Mary moved from Ashford to Kings Langley to be near Frances and her two young children. He had his retirement lunch on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2000.

## **Fr Stephen Blood – A tribute by Michael King (Adapted by Sara Lee)**

Stephen had a frugal upbringing in a slum area of Birmingham and money was tight. With his love of sport, he was persuaded to take up athletics at school, showing a talent for cross-country running, overtaking the school mile champion - and taking over that role – which is not what he had planned.

At Oxford, Stephen made the most of his time – winning the University “Venus and Adonis” beauty competition with a girlfriend and scraping through with a “Sportsman’s 4th”. He took off with his bike in the holidays, confusing himself and the locals in Germany with his imperfect knowledge of the language, with phrases like “the weather is bath” (instead of bad)! On another cycling trip, Stephen was given a metal crucifix and wooden candle stand that had been “rescued” by a British soldier from a bombed building in Belgium. On hearing of Stephen’s plans for the future he thought Stephen would be the best person to look after it, and Stephen kept it on his bedside table until the end.

As a vicar, Stephen was very principled and always made sure to do the “right thing”, even if it wasn’t the popular decision. As well as parish responsibilities, he was chaplain to the Remand Centre and Ashford Hospital, and was called on at all times of the day and night. He attended some horrific incidents such as traffic accidents and the Heathrow and Staines air crashes in ‘68 and ‘72. And his service to the hospital was recognised in 2000 when he was nominated to attend a Buckingham Palace garden party.

Stephen threw himself wholeheartedly into all parish activities – too many groups to mention. Stephen used his imagination for fund raising. When the Church Hall burnt down he ran a “Fag a Day” appeal. He rallied fellow magicians to put on fund raisers for various charities and performed himself, as the Great Stephano, or Uncle Alec.

Stephen was a fun father. He supported all the children's school concerts and dancing shows, danced the Gay Gordons with the girls at the Barn dance, supervised the making of motorised balsa wood planes and made model yachts and a catamaran that have lasted to this day. His family have so many happy memories of Stephen – from making sand cars on the beach, jumping waves, roller skating and fits of giggles as the proudly introduced new tortoise pooped down his shirt.

The full eulogy can be requested by emailing [sthildanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:sthildanewsletter@gmail.com)



*Fr Stephen Blood, pictured with his family*

Dear Fr Joseph

On behalf of us all, I just wanted to say a big thank you to you and the others from St Hilda's who came to Dad's funeral yesterday, and to those who were unable to come but were with us in spirit.

Given the special link with St Hilda's, we were very pleased that you were able to take part in the service, and we were immensely touched by the love and support that everyone gave us. It made us feel that we were back with the family that had meant so much to us as we were growing up.

With very best wishes

Gill

## High Days and Holy Days for July

For the first half of each year (Advent to Whitsuntide) our focus is on what God has done for man, particularly through sending us Jesus Christ. But in the second half of the year (from Whitsuntide back to Advent) we focus on Man's response to God - through faith and deeds.

Here the smaller festivals can really come into their own – as we recall the lives of different saints down the centuries. Each of them has set us an example by their spirituality and courage. Certainly, mission and social concern are nothing new among Christians, as our saints this month show...

1 <sup>st</sup> July	Theobald - choosing God, not money
2 <sup>nd</sup> July	John Francis Regis– patron saint for relief workers
3 <sup>rd</sup> July	St Thomas the Apostle – confused and doubting
4 <sup>th</sup> July	Elizabeth of Portugal - compassion for prostitutes
6 <sup>th</sup> July	Thomas More, Reformation martyr
7 <sup>th</sup> July	Boisil of Melrose - patron saint for ordinands
7 <sup>th</sup> July	Willibald – the first ever Anglo-Saxon travel writer
11 <sup>th</sup> July	Benedict - author of the famous Rule
14 <sup>th</sup> July	Camillus de Lellis - patron of the sick
15 <sup>th</sup> July	St Swithun (or Swithin) - saint for a rainy day
16 <sup>th</sup> July	St Helier – losing a loved one to violence
19 <sup>th</sup> July	St Macrina the Younger– a sister in a million
22 <sup>nd</sup> July	St Mary Magdalene - patron of repentant sinners
25 <sup>th</sup> July	St James the Apostle - apostle to Spain
25 <sup>th</sup> July	St Christopher - patron saint of motorists
27 <sup>th</sup> July	The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus – proving a nap is good for you!
29 <sup>th</sup> July	St Olaf – king & patron saint of Norway
30 <sup>th</sup> July	William Wilberforce, Olaudah Equiano and Thomas Clarkson
31 <sup>st</sup> July	St Joseph of Arimathea – the man who buried Jesus

## **PCC – Parochial Church Council**

### What is it?

A PCC is the executive committee of a Church of England parish and is made up of the Incumbent, Churchwardens of the parish along with representatives of the congregation. It has its origins in what was known as the Vestry Committee (now known as the Annual Meeting of Parishioners) which looked after both religious and secular matters in a parish. It is a corporate charitable body.

### What does it do?

The PCC is responsible for the financial affairs of the church parish along with the maintenance of its assets, such as the church, vicarage, and church halls. It also assists the clergy in the management of church affairs in the parish and promoting the mission of the church.

### The PCC at St Hilda's

Our new PCC was formed after the Annual Parochial Church Council meeting in April 2023. During our first meeting, we discussed roles and responsibilities; heard about our church finances from the Treasurer; had updates regarding St Hilda's House and the Church Hall and discussed on-going repairs and maintenance issues. We will meet again in June and then every month with a break in August.

### Who is on the PCC?

The current PCC is made up of the Licensed Lay Minister – Rosalyn Young, Church Wardens – Chris Brown and Paula Gething, Secretary – Liz Brian, Treasurer – Kieran Stevens, Deanery Synod Representatives – Elizabeth Bate, Christine Makriel, Chris Maddock, and representatives from the congregation (so your representatives) – Chris Davenport, Jane Dobbie, Alison Garner, Nick Gething, Rosemary Greenwood, Joyce Rouse, Valerie Scott and John Swaffield.

## How can I find out more?

Minutes and Agendas of all previous PCC meetings can be found in a folder in the North aisle of the Church between the notice board and before the Children's area. Please ask any of those named above and we would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

## **Vacancy**

### What is it?

This was previously known as an Interregnum: the time after an Incumbent has left the Parish until a new Incumbent is selected and inducted. Here at St Hilda's, although we waved Father Joseph a fond farewell on 21<sup>st</sup> May, our Vacancy period did not start until he was inducted into his new Parish in Acton, on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2023.

### What is St Hilda's doing?

Both the new and previous PCC members have met to produce a Parish Profile, which gives potential applicants an overview of St Hilda's Church, our local community, our mission in the community, the buildings we have and our on-going projects. Our sincere thanks go to Gordon Clark who although he has now moved to a new parish has continued to author the Parish Profile to its completion. Throughout this process, we have held an open meeting to gather your views and have consulted Junior Church parents to seek their ideas. A draft copy of the Parish Profile has now been submitted to The Revd Jonathan Rust, Area Director of Mission and Development for the Kensington Area and we await his response, together with an opening introduction from Bishop Emma (The Bishop of Kensington). We will shortly be confirming the two Parish representatives to conduct the recruitment and selection of the new Incumbent.

Please pray for all those involved: St Hilda's PCC, Church members, the Kensington Area and the Diocese of London and for any potential candidates, that God will bless St Hilda's Church with a new Incumbent in the very near future.

Liz Brian

PCC Secretary – St Hilda's Ashford

## **Beating the Bounds**

*Beating the bounds is an ancient custom still observed in England, Wales, and New England which traditionally involved swatting local landmarks with branches to maintain a shared mental map of parish boundaries. In this article, Paula Gething reviews the recent revisiting of this tradition from St Hilda's.*

### Beating the Bounds, Rogation Sunday 2023

For some strange reason, I look forward to this event. It was not something that I had experienced prior to Fr Joseph's first year when Gabriel was the child threatened with battery, in order to learn the boundary of the parish (although in the end we used a stick rather than said child's head). It turned out to be another example of fellowship and of looking beyond the four walls of the church and the church hall that he introduced that I now treasure.

We started at the church, having to take care to gather up only the determined group of parishioners and not the candidates arriving to audition for Oliver in the church, or stray members of the cast of Murder in Play arriving for their dress rehearsal in the church hall. An intrepid bunch left the church in bright sunshine after the opening prayer, armed with litter pickers and accompanied by Minnie (Gething) and Bella (Fernandes) who, after an initial stand-off and snarl, spent the afternoon totally ignoring each other.

Prayers and hymns were recited at Clarendon School and the corner of the old Barclays Bank before we left the high street, stopping at Pat Kitto's house to sing with her. The original parish boundary extends through some "new" properties at the bottom of Springfield road, so we have to re-trace our steps back to Chesterfield Road and along Fordbridge Road. As it was a beautiful Sunday afternoon, we surprised the patrons of the King's Fairway enjoying an al fresco beer, as we were still singing Lord of the Dance as we walked past. We paused for our next prayer opposite "Auntie" Kath Brown's old house before turning into the park and following the meandering River Ash through the park, across Woodthorpe Road and as far as Bronzefield Prison.



Unfortunately, and unlike previous years, the walk; (some 9km) was not without mishap. Bobbie hit the ground with a bump just as we left the park and Rosalyn with a shriek as we journeyed towards the footbridge over the railway. We lost a few walkers along the way, for some it was the distance and the heat, for others it was for dinner preparations or (as in Nick's case) due to the auditions taking place at the church. You can see him, and others, in Hatton Musical Theatre's presentation of Lionel Bart's *Oliver* in October, at the Rhoda McGraw Theatre in Woking.

From the footbridge we continued towards Shortwood Common, taking a right towards Hengrove Park, before we reached the open commons. By this time, dark clouds were threatening, so only Fr Joseph and Chris Maddock ventured to the far boundary on the A30, while the rest of us walked on (still singing and praying) towards McDonalds, where we took advantage of the facilities for a comfort break.

The rain started as we turned into Stanwell Road and was so heavy at one point, that we sheltered under a large bush outside Thomas Knyvett school. Once again there was a hymn and a prayer - for the people of Ashford and the students at both Thomas Knyvett and St James's school, before we headed back over the railway, towards St Hilda's.

The remaining walkers enjoyed fish and chips together at the end of the day and whilst perhaps the need to know and understand the parish boundaries has now disappeared into oblivion, the need to be out in our community has not changed. We are commanded to show Christ's love in the community and to do this, we need to be visible and obvious outside the four walls of our buildings. Of course, we can welcome those who come to us, but we must also pray for and be accessible to, the people of Ashford.

I deliberately described the busy activities going on in the church and the hall at the start. We are a huge and important part of the community of Ashford and how wonderful it is to have buildings that make it possible for adults and children alike to make the most of what life has to offer. I am passionate about making it easy for people to visit our church; for people to know the peace and fellowship we have to offer and for people to be in the right place and at the right time for them, to hear the Good News.



Barry Dix has been a loyal supporter of St Hilda's Entertainers for many years, and this year kindly agreed to review our May Play, *Murder in Play*. As members of NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association) we are also reviewed by one of their representatives. We hope you will find the following items interesting.

### ***MURDER IN PLAY* performed by St Hilda's Entertainers**

The concept of staging a play within a play is nothing new in the world of theatre. It's been attempted in all manner of styles, from the sedate and serious to the totally bonkers. And it's a format which demands an immense amount of concentration confidence and acting ability from cast members attempting to juggle the interplay of multiple characters, lines and mannerisms. It's also one which, it has to be said, requires a great deal from members of the audience if they are to fully appreciate the action unfurling in front of them. St Hilda's Entertainers, never a group to shun a challenge, have tackled play within play productions in the past. And they boldly chose to do so again for their Spring offering, *Murder In Play*, by Simon Brett. Wisely, they selected some of their most experienced and recognisable stalwarts, with years of experience under their belts, for the unrelentingly tricky task of each playing at least two different characters.

The action was set in what purported to be a small provincial theatre, where a small group of variously talented thespians was attempting to stage a crime mystery, *Murder at Priorswell Manor*, set in one of those ubiquitous large country houses so familiar from a myriad of films and stage shows. To help differentiate between the productions coming to life in front of us, we were provided with a programme within a programme, an ingenious idea, which certainly helped the audience unravel the complications of following the two plots.

The 'inner play' was under the control of one-man production guru Boris Smolensky who, in the spoof programme was credited with every role from director to set designer. He was ably played by Craig Entwistle who

commendably managed to retain his Eastern European accent throughout, portraying a man under huge pressure, faced with the exasperating task of knocking the group of luvvies into shape in time for the opening night. It was so pleasing to see Entertainers' regular Laura Allen in the sort of role she does so well. Her facial contortions as she dished out the put-downs and catty remarks were, as always, a joy to behold. What a shame that her character, Renee Savage, aka Lady Dorothy Cholmondley was only on stage for the first half of the performance, prior to becoming the victim of the 'real life' murder which threw the rehearsals into turmoil. The bulk of her vitriol was aimed at Christa D'Amato, played by another long time Entertainers' favourite, Kim Cooper. Cast as Mrs Puttock, complete with comedy rustic accent, Christa still attempted to bathe in the glory of her role in long-running TV soap 'Harley's Hotel'. The exchanges of ever-increasing bitchiness with Lady Cholmondley were a delight.

Much of the farcical side of the action was in the hands of evergreen Steve Smith as bumbling Harrison Bracewell, playing Mr Papadopoulos, whose attempts to regale his fellow thespians with boring stories from his days working with the big names – 'Young Kenny at the RSC' for one – were constantly thwarted by the long-suffering cast. Steve, on fine form as ever, was entrusted with no less than three roles, taking to the stage after the killing of his first character to be transformed into delightfully wooden Ford Beltbad, as Inspector Delver, complete with all the Agatha Christie style cliches. Neale Winter is another stalwart who has even written plays and pantos for the Entertainers. Freed from the constraints and worries of that task, he excelled as Tim Fermor, plying the pompous ex-Army Major Rodney Pirbright. Neale has never acted better, and his portrayal of the archetypal military bigot was spot on. Anwen Fuller hardly had anything to say for much of the early action, standing obediently ready to serve as the maid Triggs. But when she, in her alter ego of Sophie Lawton, joined forces with Tim to try to solve the mystery of Renee's killing, she got the chance to excel. Portraying the young Lady Virginia was Ginette Vincent, in real life Jess Shore, who brought just the right level of scatty innocence to the role. Holding it all

together, as often is the way in real life theatrical productions, was Rachel Barnes, as long-suffering stage manager Pat Goodenough, whose efforts to sort out the props and scripts were never quite good enough for the ever-demanding Boris Smolensky. Rachel was perfect in the part and was suitably amusing when given the chance to 'step up' into the role of Mrs Puttock.

As stated earlier, plays within plays demand a great deal from cast members and audiences alike, and I must admit, there were a couple of occasions when I had a yearning to hit a pause button just to take stock and make sure I was fully appreciative of exactly what was going on. But this strong cast, skilfully directed by Sue Pinfold – who had the unenviable task of directing a director – made sure the action moved along at a sensible pace. There was pathos, wit and enough red herrings to satisfy the most demanding murder mystery enthusiast. And most of all there was the wonderful humour, no more so than in a joyous spell at the end of the first half, when a new set of stage directions by Boris resulted in the biggest laughs of the evening. As always, the work of Mike Smith, and his backstage crew, added so much to the delights of the production.

Just one gripe: Please, Entertainers, make even greater efforts to remind people about turning off their mobiles. Four times during Saturday evening an assorted array of ringtones filled the air. Next time there **will** be a murder.

**Barry Dix**

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### ***St Hilda's Entertainers***

*Having successfully performed their May Play Murder In Play, St Hilda's Entertainers' thoughts immediately turn to this year's Pantomime, Jack and the Beanstalk, to be performed in early December. Their first step is the 'readings', very informal auditions, to be held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July at 8pm in the Small Hall, and Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July at 8pm in the Main Hall. If you will be age 16 or over on 1<sup>st</sup> September, you will be welcome to come along to the readings to see if you would like to be involved, either on stage or behind the scenes.*

*Mike Davenport.*

## Mother Helen Calner

Many of you will already know that Helen Calner was made priest by Emma, Bishop of Kensington, on 17<sup>th</sup> June this year. She will be offering her first mass on 2<sup>nd</sup> July at 1030 am at St Philip's Church, Earl's Court. Please pray for her and the Rev. Pippa Turner and the people of St Philip's Church, Earl's Court among whom Helen will serve.

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## St Hilda's receives Eco Award

St. Hilda's was recently awarded a Bronze Eco Church award.

For those who don't remember the speaker from A Rocha who told us about Eco Church (before the Covid lock down), it is a national scheme to enable churches to demonstrate how they are caring for God's earth in different areas of their life and work.

It covers five areas:

- Worship and teaching
- Management of church buildings
- Management of church land
- Community and global engagement
- Lifestyle

The scheme works through a questionnaire. The answers in each section are translated into points which are used to determine how well our church is doing in each area. To get the bronze, silver or gold award one has to reach the appropriate standard in all five areas. St. Hilda's achieved gold in Worship and Teaching, silver in Management of church buildings (which included the hall and vicarage), and bronze in the other areas.

The next step is to work towards the silver award. This will need us to do more than "business as usual". I think we are close to silver for the management of our church land, but the remaining areas will need more work.

Community and global engagement is about how we engage with leaders such as our MP and council leaders, about environmental issues, and how we work with other organisations to raise awareness of environmental issues and to do something about them.

Lifestyle is about how we are encouraging the individual members of our congregation to live more sustainably - this means you!

To find out more, look at the Eco Church web site:

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/> . You can just browse, or if you want to be more involved then register and then link your account to St. Hilda's church.

If you have any questions, and especially if you would like to help develop our work in the Community and global engagement and Lifestyle areas, speak to me:

*Rosemary Greenwood*  
*St. Hilda's Eco Church Rep*

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## **Junior Church**

Junior Church meets every Sunday during term time. On the first Sunday of the Month we have Messy Church. We begin in the Hall and remain there for the whole of the Service. Parents are encouraged to come to the service and participate with the children. On the remaining Sundays we meet, initially in the Church, then go in to the Hall for a child centred activity returning to Church just before the Eucharist.

Our principle teaching resource is Roots on the Web which follows the Lectionary and usually focuses on the Gospel reading. During Ordinary Time over the last few years we have looked at some of the Old Testament themes. This half term we have decided to study Moses and the Exodus.

All children are welcome – if a child is very young or new we ask a parent, grandparent or guardian to accompany them. We will ask the parents to complete an identity form in case we ever have a problem and we ask for an email address so we can keep them informed about Junior Church

We have notice boards in the Church and Hall which may give you some idea of the topics covered.

## Nick's Bar

St. Hilda's Church is always looking at ways to increase its ability to raise funds both for the church and those charities that we support.

As you will be aware we now use the church along with the hall for performances of various types. We can also use it for wedding receptions and have already done so last year with more scheduled this summer

As we increase the number of church events, and non-church performances, we have needed to obtain more alcohol licences. So, we reached the point where it was more cost effective to have a permanent licence in place to cover both the hall and the church. Therefore, since March we have had a full-time alcohol and entertainments license with me as the Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS, effectively the licensee). Both Chris Brown and I have Personal Licenses that enable us to hold such a licence and so he can cover for me if any event takes place while I am away.

We are able to create a "Pop-up bar" to support these events and my wife has even bought me a sign saying "Nick's Bar" to put up with official signs I am required to display whenever we are selling alcohol.

So, if anyone wishes to hold an event, either in the hall or in the church, and wishes to sell alcohol as part of such an event, please contact me, via the parish office, to arrange for the bar to be made available.

Nick Gething

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## Want to contribute? A brief guide for articles

It would be preferred if all submissions were between 250 and 500 words to save on editing time.

Body text should be single spaced, with font in Calibri 12 point.

Pictures/photographs are welcome, but please select only one or two that you want included with the article.

We would welcome contributions for a children's page. This could include word searches, spot the difference, or any other suitable activity.

Please email all contributions to [sthildanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:sthildanewsletter@gmail.com)

## The perfect minister

*As you may be aware, we are currently Interregnum and this article offers some points to bear in mind when looking for a new minister:*

- The Perfect Minister preaches exactly 10 minutes. He condemns sin roundly, but never hurts anyone's feelings. He works from 8 a.m. until midnight and is also the church handyman.
  - The Perfect Minister lives on a very small salary, wears good clothes, drives a good car, buys good books, and donates £30 a week to the church. He is 29 years old and has 40 years' worth of experience.
  - The Perfect Minister has a burning desire to work with teenagers, and he spends most of his time with the senior citizens. He smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humour that keeps him seriously dedicated to his church. He makes 15 home visits a day and is always in his office to be handy when needed.
  - The Perfect Minister always has time for church meetings and all its committees, never missing the meeting of any church organisation. He is always busy evangelising the unchurched. He also spends hours preparing couples for their weddings, hours preparing parents for their baby's baptism, and hours visiting the bereaved, but his life is dedicated to solitude, prayer and meditation.
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### Church contact details

If you would like help or to speak to one of the ministry team, please contact the parish office:

Telephone 01784 253525

Email [office@sthilda.org](mailto:office@sthilda.org)