

AN INTERVIEW WITH BARRY JONES

Barry used to be a member of All Saints' Choir in the 1950s and 1960s. He later went on to study Theology and subsequently spent his career as a hospital chaplain. He has very kindly donated several items to Claire Cox, who is currently in training to become a vicar.



This cloak was given to me by the wife of **Vicar William Sargeant**, who was Vicar of All Saints' from 1946-1957. He was Padre to the Brigade of Guards during the Second World War, but before being ordained he was a serving cavalry officer in the Indian Army. He

accompanied the Brigade onto the Normandy beaches on D Day, and remained with them as they fought their way to Germany.

Vicar Sargeant baptised me – I was born in December 1946 and baptised in January 1947. I don't know the precise date, as my baptism certificate was lost in Lichfield when I sent it in with my Confirmation certificate prior to being ordained, and alas it was never returned.

I recall that written on the bottom in Sargeant's own handwriting was : "The biggest failure a Christian can know is to give up trying." I thought that was a very good motto to send you out with in life!

I joined the choir in 1954, in the days when we had up to 29 boys. I must say that it was the money that attracted me in the first instance! My friends told me of the riches of an old thruppence if you attended choir practice, and an old sixpence if you sang at a service.

You had to go on a rota. The senior boys always sang, but the junior boys were on a rota. The juniors sat with the men at the back; they found your place for you and taught you the tricks of the trade.

In addition to the photo of me with Vicar Lloyd's choir in 1963, I have one from when I was quite young, and also one when I was at university, where I was sporting

a beard – I sang with the men at the time of that later photo.

William Sargeant went off to a country parish after his time in Sedgley, then he became a Prebend at Lichfield Cathedral. He had an apartment there with his wife.

Somehow they'd found out that I was to be ordained – however William died before the ordination and his wife kindly asked me whether I'd like his stoles and his cloak.

I thought that would be very nice because I didn't have two pennies to rub together! I went over to Lichfield to fetch them. Alas the stoles later disintegrated because they were of a great age, but the cloak I've kept.



I bought the clerical scarves that I've given to Claire before I was ordained – they didn't belong to William. There's a black, a red and a green one.

I was ordained as a deacon at Lichfield on 24th May 1970, on Trinity Sunday. I then had to wait 13 months to be ordained as a priest, because they'd changed the date for ordinations to Petertide.

So I was ordained on 27th June 1971. I celebrated my first Communion at the Church of the Holy Ascension, Lower Farm Estate, Bloxwich on what was St. Peter's Day, 29th June 1971.

My first parish was All Saints' Bloxwich, and I was responsible for the Lower Farm Estate. I left there around 1st November 1972.

We went to All Saints' Church, Upper Norwood, London SE19, the most northerly part of the Borough of Croydon. I was there as a curate, when you had to do at least two curacies, and stayed until August 1976.

I then went for a short time to New Addington, near Croydon, South London. I was asked by the Bishop to develop a separate parish. Unfortunately it never took off, so I left there after around 18 months.

I became the full-time Chaplain of what was then called 'Mayday, Queen's and St Mary's Hospital' Croydon. I became a direct employee of the NHS, rather than the Church.



The Communion set was given to me. When I went to the Mayday Hospital there was a retired priest called Reg Lee, who was there on a part-time basis, covering on my days off. He'd been Vicar of Great Chart in Canterbury Diocese; Croydon at that time was part of that diocese until it was assimilated into Southwark.

He'd had that Communion set while he was Vicar of Great Chart during the Second World War. He told me the set had been given to him by a former army chaplain who'd used it in the trenches in the First World War, but I have no evidence to say that's correct.

I used the Communion Set in Mayday Hospital and in Queen's Hospital until I came up to Redditch Hospital, where I started on 1st December 1986, again employed directly by the NHS. In total I was a hospital chaplain for 27 years until I left the priesthood.

While I was at Theological College in Durham, I'd been on a six-week full-time course for theological students at Selly Oak, Moneyhull and Rubery Hill Hospitals (none of which exist now) in Birmingham.

That gave me the bug – I'd always wanted to try hospital work. When the opportunity at Mayday Hospital in Croydon came up I got the job at the grand old age of 31, and found that hospital work was for me.

Recently I contacted Worcester Diocese to ask whether there were any ordinands who needed any 'kit'. I didn't tell them about the Communion Set – it was mainly the cloak, stoles and the black, long scarf used for Evensong, Matins etc and formal occasions at the Cathedral, also including Clergy gatherings. I'd never actually used it since I left parish work, but I kept it just in case.

When Claire Cox came to collect the cloak, stoles and scarf, I showed her the Communion Set and said she could have it if she wanted it - and she gladly accepted. The case it came in disintegrated long ago. The stoppers and top of the altar cruet are solid silver and the chalice is solid silver. There may be a way of tracing who made it and where it was made. On one of the items there's a crown, so whether that indicates it's military I don't know.

I was born at No 70, Bilston Street, Sedgley, which was a slum, almost opposite Greenway. There's now a block of bungalows where our house used to be. It was two up, two down, no water, with the toilet across the yard. I can remember electricity being put in, which was amazing. When I was young we had a black grate, which the landlord took out and replaced with a modern fireplace.

When I returned in August 2021, I was horrified with the changes to the village – I'd not been back since I was 18. It was so different compared to the bustling place I remember.

I recall when I went to Sunday School as a child at All Saints', a lady called Mrs Bodenham lived at the Greenway. She was like the Pied Piper. She gathered together several children – she had none of her own – and led us dutifully up to Sunday School at All Saints'.

The Sunday School was then held in a building that's now Iceland supermarket. Later they built the Church Hall in Vicar Street, and it was then held there.

I went to Queen Victoria Infant and Junior School in Bilston Street, and after that to Dudley Grammar School. I went to St Chad's College Durham where I did my degree, which consisted of church history, biblical

studies and Classical Greek, followed by a post-graduate Diploma in Theology.

I was too young to be ordained so I got a job as a junior filing clerk at West Bromwich Tax Office for 6 months, before getting ordained on 24th May 1970.

Thank you very much for relating these wonderful memories from your career and your early life in Sedgley, Barry!

Interview by Martin Jones, final edit 17/12/21.