



Dear Friends

For many August is a time of holiday, though those who do not have to take holiday in school holiday times are well advised to avoid it. It is a quiet time in the church though as some activities take a break, giving people a well-earned rest.

Rest is an important theme in the creation narrative. We read in the poetic/liturgical account of creation (of which you can read from another perspective later in the magazine) that in the seventh day God rested from all the work of creation. The rhythm of activity and rest is very important in our lives and this can be achieved in many ways, through taking days off, through holiday, through hobbies and recreation but also by means of a sabbatical.

The word sabbatical has its origins alongside the Sabbath, the seventh day on which God rested and in the Church of England, and many other churches it is good practice for clergy to take an extended sabbatical from time to time (usually three months every seven years in a particular post). This is a time for rest, reflection, study and fun. Although I have been ordained 28 years and in post here for 12 I have never managed a sabbatical for various reasons, so this is the year.

The intention is that I shall be on sabbatical from September 13th to about December 7th. I shall be spending some time in Salisbury, some reading and reflecting from home and possibly dotting about a little and exploring some of my theological interests. The culmination is a month in Rome in November when I am attending two courses at the Anglican Centre there and spending some time sightseeing and enjoying the city. I shall, all being well, be back and raring to go in time for the build-up to Christmas.

Work is on-going to ensure that everything is covered over the time I am on sabbatical. Arrangements for service cover are almost done and other things fitting into place. I am writing about it now so that people who have not already gathered that it is happening have time to get used to the idea and to be ready to offer to help in whatever ways the Wardens PCC and Ministry Team will find helpful.

When back I am hoping to be able to share the fruits of thinking and writing in various ways.

Priscilla

Aspects of life at St Faith and St Laurence

Morning prayer – is normally said Monday to Thursday and Saturday at 8.15 am in the Lady Chapel. We use Common Worship Daily Prayer, all are welcome to come and join in.

Reflections A chance to meet together over a cuppa and reflect on the Gospel reading for the previous Sunday. A group meets on Mondays from 1.45-3pm Venues are listed in the Programme of the month.

Task Groups – The church has a number of task groups enabling areas of church life. These are listed in the magazine with the contact details of the chairs. If you would like to be a part of a groups please contact the relevant chair or Priscilla. All are welcome to join.

Stay and Play meets on Thursday between 9.30 and 11am in the Hall to give a chance for people with young children to meet and the children to play. All are welcome. Cost £1.50 per family.

Sunday Club meets on the first and third Sundays of each month except during the holidays. We hold an extra Sunday Club on days when there is a baptism. All are welcome to join in hearing and experiencing a Bible Story and learning together about what it means for our daily lives.

Messy Church takes place on the first Saturday of each month, most months. A chance for children and parents/ carers to have an informal time of worship, and discovering about a Bible story through song, craft, listening, cooking and so much more. Dates are published in advance and all are welcome to come along.

Planned Giving helps people make giving regular. You decide how much you can afford to give. You can join the envelope scheme weekly or monthly or pay by Standing Order or annually by cheque. Income tax payers are asked to Gift Aid their giving, so the Church can reclaim the tax on their donations at no extra cost to the donors. For details, contact Jackie Taylor or Brenda Stott

Call in for Coffee time together over a cuppa on a Wednesday morning from 10.30 -12.00. if needed we can arrange for someone to collect you and then take you home. Please ring Pauline Sitford (427 7005). If you are passing, do call in, or bring a friend, all are welcome.

We support **Recycling**. We have a special collection on the first Sunday of every month when we collect ALUMINIUM cans and foil which can be sold and the money raised is donated to our Mission Partners in Chile (through USPG) We also have envelopes for recycling mobile phones again supporting USPG. Pauline Sitford (427 7005).

If you think you have a lot of relatives to remember at Christmas, spare a thought for David Jones.



General Synod took place recently at York. I wonder how many of those taking part know that there is a pub near Llandysul in Wales called the **Synod Inn?** (pictured above) One of its well-known regulars there is David Jones. The 83-year-old writes cards and buys presents for his 79 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He has three more great-grandchildren on the way, and confesses it is hard to keep track. But he has still managed to write 110 Christmas cards to friends and family. Mr Jones, whose wife died four years ago after 52 years of marriage, has seven children, 38 grandchildren and 34 great-grandchildren. However, the entire family has never been in the same room together. "We'd need to hire a hall to fit us all in," he joked.

The walls of his home are covered with photographs of his family, which he says resembles an art gallery. He admitted: "I've got that many I can't even remember their names. "If there are any birthdays due my daughter, Carol, lets me know in good time and I get them a card. "I couldn't do without them and they've been no trouble to me. We've always been a close family." He joked: "I don't know what it is. It must be the Ceredigion air or something.

Family history expert Cat Whiteaway, who co-presents *Look up your Genes* on BBC Radio Wales, which helps people with their family history hunt, said it was unusual to have so many living descendants. "I have not heard of somebody having so many," she said. "It isn't a record breaker, but it's a fairly substantial number for the UK."

According to Guinness World Records, Mr Jones has a long way to go before he breaks the record for living descendants. A spokesman said: "At the time of his death on 15 October 1992, Samuel S Mast, aged 96, of Fryburg, Pennsylvania, had 824 living descendants. "The roll call comprised 11 children, 97 grandchildren, 634 great-grandchildren and 82 great-great-grandchildren."

A BIG THANK YOU FROM THE FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE.



We would all like to thank those who supported our Fun Quiz and Supper Evening on the 1st July.

A very good night was enjoyed by 40 people and, together with a raffle and some generous donations, we were able to add £365 towards our total for this year for the West Midlands Air Ambulance.

See you at the next event!!

Helen Hayward (for the Friendship Circle.)

Jane Austen –200 years since her death



Jane Austen, a brilliant, quintessentially English novelist much loved for her irony, social realism and criticism of the upper classes, died on 18th July 1817. She was almost unknown in her lifetime, having published books like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park* anonymously.

She was also a Christian (and the daughter of a rector) but did not wear her heart on her

sleeve. A reticent Anglican, she wrote early on that she “did not like the Evangelicals” but later felt that those who were Evangelicals “from reason and feeling must be happiest and safest”. Her novel *Mansfield Park* tackles a theme dear to the heart of many late eighteenth century Evangelicals – the abolition of the slave trade.

Throughout her writing her main characters are transformed by love, an idea of course central to Christianity. Her faith may not call attention to itself in her novels, but it is everywhere in her work. One critic wrote: “The stories are subversive and work like Jesus' parables. The humour and the ironic insight into human sin get under your skin.” An image of Jane Austen will appear on the new polymer £10 note, to be released in September.

Home Communion We have a team of lay people trained and able to bring Home Communion usually on a monthly basis. This is for those who are unable to come to church long term. If the situation is more temporary for example after an operation you can also receive communion, usually from Priscilla. In either case please contact Priscilla.

Traidcraft

Traidcraft sells a range of fairly traded food, cards, clothes and accessories. We use Traidcraft tea and coffee and everything we buy helps fight poverty and supports our church. You can order seasonal gifts through the church at Christmas time when catalogues will be available. Any questions, please ask Ruth Jeavons or Bronwen Jones.

'easyfundraising'

Next time you shop online, think of St Faith and St Laurence and raise free donations with 3,000+ retailers:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stfaithandstlaurence>

Women's Fellowship meets on the first Monday of the month from March to December. Meetings are held in the Committee Room 7.30 for 8pm. We have talks on a variety of subjects. See Programme of the Month for details.

Prayer Ministry Team

Prayer ministry is offered during the 10am Communion on Sundays. People can receive prayer for themselves or for any situation that is important to them. It takes place in the Lady Chapel during the distribution of communion.

Service with no name

This takes place on the first Thursday in the month in church at 7.30pm.

Foodbank

We collect food for the Quinton and Oldbury Foodbank. There is a box in church and food can be placed there at any time. The list of things that are needed is in church and in the hall. Food is distributed from St Boniface Church on Wednesdays and Paul and Barney's place on Fridays. Vouchers are required to receive food.

Choir and Music.

Choir Practice takes place weekly, normally on Thursdays 6-7pm. Anyone interested in singing in the choir should contact Simon Palmer, Organist & Choirmaster. (Contact details on page cover) We also like to encourage instrumentalists to perform in church, either in services or in concerts.

The Kingdom of God, is justice and joy, for Jesus restores what sin would destroy.

The group of sessions of General Synod which finished on Monday 10th July contained much of justice and, for many, not a little joy. I'd remind you that reports of all business done and copies of all the papers are available on the Church of England website as are links to recordings of proceedings. Electronic voting results usually appear around a week after the end of the sessions if you wish to look.

You will see that your reps put on questions, spoke in and chaired debates as well as our diocesan motion. Birmingham was clearly engaged in all aspects of synod. I'd like to break the synod up into a number of streams, thus not reporting sequentially, but logically.

The first stream about **social and political issues** began with an additional item, put forward by the Archbishops in response to the election. It sought to give thanks for the increased turn out, called for prayer for MPs and courage for political leaders and called Christians to keep up pressure on justice issues, in service of the poor and vulnerable and reminded us all of the importance of strong international relationships. It was very much a matter of general principles described, slightly unkindly, as "Motherhood and Apple Pie" and was promptly nearly drowned under a deluge of amendments seeking to spice it up a bit. All were very specific and many about particular personal views. All the amendments, including a late one from the Archbishop of York, were rejected and the un-amended motion passed.

We also received a report and debated a motion on presence and engagement. In this motion we continued to share stories of good practice in encounter and dialogue with those of other faiths. Birmingham was put forward as an example of a super-diverse city in which much work in this area is going on.

On the last morning our diocesan motion on the cost of citizenship was ably presented by Ben Franks. The call to support those who struggle to pay the high citizenship fees charged was supported by everyone who spoke, some sharing personal stories of hardship and problems in this area. Sir Tony Baldry suggested that the transcript of the debate be sent to the Home Affairs select committee so that they could see for themselves the feeling generated by the injustice represented by these fees. The issue was felt to be of such importance that we had a card vote so that numbers and supporters could be accurately recorded. The figures were 310 in favour, 0 against and no recorded abstentions. This was clearly a great result, reminding us that the process of bringing motions forward from deanery and diocese really can work. We wonder if synod might like to see the video of the debate at a later date to demonstrate the really good atmosphere and reactions to our motion. Central Deanery, and Ben are to be thanked for all their hard work on this.

Although preaching formed a prominent part of services after the Reformation, many in the congregation sat in their pews facing away from the preacher. Worse inconveniences occurred. At Llangattock church in Carmarthenshire, "Mrs Crawshay brought her dogs and had tea served on a table in her pew during service". In other cases fires were stoked in pews by snug owners oblivious to the disturbance.

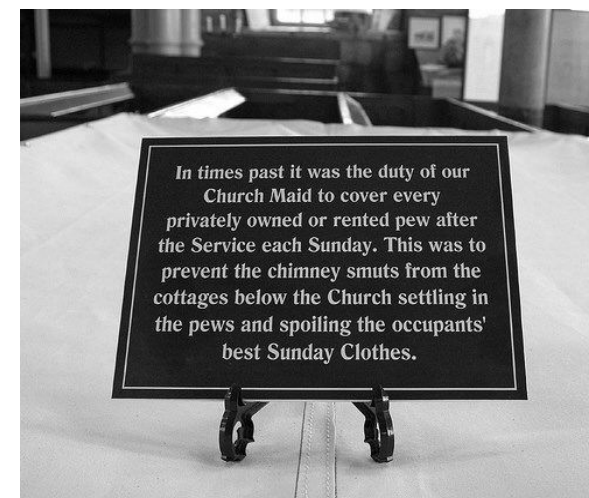
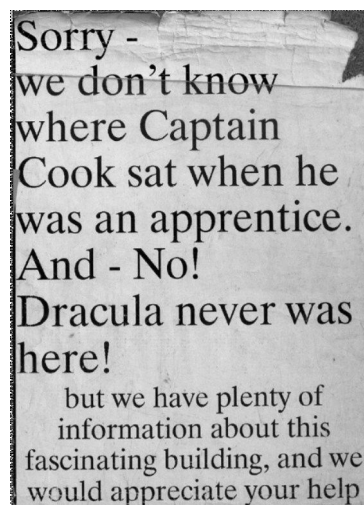
Some churchmen stood out against "pew abomination". In the 17th century, Archbishop Laud's objection was not so much social division as the chatter or "jangling" when people were seated. The great movement against pew-rents came in the 19th century. In 1842 the engaging ecclesiastical reformer Francis Paget published a novel, *Milford Malvoisin, or, Pews and Pew holders*, with its moral that "the wealthy few have driven, in many places, the Poor from our churches".

Among the forces against reform were the pew-openers. Unusually for people with power in the church, these were women, often energetic types who filled their week with charring and taking in washing, although the census of 1851 put down 658 of them as being employed in connection with the "learned professions". On the eve of his marriage, David Copperfield dreamed of one of these formidable figures "arranging us like a drill sergeant before the altar rails".

Below are examples of notices on pews at the famous St. Mary's Church in Whitby.

PS When researching the history of our church, I learnt that in 1937 the architects, J.A. Chatwin & Son were not in favour of having pews in the new church, but were overruled at a PCC Meeting.

Peter Stokes



Renting the best seats in church

One Sunday, Elinor Burnett stepped into Alison Brown's pew at All Saints church, Oxford, and "bade her give her elders and betters their room". Mrs Brown refused to give way, and replied that "she did acknowledge her to be her elder but not her better".

That was in 1596, but it was not the first falling out over seats in church, nor the last. The trouble was that people would insist that they owned pews, and had paid good money for them. Some screwed ownership plates to them. A court judgment in 1612 had declared that a church "is dedicated and consecrated to the service of God, and is common to all inhabitants", and therefore it belonged to the bishop to decide the question of ownership of a seat there. This confirmed a decree of the Synod of Exeter in 1297.

Yet pews were still being rented annually as late as 1970, at Much Wenlock, Shropshire, and their sale and traffic, though illegal, or at least unlawful, continued for centuries with connivance of churchwardens and clergy.

Some pews were erected with a diocesan faculty (establishing their right to exist in the church). These, and others built by those who used them, were naturally regarded as a sort of private property. At Warrington, in 1631, Thomas Ireland set up a pew "in the manner of a scaffold 12 feet high on pillars of wood overlooking the pulpit and congregation".

At Yeovil in 1837 pews in the parish church sold well at auction, on behalf of the churchwardens, fetching between £16 and £90 each, some bought by investors, one of whom bought 13.

The scandal, if it was seen as such by a firmly stratified society, was that the poor were edged out to perch on benches and stools in the odd bits of space left at the back or middle of the church.

All the worshippers visible in a watercolour of Battlesden, Bedfordshire, from 1814, sit outside the pews, on benches, or stand in the aisle. That painting forms the cover illustration for an issue of *The Local Historian* (November 2009) in which appears an admirable and enjoyable article on the role of pews by Dr Spencer Thomas, on which I have drawn here.

To an outsider the effect of rented pews in church could be off-putting. "I did go once," a Monmouthshire man wrote in 1882, "but the people were all shut in, and the folk in the boxes looked at me as if I had got in without paying: so after walking up and down several times, like a man in a station trying to get a seat when the train is full, I went home."

There was a Private members motion about school admissions which was seeking to make the school admissions process simpler both for clergy and for others who live in tied housing and can find school places difficult to obtain. This motion passed although there was considerable debate around the issue. It was emphasised that it was not seeking special pleading for clergy as such but looking at all those who can be caught in a catch 22 situation of not being able to apply for places in a timely fashion, and seeking just ways for people in this situation to be helped.

Another major stream was on **Human sexuality and gender**. Firstly we were given a presentation and the opportunity to ask questions on the next steps after the synod didn't take note of the report brought to it last time. An advisory pastoral group which aims to advise Bishops on issues which may come up in the course of time has been set up under the oversight of the Bishop of Newcastle Christine Hardman. Alongside this, a teaching document is to be produced, covering many streams of work under the oversight of the Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth. Questions were asked about the makeup of the various groups and their remit. This is work which will be ongoing for some time.

Two motions on sexuality were debated. The first, a Private Members motion on what is often called "Conversion Therapy" the second a Diocesan motion from Blackburn diocese on welcome for Transgender persons and the provisions of liturgies. Both debates were very good, both involved amendments, some very complex. Both motions, the first somewhat amended, thus making it more robust, were passed. Again because of the importance of the issues card votes by houses were held. Synod got very used to the rubric about the ringing of bells and the pressing of buttons and there was a sense of good humour permeating the chamber.

Mission and evangelism

On the Saturday we had a presentation about various streams of work taking place from Church House Westminster designed to help local churches in their mission and evangelism. These streams were Thy Kingdom come, Life Events, Digital Evangelism, National events and Opportunities for witness, Inclusion and Outreach and Crossing the Generations. In the afternoon we spent time in workshops each examining one of these themes. Your reps managed to organise themselves so that all workshops were covered.

(Concluded over page)

Clergy well-being

There was a report on on-going work on clergy well-being which was debated and received. This is another on-going piece of work looking to develop a Covenant for clergy well-being to strengthen clergy in their lives and ministries. .

Legislation

There were various bits of legislation to deal with, some under the simplification agenda and repeals of obsolete pieces of legislation. Of historical interest, this included legislation referring to Queen Anne's bounty, now administered via the Church Commissioners. Final drafting, approval and petition to Her Majesty were gone through for both the amending Canons that have been working their way through the process, that permitting not wearing robes for services and that relating to suicide and burial services.

Church order and administration

We had an interim report and presentation with questions on the review of the Crown Nominations Commission, another on elections to the General Synod itself. The current electorate for electing the House of Laity is Deanery Synod members. A set of different options was presented to the synod with an advisory ballot to see what the current membership think would be the best. We received the Church Commissioners' report and reports and budgets from the Archbishops' Council. Question time contained as usual a huge variety of questions and written answers. There were 85 questions and we got through about 49 in the session where a number of supplementaries were asked. The questions and answers are also available on the website.

Farewells were given to Mike Hill the Bishop of Bristol and to the Bishop at Lambeth, Nigel Stock.

In the debate on mission and evangelism The Bishop of Chelmsford, Stephen Cottrell, spoke. I failed to note whom he was quoting, he quoted this, "Every day I need the Gospel to transform my life"

Overall this was a good synod, we cooked in the chamber in searing heat most days. If I were to bring a symbol of the sessions it would be this (picks up annual report and fans herself) Most of the time were good tempered and careful of one another. We had the joy of no evening sittings, leaving more time for fringe meetings or simply being together. We were able to listen and learn together. There are always grumbles and gripes and the amount of amendments may have characterised this synod. Some of what we did at synod was fairly mundane, but there was a great deal that had the potential to be truly transformative as we seek to share the gospel of Christ in our nation in this generation and to call many to find their roots in him.

Priscilla White July 2017

How the mitres have fallen – but it's not the end of colourful clergy

Mitres, stoles, capes and chasubles – the traditional clothing of Church of England clergy – may disappear from some churches services after the Church of England voted recently to allow ministers to 'wear what they want'.

It may prove a difficult time for ecclesiastical designer Juliet Hemingray, who has led the way in not only adding colour to vestments but, through her designs, making allusions to biblical narratives. 'They are visual aids,' she explains, 'and do not form a barrier between wearer and observer. The subject matter on the stole or scarf, for example, can start helpful conversations.'

Juliet's business began in 1979 when a close friend asked her to decorate a plain black preaching scarf with scenes that would appeal to children. 'Orders poured in for bespoke designs reflecting the faith of customers,' she recalls. 'I have created 13 jobs and enabled more than 30,000 people to portray the Gospel in a way that is personal and meaningful. One friend in Tennessee told me he couldn't remember any sermons from his early church life but recalled symbols on vestments and hangings. They meant a great deal to him.' Juliet believes there is room for both options – vestments or more informal clothing.

'My choice is obviously the first, purely from a Gospel-preaching standpoint,' she says. 'But you should make the most of whatever you are wearing and when you are not speaking, let the garment speak!' Her view was reflected at two recent meetings in Lancashire. More than 4,000 schoolchildren gathered at Ewood Park, the home of Blackburn Rovers, for a talk given by the Bishop of Burnley, Rt Rev Philip North. Dramatically, he revealed an Arsenal shirt under his vestments, using the long-standing rivalry between Division One team Blackburn and Premier League Burnley FC to discuss the importance of loyalty.

Only a week before, Canon Mark Jones vicar of St Leonard's Church in nearby Padiham, wore a Queen's Park Rangers' shirt – the team he supports – in front of 200 children from the local primary school. He wore it to illustrate how belonging to and supporting a club is an important part of any christening service. He 'baptised' a baby doll for two seven-year-old pupils.

In an area in which some members of the clergy have ignored the rulings and worn no clerical identification or the minimum for some time, the new pronouncement gives everyone the opportunity to be free and easy on some social occasions and add colour and pomp on others – without causing offence. It may even offer those 'wearing parables' to speak clearly to their congregation without uttering a word.

If England must have a patron saint, who would you choose?

I would suggest St Aidan would be a more appropriate patron saint for England than St George. I think he would make a suitable saint for all Britain - except perhaps Wales.

Originally from Ireland, Aidan came from his monastery on the island of Iona in Scotland as a missionary to the Angles and other peoples of Northumbria in northern England. He got sent there after Cormac had returned from his unsuccessful mission reporting that the Northumbrians were too uncivilised and stubborn to be converted. It would seem that Aidan was more gifted than Cormac at getting alongside people, even when he did not speak their language. Here is what the Venerable Bede wrote about him

"He neither sought nor loved anything of this world, but delighted in distributing immediately to the poor whatever was given him by kings or rich men. He traversed both town and country on foot, never on horseback, unless compelled by some urgent necessity. Wherever on his way he saw any, either rich or poor, he invited them, if pagans, to embrace the mystery of the faith; or if they were believers, he sought to strengthen them in their faith and stir them up by words and actions to alms and good works."

The prayer below is known as St Aidan's prayer. We remember Aidan on August 31st after a Bank Holiday weekend in England, so this prayer seems appropriate. It alludes to the situation of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne where St Aidan established a monastery. It is an island cut off from the mainland at the sea's high tide, but is accessible via a causeway or on foot at low tide.

Leave me alone with God
as much as may be.
As the tide draws the waters
close in upon the shore,
Make me an island, set apart,
alone with you, God,
holy to you.

Then with the turning of the tide
prepare me to carry your presence
to the busy world beyond,
the world that rushes in on me
till the waters come again
and fold me back to you.

Peter Stokes

Priscilla White Birmingham 065

Thank you for calling me.

I stand here as a cis-gendered hetero-sexual female. That identity, however, does not blind me to the fact that others are not as I am.

We have already heard in synod reference to the sixth day in the creation account in Genesis one where it is declared "Male and female he created them" and this seems to be used as a reason not to accept the issues around gender that are raised by trans people.

I would like to offer an interpretation of the Genesis account which could help us move from a purely binary approach to gender.

In this account we are presented with a series of days with other binaries alongside male and female, light and dark (or night and day) and that between dry land and the waters.

We know that in these other categories the binaries are not as binary as all that.

We experience twilight, as darkness falls. marshland and beaches offer an ever-changing buffer between what is clearly water and what dry land. These hinterlands, as we might call them, defy the poetic/liturgical binaries in Genesis 1 where for the sake of economy of expression the writer does not footnote the complexities. Our creative God provides and is present in hinterland too.

(God is as present in dark as light see psalm 139 as present on water as on dry land (think of the stilling of the storm) but God is also present in the twilight and in the marshland even though Genesis does not mention them)

So I want to suggest that these hinterlands offer an interpretative key which can help us in considerations of gender issues and transgender issues in particular. I believe this concept can help us to welcome and accept that male and female are not always as simple as binary categories would suggest and be open to recognise the needs of those who inhabit complex gender hinterlands and who are seeking for their bodily expression more accurately to reflect their felt experience. To give liturgical expression to this acceptance on a whole church level, rather than individual churches simply putting services together to reflect that sense of welcome demonstrates to all those living through transition that the church as a whole understands that all are not the same and that some people inhabit complex hinterlands. It will give those living with issues of gender dysphoria and those who transition a sense that the church as a whole knows that they are not a problem. In recognising liturgically the deepest movements of people's lives, in recognising the moments when identity in humanity and in Christ can be reaffirmed we offer real welcome and acceptance and enfolding in the grace of Jesus. I urge you to support the original motion.



FROM THE REGISTERS

FACTS

AND

Funerals in Church

6th July Ruth Mosley
 25th July David Atherton

Funeral at the Crematorium

28th June Barry Davies

Holy Matrimony

8th July Alexander Robinson and Charlotte Boden

Confirmations At Edgbaston Old Church/ St Bartholomew's by the Bishop of Birmingham.

25th June
 Amy Blackledge Also Baptised
 Anna Binns
 Lucy Carter
 Daniel Evans
 Stephanie Evans Also Baptised
 Lilibeth Hubble
 Dean Woodward

FACTS AND FIGURES

Week Beginning	Communicants	Loose Plate	Planned Giving	Gift Aid
		£	£	£
June 18	70	34.79	354.52	15.00
June 25	68	34.25	226.82	
July 2	68	41.47	342.35	2.00
July 9	31	61.41	161.20	9.00
July 16	86	49.48	277.37	2.00
Standing Orders				

We can count ourselves fortunate that the Normans preferred to use the much larger Holy Trinity Church, because their lack of enthusiasm for St Laurence's led to it being abandoned. It thus arrived in the 21st century unaltered, which makes it , exceedingly rare for a Saxon church in Britain.

That's not to say it hasn't had an interesting journey. By 1715 we know it was being used as a school, while the chancel became a cottage, the church's high ceiling accommodating three storeys. It also served time as a warehouse. With a schoolmaster's house leaning against the south wall - perhaps where a second porticus once existed - and other buildings crowding round it, the fact that this was ever a church was simply forgotten and St Laurence's disappeared.

It took a local vicar, Canon Jones, to haul the church back from the void into which it had vanished. An avid historian, when two Saxon carved angels were found during repairs to the building in 1857, he set about investigating. Climbing up the steep slope above Holy Trinity, he looked down on the jumble of roofs below and made out the shape of a Saxon church. St Laurence's was discovered. The church was duly re-consecrated and reopened for worship. Restored to its original function, it sits in relative isolation today, in a little patch of lawn, its honey-coloured stone once again glowing in the sunlight. It's really in remarkably good condition - only the west wall had to be rebuilt and the Victorian artisans who did it made a fine job of matching it to the rest of the building.

The entrance nowadays is via the north porticus. The window here is original, as are those in the south wall of the nave and chancel - all of which are very small by modern standards, window panes being a luxury often beyond the budget of even the wealthier echelons of Saxon society.

The plainness of the nave draws the eye to the narrow portal topped with a Romanesque arch that provides the only opening between the nave and the chancel. This stark separation serves to make the church feel even smaller than it is. It also adds a dash of real drama, for the doorway affords only the merest glimpse of the chancel. The sun's rays, streaming through an unseen window, illuminate the east wall like a spotlight.

Against that wall is the solid rectangular mass of an altar created from Saxon stones found in the vicinity. Above is a ring of Doultling stone carved by John Maine RA in 2012. The artist has attached it to the wall, placing beneath it a piece of fossilised tree 150 million years old and a fragment from a Celtic cross.

If you are visiting, before you leave, take a moment to look up high on the east wall of the nave. There you'll see the carvings of heavenly figures whose unearthing led to the rediscovery of the church - St Laurence's very own guardian angels.

Peter Stokes

Small is beautiful

When traveling around the country, it often strikes me how lucky the British are to live among such an abundance of well-preserved ancient churches. What is perhaps all the more extraordinary about the treasure trove of historical architecture in Britain, is that a large number of small and insignificant churches has managed to survive into the 21st century, often having weathered several plagues, the Reformation, plummeting attendances and the tender ministrations of the Victorians. For me, there's something particularly attractive about these ecclesiastical underdogs. They are seldom caught making a grandiose political statement about the power of a particular regime. Very few were built to prove that some diocese was richer than its neighbour.

We remember one of our patron saints, Laurence on August 10th. The smallest, and I believe the oldest English church dedicated to him is down in Wiltshire and is pictured on the front cover.

There's many a church that has disappeared because it has simply crumbled away or been demolished. By contrast, there are very few that stay right where they are yet contrive to go missing for hundreds of years, in the middle of a town. But that's exactly what happened to the church of St Laurence in Bradford-on-Avon. There's some debate about when the church was built. An observation made by the 12th-century historian William of Malmesbury supports the theory that it was established as early as 705 by St Aldhelm. However, the architectural style suggests a much later date: the early 11th century. Of course, it might be that a church was originally founded on this spot in the early 8th century and built upon later. Alternatively, St Aldhelm may have established a place of worship on the site of the current Holy Trinity Church that stands opposite. There is one thing we can say with certainty though, St Laurence's is Saxon.

If you are in the area, please try visit this beautiful church. Once you've slipped through the doorway from the porticus to the nave, there's an overwhelming sense of being somewhere thoroughly ancient. With no electric lighting, and only a few narrow windows to let in the sunshine, your eyes take a second or two to adjust. The ceiling is also remarkably high for such a small building - if it didn't feel like sacrilege, it might be described as like walking into a huge wardrobe or, in winter, perhaps a huge fridge.

Furnished with just five wooden chairs, a rail, and a couple of candelabra hanging from the ceiling, there's an austerity to the place that puts you immediately in mind of monks. 'Remember your vow of poverty,' it breathes. This message is undercut somewhat by the breathtaking beauty of the place - derived in no small part from the simplicity of its design and the boldness of its proportions - which renders any visitor rich.

Prayer of the Month

As a teacher and a mother/stepmother with school age children, August represents a very special time in the year; a time when all commitments cease; when there is no longer a club after school every night, nor parents' evenings, nor late nights of marking books. It is a rare time when, as a family, there is the opportunity to spend more time appreciating life and spending more time together. It represents a time when (hopefully) the weather is warm and sunny and there is the chance to get out and enjoy the great outdoors, and maybe even time to take a holiday together and just have fun.

It is at these times when it is important to remember to thank God for the things we enjoy and the things that make us happy, so with that in mind here is my prayer for the month:

Father, Creator of all, thank You for summer!

Thank you for the warmth of the sun and the increased daylight.

Thank You for the beauty I see all around me

And for the opportunity to be outside and enjoy Your creation.

Thank You for the increased time I have to be with my friends and family,

And for the more casual pace of the summer season.

Draw me closer to You this summer.

Teach me how I can pray

no matter where I am or what I am doing.

Warm my soul with the awareness of Your presence

and light my path with Your Word and Counsel.

As I enjoy Your creation, create in me

a pure heart and a hunger and a thirst for You.

Amen.

Vicky Miller (Licensed Reader)

PROGRAMME FOR AUGUST

Thu 3	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
SUN 6 TRANSFIGURATION			
	8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Genesis 32.22-31; Romans 9.1-5; Matthew 14.13-21</i>	
	10.00 am	Family Communion <i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
	6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 80.1-8</i> <i>1 Kings 10.1-13; Acts 13.1-13</i>	
Wed 9	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
	11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Numbers 13.1-2,25-14.1,26-35; Matthew 15.21-28</i>	Lady Chapel
Thu 10	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
SUN 13 NINETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY			
	8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>1 Kings 19.9-18;</i> <i>Romans 10.5-15; Matthew 14.22-33</i>	
	10.00 am	Morning Praise with Baptism	
	6.30 pm	Sung Eucharist <i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
Wed 16	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
	11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Deuteronomy 34; Matthew 18.15-20</i>	Lady Chapel
Thu 17	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
SUN 20 TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY			
	8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Isaiah 56.1, 6-8; Romans 11.1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15.21-28</i>	
	10.00 am	Family Communion <i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
	6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 90.1-12</i> <i>2 Kings 4.1-37; Acts 16.1-15</i>	
Tue 22	2.00 pm	William Lench Court Service	

Wed 23	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
	11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Judges 9.6-15; Matthew 20.1-16</i>	Lady Chapel
Thu 24	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
SUN 27 ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY			
	8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Isaiah 51.1-6;</i> <i>Romans 12.1-8; Matthew 16.13-20</i>	
	10.00 am	Family Communion <i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
	6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 95</i> <i>2 Kings 6.8-23; Acts 17.15-end</i>	
Wed 30	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
	11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>1 Thessalonians 2.9-13; Matthew 23.27-32</i>	Lady Chapel
Thu 31	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
Sat 2	10.30 am	Messy Church	Hall

Church

Let church be a place where all are welcome
 With doors flung open and wide
 Where words of redemptive love are from pulpits preached
 And the glory of God's good earth is made supremely manifest
 Let church be a place where the broken are healed to new health
 Reconciled. And no-one stands condemned
 Where hungry hearts are satisfied, intoxicated on God's love
 And both grief and gratitude are held, accepted, understood
 Let church be a place where diversity defeats division
 And no-one has to hide
 Where difference is celebrated, proclaimed in word and song and deed
 Praised as an abundant gift of God's good creation
 Let church be a place where all are welcome
 With doors flung open and wide
 Where fellowship is a way of life, not simply just a word
 And grace-filled people stand straight and proud, released from guilt and shame
 Let church be a place where we live out the loving heart of Christ
 Let church be the place we call home

Kirsty Clarke