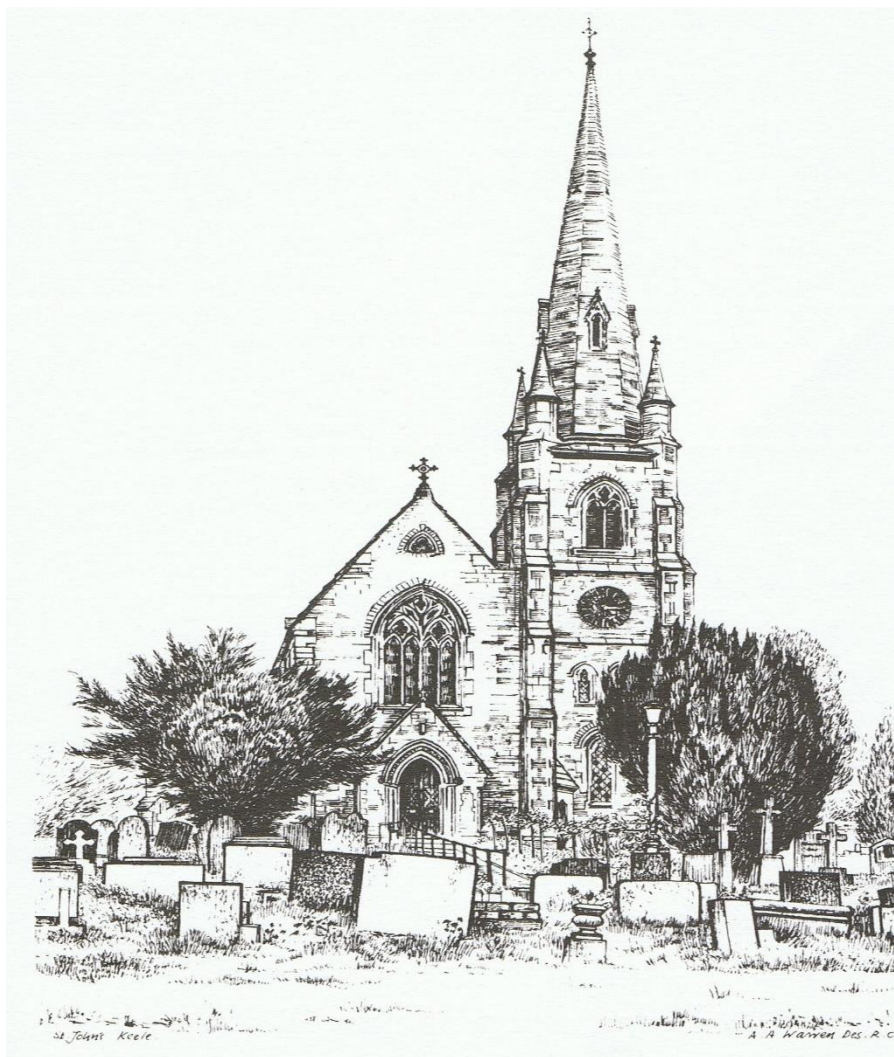


PARISH MAGAZINE



**St. John the Baptist Church
Keele**

October 2020

50p

Worship at St John's

An important note on the resumption of public worship

St John's is now open for public worship on alternate Sundays only and with certain restrictions as listed below.

- The church can only accommodate 28 people at any service. People who share a household/social bubble may sit together but otherwise a distance of two metres between seats must be adhered to.
- Hand sanitizer will be available near the entry for your use or you may bring your own.
- Please bring your own pen/pencil in order to leave your contact details as required by NHS England in case of a local outbreak occurring.
- You will be required to wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth at all times with the exception of when receiving Holy Communion.
- Holy Communion will be administered in one kind only (Host). Instead of kneeling/standing at the sanctuary rail, please queue one behind the other, observing social distancing. When in front of the priest, offer your outstretched hand (palm up) to receive the sacrament. Move to one side, lift your mask and place the host in your mouth. Replace your mask and return to your seat, again observing social distancing.
- Unfortunately, singing will not be permitted so hymn books will not be available. You will be given a service sheet. Please take these home with you at the end of the service. Also, no physical sharing of the peace.

Continued

- The collection plates will not be brought round but please leave your donations of money on the plate provided at the entrance.
- We are unable to offer refreshments for the time being and neither can we provide toilet facilities.
- Please remember the need for social distancing at the end of worship and as you leave the church.

Our Fortnightly Services Continue as Follows

October

Sunday 4th Harvest Thanksgiving 11.00am Eucharist

Sunday 18th St John's Church closed today

Sunday 25th Twentieth Sunday after Trinity 11.00am Eucharist

Act of Thanksgiving for the Departed 4.00pm

(Clocks go back one hour)

November

Sunday 8th **Remembrance Sunday** 11.00am Eucharist

We will meet in the carpark (socially distanced) at 10.45am

Sunday 22nd Christ the King 11.00am Eucharist

We look forward to the time when we will all be able to worship together as before. Meanwhile, we hold you in our prayers always.

Stay safe



The Bishop's Pastoral Letter

A glorious noise and all that's jazz...

Bishop-designate Matthew's improvises in his Pastoral Letter for October 2020

I have recently been at ordination services for both deacons and priests. Usually, such services are packed to the rafters with family, friends, people from the parishes and all manner of well-wishers. This year was different. The services were shrunk to less than thirty people. We all kept our distance and were masked throughout. The services were still rich and meaningful, but there is no getting away from it – this is not what the candidates and their supporters had expected or wanted. No doubt episcopal ordinations will follow in much the same vein, as I look forward to my consecration as Bishop of Stafford in January!

Disappointment and uncertainty mark our times and that's hard to live with. We make plans for a week or a month's time and then the number of cases rises, new government regulations are brought in and the threat of a new lockdown hovers threateningly over all our tentative arrangements. We think of all the weddings postponed, students isolated in their halls of residence, theatres closed, holidays cancelled, jobs lost, and we wonder if it is worth making any plans at all.

We have found ourselves astonished by the rapidity of our descent into uncertainty. We are so used to thinking we are in control and have mastery of the world around us that we feel particularly helpless in the face of a virus that is oblivious to our carefully laid plans.

So how do those new deacons and priests minister in such a world? How do all God's people bear witness to the hope of the gospel in such an uncertain time? What kind of church must we be when everything is so unpredictable?

Ancient institutions, like churches, can find it hard to sit light to 'the way we have always done things.' This solidity can be a good thing - we are not prone to being simply blown about by the latest fad or fashion or knocked off course by each new crisis. But it can lead to inflexibility. We may claim that 'here we have no abiding city' whilst in fact we are rather comfortable and settled with how things are. But in a time when so much feels *provisional*, we will need to learn how to *improvise*. There are recent indications that the church can do this when it puts its mind to it. When our buildings were closed, we had to improvise and we found new ways to reach out to one another and our communities – by phone, online or by email.

Improvisation is not the same as starting from scratch. As a second-rate guitarist, I know how hard it is to improvise. First-rate jazz musicians need tremendous dedication and practice to improvise well. They need to be attuned to the great jazz tradition, sense the mood and direction of the music and be responsive to their fellow musicians. If we are to make beautiful music during a time of uncertainty and turbulence, we will need to drink deeply from the great tradition of Christian teaching, learning and wisdom and then, confident in that faith, respond nimbly and confidently to a world in flux.

We serve a God who is unchanging and whose love and goodness is unending, but we inhabit a world that is being buffeted by severe storms and we are not immune from those stormy blasts. Our response is not to hunker down in the hope that how we did it fifty years ago will serve us well now.

Instead, secure in the promise that underneath are the everlasting arms, we strain to hear the new song that the creative Spirit of God is singing. Then we pick up our instruments or open our lips and sing and play along. We may not be always in tune and sometimes we will miss the beat but, if we are open to the music of the Spirit, it will be a glorious noise.

Ven Matthew Parker
Archdeacon of Stoke-upon-Trent



Belfry Bat

For the last week I have been making two hedgehog houses. We have volunteered our garden as a release site for hedgehogs from the local rescue centre, and because they have been accustomed to living in a hutch at the centre, they need something similar when first released. Our garden and orchard are considered to be an ideal release site, and we have been promised a male and female. I was told I would have to name them – Mr and Mrs Tiggywinkle!

The hedgehog houses were completed on August 14th but on the following day we were told that there were no hedgehogs ready for release. There was no service at St John's on August 16th, so we did our customary ringing in the garage.

On August 18th our friends Paul and Ruth Jopp visited us to ring hand-bells. We rang a quarter peal to mark the sixtieth anniversary of my first peal. I would have preferred to ring a peal, but my hand-bell ringing is not up to that, and tower bells are not available at present. The tower bell ringing which is taking place has to be compliant with guidelines agreed by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, the Church of England and Public Health England. One tower has been closed down for ringing in a non-compliant way.

On August 21st I took Ro to the eye clinic for her first cataract operation, which was done very quickly – she was home again by 10.30 and there was almost instant improvement. On Sunday we rang for the service, three again, this time John Digan, Steve Mellor and me. On Wednesday I was asked if I could ring at Madeley on September 6th and fortnightly thereafter, which matches the Keele dates.

During the last week in August Steve Mellor and I volunteered to repair the roof of the garage in the churchyard, and on Thursday we inspected it to see what materials were needed. - three pieces of timber and three sheets of corrugated roofing, so the cost will be fairly modest. This was not an entirely altruistic offer, as it is where

we store the stays which we supply to belfries in the neighbourhood and further afield – the most recent order went to the Isle of Man.

There was no service at St John's on August 30th, so we rang in the garage. In the afternoon two hedgehogs were delivered. We will have to feed them for a while, but the hope is that they will start to forage for themselves and become less dependent, and also move out of the houses I made. On Wednesday there was some evidence that they are beginning to forage near the houses. Good news. In the afternoon Steve and I went to Travis Perkins and bought the materials for the garage roof repair. Total cost £75.

I rang for two services on Sunday August 6th. For their 9.30 service I joined two Madeley ringers for the first Sunday ringing there since well before lockdown, then after a short coffee break it was up to St John's, where I was joined by Amy Robson and Roland Wakefield. So far six members of our band have shared the three lots of Sunday ringing we have done.

On Monday Steve Mellor and I repaired the roof of the churchyard garage. I had predicted it would take half a day and I was exactly right – we finished at 12.30 just as Angela was taking her constitutional in the churchyard, so she was able to inspect and approve. We have a very good crop of crab apples this year, and on Wednesday I harvested about half of them, which Ro made into jelly.

At Madeley the curate and churchwardens have been chiming three bells for the Thursday service, but on September 10th no-one was available to do it, so I went with Catherine Gibson, one of our Whitmore Thursday band. We were careful to ring bells which are not being rung for the wedding on Saturday, as currently a 72-hour gap is required between different ringers.

Phil Gay





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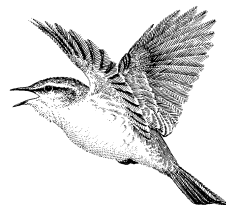
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On the Wing

October is changeover month. The last of our summer visitors leave, (although occasionally house martins may still be feeding young); and by the end of October our winter visitors are here. Look out for Redwing and Fieldfare feeding on yew berries in your churchyard. If you see several Mistle thrushes amongst them they may have arrived from northern Europe and Russia, adding to the numbers of resident thrushes found over the summer, some of whom in turn may have migrated south.

We think of Robins as a permanent feature of our gardens and churchyards, often believing we have got to know a particular individual. Actually, many winter Robins have migrated here from colder climes and the average life span of a Robin is only 9 months, so this is unlikely to be true.

Some birds are 'true migrants', swallow for example always travels to Africa regardless of weather. Other birds such as chiffchaffs and blackcaps will respond to the weather, going south ahead of cold spells. As a result of climate change, these less programmed migrants may stay with us all winter now.

Whilst migrating, birds need places to rest and feed and churchyards can be excellent for this, providing a refuge for the travellers. Many bird species are in trouble with populations declining steeply. Providing food and shelter for birds on the move and those wintering here can make all the difference. Bird boxes are used for sheltering as well as nesting, so why not erect a few. Dense ivy and hedges give shelter from the weather and berry-bearing shrubs provide a rich food source. Consider pruning hedges and shrubs late in the winter so that birds can feed on any berries present, also making the most of the shelter offered. Could you provide water in a simple bird bath? Try to view the churchyard from a bird's perspective, does it offer a warm welcome to hungry, tired birds? Think of it as a transport café or cosy pub for birds.

All the best

Harriet Carty,

Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor, harriet@cfiga.org.uk,

www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk - individuals and groups in the diocese receive 20% members discount on all CfGA materials. Use the discount code Lich19

Templar Window Restored

It was a delight to be able to welcome the restored and repaired Templar Window back to Keele after its nine month stay with the impressive Holywell Glass company of Wells who have not only recently repaired the medieval glass at Winchester cathedral but also that in the private chapel of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle. It was unfortunate that the Covid problem prevented the event being advertised or open to members of the congregation, but it is certainly good to see it back - beautifully cleaned and glowing bright as the day that it was created in the last decade of the thirteenth century. In particular the image of the Virgin's head really does stand out as its medieval makers intended as the most important feature in a window designed to commemorate the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, patron of the Templar Order. Here we have what is almost certainly the earliest use of silver stain anywhere in the country which can now be appreciated in its magnificent translucence.

Fortunately Elizabeth Taylor, who has made a record of the removal of the window last January, was also on hand on 15 and 16 September to record its restoration for all to be able to view in due course. Covid is making it very difficult to allow much access to date but the bishop of Lichfield was able to inspect it when he was here for morning worship three days later. He too was impressed and has said it will be possible for a service to welcome its return to Keele will be possible when full access to the church returns. A report on the restoration is being prepared by Holywell Glass and will be summarized for the magazine when it arrives.

Robin

We see the Creator's hand

*In the fading of the summer sun,
the shortening of days, cooling breeze,
swallows' flight and moonlight rays
WE SEE THE CREATOR'S HAND*

*In the browning of leaves once green,
morning mists, autumn chill,
fruit that falls frost's first kiss
WE SEE THE CREATOR'S HAND*



Greetings from Arizona

Dear all,

Whilst thinking about the prayer on the previous page, I was reminiscing about my visit to Trentham gardens in October 2018 and the beautiful colours of the trees glowing in the Autumn sunlight.

I felt quite nostalgic and a little envious of you all as you enjoy the present season and all it has to offer.

My envy didn't last long! Yesterday evening as we sat out on the front deck, we raised a glass to the rising Harvest Moon. It lit up the evening sky and very soon Jupiter and Saturn appeared, followed by a myriad of more stars and planets. I love the clear open skies here. This morning at (at around 5.25) we watched it as it set over the Huachuca mountains.

WE SEE THE CREATOR'S HAND

(How true!)

The trees around us – mainly Mesquites – are still green and in full leaf. The temperature during the day is still hitting 95F (35C) and above, though it is much cooler at night now. The number of hummingbirds buzzing around the feeders is dropping as some of them migrate to Mexico for the winter, while only a few stay here.

I do miss you all and hope and pray that things will return to normal in the not too distant future. We are both looking forward to the time we'll be able to get over to England. Meanwhile we're carrying on as normal. Filling the hummingbird feeders before sunrise, getting our morning walk in before it gets too hot and enjoying drinks and barbecues with our neighbours (socially distanced of course!).

With love, Diane

A Birthday Celebration

Eileen Cope celebrated her 91st birthday on September 23rd and would like to thank all her friends and family for adding to her joy on this special day.

Two of her grandsons, Benjamin and Harry, paid a surprise visit and they enjoyed a ‘scraped together’ lunch of frozen chips, birthday cake, chocolate and Coca Cola!

Several friends from church visited, including Catherine and Freddy, Angela, and Rick and Ruth as well as other friends and neighbours – all leaving birthday gifts. Eileen said “The house looked like a flower shop!” She also received five jigsaw puzzles which she enjoys doing, and is still working on the first one, (Noah’s Ark).

Eileen was also very pleased to have received so many phone calls, including those from Elizabeth, Janet and Sue Hallam. Catherine and Freddy phone her every morning and that her daughter phones twice a day. They are always there for her and she feels cherished!

She is very thankful for her wonderful neighbours “I would starve to death if not for them!” said Eileen.

Eileen enjoyed another celebration on September 25th. Catherine and Freddy took her to The Old Swan at Madeley for lunch, where they celebrated Freddy’s birthday together.

On the subject of Covid Eileen said “I have nothing to complain about. I wouldn’t have chosen this current lifestyle but it is what it is and I just get on with it, thanking God for all that is good in my life.”

**‘Yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery, today is a gift –
that’s why it’s called the present!’**

From the Registers

Interment of Ashes

September 22nd Alice Mary (Molly) Casselton



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NB Articles for the magazine should be sent to the editor by the 12th of the preceding month.

