

*This has been a significant year for the parish and the planet. As the front cover and the first article below record, it was at last possible for Archbishop Bernard Longley to come to St Dunstan's and consecrate the new altar. Parishioners were also able to enjoy the first social gathering of our community since Covid-19 restrictions were put in place nearly two years ago. Meanwhile, in Glasgow, representatives of the nations were discussing measures to prevent the worst consequences of global warming. We have reports from there and also an account of local 'eco-activities' in our local secondary school. Global issues were also brought nearer to home this autumn by Little Amal's visit to Birmingham on her long journey from Syria. We are grateful to correspondents who supplied the articles and photographs on these and other matters that make up this issue of WINDOW. We wish all our readers the blessings of the season of Christ's coming into the world. May it be a time for families to share the joys of Christmas and to look forward with hope to the New Year.* **Editors**

## The Consecration of the Altar

On Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November, we welcomed the Archbishop to St Dunstan's for a very special occasion. He came to consecrate, or dedicate, our new altar – or to be a bit more precise, the Lord's altar, where his sacrifice is renewed day by day through the hands of his priest in the offering of Holy Mass. The ceremony was quite beautiful, filled with sign and symbol, and the elements within it reach long into the past.

As the faithful arrived for Mass, the altar was completely stripped – no candles or altar cloths or flowers – in some ways not unlike Good Friday! The altar lies bare as it awaits its consecration. After the Liturgy of the Word, the Archbishop divested himself of the chasuble and put on a gremial (similar to an apron) as he poured sacred chrism oil onto the altar as the choir sang: *'I will come to the altar of God, the God of my joy.'* Sacred Chrism is the same holy oil that we are signed with at Confirmation, and that a priest's hands are anointed with at his ordination. It is this consecrating oil that is poured into each of the five crosses that the stonemason has carefully

makes it holy, a worthy place for the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

When the anointing was completed, a large brasier was placed on the altar filled with hot charcoal and, as the archbishop poured onto it the blessed incense, the sanctuary was filled with the aroma and image of the mystery of God's presence as the Archbishop prayed: *'Lord, may our prayer ascend as incense in your sight. As this building is filled with fragrance so may your Church fill the world with the fragrance of Christ'*. Once the altar was consecrated it was adorned with the altar cloth, candles, crucifix and flowers.



carved into the surface of the altar with hammer and chisel. Each cross is a sacred reminder of the five wounds of Our Lord's passion. It was this anointing that set this sacred place apart and

Before any of the ceremonies described had taken place, however, there was a very ancient, important and poignant moment. For into a recess, carved into the top of the altar, the Archbishop placed the relic of a saint. This is a tradition that goes way back to the beginnings of the Church, when the first churches were built over the tombs and graves of the saints and martyrs – the heroes of the faith – who, in the darkest days of persecution, had kept the faith. Perhaps St Peter's in Rome is the most famous example, with its Papal Altar positioned exactly over the spot where St Peter was buried following his martyrdom. And this connection with the martyrs and saints speaks of that

bond of unity between the Church on earth and the Church triumphant in heaven – where, please God, we are heading.

I suppose relics have always been something that human beings have sought out. Beatles fans will pay a lot of money for a guitar that had been played by Paul McCartney, and football fans for an England shirt worn by David Beckham. This sort of thing seems to make people feel connected with history, connected with their heroes and heroines. But for us, the relics of saints aren't there just to make us feel connected with our history, but more powerfully as a sign of our connection to living souls – those people we call the saints, whose prayers we seek as we walk the same path they once trod.

The relic that was placed in the altar recess by the Archbishop, and sealed in place by the stone-



mason, was a relic of St John Henry Newman, whose portrait looks across at us. This relic is so appropriate for us here, because we can often see the saints as slightly unreal or very distant from us. But as a priest of the Oratory, he would have been a familiar sight, first among the slum streets of Digbeth where the first Oratory was (now St Anne's), as he went about his priestly duties on the Alcester Road, and then latterly around the Hagley Road in the Oratory's second home. He got to know Birmingham and its people well, and through his preaching and writings sought to show to them the loving and merciful face of Christ.

When someone once suggested to Cardinal Newman that he was a bit of a saint, he said, "I have nothing of the saint about me as everyone knows." Yet those who knew him, and the Church that formed him, knew differently!

God has created each one of us to be a saint. Someone who belongs to the Lord. As we remember with thanksgiving the consecration of the altar on that special day, and Sunday by Sunday we gather before it, let us ask the prayers of St John Henry Newman – Birmingham's Cardinal – that like him we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

St John Henry Newman, pray for us \_\_\_\_\_ *Fr Philip*

### **St Dunstan's and St Jude's Walsingham Pilgrimage Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> - Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

It was a pleasant September morning when forty-one parishioners left Kings Heath bound for Norfolk. For many of us, it was our first trip away from home since the Pandemic. We were met by Fr Philip, who led us in prayer in the beautiful Slipper Chapel in Walsingham, the National Shrine of Our Lady, England's Nazareth. Our three-day pilgrimage had begun.

We stayed at Elmham House, the Shrine's own guesthouse, which is comfortable and welcoming. Friday evening ended with a Votive Mass of Our Lady of Walsingham. It is a long-standing tradition that on Saturday morning we follow in the footsteps of past pilgrims and process along the 'holy mile', carrying a statue of Our Lady of Walsingham whilst reciting the rosary. At the Shrine we joined in the Angelus and Holy Mass with fellow pilgrims who filled the Chapel of Reconciliation and Shrine grounds. Our itinerary provided many opportunities for prayer, worship and quiet reflection as well as fun and fellowship. We even managed a trip to the seaside and a visit to the local pub!

Walsingham is a special place and we give thanks for the grace of a happy pilgrimage and the fellowship we shared. It is a blessing to be able to set aside a time to be with Mary our mother.

Our Lady of Walsingham, pray for us.

The date for next year's pilgrimage to Walsingham is Friday 27<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May. If you are interested in joining us, contact Isabel O'Connell on 07758004306. \_\_\_\_\_ *Isabel O'Connell*



## ACTS 435

Acts 435 is inspired by verses in The Acts of The Apostles (2:43-47):

*"A sense of awe was everywhere, and many marvels and signs were brought about through the apostles. All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common: they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need of each required."*

Encapsulated as 'giving to anyone who has need'.

Acts 435 is a Christian online giving charity that directly connects those who want to give with those who are in need of their help, through a network of local churches and charities. It recognises that people want to give, often a little, sometimes more, to people with genuine need. It puts people who can give in touch with people who are in need, with the Church as the physical, face-to-face advocate. This network of over 600 partners enables online giving throughout the UK, which goes directly to individuals and families in poverty and facing hardship. Anyone can go onto the Acts 435 website, read a story of an individual need, and give towards their request for help. They also know that 100% of anything they give will go directly to their person in need as all administration costs are covered by applicable Gift Aid on donations.

In our parishes, the Acts 435 platform is accessible for individuals referred to the SVP (St Vincent de Paul society). An SVP member (currently Rachel Brown) is an Acts 435 Advocate. The advocate puts requests, anonymously but with the applicant's consent, on the internet portal. Five individuals have so far had requests fully funded for white goods, fuel debt relief and school uniforms. The SVP is able to offer further support to these individuals. Being able to supplement SVP activities with Acts 435 donations has eased the burden on limited funds.

"Acts 435 is a fantastic initiative. It is a very simple idea but a very exciting one! I am proud that the Church is taking practical steps to help those facing practical difficulties." (Right Rev. Dr. John Sentamu, former Anglican Archbishop of York).

### Facts and Figures

Acts 435 was launched in July 2010 and is fully ecumenical

By 2021, Acts 435 has helped over 32,000 people

Over £3,300,000 has gone directly to those indi-

viduals in need

Acts 435 operates in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland but is always looking for more churches to get involved and spread the network of Acts 435 Advocates, who can reach out to those in need.

If you know an individual in need, Acts 435 offers a welcome mechanism for providing financial help. Please refer them to the SVP. Please also consider whether you might be able to become a donor. It is possible to donate directly on the website or to sign up for notifications. You can filter requests that come to your inbox – my experience is that you are not inundated. Read real stories of individual need and know that your donation will go directly to that individual. More information is available here: <https://acts435.org.uk/give>

Rachel Brown

### The Piety Stall

We are pleased to announce that the piety stall in St Dunstan's Church, the legacy of our much missed Mary Masterson, is now open again. It is located in the front entrance by Kingsfield Road and is open every Sunday after 10.30 am and 12.00 noon masses. We have a good selection of items on sale, which include a variety of Mass cards, prayer books, children's books, rosaries, candles, medals, pictures and crucifixes. As well as stocking these everyday items, we cater for special occasions, such as baptisms, first communions, and confirmations; and Christmas items are currently on display. Please come and say 'Hello', and see what we have to offer. Suggestions or requests are welcome.



Sue Allen

### Advent Verses

Hark! a herald voice is calling,  
'Christ is nigh!' it seems to say;  
'Cast away the dreams of darkness,  
waken, children of the day!'



Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
come to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us;  
let us find our rest in thee.



O come, divine Messiah!  
The world in silence waits the day  
when hope will sing its triumph,  
and sadness flee away.



# “Partnership is our way of being a mission”

## The story of a COP26 prayer vigil

### The seed is sown

A great privilege of my work as the ‘Justice and Peace Education Worker’ for the Columbans in Britain is having direct (if virtual) contact with Columbans around the world. Facilitating conversations between young people and educators in this country and people living in areas most impacted by the climate crisis (in, for example, the Philippines) offers a powerful call to action, inviting schools and youth services into mission for the common good.

During the various Covid-19 lockdowns, the Columban International Youth Encounter grew, bringing together young adults from many countries around the world for prayer and discussion about social justice issues. Climate change was a ‘hot topic’. It was moving to share experiences with young adults in Taiwan, Pakistan, Peru ... one by one, people witnessed to the devastating effects of the climate crisis on their countries and called for change.

Given these experiences, COP26 being held in the UK presented an immediate challenge: what contribution could we make? The pandemic made pre-existing imbalances of power and voice worse. In discussion with friends and colleagues, the seeds of an idea were sown: might we take a group of young adults to Glasgow and find some way of bringing together voices and stories from around the world?

### Early moves

Early co-conspirators included members from the Social & Environmental Justice group from the London Jesuit Centre, the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach in the USA, and Justice and Peace Scotland. Through conversations, zoom calls and e-mails, a dream began to take shape – a group of young adults facilitating 24 hours of prayer and sharing climate stories from around the world, broadcast from the Jesuit parish in Glasgow. The stories would be sent to COP26 negotiators and the event would finish with the group processing out of the church to join a march

as part of the ‘Global Day of Action for Climate Justice’.

It all sounds so much easier when I write it down, now that it’s all over! What felt like a good idea grew and grew as the complications of Covid, technology and big dreams raised their heads. But, for the rest of this article, journey with us and see how for every challenge, a combination of partnership, collaboration and divine providence offered a solution, even into the live broadcast itself...

### Meeting the challenges

One by one, a series of difficulties were overcome.

- ♦ *We need a team to make this happen* – God provides generously in the form of Columban friends and family from Pax Christi, the Diocese of Southwark, the Assumption Sisters, Columban Faith in Action Volunteers past and present.
- ♦ *We have no idea how to do this technologically* – Juan Carlos from the Columban’s Hispanic Ministry team is an expert and provides training and other helpers make websites, google forms, bring the advocacy aspect to fruition, and actually get to grips with the software
- ♦ *We’re losing faith in our ability to do this* – Jane of the **Laudato Si’ Movement** reminds us that prayer is the crucial part.
- ♦ *When we need prayers and stories from around the world* – they trickle then pour in from the Don Bosco Green Alliance, Pax Christi, Eco Jesuit, Faithful Companions of Jesus, and the Glasgow Catholic Workers, from schools, communities, and so many more.
- ♦ *A cold church with no wifi* – so we move into the wonderful, warm Ignatian Spirituality Centre.
- ♦ *We need a live evening prayer from the church* – no problem thanks to CAFOD.
- ♦ *Our guitarist won’t be in Glasgow in time* – step in James from St Aloysius School, Jo from Independent Catholic News and Ellen from Columban JPIC.
- ♦ *The video we’re trying to play isn’t working* – not to worry, get Bishop Nolan on screen reading a pastoral letter from the Bishops’ Conference of Scotland.

- ♦ *We don't know how to live broadcast a mass or record from the church – problem solved by the good people of Sancta Familia and Being Catholic.*

### **The results**

And did anyone join us in prayer and send in climate stories? Yes, around 2,000 views – including groups such as schools and religious communities around the world – and 60 stories were collated and sent to negotiators, with the 'views' on the youtube channel continuing to increase.

And finally, the disappointing results of COP26 are lifted with hope through the beauty of the climate movement, the 'other' COP. People of all ages listening and learning from one another, hearing stories from the margins, sharing joy, sadness, anger, growing in commitment and conviction, then taking action and making change. Our prayer vigil is and was a part of this, with so many individuals and organisations (including many not mentioned) working together in partnership to put faith into action!

*James Trewby*



Members of the prayer vigil

### **Another View from Glasgow**

As people of faith, we cannot afford to lose hope over the outcome of COP26 and what we are already doing to damage the planet and ruin our children's future. However, I would like to strike a pessimistic note first of all because 'people of faith' frequently are not even aware of what is going on around them. An example of this was a Sunday mass I attended in Glasgow right in the middle of COP26, which did not even mention the climate or the international gathering right on their doorstep.

From such a low point, it was heartening to see so many people and activities around Glasgow which reflected the importance of the discussion and people's concern for dealing with climate change. Many Catholics and Christians were involved in the proceedings and certainly the pressure is on to change our government's actions as well as their words. But we have to have an informed electorate, which accepts that they too must change their own lifestyle and not just other people's. I don't think it helps to talk of 'sacrifice', but a simpler lifestyle with less consumerism would enable everyone to be happier – and in the case of many Pacific islands to survive past 2050. More than a move from petrol or diesel to electric cars is needed to solve the problem of climate change. We must put a stop to the endless pursuit of economic growth, which drives the increased consumption that is ruining the environment.

Glasgow helped to reveal our foolish priorities! Now, we must increase our efforts to change them.

*David Somerville*

## **Preparation for the Permanent Diaconate**

### **The Four strands**

There are four strands to the preparation I have been undertaking, which are used to form and assess those hoping to be ordained, both to the permanent diaconate and to the priesthood.

#### **Spiritual Formation**

Spiritual formation is about our devotion to the Lord. Are we developing a relationship with Christ in prayer that will provide solace in adversity, comfort in sadness, and wisdom in ministry? Do we have a love for Holy Mass and the Divine Office? Do we assist at Holy Mass with reverence and devotion?

These would be questions that could be asked of anyone, cleric or lay; and rightly so. No one who has ever lived, save perhaps our Holy Mother, has had a perfect relationship with God while on earth. We are all called to an ever-deepening love of the Lord; spiritual formation is the development of that.

One thing which springs to mind in my recent spiritual formation is that, for the past eighteen months, a group who are preparing for the diaconate have met online twice a day to pray part of the Divine Office together. This has been a truly fruitful endeavour; it provided a real sense of cohesion and fellowship through the lengthy lockdowns, and even spurred two of us to write a short book together!

#### **Pastoral Formation**

The word pastoral comes from a Latin root concerning shepherds; and while the bishops are the ultimate shepherds of God's people, priests and deacons share in this ministry. Pastoral formation is preparation for the care that, as deacons, we must have for those to whom we minister.

There is not a set list of criteria for pastoral formation, but we are asked to experience as many different types of pastoral ministry as we can. Some of the most humbling moments of my formation would come under this strand; in particular working as a chaplain at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I have been stopped in corridors by people of different faiths and none, who simply needed someone to talk to about what they, or their close friends and relations, were going through. The Lord puts us in the right place at the right time.

During Advent I am on a placement to Our Lady's, Rednal, and St John Fisher, West Heath. Among other things, an appreciation of how parishes in different places and with different demographics (and dare I say, different priests) provide pastoral care is what I hope to gain from this placement.

### **Academic Formation**

Academic Formation is perhaps the most obvious of the strands. It consists of lectures on every possible aspect of the faith, for which we then write and submit assignments. Each year of formation has a particular theme: the first year is the history and origins of the Church; the second is largely concerned with Sacred Scripture; the third covers the Sacraments; and the fourth the Church's role in the world today.

Some potential deacons are hesitant about the academic strand, but it is of great importance. If we are to share in our bishop's ministry of teaching the faith, then we must know our faith. For my part, I have found the academic strand fascinating; I have read into things which I knew of, but not about, and they are now among my greatest interests. As a particular example, I was not a regular reader of Sacred Scripture, beyond those passages that are given to us at Holy Mass and in the Divine Office; now I regularly read around a passage and look to commentaries to provide context to what I have read or heard.

### **Human Formation**

This is the hardest strand to define. It can best be described as how we develop as people through our formation, and is heavily influenced by the other three. The past two years of lockdown have made many of us reflect on what is really important in life; this type of reflection is human formation. As an example in the context of ministry, this certainly involves developing our empathy for those who have gone, or are going through, things which we ourselves will, please God, never experience first-hand.

A recent example that comes to mind took place at a Blessing of Graves service. I prayed with a woman at her child's grave. The child had died whilst very young, over fifty years before; yet she comes regularly to that grave, and rightly asks for it to be blessed every year. It is impossible not to be touched by such faith and dedication, and encounters like this leave an indelible mark. That is human formation.

### **A Ministry of Service**

As a minister of service, the deacon supports our bishops and priests, and shares these four strands of formation with them. We must be clear, however, that a hundred deacons can never take the place of the consecrated hands of a priest. So please pray that the Lord will grant vocations to the priesthood, holy bishops to guide his Church, and also the deacons needed to serve them.

*Martin O'Casey*

## St Alban's 'Friendship Week' 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> November

Staff and pupils at St Alban's Catholic Primary School celebrate 'Friendship Week' every year to highlight the importance of being kind and compassionate to one another so they can be true disciples of Christ. By doing this, we are living out our mission statement of **'following in the footsteps of Jesus.'**

The theme for this year was "One Kind Word", which followed on from World Kindness Day. The school's Anti-Bullying Ambassadors launched the week by delivering an assembly to their peers to promote positivity and support for one another. The children encouraged each other to instil the values of loving their neighbours, according to the teachings of the Gospels.

**'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Mat 22:39)**

Kindness is more important today than it has ever been. The isolation of the last year has underlined how little acts of consideration can break down barriers and brighten the lives of the people around us.

St Alban's embrace the Gospel virtues by encouraging the children to love one another and be ready to forgive each other when they are unkind.

*Louise Donnellan*

*Acting Headteacher*

## Deacon Steven Fleming

Deacon Steven Fleming has come a long way since he was an altar server in St Anne's Church, Streetly. He was born in Sutton Coldfield and worked during a gap year from college as a youth leader at Alton Castle, the youth retreat centre in Staffordshire. Later, he worked as a missionary with the Divine Love Community in Hungary and Romania and spent time with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in the Bronx and Harlem in New York. He then took a Pontifical Degree in Ireland and is now in the final year of his formation at St Mary's, Oscott, having been ordained to the transitional diaconate this year. We are fortunate that he is spending a parish placement with us before his ordination as a priest next summer. We hope that his time at St Dunstan's will be enjoyable and profitable.



*Editors*

## A Double Celebration

The reception in the former Community Centre on 6<sup>th</sup> November was a red letter event in more than one respect. We gathered not only to celebrate the long-awaited consecration of the new altar by the Archbishop but also to mark another postponed mile-stone: the twenty-fifth anniversary of Father Philip's ordination. It was also the first time since the pandemic struck that the parish community was able to gather socially in large numbers. And with a good supply of food and drink, we certainly made the most of it. The feast included a cake that



[Parish members enjoying the social occasion]

had been baked for Fr Philip's jubilee, which the Archbishop helped him to cut, before handing him a carefully considered anniversary gift.



Another highlight of the afternoon was a moving performance of 'Ad multos annos' by an ad hoc clerical choir to celebrate Father Philip's 25 years as



a priest. It is no exaggeration to say that 'a good time was had by all'. *Editors*

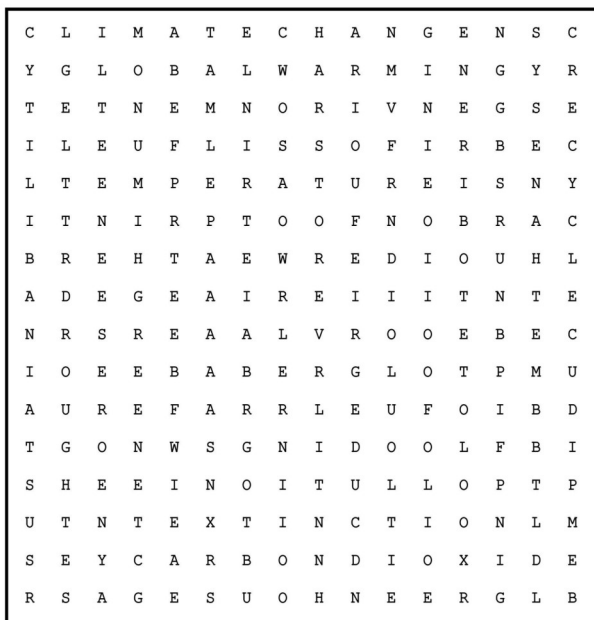


# Youth Page

## COP26

In September, nations gathered in Glasgow to discuss climate change and how we can combat it. Here is a word search related to COP26....

CLIMATECHANGE	CARBONFOOTPRINT	FOSSILFUEL	EXTINCTION
TEMPERATURE	POLLUTION	SUSTAINABILITY	RENEWABLEENERGY
FLOODING	GLOBALWARMING	WEATHER	METHANE
CARBONDIOXIDE	GREEN	BIOFUEL	BIODIVERSITY
DROUGHT	GREENHOUSEGAS	ENVIRONMENT	RECYCLE



## All Saints Day

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, the Parish organised a celebration for All Saints Day.

The children were tasked with dressing up as their favourite saints. They all looked brilliant!!

There were many fun activities and craft to do including: handmade bird feeders, decorating fairy cakes, saint bingo and guess the saint.

Lots of chocolate and sweets were enjoyed by both the children and the adults.



## Little Lambs

After nearly 18 months of not being able to meet, Little Lambs is back in full swing. Meeting every Friday during term time, it is an opportunity for pre-school children to play together, while their parents, grandparents and carers catch up over tea and coffee. The group has blossomed with a mixture of new and old little Lambs and the occasional visit from older Lambs who popped in recently and enjoyed leading activities with younger children. We have recently had some lovely pre-loved toys donated by parishioners, which have brought lots of excitement and joy to the group.

If you are free on a Friday morning, you are more than welcome to come and join a growing friendly group.





# Welcoming Little Amal

As I have been writing this article during November, news of people crossing the sea from France to claim asylum in the UK has been developing. Asylum seekers have been under attack for putting the RNLI lifeboats under pressure. The Conservative government has put a Nationalities and Borders Bill before Parliament that would give Border Force personnel immunity if their actions lead to the deaths of people they were seeking to prevent landing on the English coast. Now twenty-seven refugees have died trying to make the crossing. They are not being treated as people, but as political footballs. As things.

Terry Pratchett, author of the popular Discworld novels, understood what is going wrong. He made his character Granny Weatherwax explain, 'Evil begins when you begin to treat people as things'. Or from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 'Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something but someone' (paragraph 357).

In 2015, a group motivated by this conviction travelled from England to the camp near Calais to talk to the refugees there, not as journalists covering a news story but as people meeting people. They allowed the refugees to tell their story on their own terms. Their conversations gave birth to the Good Chance Theatre Company and a play entitled 'The Jungle' set in an Afghan-run café in the camp. One of the characters was little Amal, an unaccompanied child refugee. Amal means hope.

The creators of the play began to plan another project. To take her place in it, Little Amal would have her stature increased. She was raised up as a 3.5 metre high puppet, who would walk the route taken by a refugee from the Syrian border in Turkey through Europe to the UK. The puppet was created by the Handspring Puppet Company of South Africa which produced the puppetry for the War Horse stage show. The size of Little Amal means that she cannot be hidden, she cannot be ignored, she cannot be lost in the crowds she meets. She interacts with them as their equal. On her journey, she stopped at the Vatican and shook hands with Pope Francis.

The organisers asked each city that Little Amal was to visit how they would like to welcome her. In Birmingham, the place of welcome was chosen as Erdington and a welcome was envisaged that included the wide range of people who have come to the city to make it their home. In Erdington, these include Irish people, Catholic priests fleeing Germany in the late 19th century who founded Erdington Abbey, Poles making their home during and after the second world war, people from the British Commonwealth and Eastern Europe, and today people arriving from the Middle East.

On Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October, people from all over Birmingham came to Erdington High Street to welcome Little Amal to the sounds of music representing many of the different peoples of our city. Erdington MP Jack Dromey and local councillor Robert Alden were among them.



When a large crowd had assembled, Little Amal walked slowly up the High Street to meet it, stopping frequently to greet people. She then turned round and was accompanied by musicians and banner wavers in procession to the Central Square shopping centre, where she met members of the local Syrian community. Local school children read her their poems and more music was played in her honour. The event ended with a Syrian woman playing songs with others from the community joining in.

Little Amal continued her walk north to Sheffield and to the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.

*Bernard Davis*

## SVP Update

A bit of history. If you're familiar with *Les Misérables* – the book, musical or film – you'll recall that most of the action takes place in France in 1832, when a group of students, outraged by the awful conditions of poor people at the time, tried to start a revolution. Which ended badly with most of the students being shot or arrested by the authorities. The following year, though, another student by the name of Frederic Ozanam and a small group of friends were similarly outraged by the situation of poor people. Rather than violent revolution, however, they decided to bring the love of Christ to them by providing practical help and support. And that's how the SVP was born.

Just like Blessed Frederic almost 200 years ago, we still gather as small groups of friends providing whatever help and support we can to people who are finding things tough. Worldwide we are now 800,000 members strong!

Here, in St Dunstan's and St Jude's parish, SVP help and support has recently included:

Providing various necessities to women and children who have sought shelter from abusive relationships in the women's refuge in Moseley;

Offering "Funday and Lunch" sessions to parents and children in Druids Heath through our friends at Manningford Hall;

Providing items like cookers, fridges and washing machines to people moving from furnished to unfurnished accommodation – either from our own funds or via the Acts

435 website – see Rachel Brown's article about this elsewhere in "Window";

Helping struggling families purchase school uniforms for their children;

Helping people pay their gas or electric bills where, for various reasons, they cannot afford to do so;

Providing food parcels to families whose Universal Credit hasn't lasted the month;

Visiting older people who feel isolated in care homes or their own homes

And with Christmas almost upon us we'll be delivering "Christmas Dinner in a Bag" to families referred by our schools, families referred by Manningford Hall and the families who are already on our own list. Last year we provided 130 of these hampers. We expect to do something similar this year.

By the time you read this, we'll have held our Christmas Appeal. I'm confident that you'll have been as generous to us as you always are. But ... if you missed it or came out without your purse or wallet ... feel free to donate through bank transfer into our account. **SVP SS Dunstan & Jude Sort code 60-60-04. Account 46082956.**

Your prayers for us and our work, and for the canonization of Blessed Frederic, who showed us the way, are very welcome.

With thanks, as ever.

*Andy Gudge*

*SVP Conference President*

[Stop Press: the Christmas Appeal raised nearly £3,000.]

### Cakes Galore Make Plenty of Dough

As usual, the parishioners of St Dunstan's and St Jude's came in droves to support the Macmillan Coffee Morning held in the Conference Room on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October, sandwiched (or jammed!) between the 10:30am and 12 o'clock masses.

Since we hadn't been able to hold a fund-raiser of this sort for two years, the enthusiastic response to our appeal was even more heart-warming. It was lovely to see people mingling, chatting, munching and sipping – and absolutely over-whelming when it came to counting the money! The wonderful folk of King's Heath, Maypole, Billesley and Moseley rallied round to raise an astonishing sum of £639.06!

A huge Thank You to everyone who came, ate and drank, and even helped to wash up. See you all next year!

*Karen Tehan and Kathleen O'Gara*



## Rising from the Ashes

### How the Prayer Garden at St Dunstan's School came into being

It's hard to imagine how, when she first discovered the piece of neglected ground at the back of St. Dunstan's School, Miss Swapp thought, "Prayer garden!", but think it she did. Mr. Tehan picked up his hoe, and with a "Weed on!" the seeds were sown for a Ground Force project.

There was a weedy and overgrown raised bed, (and I was more than a little surprised, on randomly plucking at a weed to find a small collection of potatoes at the root!); a very unappetising and mossy pond; and a daunting mixture of broken concrete and paving slabs.



And so we set to: former pupil, Ronan O'Gara, steered his father's digger to clear the broken stonework (thank you Aidan for the equipment and manpower!). Mr. Wallace cleared and drained the pond (did Mrs. Wallace hose him down before allowing him back into the house?), weeded the raised bed and then jet-washed the supporting sleepers. Another former student, Aedan Tehan,

hauled and distributed top-soil.



Finally, I had the easy and pleasant task of ordering various items and buying plants. In just over a week, the garden was transformed and (watched over by St. Francis) life was breathed into it.



Even more rewarding, the Prayer Garden is being used! \_\_\_\_\_ *Karen Tehan*

#### **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: 18 to 25 January 2022**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity aims to unify Christian Churches throughout the world, to fulfil the desire of Jesus that the world may be one, "*as I am one with the Father*" (John 17:21). Each year a group of churches from one part of our world provides the resources for the Week of Prayer. In 2022, they have been provided by the churches of the Middle East. "*The Christians of the Middle East offer these resources conscious that the world shares many of the travails and much of the difficulties that it experiences, and yearns for a light to lead the way to the Saviour who is the light that overcomes darkness.*" This year's theme is inspired by the story of the Magi and their visit to the Holy Family in Bethlehem. May we show the same devotion and perseverance in our mission to seek Christian unity. More information and daily prayer resources are available to download from the Churches Together website: <https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2022/>

#### **World Day of Prayer 22 March 2022 "I Know the Plans I have for You"**

World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical organisation that enables women, all over the world, to share their ideas and concerns. A special theme is developed by a different country each year, and 2022 has been prepared by diverse women from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The text from Jeremiah – "*I know the plans I have for you*" – is used to reflect on some of the issues facing us today: poverty, domestic abuse, disability, finding hope in difficult situations and encouragement in the help we can give to each other.

Resources for all ages and details of the services that will be held are available on the World Day of Prayer website: [2022 Theme and Country EWNl - World Day Of Prayer \(wdp.org.uk\)](https://wdp.org.uk/)

*Deacon David*



## "A Night to Remember" (BC Arts Hub)

To commemorate Remembrance Day, Bishop Challoner Arts Hub decided to build on the success of the previous six years of 'Remembrance' installations by creating 'an evening of celebration and commemoration of memory'. The vision was to create a celebratory Arts event that explores, celebrates and commemorates memory in all of its forms – a journey of what it means to remember told through a promenade theatre-style trail, experiencing art installations, live musical, dramatic and spoken word performances from some of our most creative students and local artists. This type of event is a huge risk due to the element of freedom it requires but it was an absolute success.

The school entrance was the beginning of the trail with a sculptural installation created by Art and Design Technology in the school grounds. The large soldier silhouettes represent those lost in WW1 who lived on Institute Road; each of the small soldiers in the ground represents a fallen WW1 Soldier from the local area. The large scale wall-hung poppy includes a staggering 800 poppies, handmade by members of staff and students using acrylic. This is a key showcase piece which takes centre stage year on year on the façade of our Sports Hall. The central button incorporates the John McCrae poem, 'In Flanders Field', which is laser engraved in the centre, with the names of the fallen war heroes from Kings Heath and Moseley engraved around the edge of the circle.



Our large poppy sculptures represent remembrance of different lives lost during wartime, including people of colour (black poppy), conscientious objectors (white poppy), and animals (purple poppy). Red poppies are a symbol of remembrance across the world. This was supported by a powerful video projection of musical and dramatic performances by BC students and St Dunstan's pupils, projected onto the Sports Hall façade adjacent to

the large scale poppy. This insightful installation is always met with interest and admiration from the wider school community, as members of the public pass by and take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices made, and still being made, towards a better future.

The marquee, situated in the front playground, housed an installation created by Textiles and Product Design, exploring how ordinary objects and clothing can hold memories and stories of our lives. Each item of clothing featured information about their owner, as well as other possessions. Small hand-formed card houses cast shadows of Scripture across the space, symbolising God's vision of reflection. A musical projection created for the centenary in 2018 showed students performing pieces with their chosen instrument. Artist and alumna Carmela Hodgson also exhibited work as part of her collaborative 'Round Lemon' surrounding memory.



Musical performances by past student and Tuba player Morgan Hart, who performed *The Last Post*, could be heard across Institute Road. Pianist and Year 13 student, Seth Garrett, played a medley of pieces in the quad area to welcome guests inside where singers from Bishop Challoner's impressive musical community performed live in the Auditorium. This included songs from wartime, as well as the musicals.

The foyer housed a mixed media sculpture, created by the Art department. Working with students' mixed media studies of poppies, birds and maps, this draped fabric was also printed and embellished by hand and acts as a quiet and still entity that takes inspiration from the artwork '*Weeping Window*'.

The Art installation continued into the atrium, where the latest Art piece, which includes posses-

sions and photographs of lost loved ones of our School Community was installed. The delicate Perspex boxes float across the wall containing personal objects and treasures of loved ones. Each tag, gives an insight into the person these objects belonged to and reflects on what our legacy may be. The large scale artworks, created by our A level Art students, explore memory and family relationships. Displays and photo albums created by the History department focus on Birmingham through time, as well as those whose lives have been affected by war, with each album focusing on the symbolism of the red, purple, white and black poppies.

Students across Years 7, 8 and 9 have dedicated hours of time, working hard to devise a piece of theatre inspired by *War Horse*, working with movement, voice and character development. They performed a short scene that students felt depicted some of the most challenging moments of the soldiers' lives. This was such a powerful performance that members of the audience commented on the talent of our pupils.



Following on from the dramatic performance in the dance studio, was a series of spoken word performances by Key Stage 3 pupils involving memories. This was supported by performances in our final space, the library, by celebrated spoken word poet Leah Atherton, who closes the trail. As they read from their books, you had a glimpse into their intimate and dynamic performance styles. Year 11 poet AJ Finch-McNeil also debuted her devised works. This was an exciting opportunity to hear and see from a future BC poetry star!

The Arts have always found opportunity to celebrate, reflect and evoke feelings, spark ideas and tell stories. At Bishop Challoner, we pride ourselves in championing the Arts through innovative and exciting exhibitions, shows and events. This is an exciting start to one of the many Arts Hub experiences and events to be shared with the community.

Jo Baptiste

## Eco News from Bishop Challoner

A new Eco group from all Years 7 – 10 has been set up to help maintain and improve green areas on the school site. It will carry out jobs such as weeding and clearing of the vegetable plot, the Sixth Form area and the Peace Garden, and some low level pruning of established plants. The Chaplaincy team are supporting the group as part of their pledge to be good stewards of the earth in response to Pope Francis' invitation in *Laudato Si'* to "work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us".

The Eco group will also work in the wider community. One of the first jobs is working with an organisation called 'Birmingham Trees for Life', a charity that has been established for fifteen years and has already planted 95,000 trees in Birmingham's parks and open green spaces. Tree-planting events are good for physical and emotional wellbeing and will allow students to improve their local environment, empower themselves, and nurture civic pride. Birmingham Trees for Life are working towards planting their 100,000th tree in Birmingham this season and we will be part of this wonderful milestone.



Through the Woodland Trust, Bishop Challoner has registered for the Green Tree Schools Award, which encourages outdoor learning and inspires students about trees, woodlands and wildlife. Students can earn certificates and a special plaque to display in school. They will be rewarded for doing environmental projects, such as tree planting, recycling or thinking of ways of conserving energy and implementing them. Through the Trust, we have applied for tree packs, so that we can contribute towards two nationwide projects: 'The Queen's Green Canopy', which will mark the Platinum Jubilee of Elizabeth II, and 'The Big Climate Fightback', an initiative to get fifty million trees planted in the UK to help combat the climate crisis.





# Youth Sunday

The 21<sup>st</sup> of November was International Youth Sunday. Some of the youth in the parish volunteered to take part in the mass and read with confidence. We all met after mass for pizza and craft activities.



*One of the young volunteers from Kenelm Youth Trust came to St Dunstan's and spoke about the important work they do:-*

My name is Grace and this year I am part of the volunteer mission team at Alton Castle and Soli house. The team consists of young adults like me, who have volunteered for a year to help young people explore and strengthen their faith through fun activities like climbing, survival challenges and team building.

The trust is made up of four branches: Alton Castle Retreat Centre, Soli House, BCYS and Kenelm Chaplaincy Partners. Alton Castle is a retreat centre for children in Years 5 to 8, Soli House is for teenagers in Year 9 and upwards, BCYS supports youth groups and organises pilgrimages for young adults and Kenelm Chaplaincy Partners train staff to help faith within secondary schools flourish.

The Kenelm Youth Trust has had a huge impact on my life. When I was in Year 10, I visited Soli House for the first time. The team were dedicated to helping me expand my faith and made me realise what I wanted to do with my life, helping young people develop their connection with God.

At my old secondary school, I was encouraged by the Lay Chaplains to get involved in various charitable activities like the Shoebox Appeal, St Chad's Sanctuary and local food banks. Through these activities, I was able to develop my faith through meeting other likeminded people and discussing important topics with them.

Thanks to the Parish and Archdiocese's belief in young people, I have been able to take part in many youth groups. These youth groups have allowed me to investigate my faith and find my love of praise and worship music.

Last Sunday was World Youth Sunday, an international day for young people. Pope Francis believes that the youth are the future and present of the Church. So, the work of KYT is especially important in nurturing the faith of the young people in our diocese.

If you want more information, you can visit Kenelm's website:

**[kenelmyouthtrust.org.uk](http://kenelmyouthtrust.org.uk)**





## Rethink the LTN

I suppose that most people in the parish are now familiar with the LTN (Low Traffic Neighbourhood) project which has been running for just over a year. Put simply, the Government allocated Councils money to introduce schemes which would encourage people to leave their cars at home and make short journeys on foot or by bicycle. This, so the theory went, would make neighbourhoods more pleasant, safer and less polluted and would keep the population healthier.

Kings Heath, Moseley and Bournville were selected as some of the suburbs where the scheme would be piloted. Birmingham City Council chose to spend some of their grant on cycle lanes but to spend most of it on what are called “modal filters” – a combination of large planters and steel barriers – on various “side roads” (Poplar, Colmore, Silver Street, Hazelhurst, and Abbots to name a few), which enable pedestrians and cyclists to use them as through routes but prevent motor vehicles from doing so.

But what sounded like a splendid and commendable idea turned out to be anything but. People still used their cars – because mostly, and for various reasons, they needed to – so all the traffic that would have cut through the side streets ended up on the neighbouring roads (Howard, Springfield, Vicarage and of course the High Street). This in turn meant that journeys take longer, cars are stationary for longer, thus causing more pollution; and businesses suffer as, increas-

ingly, people avoid Kings Heath in favour of shopping elsewhere.

Not only this. A rift has grown up in our community between at least some of those who now, thanks to the LTN, live on the closed-off and now tranquil side roads, and those of us who live on the roads which have inherited the surplus traffic. Further conflict has developed between those who are fanatically pro-cycle and anti-car and those who cannot, at the moment, see a workable alternative to using their car.

And coming soon will be Phase 2 of the LTN, which, among other things, will impact directly on people who go to St Dunstan’s Church by car. Under plans for this, Heathfield Road and Institute Road will become one way streets. This means that whenever you go to our car park, you will need to drive around the block, either coming or going.

I’m a member of the “Rethink the LTN” group encouraging people to have their say on this. We emphatically *do not* oppose the principle – that people should be encouraged to travel *without* using a car wherever possible. We just think that there are very many better ways of achieving this than imposing an unfair, ineffective and divisive scheme on the people of Kings Heath and Moseley. To learn more, go to [www.rethinkltn.org](http://www.rethinkltn.org) or find us on Facebook Kings Heath LTN (Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) concerns.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Andy Gudge

### My Prayer for Christmas and the New Year

Silent Night! All is Calm! with bright stars in the dark night sky. A woman on a donkey, guided by her husband over wild rough countryside on the way to a stable in Bethlehem, where a special child will be born. Today, we know them as the Holy Family. My prayer to them in this time of unrest is not only for families in our community, but for people world-wide living in authoritarian states, who cannot voice their opinions for fear of being put in prison. Also for unpaid carers, who all year round look after wives, husbands, children, adults with a learning disability or medical needs; and especially young carers. And then for the rights of people all over the world to food, education and medical help; and for the sick and lonely and those living on the streets. And that leaders of governments may work together for peace and tranquillity throughout the world. I pray that God will bless all parish families not only at Christmas but in the years to come in this lovely world of ours and wish to thank all those who knew and supported my brother Hugh (may he rest in peace). \_\_\_\_\_

Kate Edwards

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peace and  
joy of  
Christmas  
to all our  
readers!

