



# KNIGHTON



## Benefice Magazine

### Spring comes to Knighton



After a very wet January and February, the arrival of Spring during March has been very welcome. In the absence of any 'hold the front page' news story, I hope this magnificent magnolia, which I pass on my way to St Mary's, will be as cheering for readers as it is for me.

*Editor*



*Also in this issue:*

Vicar's Letter

Science and belief

Minster communities

A Garrison church in Singapore

Doreen White, a Eulogy

Christmas Tree Festival, thanks from Wishes4Kids

In 2023 St Mary's Social Committee raised £2,200 profit from Coffee Mornings and social events, celebrated with the presentation of a very large cheque. During the year the Committee purchased a stainless-steel trolley for the Coffee Machine.

We thank everyone for their support, making these events enjoyable. *Beryl Bonfield*

## Vicar's Letter



Dear friends

Addressing Congress in 1962, about a year after the United States emerged from a recession, President John F. Kennedy said: *“Pleasant as it may be to bask in the warmth of recovery... the time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.”* He went on to outline the ‘fixes’ that would be needed in the next few years to prevent another economic slide.

What President Kennedy was recognising was the almost universal human preference for putting off anything that doesn’t seem strictly necessary to do today! It may have been another American, Mark Twain, who went further in his description of our inclinations by saying *“Never put off till tomorrow, what you can do the day after tomorrow.”*

I am at least as guilty as anyone else in this respect, but I’ve also been reflecting recently on the value of working on ourselves when times are

good, in preparation for the days that will surely come with problems and hardship. When life is going well, we have little inclination to add dark clouds to the sky, but it seems to me that this is just the right time to do the work that will really help us later in the storms of life.

When we face life’s real dark patches – when a loved one dies for instance, when we have a serious medical diagnosis, or when a relationship breaks down – we may feel alone, weak, powerless, even overcome and desperate. In such circumstances, a Christian faith that reminds us how God is always with us, even through *‘the valley of the shadow of death’*, can be a great strength and comfort... but how much *more* can it help us if we have taken the time to repair, build and expand our faith in the sunny days when all was well?

This nurturing and building of our faith is *work for today*, and if we simply put it off because we tell ourselves we haven’t time or motivation now, then we won’t experience the full *benefit in the future*.

Building our own faith doesn’t need a complicated plan – but we do need to *do something* ...we can’t just soak it in from the walls of the church!

Here are some simple ideas:

- read the stories of one or two well-known Christians who have travelled difficult life journeys –

*“The Hiding Place”* by Corrie Ten Boom is the account of a Concentration Camp survivor;

*“Joni”* is the life story of Joni Eareckson Tada, who became a quadriplegic after a diving accident at the age of just 17;

*“101 Stories of Hope and Faith”* by Robert Petterson, features well-known people from around the world

*“God Will Use This for Good - surviving the mess of life”* by Max Lucardo is a small book for anyone in need of hope.

- keep up with regular Bible reading and write out your favourite, encouraging Bible verses in a smart new notebook as you go along;
- collect a few CDs of hymns or Christian songs that you can play anytime and become familiar with the words.

One of my personal favourite hymns – well worth getting to know – is *“I will sing the wondrous story”* by Francis Rowley, and it includes these words, which are my prayer for all of us, in rain and shine:

*“I was lost, but Jesus found me,  
found the sheep that went astray,  
raised me up and gently led me  
back into the narrow way.  
Days of darkness still may meet me,  
sorrow's paths I oft may tread;  
but his presence still is with me,  
by his guiding hand I'm led.”*

Yours in friendship and Christ's service,  
*Adrian*

## **‘My Father’s House has many rooms’**

*Sian Howard resumes her consideration of science and faith, prompted by the work of Charles Coulson*

In John 14:2, Jesus gives comfort to the disciples Thomas and Phillip using the words which form the title of this article. The context is, of course, that he is explaining there is a prepared place for them in the Kingdom of Heaven. But Jesus always chooses his words carefully. What exactly did he mean by this phrase? Was he just saying there's a lot of room up there? I would like to explore this by being, I hope, rather controversial!

In the book by Charles Coulson which I referred to in my last magazine contribution, the author makes a most wonderful analogy<sup>1</sup> as part of his reconciliation of science and Christian belief. Prof. Coulson explains that he was once partly responsible for the design and creation of a new underground laboratory at King's College London. As part of this process, very complex plans were prepared by the architects which could be viewed as multiple 2-D sections. The sections looked remarkably different to each other; but ultimately they were all describing the same, 3-D room. He uses this to illustrate how apparently disparate views can, in fact, be perfectly consistent with one another since each is describing just a piece of the puzzle. He then applies this to God's creation: it is far too complex for us to completely comprehend it and

we fail most miserably if we choose to only take a narrow view of it. In fact, Revd Adrian made a similar argument in his sermon at the 09:00 Eucharist this morning – he pointed out that some ideas in the Bible can seem contradictory unless we accept, as a mature Christian, that ‘parallel truths’ are not only acceptable but are indeed to be expected when trying to describe such complex ideas.

Now let me explain why I think this idea is so important that I want to bore you with it! For some time, I must admit to being troubled by some things I read in the New Testament regarding ‘false religion’. For example, in 1 John 2:22 we are warned that false religion is synonymous with failing to recognise Jesus as the son of God. While this sounds very reasonable, especially to a Christian, if one takes this to its logical conclusion then we condemn all religion except Christianity as false. No doubt all Christian ‘hard-liners’ will say ‘yes, absolutely’. But how do we reconcile this with the multicultural, pluralist world we live in today? Most people in Leicester are not Christians. Are they all hopelessly misled? While a part of me still wants to think this is so, there is another part of me who has looked into the eyes of young Muslims walking to worship on the fast-breaking day of Eid-al-Fitr (to which I have also been invited). I have recognised the same joy that I experience in anticipation of a shared act of worship – looking forward to being in God’s presence. Hence, I feel that their God and my God are one and the same,

even though the Quran states that Jesus was a prophet and not the Son of God.

Perhaps many will think I am stretching the Coulson analogy too far here. As a devout Christian, perhaps Prof. Coulson himself would have thought so too. But I would like to suggest that Christianity, Islam and all the other religions are potentially correct, since religious doctrines are ultimately mans’ attempt to understand a God who is beyond understanding. However attached to them we may be, these doctrines will always be 2-D slices of the big 3-D picture. This doesn’t in any sense invalidate any of our Christian beliefs and we are right to cherish them. But perhaps recognising this gives us hope for a shared future on Earth. Perhaps God’s final test for us is to recognise the only thing we are all absolutely right about is the need to worship Him. Exactly how we do it doesn’t matter so much.

Was Jesus saying that there is room for all of us in Heaven, Christian, Jew and Muslim alike? Would a great Methodist scientific and religious thinker such as Prof. Coulson have agreed to extend his analogy this far? I would love to know what you think.

*Sian Howard*

<sup>1</sup> Science and Christian Belief, Coulson C. A.

## Minster Communities – the next step

Over the past eighteen months or so, a new framework for the mission and ministry of the Church of England in our diocese has been emerging, centred on the formation of new “Minster Communities”.

Each Minster Community is a group of local churches who commit to working together much more closely, to sharing clergy, staff and resources and to growing in understanding, appreciation and support of each other. Minster Communities offer the opportunity to maintain parish worship in the face of reducing budgets and congregations, but at the same time look outwards, particularly to young people, with new forms of outreach, service and discipleship.

The process towards forming Minster Communities in the City of Leicester and its suburbs is now beginning. Both St Mary’s and St Guthlac’s have been invited to join the series of meetings and discussions, perhaps taking up to 18 months, with other local churches (over 40!) with a view to the formation of 6-8 Minster Communities.

Each Church is asked to send two lay representatives, nominated by the PCC, to the meetings - but critically, *all decisions remain in the hands of the PCC itself*, and it is hoped that the whole congregation will keep informed and take part in parish conversations about the process. No church will be

forced to join a Minster Community if they don’t feel this is the right way ahead for them.

So, what happens now?

The PCC has met and agreed to our taking part in these discernment conversations and first discussions, and has begun to gather a ‘pool’ of representatives who can attend meetings and raise concerns and questions on our behalf, and then report back – this is an ideal role for anyone who is anxious about the process of forming Minster Communities or about our own future as a Church in the face of reducing clergy numbers. **Now is the time to be involved, rather than complaining once decisions have been made!** If you would like to attend a meeting on behalf of the PCC then do please let Adrian know as soon as possible.

The first Information Event is on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. We will then report back to the whole church on the pattern of meetings to come, and we will begin seeking everyone’s views on each step of the process – there will be plenty of opportunity for you to voice your opinions!

We will also make plenty of opportunities to pray about the future as well – this is a hugely significant step for every church in our diocese and we need to be certain that God is guiding us as we head into the future. Please do encourage the PCC and support all of us in your prayers.

*Revd Adrian*



## A garrison church in Singapore

A few years ago, when I visited Singapore on business, I wrote an article for the magazine about the Anglican cathedral there. Earlier this year Sue and I visited Singapore for a few days *en route* to New Zealand, and we stayed with my old university friend Bill. Bill sings in the choir of St George's Anglican church and we were fortunate to be able to attend a Sunday Eucharist service during our time there.



The church is located on a high point on Minden Road, in the popular Dempsey area, close to the shops and hotels of Orchard Road, and the iconic Botanic Gardens. It was built from 1910 to 1913 (making it a contemporary of our St Guthlac's) as the garrison church for troops stationed in the Tanglin Barracks, once the General Headquarters of the British Far East Land Forces.

Designed to accommodate up to 650, it is built of brick, used decoratively, in the basilica style, whose architecture is probably reflected in the design of

churches in garrisons both in the UK and in other former colonies. There is a wide rectangular nave, with a shallow



one bay chancel area of the same width. A distinctive feature particularly suited to the Singapore climate was the open unglazed windows and arcades. We were fortunate to be there on clear sunny morning. As a local historian of the church has said, "the bricks that you see are all that there is – carefully laid to hold together, to support the roof, to keep the rain out and the breeze coming through and to filter the sunlight so that it is bright but never too glaring, even in the bright light of midday here."

We went to the 8:00am Holy Communion service, which in all essential respects was indistinguishable from the sung eucharists in Knighton. Use was made of a large screen rather than a printed handout for the words of hymns and to support the message of the sermon. Precautions against covid were still evident; when inviting you to go up for communion, a sidesman sprayed your hands with sanitiser; and Communion wine was presented in small plastic cups along the altar rail, with a bin in the aisle for disposal.



Our service was to have been followed by what was described as "a more informal service with a mix of modern songs and hymns, suitable for families".

As the pictures probably do not fully indicate, there was a reasonably large congregation. St George's is one of 26 Anglican parishes in Singapore. Among the other Christian denominations, the Catholics are the most numerous and the Methodists the largest mainstream protestant community.

## **Doreen White**

**1937 - 2024**

*A Eulogy delivered by Revd Adrian Jones at Doreen's funeral, attended by over 140 family and friends on 5 March 2024 at St Mary's*

**D**oreen was the eldest of four children – siblings Raymond, Joyce and Dorothy – and was brought up just south of Kendal – grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all lived in the same Lake District village.

Village life in the 1930's and 40's centred around the church, and from earliest days Doreen was always very much involved. She attended the Sunday School, sang in the choir,

During the Japanese occupation of Singapore from 1942, the church was used by the occupying forces as an ammunition store. It is believed that before the invasion, the Garrison Chaplain removed the original stained-glass pieces from the three windows behind the altar for safekeeping. He did not survive the war and they were never recovered.

St George's was restored and rededicated after the war, continuing as a church for British forces even after Singapore became independent in 1963. It became a civilian church when British troops finally withdrew in 1971 and was classified as a national monument in 1978.

*Nigel Siesage*

belonged to the Youth Fellowship and became a Sunday School teacher when aged 16. She also sang in the village Choral Society and was a member of the Girls Friendly Society.

At 19 she left home to train as a teacher, at St Hild's College in Durham, qualifying in 1957 and taking a post in Bradford. Here she became part of the lively Cathedral congregation, and met people who became life-long friends. She also discovered the scenic Yorkshire Dales, where she went walking most Saturdays ... beautiful countryside, but, she would say, they never quite matched the Lakeland mountains!

After teaching for four years, the Bishop of Bradford – Donald Coggan,

later to become Archbishop of Canterbury – invited her to become the Diocesan Sunday School Advisor – the youngest in the country, and also taking on responsibility for church schools too.

When work took her to Chester for a while, she met Peter ... and they were married in 1963.

Following Peter's professional appointments in the world of church music, they lived first near Croydon, and then Northwood (Middlesex) and eventually Leicester in 1969, when Peter became Master of Music at the Cathedral. Here Andrew was born, joining his brother Nicholas, born two years earlier. For the next thirty-two years the family lived at Ventnor Road, here in Knighton.

Naturally, while the boys were small, the family worshipped at the Cathedral, with Doreen supporting the choristers and becoming branch secretary of the Mothers' Union. She also returned to work part-time as a teacher at Stoneygate Playschool and then Leicester High School for Girls, until she retired in 1997.

From the Cathedral, Doreen later became an important member here at St Mary Magdalen, preparing youngsters for Confirmation, leading worship with children from Menphys, beginning the celebrated Christmas Eve Crib Service, taking Communion to residential homes, arranging parish Quiet Days, hosting and leading House Groups, being a member of the PCC and Deanery Synod, and also being a

Church Warden. As leader of the team behind the fondly remembered 'Snip' .. SNYP – Sunday Night for Young People – in the 1980's, she took groups to the Frontier Camps ... at which she excelled at abseiling! (her own words!)

Family life though, was always the top priority for Doreen, with Nicolas and Andrew benefiting from a stable and supportive home in which to grow up. Amongst all the aspects of her commitment to the family, her comforting home cooked food stands out! It was so good that for Nicolas, the first day of *school* dinners was a psychological trauma – this was the only extended period in his life where he ate salad for lunch almost every day! Even Atlas the dog would patiently sit next to her in the kitchen hoping that some of her homemade lasagne would drop onto the floor!

Their home at Ventnor Road was always open house for the boys' friends, who held Doreen with deep respect ... so much so that, on one unfortunate Saturday afternoon, when Andrew and his friends were locked in cells in Charles Street police station, Andrew's friends were more concerned about '*what will Mrs White think?*' than whether the police were planning to charge them or not!

Both Doreen and Peter worked tirelessly, supported by their Christian faith, to ensure family life was not only comfortable but also very happy.

Doreen was always there to provide her own boys with guidance and encouragement, and yet always



respected the choices they made, and was there by their sides as they moved on down the different paths that life laid out for the two brothers.

Both at Ventnor Road and later Shanklin Gardens, Doreen was the one who directed the household – she was so very well organised, which complimented Peter's more creative personality. So well organised that she continued to put her weekly money into the petrol purse even after she stopped driving some years ago! The service today was also laid out by her in detailed instructions: perhaps she was worried that Andrew and Nicolas wouldn't do things properly – 'stupid boys' (again, her words!)

Doreen's heart always remained very attached to her homeland, the Lake District, and the family would travel back there during school holidays to be reunited. Andrew and Nicolas keep fond memories of school holidays spent at their grandparents' house in Burneside, where they were able to meet up with their cousins for many 'Swallows and Amazons' style adventures! They also picked up their Mum's passion for walking and the great outdoors. Alas, today (they say) they are both more '*Last of the Summer Wine*' than 'Swallows and Amazons'!

The spirit of adventure lived on, as Doreen's much-loved grandchildren grew up too ... Doreen bravely agreed to take to them all on holiday, with Sandra's help, to a caravan site in the South of England. The highlight of this particular holiday, for the

granddaughters, was hanging their Grandma's underwear out of the caravan window, without her knowing, which she discovered later that day much to her surprise!

She was always creative and never short of ideas to keep her granddaughters entertained, thanks to her many years of nursery school teaching. Those were still the days of simple pleasures: a trip to the zoo, sharing ice creams, playing on the beach and of course a ride on the Romney and Hythe railway. The grandchildren were her pride and joy, and she was always willing to drop everything to help out, particularly during school holidays when their parents had to be at work. The Easter Egg hunt in the garden was an annual favourite not to be missed!

A couple of years ago Doreen was diagnosed with a malignant growth in her abdomen that seemed to have gone undetected for some time. Shortly before going into hospital for surgery to have it removed, the family met up in Cambridgeshire for a pub lunch to celebrate her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. Whilst looking through the menu she asked if children's portions were available, worried that she might not be able to eat a full plate. But when it came to taking the plunge, she opted for the full Sunday roast and proceeded to finish the plate clean. Then followed the birthday cake – with a choice of two – Doreen opted for a piece of each!!

The surgery was successful and for the next few months she seemed to find a

new lease of life, although sadly this turned out to be rather too short lived. But even in the run up to last Christmas when she had become noticeably more frail, Sophie and Céline were able to drag her out to the Cradock for a hearty portion of fish and chips. The evening wouldn't have gone by without hearing her 'catchphrase' at least once – 'Is there any wonder I'm grey!'

Whilst Doreen clearly found her reduced independence in recent months frustrating, she was so pleased to have a lift to church and to see what was going on, and looked forward to catching up regularly with relatives in Devon and the Lake District via weekly phone calls, which she always started with '*Leicester calling!*'

Doreen left full notes about her life, for us to use today ...and she ends with these words:

*"God was always a real presence in my life .. being experienced in worship, bible reading, prayer and other people... but it was in the wide open spaces of the countryside that I was perhaps most aware of God's presence. Believing is often hard, but my Christian faith has sustained me, and given a point and a purpose to my life."*

As you all know, Doreen was fun to be with, warm and accepting, faithful and hard-working, and a reservoir of good sense and loving kindness to many. Her life was full, and with humour and joy she let it overflow to the rest of us. There aren't many like her ...

*From Journal of a Soul by Pope John XXIII. Chosen by Doreen to be read at her funeral*

Death is the future for everyone.

It is the Last Post of this life and the Reveille of the next.

Death is the end of our present life, it is the parting from loved ones; it is the setting out into the unknown.

We overcome death by accepting it as the will of a loving God, by finding Him in it.

Death, like birth, is only a transformation, another birth.

When we die we shall change our state, that is all.

And with faith in God, it is as easy and natural as going to sleep here and waking up there.

# *Coffee Morning*



*On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2024*

*From 10 - 12 noon*

*In St. Mary Magdalen Church*

*Stalls to include*

*Plants, Cakes, Books, Jigsaws,*

*Gifts and a Raffle*

*Just come along*

*Everyone Welcome*

# Christmas Tree Festival - Letter of Appreciation



Dear Revd Jones

I write, on behalf of the Wishes 4 Kids children's Charity, to thank you and the Knighton Christmas Tree Festival Team for the unbelievable donation of £2,650.00 which we received in our office on the 15th December 2023. This incredible amount of money was raised during your Christmas Tree Festival on the 2nd and 3rd of December 2023. An additional £25.86 was also collected in donations from the general public. We cannot thank you all enough for choosing to support our Charity and your kindness will enable us to grant the wishes of the following children:

An 8-year-old little boy who has a form of cancer. His greatest wish is to meet Winnie the Pooh. With your help we will be sending him and his family to Disneyland Paris for 3 magical days where he will have the opportunity to meet Winnie the Pooh and also any of the other Disney characters that he chooses. He will be given a very special lanyard to wear which means that him and his family will not have to queue for any rides or attractions or to meet the characters. The staff in the park will know that he is a very special guest and he will be treated like a VIP and they will make a huge fuss of him.

A 13-year-old girl who has suffered a physical trauma. Her wish was for a PlayStation 5. With your help we were able to buy a brand-new PlayStation 5 along with an extra controller and her 2 favourite games. We delivered this to her yesterday and she was so excited.

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for all of your kindness and support but the biggest thank you comes from the children whose wishes you have helped to come true.

Gary Lowe  
Charity Manager

4 January 2024

## From the Editor

The next edition of the Magazine will be issued in mid-May. The closing date for copy will be **Monday 29 April, but you can send your contributions at any time. Don't wait!** Please send your contributions, preferably in Word, to the usual address, stmaryknighton.magazine@gmail.com.

Articles do not represent the opinions of the Parochial Church Council of either church. Typographical and other errors (and the occasional omission) are the Editor's responsibility.

## Wit and wisdom ...

**T**he Editor is grateful to Bernard Stone for a number insightful and humorous quotations, which will feature in future editions of the Magazine.

In view of the consideration of Minster Communities discussed elsewhere, the following attributed to Gaius Petronius Arbiter, a member of the court of the Emperor Nero, was irresistible (though the attribution may well be spurious).

*We trained hard . . . but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization.*

And this, which is attributed to Murphy:

*Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.*

## AI and Church

**D**avid Stanyer has drawn my attention to an amusing leading article in The Times on the possible application of Artificial Intelligence - and particularly systems like ChatGPT - to the conduct of church business. I am hesitant to print it here for copyright reasons, but if you can find a back copy, it was published on 5 December last year. If you have access to the Times online, it can be read at <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-times-view-ai-vestry-churchgpt-62dv7g3p0>.

The article suggests that AI will not shortly be "coming to a church near you." But I am not so sure. A little googling quickly identified two GPT systems designed for church use:

- ChurchGPT - "A dynamic assistant for sermon & bulletin creation, and worship planning."



- Church Assistant - "A dynamic assistant for pastors, churches, and families, aiding in sermon & bulletin creation, prayer and liturgy writing, worship planning, and now interactive Bible Study guide and church administration task development."

So not such an unlikely development as it seemed at first ... Coming to a church near you????

*Editor*

## PLANNED GIVING

Regular giving is an integral part of our church life supporting our day to day costs, ministry and mission. A good way to achieve this is through a monthly bank standing order as part of our Planned Giving Scheme. Scheme details can be obtained from Planned Giving Scheme contacts for each church, listed below. If you are a taxpayer and gift aid your giving, the church can claim an additional 25%.

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