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Pictured is MP for Peterborough Paul Bristow (second right) with Parish Priest Fr Adam Sowa and parishioners at All Soul's church.

Allow Jesus to bring us his light, says Bishop Alan

In his pastoral letter for the start of January, Bishop Alan Hopes says, let us truly allow Jesus Christ to bring his light into our dark winter nights and into the dark winter nights of those around us by our sharing of the God-given gifts of love, hope and peace.

■ “Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ.

On Christmas night, the angel of God appeared to simple shepherds and invited them to come to a stable in Bethlehem and worship the new-born baby, cradled in the arms of his mother Mary.

The prophets called this child Emmanuel, which means God is with us. St John, in the Gospel today, describes this child as The Word made flesh and who lived among us and we saw his glory, that glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Today, The Lord invites us to turn aside again and to worship the Christ Child as we contemplate this thing that has happened and which the Lord has made known to us.

This wondrous thing that has happened is the mystery of the Incarnation which we are celebrating this Christmastide – that in Jesus Christ, God united himself to our human nature and came among us as a man.

The holy life in Mary's womb and the baby to whom she gave birth is of someone who existed before all time began. The divine Son of God takes on our human flesh and is born of a human mother. He takes on our human nature so that one day we might share in his divine nature. Jesus Christ is indeed both God and man. The Church rightly calls Mary the God bearer – the Mother of God.

The Incarnation assures us that God
■ Continues on page six.

£1.3m appeal to save Peterborough church

St Peter and All Souls church in Peterborough needs to raise £1.3 million to deal with major subsidence issues which are threatening the church structure. Keith Morris reports.

■ The Park Road church has been at the centre of the community throughout its 125-year history – but now it is in desperate need of repair. Clergy are appealing for help to raise funds to repair the building.

The Dean, Fr Jeffrey Downie, on behalf of the Diocese of East Anglia, said work needed to be carried out as soon as possible. He said: “The story of the structural

problems of St Peter and All Souls church in a long one and a known one, but it has reached the point now when it must be resolved.

“We may think here about our own sacred space in this church which is important in our lives and in our community. Saving this sacred space will be costly, it will be difficult, it will be disruptive, but it can be done and it will be done.

“It's been done in other places, and we can do it, too. I say we – in particular, rather than – you, because all Catholics, all the parishes in the deanery are with you supporting you in this mission to save the Mother Church building for the Catholic community of Peterborough, for the surrounding towns. The funding, though daunting, will come.”

Peterborough MP Paul Bristow visited the church in early December, and

backed the appeal to save the church saying: “We can, and we will, and we must,” save the church.

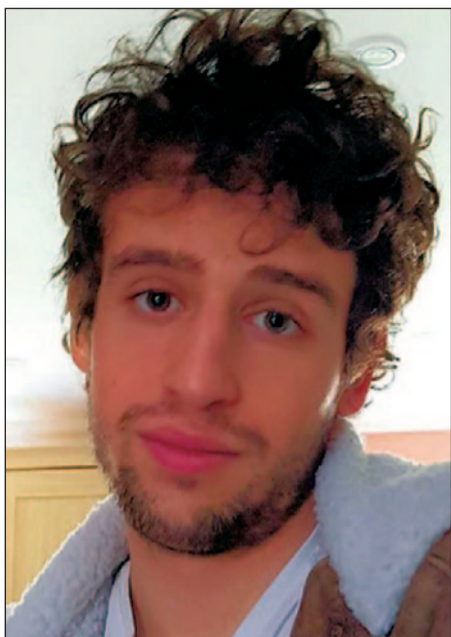
He said: “The church is at the heart of the Catholic community in our city. As well as English – we have Eastern European, Indian, African, Irish, Filipino and East Timorese Catholic communities in Peterborough.

“But the 125-year-old church walls are falling down. They have been temporarily bolstered but need expensive and extensive work. To lose the church would be unthinkable.

“We can do this! And I promise to stand with the church and the Catholic community as we try to raise these funds.”

A fundraising appeal has been launched to help fund the repairs.

For more information visit: www.stpeterandallsouls.org.uk



Priest's plea on missing man

■ Great Yarmouth priest Fr Alvan ibeh has added his voice to a Police appeal to find a missing young Catholic man from Gorleston, Pawel Martyniak.

Paweł (Paul) Martyniak (pictured above), aged 21, was last seen on Tuesday November 30 in the Gorleston area. He is approximately 5 ft 10 in height, with brown curly hair, dark facial hair, wearing grey Nike tracksuit bottoms, black Adidas trainers, white t-shirt, and a brown/beige jacket with white fur collar (pictured above).

Originally from Poland, Pawel moved to Gorleston with his family in 2004 and was previously a student of the University of Essex.

Paweł's father, Andre Martyniak, describes his son as quiet and thoughtful, but he is also a fan of music festivals.

Anyone with information should contact Norfolk Police on 101, quoting incident number 9 of or call 07496 751721

Fr Alvan said: "Paweł is a young lad who used to attend Mass at St Peter's Gorleston. He has been missing for over a month now. With the permission of the parents, I am asking if the appeal can continue to be made until he is found. Anyone who comes across him can also contact me 07405 463669."

Catholic EastAnglia

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Articles and photographs for the next edition are very welcome and should be sent to the editor, ideally via email, by Monday, February 7.

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Christmas extravaganza for charity

■ Fr David Ward, parish priest of Our Lady and St Walstan's in Costessey, has performed a Christmas extravaganza to raise money for charity.

Fr David occasionally puts on a one-man show to raise money for charity. On December 10 and 12 he performed his latest offering, 'This Time with Tinsel', billed as 'A Christmas extravaganza to rival Thursford', in Costessey and Gorleston'.

Accompanied by maestro Nick Walmsley at the keyboard, the show consisted of Christmas songs, monologues and poems, including 'White Christmas', 'I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus', Joyce Grenfell's 'Nursery School Nativity' and 'The Night Before Christmas'.

Nick played a number of pieces including 'God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen' in the style of Bach and 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' in the style of Rachmaninov. Enthusiastic (and sometime heckling) audiences joined in the fun and some of the singing.

The show in Costessey raised £610 for Let the Children Live, and the performance in Gorleston raised £514 for 'East Anglian Children's Hospices'.

Pictured right are Fr David, Fr Alex (assistant priest at Gorleston) and Nick Walmsley after the second performance.



Plan to install electric car charging at churches

The newly-formed Diocese of East Anglia Environment Group is taking part in a national project to identify sites and install electric vehicle charging points at locations across East Anglia.

■ The initiative is part of a wider project by the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Fr Paul Maddison is chairing the Diocese of East Anglia Environment Group. He said: "As part of a national project, we have identified 17 sites across the diocese, including churches and schools, which may be appropriate for the installation of public electric car charging points and their suitability is currently being assessed. It is hoped that not only would this promote the use of electric vehicles but that it would make good use of car parking spaces often underused during the week."

The paid-for charging points would be installed and maintained on a commercial basis by an external private company.

"The environmental group is addressing several important areas across all our parishes and schools," said Fr Paul. "These include decarbonising our buildings, disinvesting from fossil fuel use, promoting biodiversity and providing



environmental education. Many of these issues are also emerging as part of the synodal process showing how this consultation is having a local impact as well as an international one.

"The group had its first meeting in December and looked at several issues we will need to tackle in our quest to live more sustainably as a diocese. The group is made up of a small number of clergy and laity from across the diocese who are

committed to holding us all to account in our Christian vocation to care for our common home. Pope Francis has given the world a lead on this pressing issue, and our response will be both challenging and costly," said Fr Paul.

In addition to Fr Paul, the group includes three leads: Barbara Burnett, Rhona Lewis and Judith Tooth.

You can contact the environmental group on: eco@rcdea.org.uk

Synod meetings aim to reach out

■ Caritas East Anglia will be holding two online events in early February, to support the Diocese of East Anglia Synodal Team and parishes, in reaching those on the margins of the Church and hearing their voices in the Synodal Pathway. Caritas development worker Jacinta Welch reports.

This Synod is very different to those held in the past. Since Vatican II, bishops have held Synods every few years, when they met with the Pope to discuss and discern together on important issues of the day. This time, ahead of the bishops meeting for the Synod in 2023, Pope Francis is asking all the people of God to contribute by discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying to us in our prayer and through one another.

Some of you will have met in parish events to consider the ten questions given to us, to listen to each other and to discern what the Holy Spirit is



asking of us.

The purpose of the online events is to reach out to those who, for any reason, are unable to join a parish-based event. Pope Francis speaks of those on the margins as being the centre of the Church and these are the people to whom we are reaching out – to welcome those whose voices are not always heard. If you, or someone you know, feels they are on the margins, you will be welcome to join us.

Sadly, most of us will know people

who no longer attend Mass and the reasons for this will be many and varied.

We would ask that you pass on this information to friends or family members who might be interested.

The events will be held on Zoom on Thursday February 3 - 1pm and Thursday February 10 - 7.30pm. We ask that

you think about the ten questions before attending the event, which can be found on the diocesan website:

www.rcdea.org.uk/synodal-pathway/

Register for Feb 3, at 1pm here:

bit.ly/31QLu7G

Register for Feb 10, at 7.30pm here:

bit.ly/3K889Oj

The Synodal Pathway online survey needs to be completed by March 8.

For further information, email Jacinta: caritas@rcdea.org.uk

news in brief

Ecumenical carol concert

■ Acle's Catholic, Methodist and Church of England communities have come together for a traditional Christmas carol concert. The event was led by Deacon Peter Glanville from the Catholic parish, who was joined by Methodist minister Andrew King and Church of England Rector Martin Greenland.

Music was provided by Elaine Brown and the Broadland Band. Carols ranging from 'Once in Royal David's City' to 'O Come All Ye Faithful' were heartily sung by the packed congregation with prayers recited by Martin Greenland, Peter Glanville and Andrew King at appropriate intervals. A collection was taken in aid of the homelessness charity Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney.

Catenians highlight

■ Fr Mike Brookes provided the highlight of the November meeting of the Norwich Circle of the Catenians reports John Kenny. Fr Mike is assistant priest at St Edmunds in Bury St Edmunds and is relatively newly ordained, having previously worked for 25 years as a psychiatric nurse. He provided the Norwich Catenian Association with a very entertaining after-dinner speech.

The Circle President, Francis Harmer, has several more speakers in the pipeline to provide a focal point to each meeting and an attraction for new members.

Old mobiles plea

■ The Jesuit Refugee Service UK is looking for donations of old mobile phones and technology to provide refugees with the means to stay connected during this difficult time. This technology helps refugees access vital support, legal advice and stay connected with loved ones. If you have an old phone or tablet sitting in a draw, do get in touch with JRS!

For more information visit: www.jrsuk.net/news/donate-your-smart-phone-and-make-a-difference/

Restored Wisbech statue rededicated

A restored statue of Our Lady in Charles Borromeo church in Wisbech has been blessed and rededicated in the presence of two bishops and high-ranking air force representatives.

■ On Friday December 3, the Statue of Our Lady was blessed rededicated and the side chapel of Our Lady and St Charles Borromeo was dedicated to the Fallen Aircrew of East Anglia.

Parish priest, Fr James Caulfield, said: "The statue has been lovingly restored by parishioners Rowena and Hazel Goodfellow, a mother and daughter team."

In attendance at the blessing, and pictured on the right with Bishop Alan Hopes were, from left to right, Rev (Wg Cdr) Alex Hobson (RAF Marham), Artur Bildziuk (Polish Airmen's Association), Colonel Pawlicki (Deputy Polish Defence Attaché), Bishop Paul Mason (Bishop of the Forces), Rev James E Caulfield (Parish Priest Our Lady and St Charles Borromeo), Ven (AVM) John Ellis QHC RAF (Chaplain in Chief).

The chapel was dedicated with these words:

"We pray for that the Lord will grant eternal peace to those who have given their lives while serving as Aircrew in the defence of our nation and all who in



war and peace strove to defend all from tyranny and the injustices which prevent us living in peace as God's children.

"We call upon our Blessed Mother, mindful that none who seek her help or call upon her intercession our left forsaken, to give comfort to those who mourn.

"In this chapel may all find an oasis where they may remember the fallen and draw strength to return to their own journey in life.

"Oh, Blessed Mother, England, thy Dowry, has many times found itself called upon to defend its skies against those who

threaten our freedom and that of our friends and allies in other nations across the world.

"In war and peace, we continue to call upon aircrew to bring aid to those afflicted by pestilence or are victims of calamities, both natural and those resulting from industrial carelessness or the horrors of war.

"Pray for all aircrew, those who fly with them and all of us that by faith and good works we may one day see an end of war."

Amen. Our Lady of Walsingham, pray for us.

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The Catenian Association welcomes new members to our international social network of Catholic men committed to friendship, family and Faith.

Our local Circles are active throughout the U.K., Ireland, Australia, Malta, India, Bangladesh, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Our Circles in the U.K. raised over £250,000 in the past year for local charities as well as supporting the Association's two in-house charities; the Benevolent Fund which supports members and their families and the Bursary Fund which sponsors young persons in projects contributing to wider society at home and abroad.

Our Circles meet monthly and arrange activities both for members and their families: meals together, barbecues, picnics alongside visits to theatre and music and sporting events are all popular.

Golf societies throughout the Association join together in a National Golf Championship week every year and the Catenian Caravan and Camping Fellowship have a popular range of special events.

If you join the Catenians you will find it is the basis of many lifetime friendships.

To find your local Circle please contact our provincial membership Officer Paul Thompson on p_s_thompson9@hotmail.com

St George's cubs make blankets for homeless

■ The Cub Pack at St George's in Norwich has been turning crisp packets into insulating blankets for the homeless. Gillian Hanley reports.

At St George's our Cub Pack has been working towards their Environmental Conservation Badge and Anne-Marie Cooke, our cub leader, was discussing this with her leaders.

At this point our section assistant Joe Savage, who is spending a year as a CAFOD intern, had an idea. He had recently attended COP26 and told her that he knew some people who had made insulating blankets from crisp packets.

The Cubs all agreed they should give this a go, so they started collecting empty crisp packets from friends and family. On December 1 they set to work with a busy production line. Some cubs were cutting the packets open, others washing them, others drying them.

Then they needed to be laid out in rows to be ironed together (adults and young leaders helped at this stage). They made 10 insulating blankets in one evening, and the cubs were very proud of their achievement.

They have now been donated to a charity in Norwich that supports people sleeping on the streets.

Pictured right are the St George's cubs with some of the insulating blankets.



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Fr Alvan's flight of faith

Fasten your seat belt of faith, relax and enjoy your flight 2022 says Fr Alvan Ibeh, in a new year message.

■ On January 1, 2021, we all took off on board flight 2021 and congratulations to us all who made it to the end of the flight which landed on December 31, 2021. It was indeed not an easy flight as we all encountered one storm or the other in the course of the flight.

Many who started with us on this flight, unfortunately were not able to end this flight with us. We lost them. May their souls rest in peace, Amen.

When the flight took off, the Chief Pilot, God our Father, assured us of a smooth take off and landing, but did not assure us of a smooth flight. For those who will hold on firmly to their faith in the Chief Pilot, even though the flight may be rough and tough, they will safely land.

Unfortunately, due to the heavy storms of life many of us encountered, some lost their faith in the Chief Pilot and gave up on Him. We pray for such people, and ask God, our Chief Pilot to forgive them and still continue to let His face shine on them. Yes, they gave up on Him but He never gave up on them, but rather, He still, out of His merciful love, brought them safely to the end of the flight.

To all of us who made it safely to the end of the flight 2021, I say congratulations once again to you all and would remind us that it is by the special grace of God that we have made it. It is not as if we are better or more righteous than those who didn't make it to the end. It is not by power, nor by might, but by God's Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). It is not by our own righteousness but because of God's mercy that we are still alive to see the end of the flight 2021... 'it is of the Lord's mercies



that we are not consumed, because His compassion fails not; they are new every morning' (Lamentations 3:22-23). So let us with the psalmist give praise and thanksgiving to the almighty God, our Chief Pilot, for all He has done, for all He is doing, and for all He is yet to do. As long as we are still alive, we should give praise to God... 'Let everything that has breath, give praise to the Lord' (Psalm 150:6).

It doesn't matter what happened during the course of last year's flight, we must not keep living in the past, all we can say is, 'dear past (2021), thanks for all the lessons, dear future (2022), I am ready. Dear friends, I therefore welcome you on board flight 2022.

Congratulations to us all, for the privilege of being amongst those who made it to this flight. As usual, we have chosen God to be the Chief Pilot of this flight. We do not know where this flight is heading to. We do not know what dangers or blessings are ahead of us. We do not know the challenges that we are going to encounter on this journey. We may be uncertain about all these, but one thing is certain, God is in charge and He has a plan for us all (Jeremiah 29:11). We may be full of cares, burdens, anxieties, but He is saying to us all right at the beginning of this

journey through 2022, "Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you, he will never let the righteous be shaken" (Psalm 55:22), "Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1Peter 5:7), "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you."

If we must cast all our cares, burdens, anxieties, on Him, then we must let go of whatever happened last year, learn from them, and become stronger to confront whatever is before us in the new year... "Leave your hard times behind, be a stronger person with new confidence and celebrate the new year for a new start" (fofreestatus.blogspot.com).

2021 is now called past. It has come and gone, even though it has left its mark in our lives in one way or the other, but we must not allow anything negative we encountered last year, to follow us into the new. The new year is a blank page and we need to start writing on it. If we start writing old things that have passed on a new page, that may not work out well for us. Leave your past to the Lord, He knows how to right every wrong and change every mess into a message.

This is what our Chief Pilot is saying to us through the prophet Isaiah at the beginning of this year, "Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

It was the poet Juansen Dizon who said: "I hope you realise that every day is a fresh start for you. That every sunrise is a new chapter in your life waiting to be written." So let each day of this new flight be lived with full energy, vigour, courage and trust in the Most powerful and almighty God in whom we are safe.

Fasten your seat belt of faith, relax and enjoy your flight. Happy new year to us all.

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Norwich group sews for peace

CAFOD volunteers from St George's Parish in Norwich have revealed how a shared passion for peace has linked their parish with a community in Colombia.

■ The CAFOD group at St George's parish in Norwich has been standing in solidarity with communities overseas for years. The parish group holds events every month of the year, including fundraising events such as marmalade sales, parish lunches and Christmas lucky dips. This Advent they also sold two nativity sets, which they made out of fabric.

Earlier in 2021 they decided to work together with young people – from the parish Scout groups and students at the Notre Dame High School in Norwich – to raise money for work CAFOD supports in Colombia.

Gloria Irons, a long-standing member of the group, said they were really interested in the Hands On Magdalena Medio project because it was all about peace – young people bringing peace and change to their society.

Together, they decided to create a patchwork wall hanging to express their love and solidarity.

Gloria said: "Our group loves sewing, but what we enjoyed most of all was working with the young people's designs and turning them into fabric. The inspiration behind the project was the importance of peace, and we could see how deeply and carefully the young people had thought about it. It took us six months, during the pandemic, which wasn't easy!"

Jane Crone, CAFOD's Community Participation Coordinator for East Anglia, said: "The wall hanging is a



beautiful piece of work. What I most admire about Gloria and the group is that, once they've given a gift, they recognise that they don't own it anymore – they're very happy for our friends in Colombia to use it as they think fit. All they want is for them to know that their sisters and brothers in Norwich care for them, pray for them and wish them well."

Gloria added: "As the squares on the wall hanging so clearly say, we wish our sisters and brothers in Colombia peace, prayers, love – and more love. We will not forget you."

Once the wall hanging was finished, Fr Sean Connolly, blessed it.

Unknown to the parish group in Norwich, on the other side of the world in Colombia, a group of women had been gathering as part of the Hands On Magdalena Medio project, creatively responding to the need for peace.

For over 50 years Colombia has suffered from an internal armed conflict. More than a million people have been killed and more than 8 million forced to flee their homes. However, just over five years ago, a peace deal created an opportunity for people to build peace in their communities.

This peace is, however, fragile, and the conflict has worsened. In the Magdalena Medio region, an area rich in culture and natural resources but with high poverty rates, the group of women met as part of a process to increase their commitment, as female leaders and human rights defenders, to collective peacebuilding initiatives.

This process enabled the women to reflect on their ability to transform themselves and those who live

in the region, and to break with paths of violence – putting women at the centre of reflections on peace and the community, and on respect, love and tolerance.

Sara Harrera, one of the group members, shared: "First of all, to have identified ourselves as

defenders of rights – this was very important, to give recognition to the female leaders who were sharing there. It was great to be recognised for the work we have been doing for a long time."

The women wanted to express their conversations and reflections creatively, through weaving, embroidery and sewing. Eventually, they produced a large patchwork quilt that they called "Sewing Voices for Peace". It shares their cultural, political and spiritual identities and represents the loving act of care between women, their stories of resistance to the events of the armed conflict, their longings, hopes and dreams.

There is a striking resemblance between the Colombian patchwork quilt and the wall hanging from Norwich – both have responded to the need for peace and reconciliation in creative ways. As Jane said: "What amazes me is how the groups have independently come up with such similar projects."

In the new year, once travel is permitted, the wall hanging will make its way to Colombia, and the groups from Norwich and Colombia will meet virtually – to share their inspirations, hopes and dreams.

Women who changed the church online series chance

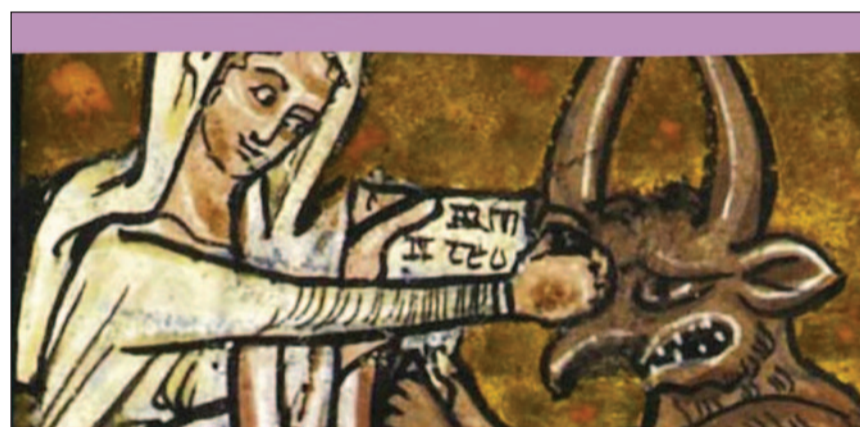
■ The Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology in Cambridge is hosting a fascinating eight-week online lecture series entitled "Women Who Changed the Church" from January to March.

The lecture series explores inspirational women whose lives and actions have been transformational within the Catholic Church. This series is designed to celebrate, uncover, and critique the contributions of women to and throughout Church history.

Speakers include: Dr Sue Price of MBIT on Mary Mother of God and More (January 20); Prof Charlotte Methuen of Glasgow University on Women in the German Reformation (January 27); Dr Sr Jo Robson OCD on St Teresa of Avila (February 3); Dr Carmen M Mangion of the University of London on Women Religious, Charitable Ministries, and the

Welfare State (February 10) Sr Pavlína Kašparová on Female Self Understanding and the Idea of Religious Femininity (February 17); Dr Phyllis Zagano an internationally acclaimed Catholic scholar and lecturer on contemporary spirituality and women's issues on Women Deacons and the Synod (February 24); Prof Jeana Del Rosso of Notre Dame of Maryland University on Unruly Catholic Nuns (March 3); Prof Shannen Dee Williams of University of Dayton (Mary Ward Lecture 2022) on Experience of Black Religious in the African American Freedom Struggle (Free) (March 10).

You can register online for the thought-provoking Thursday afternoon (2 to 3.30pm) series on, from January 20 until March 10. Each lecture only costs £10. For details visit: www.mbit.cam.ac.uk/events/



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Dr Sue Price, MBIT

27th January - And your daughters shall prophesy... The influence of women in the Protestant Reformation

Prof Charlotte Methuen, Glasgow University

3rd February - Teresa of Avila: Reformer, Mystic, and Spiritual guide

Dr Sr Jo Robson, OCD

10th February - Women Religious, Charitable Ministries and the Welfare State

Dr Carmen Mangion, Birkbeck

17th February - Female Self-Understanding, theological reflection, and the practice of art

Sr Pavlína Kašparová, OP, MBIT

24th February - Women Deacons and the Synod

Dr Phyllis Zagano, Hofstra University

3rd March - On Unruly Catholic Nuns: Creative Responses to Catholicism?

Dr Jeana DelRosso, Notre Dame of Maryland University

10th March - Mary Ward Lecture

Dr Shannen Williams, author of *Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle*, University of Dayton (Free)

£10 per lecture

For more information, and to book tickets, contact Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology
info@mbit.cam.ac.uk
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-margaret-beaufort-institute-of-theology-33109216441>



Allow Jesus to bring us his light, says Bishop Alan

■ **Continues from page one.**

is not distant. He is very close to us. In Jesus, he is one with us, sharing in our poverty and sufferings, sharing the life and experiences of each human person, no matter what our histories and mistakes.

God made each one of us. God loves each one of us. That is why he became a man.

Simply speaking, God is love. And true love is marked by gift of self and generosity. We know that many human lives are marked with winter darkness. Contemplating and worshipping the Incarnate Son of God in the manger, his arms open wide with love, we cannot but help share that love with others – the love that he so freely and joyfully gives to us.

God made each one of us. God loves each one of us. In the Incarnation he floods our lives with hope.

The country into which the Christ was born, was always on the brink of calamity and conflict, and the people were vulnerable to sickness and unexpected death. They knew that so many things were beyond their power. They sought hope in the midst of uncertainty.

As we look around us today we might recognise some of those human needs which need to be answered with love and hope. For hope is the gift our Saviour has given to all his followers. That hopeful Light of Jesus Christ still shines in his Church, as we his people turn aside to contemplate and to worship Him this Christmas.

God made each one of us. God loves

each one of us. God fills us with hope.

At the moment of the Incarnation, God pledges that there will be peace on earth to men of goodwill. As we begin the new civic year, we pray fervently with the whole Church that the gift of peace may become a reality for all peoples – all those who are caught up in war and conflict, for all who daily face persecution because of their faith, and all those who do not know real freedom or human dignity in their lives.

Because of the Incarnation our prayer must lead to action:

We must be prepared to support those who are actively working for peace in our world; to work for reconciliation and peace in our own communities and families; to be prepared to welcome all who are refugees and who come to live among us.

The Incarnation declares that peace is a gift from God himself – a peace that passes all human understanding.

As we continue to turn aside to contemplate and to worship the Incarnate Son of God in the manger, let us truly allow Jesus Christ to bring his light into our dark winter nights and into the dark winter nights of those around us by our sharing of these God-given gifts of love, hope and peace.

I wish you and your families a New Year that is free of fear and filled with love, hope and peace.

With prayerful good wishes,
Yours devotedly in Christ,

The Right Rev Alan S Hopes
Bishop of East Anglia

Environment group launched in diocese

■ **The Diocese of East Anglia's response to the environmental crisis stepped up a gear recently with the establishment of a small group tasked with addressing this important issue.**

The chair of the group, which has representatives from across Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambs, is Fr Paul Maddison. He said: "The remit of the group is to provide support, education and co-ordination across our parishes, schools and other diocesan structures as well as to facilitate national initiatives from the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales."

The team comprises Barbara Burnett (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) Judith Tooth (Norfolk) and Rhona Lewis (Suffolk). Along with Fr Paul, the group recently met via Zoom with Bishop Alan to look at the challenges facing the diocese.

"Much has been done and more is planned not only to reduce our carbon footprint, but also to make real and lasting changes in response to the call of Pope Francis in Laudato Si to care for our common home," said Fr Paul.



One of the first initiatives is a project to install electric car charging points at churches and schools across the diocese. You can read more on page 4.

"Please get involved," said Fr Paul. "Keep an eye on the diocesan website for regular updates on our work, do share with us your ideas and achievements and don't hesitate to get in touch if you feel there is anything we can help you with."

You can email the team at: eco@rcdea.org.uk

Education Mini Barran visits S

St Benedict's Upper School in Bury St Edmunds recently had the unusual distinction of a visit from Baroness Diana Barran from the Department of Education. Eldred Willey reports.



Pictured right are (left to right) Andrew Herlihy (Chair of Governors), Baroness Barran, Imogen Senior (Headteacher), Sue Baldwin (Regional Schools Commissioner), Jim Adams (CEO, Clarion Trust), Flavio Vettese (CEO, Our Lady of Walsingham MAT), Jeremy Rowe (CEO, Waveney Valley Trust).

■ On Friday December 10, Baroness Barran, who is Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Education (Minister for the School System), spent two hours touring the school and meeting staff and students.

She was joined by Sue Baldwin, the Regional Schools Commissioner, who among other duties oversees the formation of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). St Benedict's is currently preparing to join the Our Lady of Walsingham MAT.

Flavio Vettese, CEO of the Walsingham MAT, welcomed Baroness Barran to the school and introduced her to the headteacher, Imogen Senior, to trustees and to fellow CEOs who joined the visit.

Despite pandemic-related restrictions, the school is taking some bold steps to restore extra-curricular activities which include planned trips for students to New

York and Paris. On a more local level there are now a range of clubs including cookery, chess, knitting, table tennis, fitness, philosophy and English literature.

Alongside the National Curriculum, St Benedict's is running an 'enriched curriculum' which covers Classics, Latin, first aid, conservation, diversity studies, debating and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Two Year 11 students gave the Baroness a tour of the school which took in lessons in music, RE and art. There was also a break for Christmas bakes in the cookery department.

In the library Mrs Oakes, Head of English, explained how St Benedict's organises diagnostic tests to ascertain reading levels and then guides students to an appropriate choice of books. This forms an important part in identifying

Baroness Barran at Benedict's



Pictures of the visit by Eldred Willey.



students who are off benchmark and remedying gaps which may have appeared during the pandemic. The school is above average in the way it has brought students back up to desired levels in Maths after the disruptions of lockdown.

Matthew Spiller, Chaplaincy Co-ordinator at St Benedict's, guided a group discussion in the chapel where a group of students shared with the Baroness their impressions of the school.

Baroness Barran, who herself went to a Catholic primary school, said she was interested to know how students evaluated a faith school, since she received much correspondence from the Humanist Society appealing to her to abolish both faith schools and assemblies in state schools.

The students said that they appreci-

ated the fact that, in contrast to a state school, they could approach any teacher to talk about their faith and felt that St Benedict's had a strong sense of community and a culture of respect.

They emphasised the way which the school contributed to the wider community through supporting a range of charities, notably The Gatehouse, which acts as a foodbank in the town, and a homelessness charity, for which students are planning a sleepout.

In answer to the Baroness' questions, Matthew said that between 70% and 80% of students in the school were Catholics, and around 10% were practising their faith by attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis. The school itself provides regular opportunities to take part in Mass and to attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Turning the church pyramid upside down

The Synodal Pathway process turns the church pyramid upside down, says Jane Crone, a member of the parish synod team at Clare Priory Parish in Suffolk.

■ In October 2021, Pope Francis invited the world's 1.37 billion Catholics to take part in a Synod with the theme, 'For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission'. The worldwide Synod of Bishops meet in Rome and around every two years they also hold Extraordinary Synods, such as those for Youth, The Family and the Amazon. But this is different type of Synod, it's a call to rediscover our roots and church's deeply synodal nature. What does that mean and how do we respond?

The invitation isn't just for a few, it's for us all: lay, religious, young, old, daily Mass attenders, disenchanted lapsed Catholics, people from other faith traditions and of no belief. We're all invited to get involved. The synod, and the practice of the synodal process calls us, the Church, to rediscover its nature as a pilgrim and missionary people led by the Holy Spirit. It calls us to listen to each other, to discern together within a 'culture of encounter'.

The process might have been launched by Pope Francis in Rome and by bishops in their own cathedrals, but this isn't something that starts at the top of a pyramid and filters down to parishes at the bottom.

Instead, the pyramid has been turned upside down. The synod starts in parishes, at the grassroots, by consulting the whole people of God and ends at the tip of the pyramid with a Synod of Bishops.

How do we make the most of this exciting but daunting opportunity, which is 'a gift and a task', work in our parish communities? Anyone involved in parish life knows that organising meetings isn't easy at the best of times – Covid has made it far more complicated. Much has been written about the theology behind the synod. Little has been written about how it works in practice, here are a few thoughts from one Suffolk parish.

Every Catholic parish is unique and every synodal journey will be unique. When we get into a car or onto a train, we might think that we're in control of the journey we've planned but we all know that trains can be delayed, a car can grind to a halt because of road works or traffic jams.

A journey led by the Holy Spirit, that 'blows where it wills', is bound to be even more unpredictable. Our faith will be tested, we will need to be ready for the new, the unexpected, the surprising, but at the same time this journey will be full of joy and hope.

During his homily on the Feast of the Epiphany Pope, Francis linked the synod journey to that of the Magi, who return "by another way" (Mt 2:12). They challenge us to take new paths. Here we see the creativity of the Spirit who always brings out new things. That is also one of the tasks of the Synod we are currently undertaking: to journey together and to listen to one another, so that the Spirit can suggest to us new ways and paths to bring the Gospel to the hearts of those who are distant, indifferent or without hope, yet continue to seek what the Magi

found: "a great joy" (Mt 2:10). We must always move forwards.

In our parish, a group of three lay people and parish priest, Fr Gladson Dabre OSA, started meeting in October to pray, listen and discern how 'a gift and a task' can work in our community. Drawing on diocesan resources, as well as the Vademecum, we considered how the synodal journey could work for us. We introduced the Synod during the notices at the end of Mass at the start of Advent and made sure that we were available at the back of church afterwards to talk about it. The Parish newsletter contained weekly reflections on the synod during Advent, linking it to the week's Gospel readings and to the theological virtues represented by the week's Advent candle, Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.

Informal conversation after Mass seemed to encourage people to get involved in the synod and to listen to each other's thoughts. We responded to this by setting up a 'synod corner' next to the church door and font. It has become a place for informal listening and discernment - the questions the diocese has asked us to consider are on the wall and we're handing out printed copies for people to take home and reflect on. These informal discussions have led to face-to-face meetings



before and after Mass.

Starting with a time of reflection based on the Synod prayer, the Bible themes we're asked to meditate on and the synod prayer, they give an opportunity for personal silent reflection followed by a chance to listen to others. We put the questions up on the wall by the church door on large sheets of paper after Mass so that others can add their thoughts to them. We make sure that we're standing at the back of the church to listen. We've heard stories of faith and community, disappointment and frustration, and some exciting suggestions for our future parish journey.

Not all our ideas work out and we're still working out how best to involve young people and the housebound. We've noticed that some people don't wish to get involved and do not press them to change their minds.

Most importantly, although the logo of the Synod says 2021-2023, this is just the beginning. The church of the third millennium will be a synodal church – the picture on the logo explains it better than any words can – an image of the diverse people of God journeying together led by the Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit, come and renew the face of the earth!

Find the diocesan synodal survey at: www.rcdea.org.uk/synodal-pathway/

The Synodal Pathway online survey needs to be completed by March 8.

YOUTH MATTERS



Pupils appear on Radio Maria for Advent specials

■ A team from Radio Maria visited the chapels of St Alban's and St Mary's Schools to make their Advent broadcasts.

The station's three special broadcasts for Advent formed part of its latest fundraising Mariathon (marathon for Mary). As part of the events, pupils from St Alban's Primary School and St Mary's School, both in Cambridge, shared their thoughts on the air.

The Watson and Judd families led live family bed-time blessings and a family rosary in the evening.

You can listen to the Advent specials here.

radiomariaengland.uk/advent-specials

If you would like to support Radio Maria through prayer, volunteering or giving, you can find out more at:

radiomariaengland.uk/support-us

Pictured is the family rosary at Radio Maria England.

Exciting six months with CAFOD

International Development student and CAFOD East Anglia volunteer, Joe Savage, shares his experiences of working with the Catholic charity over the past six months.

■ I have had the amazing opportunity to volunteer with CAFOD as the Campaigns Volunteer Coordinator in East Anglia. During this time, I have spoken to local parishes, schools, and young adult groups before and after the G7 and COP26 conferences explaining and discussing their importance and the issues that were to be addressed during them.

This included lobbying MPs as part of CAFOD's Parliament in Your Parish campaign, and sharing our thoughts, as people of faith, on what the government should be doing in response to the climate crisis as well as sharing our position on issues of debt cancellation for low and middle income countries and global vaccine equality both within the UK and internationally.

As well as working with communities in East Anglia, I also had the opportunity to join CAFOD in campaigning for our asks with



Joe Savage (centre) at COP26 in Glasgow.

other young adults in both Cornwall and Glasgow. These were amazing opportunities to meet lots of other people from around the country, to feel part of them by making our voices heard.

I arrived in Glasgow on Friday November 5 after a long train journey from Norwich.

The Green Zone, which we were in, contained stalls run by different organisations from around the world eager to tell you about all sorts of things from how video game companies are reducing their environmental impact to a VR experience showing what life is like living in the Bohol province in the Philippines which was struck by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake causing sea levels to rise drastically. Through talking with all these different people, I was able to understand how diverse and interconnected the climate crisis is and how we need to make drastic changes to our way of life in order to protect those affected most by the crisis as well as reducing the most severe effects of climate change in the years to come.

That evening, we made our way to St Aloysius' church to partake in part of the 24-hour vigil live-streamed across the world from the church. As part of the vigil, we shared videos about CAFOD's Live Simply award and the work of some of our partners in Columbia in giving the Atrato River special protective rights. We also hosted a live prayer service where we reflected on what we wanted from the conference as well as asking God to help inspire the negotiators at the conference to work together to produce a strong agreement.

The next day contained the main event of our COP26 journey, and also the wettest! Over 100,000 people marched through the streets of Glasgow to demonstrate their desire for immediate action to combat the climate crisis. This message was echoed around the world as people marched in solidarity in every continent on the planet. Unfortunately, the messages written on our placards were quickly destroyed by the wet and windy Glaswegian weather but that didn't stop us as we shouted and sung about our

desire for climate action and several of our asks such as the shutting down of coal power stations.

On Saturday evening, after a hot shower and vegetable curry, we had a talk from several CAFOD representatives, Neil Thorns, Head of Advocacy, Robin Mace-Smith, Policy Analyst for Climate and Energy, and Frances Leach, Press Officer, who had spent the last week campaigning inside the Blue Zone with all the negotiators and sharing their messages and the messages of our Caritas partners around the world.

Overall, the experience was enjoyable and eye-opening. I had the privilege of meeting so many interesting people from all walks of life from across the country and immersing myself in what had the potential to be the most important climate conference ever.

Just when you thought that life couldn't get more exciting, on November 29, I received a rather unusual invitation - to attend a function at No 10 Downing Street!

I had been invited by the Bishop's Conference through CAFOD to attend a Christmas function with representatives of different Christian organisations across the country to listen to Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

I had the opportunity to meet lots of people there from the Papal Nuncio to radio presenters and representatives from different Christian charities and organisations. The function was a way of celebrating all that we had done from assisting communities struggling with the pandemic to campaigning for justice and equality.

■ To find out more about volunteering for CAFOD, check out [@cafodeastanglia](https://twitter.com/cafodeastanglia) on Twitter and the CAFOD in East Anglia page on Facebook or email Joe at jsavage@cafod.org.uk

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YOUTH MATTERS

Come to World Youth Day Portugal

The pilgrimage to World Youth Day Portugal 2023 is set to be launched in East Anglia in March, reports Hamish MacQueen, Director of Diocesan Youth Service.

■ We're really excited to be launching our preparations for our Diocesan Pilgrimage to the next International World Youth Day (WYD) in Lisbon in 2023! It might seem a long way off, but we wanted to start preparing early to allow time for the group to get to know each other, fundraising, and reflecting on the theme. "Mary arose and went with haste." Luke 1:39.

This WYD is particularly exciting because the last one we took a large group to was back in 2016 – that will be seven years ago by the summer of 2023! There was one in Panama in 2019 but we were only able to take a small group of over 18 year olds. We are hoping to take a large group to WYD 2023.

World Youth Day was started in 1984 by Pope John Paul II and takes place every two to four years in a different country. As well as Panama, recent WYDs have been held in Madrid, Rio and Krakow. Young people from East Anglia have not only found the pilgrimage enjoyable – it's also incredibly faith nurturing, and for some life-changing!

What is it?

■ An invitation by the Pope to all young people to come and celebrate their faith, learn more about it and join him for an all-night vigil and Mass. It is held in a different country each time, usually with well over one million people in attendance.

When is it

■ To start with, it's more than just a day! WYD week in Lisbon starts on August 1,



Pictured left are the East Anglia delegation at WYD in Panama and, above, Pope Francis and below people from all over the world in Panama.

climaxing in the final Mass on August 6. We usually go the week before to experience the 'Days in the Diocese' programme which precedes WYD week.

Who is it for?

■ All young people who will be age 16+ by

the last week of July 2023. That means if you are over 14½ already, you will be old enough to come.

How do I find out more?

■ Come to our launch event on March 13,

2022, starting at 1pm (please bring a packed lunch) and ending by 4.30pm after Mass with the Bishop.

It will be held at Newmarket Parish Centre, 14 Exeter Road, Newmarket CB8 8LT.

Watch out Ed Sheeran, Hamish is back

Move over Ed Sheeran and Elton John, Diocese of East Anglia Youth Services Director Hamish MacQueen has released a cheerful Advent song which was a real hit with St Augustine's pupils in Costessey.

■ Hamish recorded the song with the help of Year 5 and 6 of St Augustine's, Costessey to be used on the Ignite team's Third Thursday online primary schools assembly.

"I wanted to do an upbeat song about Advent but there are not many written," said Hamish. "So I thought I better write something myself! Of course there are lot of upbeat songs about Christmas and quite a few more reflective songs about Advent but not many upbeat Advent songs. So I wrote 'Soon to be born' (both music and lyrics)

with the music using every Christmas cliché I could but the lyrics very much about Advent.

"One of the things I love about our Catholic understanding of Advent is that it is a time of great excitement and anticipation as

we wait and get ready for Christmas, and I wanted the song to help make the distinction between Advent and Christmas.

"It seems a lot of people start celebrating Christmas at the beginning of December (or before!) and then stop around Boxing Day.... they are missing out! We have the excitement of Advent AND the celebration of Christmas, with Christmas lasting eight days (the Christmas Octave), and the Christmas Season lasting until the feast of Jesus' baptism (the Sunday after Epiphany) so the celebrations continue way beyond December 25!"

Pictured above, Hamish and St Augustine's pupils perform Soon to be Born.

You can watch the video and listen to the song online at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvIBhIoIy5A



Tributes to Eileen, 110

Tributes have been paid to amazing St George's Norwich parishioner and former Test cricketer, Eileen Ash, who was Norfolk's oldest woman and has died at the age of 110.

■ Eileen marked her 110th birthday in October and was the country's oldest living Test cricketer. She was a right-arm seamer and made seven appearances for England either side of the Second World War after making her Test debut against Australia in 1937.

During her remarkable life she was also seconded to MI6 during the war, played golf until the age of 98 and did yoga and drove her yellow Mini car well into her 100s.

St George's Parish Priest, Fr Sean Connolly, said: "Eileen was a remarkable person, utterly full of joy and life. Shortly after I came to the parish, I was informed just before Mass that one of the parishioners had just turned 103. Not knowing everyone by name at that stage, when I looked out into the congregation to see who it might be, I couldn't see anyone I thought might be that age. At the end of Mass we sang Eileen happy birthday and I was shocked to find a sprightly lady looking in her mid-70s smiling and waving at everyone.

"Eileen used to speed into the car park in her beloved yellow Mini. She loved driving and the independence it gave her. When, a couple of years ago, she was finally advised to give it up, I thought she might be up for a fight. All she did was shrug and say, 'Well, I had a good innings!'"

"Eileen was extraordinarily gracious and I



Eileen Ash ringing the bell to start play in the 2017 ICC Women's World Cup Final at Lord's. Picture by Clare Skinner/MCC.

can't ever remember hearing her complain, even when in the last 18 months she suffered from strokes. During the covid-lockdown in 2020 she suffered a fairly major stroke and was in hospital for some time, with no-one being allowed to visit her. When finally she came home, she was as cheerful as ever and only grateful for the medical attention she had received.

"That particular stroke left her jumbling up her words, meaning that conversations could become quite hilarious. Eileen, quite deaf by this point, spent the time lip-reading or simply guessing what you were trying to say, and you had to decipher a completely random set of words that came out of her mouth. Bizarrely, conversation was still possible and Eileen as always was good company. She was always delighted to see people and always herself a delight. She was a wonderful part of our parish for many years and we will miss her."

Fellow St George's parishioner, Philip Mason, said: "Our family has known Eileen for a number of years,

and it was my privilege to take Eileen to Mass each week, usually at Our Lady's on St William's Way. It was always a joyful experience as Eileen was always upbeat about everybody and everything. I never knew what she would say next as we drove along.

"One of the funniest experiences we had as a family with Eileen, was at a party in our garden in 2015 to celebrate our son's wedding. We invited Eileen who enjoyed the whole afternoon sipping her glasses of red wine. When it was time to leave some of our family asked Eileen if she would like to be accompanied home. Eileen replied in her most commanding voice, 'Do you think I don't know where I live'. We all fell about laughing, but it just showed how independent Eileen was even at 104 years of age."

Clare Connor, England Cricket Board's managing director of women's cricket, said: "Our sport owes so much to its pioneers and Eileen was one of them. I am deeply sad to be saying goodbye to her today."

New schools director needed for diocese

■ The Diocese of East Anglia is looking to appoint a new Director of Schools' Service to replace existing Director Julie O'Connor who is retiring after 19 years in the role.

Bishop Alan Hopes said: "We see our schools as key to the Mission of the Diocese. Though they are small in number they have an immense impact on the children and young people in our care, the staff, parents and the many parishes they serve.

"We are seeking to appoint a Director who can influence the shape of the team for the future. Our schools and their estate are in a secure place, but this is a splendid opportunity for someone who is ambitious and clear thinking to lead to the next stage of development and growth, while sustain-

ing our zeal and success.

"The key function of this role is to promote, lead and manage the Catholic educational mission of the Diocese. This is a senior role within the Diocese and the postholder will work collaboratively with the myself, Commissioners and other senior managers within the Diocese to meet the requirements of the Bishop and Trustees.

"We expect the postholder to become one of East Anglia's leading educational system leaders. Knowledgeable, enthusiastic communicator with great people skills and a passion for education," said Bishop Alan.

For more details and a candidate's pack, visit www.rcdea.org.uk, call Jane Delph on 01508 495509 or email ssc@rcdea.org.uk

The closing date is: Noon on February 14.

key diary dates

Here is a list of some of the key diary dates across the Diocese of East Anglia in 2022. All dates are provisional and should be checked before attending.

■ Mass for the Religious of the Diocese, Wednesday, February 2: 11.30, St John's Cathedral, Norwich.

■ Annual Mass to celebrate Our Lady of Lourdes with Anointing of the Sick, Saturday February 12: 11.30am, St John's Cathedral, Norwich.

■ Rite of Election: Sunday March 6: 3.30pm, St John's Cathedral Norwich. For all Catechumens and Candidates being baptised and confirmed at Easter.

■ Lenten Station Masses: 5pm Exposition and Confession, 6pm Mass, 7pm Supper:

Peterborough Deanery St – Peter & All Souls – March 15

Cambridge Deanery – Our Lady and the English Martyrs – March 22

King's Lynn Deanery – Holy Family – March 24

Ipswich Deanery – St Mary – March 29

Bury St Edmunds – St Edmunds – March 31

Coastal Deanery – Our Lady Star of the Sea, Lowestoft – April 5

Norwich Deanery – St John's Cathedral, Norwich – April 7

■ Chrism Mass: Tuesday April 12: 12 noon, St John's Cathedral, Norwich. Oils for the Sacraments are blessed and priests, deacons and people renew their commitment to serve.

■ Ignite Diocesan Youth Festival: April 30 – May 1: Sacred Heart School, Swaffham.

■ Diocesan Pilgrimage to National Shrine, Walsingham, Tuesday May 31: 12noon to 4.30pm. One of the major events of the year in the life of the Diocese.

■ Diocesan Children's Pilgrimage to Walsingham: Tuesday May 31: 12 noon at National Shrine, Walsingham.

■ Annual Celebration of Priesthood: Thursday June 9: 11am, White House, Poringland.

■ Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Mass: Saturday June 18: 11am, St John's Cathedral, Norwich. Mass for couples celebrating special wedding anniversaries.

■ Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate: Saturday July 2: 11.30am, St John's Cathedral, Norwich.

■ Altar Servers Mass and BBQ: Saturday July 16: 11.30am, St John's Cathedral, Norwich, followed by a barbeque.

■ Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes: August 19 – 26

■ Dowry of Mary Pilgrimage to Walsingham: Sunday September 4: 12 noon, National Shrine, Walsingham.

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St. Scholastica's Retreat



Job Opportunity:

Warden at St Scholastica's Retreat, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire

Following the retirement of our Warden of the past 15 years, the Trustees of St Scholastica's Retreat are looking for an enthusiastic, energetic, caring and experienced person to deliver a range of services to the residents and Board of Management of St Scholastica's Retreat, an almshouse charity providing 36 self-contained residential units for Roman Catholics in financial need who are over the age of 60 years. We are located in the town of Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire. As Warden, you will play a key role in the day-to-day management of the charity as it plans to expand over the next few years. Day-to-day duties will include assisting the Trustees in fulfilling the charitable and spiritual aims of the Trust: in particular, "to support elderly Catholics to live independently within the community of St Scholastica's Retreat". To this end, to act as manager and administrator of St Scholastica's Retreat.

As Clerk to the Trustees, to assist the Trustees in strategic planning for the Trust and for St Scholastica's Retreat. Previous experience of working in the charity sector would be an advantage. The role offers a competitive salary, pension, holiday entitlement and accommodation on-site in a three bedroom house.

For further information about the role of Warden and details of how to apply see

<https://www.stscholasticas.co.uk/warden-clerk-vacancy>

Further inquiries can be sent to info@stscholasticas.co.uk

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Welcoming migrants and refugees

As Pope Francis directs the attention of the world towards refugees, the Diocese of East Anglia continues to extend its own work with migrants and asylum seekers. Eldred Willey reports.

■ In Norwich, the Justice and Peace Group at St John's Cathedral has now been running the Welcome Rucksack Project for five years. It provides rucksacks for adult asylum seekers and children of refugee families. Its co-ordinator, Carol Chilton, was approached by Martin Nisbett, a steward at Chapelfield Road Methodist Church in Norwich, who was keen to collaborate rather than start a similar project themselves.

"A generous grant of £350 from Martin specifically for rucksacks for children of refugee families from Afghanistan has boosted the funds of the project," said Sarah Ebelewicz, who leads the Justice and Peace group at St John's Cathedral. "It enabled us to provide 51 rucksacks for ages ranging from toddler to teens. Each rucksack costs between £30-£35 (rucksack and contents) so the grant from the Chapelfield community was very timely. We have found God always answers our prayers in relation to funding for this project."

One of the hallmarks of the project is the links that the group has forged with ecumenical partners including English+, which is based at Holy Trinity, an Anglican church in Norwich. Other longstanding partners include Notre Dame High School and The Octagon Unitarian Chapel. The Unitarians donated £200 in the autumn of 2021 and Caritas also approved a grant application for £500.

Alongside these existing partnerships in Norwich, Bishop Alan Hopes recently met a representative from New Routes, another charity which works with migrants and asylum seekers in the city, and which is interested in developing links across the diocese.

In Cambridge the Deanery has been registered since 2017 as a supporter of Cambridge City of Sanctuary. "From time to time, City of Sanctuary issues appeals to several refugee support groups in Cambridge and district," explains diocesan representative Bernard Shaw. "Most recently, in September, there was an appeal from Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum Refugee Services (CECF) to assist their efforts in supporting refugees from Afghanistan in partnership with local authorities, and this was included in parish newsletters."

Cambridge illustrates the way in which the



The youth group at St John's Cathedral helping with The Welcome Rucksack Project.

diocese is working in partnership with a range of organisations. CECF is an umbrella group which provides advice and practical help to asylum seekers and refugees. It in turn collaborates with other local charities including the Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign (CRRRC), which assists refugees and provides guidance to landlords. Also linked in is the Cambridge Convoy Refugee Action Group, which transports donated clothing to Calais. The Catholic community often supports these initiatives though a generous response to appeals.

Nearby in Sawston, Our Lady of Lourdes has been running refugee projects in partnership with the housing charity Hope into Action.

"It has been five years since we, as a parish community, embarked on our partnership with the charity Hope into Action," explains Fr John Minh. "Hope into Action works with church communities to provide housing and support for vulnerable groups and in particular those previously homeless, those having just left prison and those who are refugees. All these groups have a common need: they lack a natural network of support, and that is what the church community sets out to provide."

"We support two houses in Sawston, both purchased by groups of benevolent investors. One is dedicated to men who were previously homeless; the other house accommodates a family of Syrian refugees."

The support for these two houses is provided by 12 parishioners who meet at least weekly with the tenants of the houses and offer a range of support. This can be simply listening sensitively and talking through the challenges being faced. Volunteers also

help by writing CVs, helping residents prepare for interviews, signposting opportunities and services and helping with the development of practical and language skills. There is also a steady stream of critical day to day issues such as helping with the purchase of school uniforms; providing emergency food supplies when there is a delay in benefits payments or sourcing donated laptops so that vital links can be maintained.

"Including our present tenants, we have been able to offer support to nine men who

were previously without an address," said Fr John. "Having an address is vital in so many ways not least when claiming benefits and applying for jobs. Almost all the men have moved on to their own accommodation and some have gained full or part-time employment."

"The four children of the Syrian family all attend local schools. They speak fluent English and, as children are apt to do, they have adapted well to their new lives."

Meanwhile, in Peterborough, the Catholic community has been helping asylum seekers since at least 2016, when Sr Mary Clare Mason met city council officers and shared a plan to welcome 20 Syrian families over a four-year period.

The Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme was set up, bringing together Foodbank, a project called Care Zone which supplies furnishings, a credit union, the Department of Work and Pensions and We, which provides white electrical goods. A faith partnership was also created, involving Hope Peterborough, Churches Together in Central Peterborough and the Inter-faith Council.

Support for refugees and asylum seekers will continue to be an important focus for the diocese in 2022, as Caritas East Anglia encourages and builds on existing initiatives. If you would like to share what your parish is doing, or have ideas about how this area of work could be developed, please contact Caritas Development Worker Jacinta Welch on caritas@rcdea.org.uk



A refugee camp near Calais. Picture from Auberge des Migrants/Refugee Info Bus.

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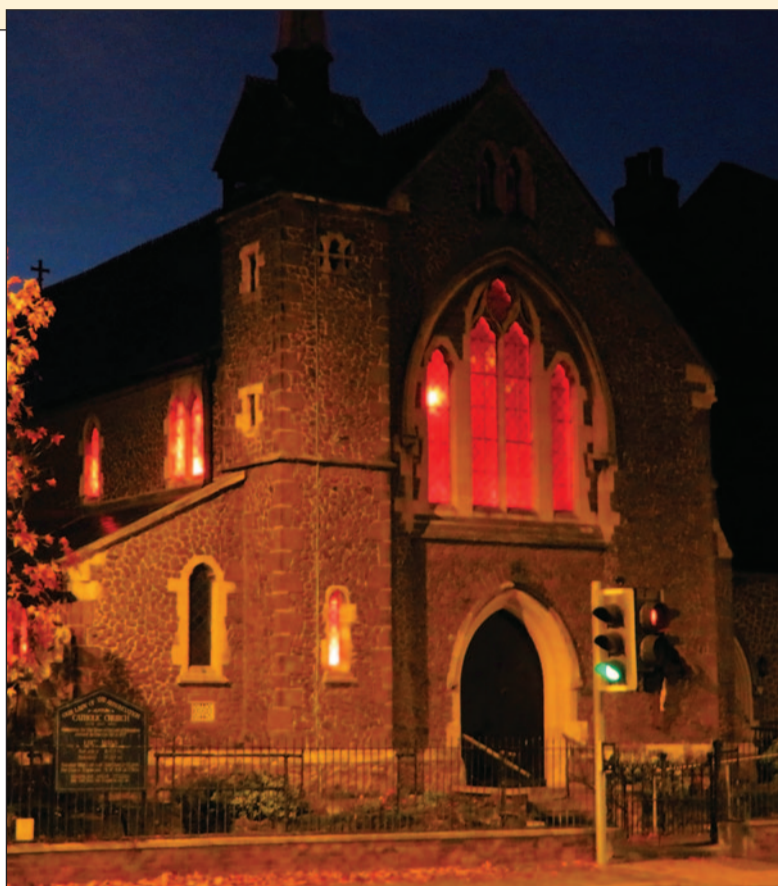


News picture gallery from parishes around the Diocese

■ Our Lady of the Annunciation in King's Lynn was lit up in red on November 24 in support of Aid to the Church in Need's #Red Wednesday campaign to raise awareness of the persecution of Christians across the globe reports Stephen Farr.

This year's campaign focus was to stop the sexual violence against Christian girls who are often abducted, forced to deny their Christian faith, and forced to marry their abductor.

Parish Priest, Canon Peter Rollings has said that this year he had had some comments from local people. One person asked why the church was lit up in red and another said that the church looked inviting and how nice it was to see a church shrouded in darkness, and he even took a picture for himself.



■ The SVP Conference St Etheldreda's Ely held a successful get-together for parishioners who have experienced isolation and loneliness due to the pandemic.

Transport was provided for those needing it. There was a Christmas theme, with decorations and refreshments. Those attending welcomed a chance to meet up with friends from church. Written and verbal appreciation was received by conference members who are hoping to make these social events a regular feature.



■ Parishioners in St Michael's in Huntingdon have been treated to an afternoon of wonderful music. Fr Philip Shryane reports.

On Saturday December 4 the A Cappella singers 'Enchanting' performed for St Michaels. There are six members of 'Enchanting' and they simply enjoy singing together. Two of the group live in Sweden and join the rehearsals by zoom and then come over to the UK to take part in a short round of concerts just before Christmas.

The programme this year was entitled 'Love knows no borders'; it is a mix of traditional carols and new music, some composed by Brogan Scott Casbon, one of the singers. About 35 parishioners enjoyed the music and joined in with three well known traditional Christmas carols.

The lovely music and words of the songs helped us prepare for Christmas during this season of Advent and made the concert very prayerful and meditative. The last song, 'Love knows no borders', was written by Sally de Ford almost immediately after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and reflects the mission of Jesus to bring peace and goodwill to all people.

The concert is freely given by people who love singing in public and the retiring collection raised £173 for the parish funds at St Michael's. Thank you very much to 'Enchanting' for such lovely music and thanks to parishioners who came to enjoy the lovely concert.

Pictured is the group 'Enchanting' at St Michael's.

■ Eleven teenagers received the Sacrament of Confirmation in King's Lynn recently from Bishop Alan Hopes.

The Confirmation Mass took place at the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation, King's Lynn, on November 27, celebrated by Bishop Alan, who said to those being confirmed: "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Today is your Pentecost all over again. As we celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation by laying hands on your head with prayer, by marking you with the sign of the cross of Jesus Christ, by sealing you with the sacred oil of chrism, so the Holy Spirit will be poured out into your life. God sealing you with His wonderful gift so you become and are seen as an authentic witness to Jesus Christ."

The candidates had been preparing of 18 months, due to the earlier Covid restrictions.

Concelebrants of the Mass, were Canon Peter Rollings, Rural Dean of St Wilfrid's Deanery and Parish Priest of the Catholic Parish of King's Lynn and Assistant Parish Priest Fr Gordon Adam.

The Celebration Mass of the Sacrament of Confirmation can be viewed on YouTube <https://youtu.be/cZz77avinlo>

Pictured right are the young people during the Mass of Confirmation. Picture by Joseph Rodriguez.

