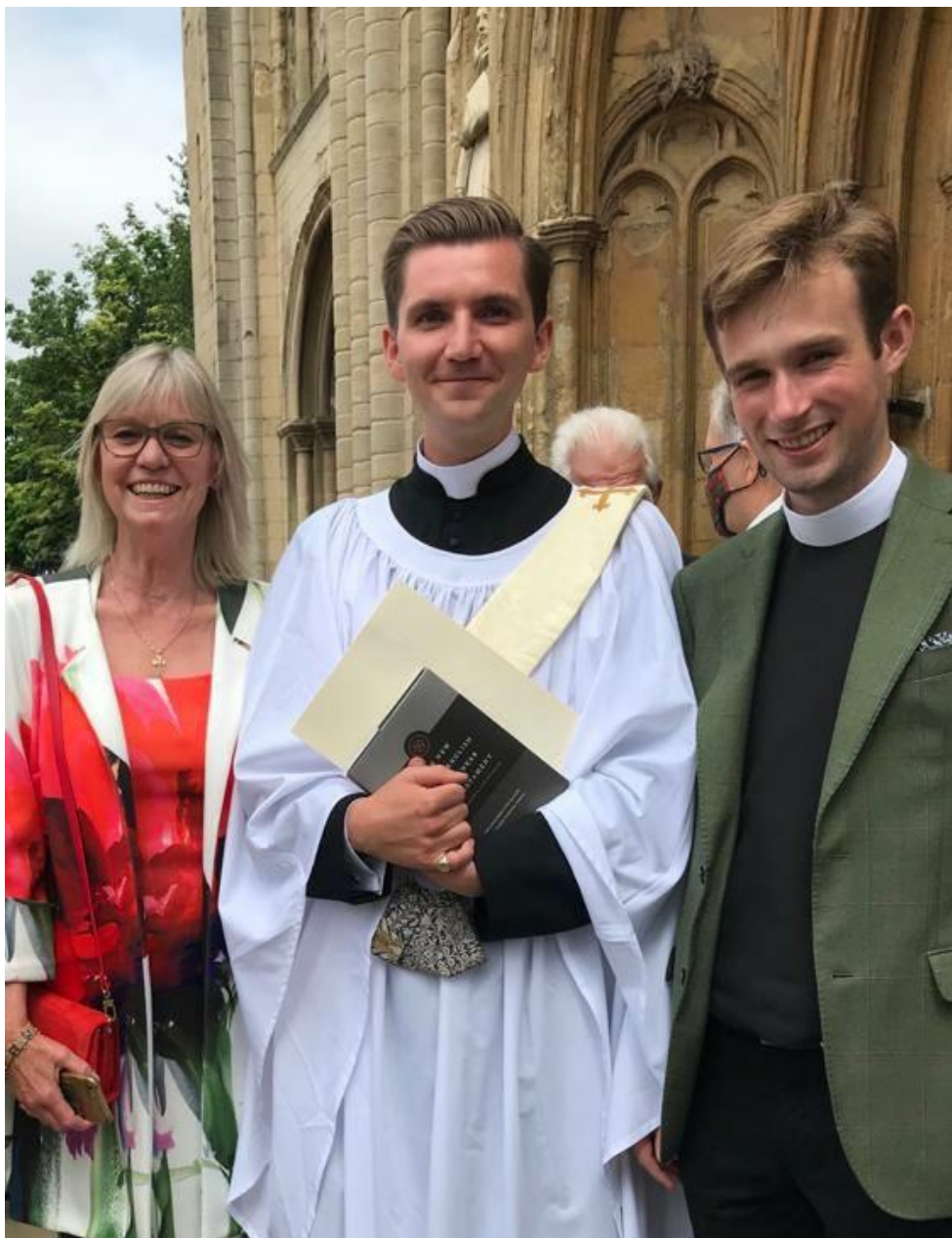


ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, TIMBERHILL with ST JULIAN, NORWICH

July 2021



PARISH PEOPLE

Parish Priest

Fr Richard Stanton
The Rectory, 8 Kilderkin Way, Norwich NR1 1RD
01603 626104 • richard_stanton@btinternet.com
Fr Richard's rest day is Monday.

Churchwardens

Shirley Buxton
32 Mansel Drive, Old Catton, Norwich NR6 7NB
01603 404438 • shirleypeterbuxt@btinternet.com

Gudrun Warren
38 Lark Drive, Attleborough NR17 1NZ
01953 455146 • gudrun.warren@gmail.com

PCC Secretary

Liz Kilshaw

PCC Treasurer

Chris Bushnell

Gift Aid Secretary

Michael Watson

Organist

Keith Buxton

Head Server

John Foottit

Electoral Roll Secretary

Elizabeth Sutherland

Safeguarding Officer

Sue Bisley

Deanery Synod representatives Liz Kilshaw, Rhys Lewis

Parochial Church Council

Fr Peter Barnes-Clay, Mary Barnes-Clay, Sue Bisley, Harry Emerson, Judy Hall, Andrew Knights, Susan Snasdell, Elizabeth Sutherland, Melissa Symes, Jeremy Warren

Sidespeople

Linda Baldwin, David Baldwin, Mary Barnes-Clay, Barbara Donnelly, Judy Hall, June Halls, Michael Halls, Patrick Hawes, Susan Snasdell, Elizabeth Sutherland, Dorothy Tinkler, Stuart Tinkler, John Woodrow

The Julian Campus

The Julian Centre, Rouen Road, Norwich NR1 1QT (*closed for refurbishment*)
01603 767380 • www.julianofnorwich.org

Curate (Wed – Sat)

The Revd Edwin Wilton-Morgan
01603 218300 • curate@cathedral.org.uk

Strengthen for service

Dear friends,

A few days after the magnificent celebration of our Patronal Festival on June 24th (and our thanks go to all who contributed, not least with music, serving, flowers, and refreshments), it was a great privilege for me to be sitting in choir at Norwich Cathedral for the Ordination of Deacons on Sunday 27th June. Among those ordained was Edwin Wilton-Morgan, who served a year-long placement in our parish as part of his final year of training at Westcott House and who, we are glad to say, continues his association with us in a new guise now. He is serving as Assistant Curate at the Cathedral and, as one of the fruits of the newly-created Julian of Norwich Partnership, will be sharing for four days each week (usually Wednesday to Saturday) in ministry to visitors and pilgrims to the Julian Shrine and to the local community around St Julian's.

I am delighted to have him and I know you will continue to support him with your prayers and your practical assistance as he comes to share in the work of ministry here. Some of you will remember other clergy over the years, particularly Fr Robert Llewelyn, who have exercised a distinctive ministry at St Julian's which is independent of but complementary to the work of the parish, and Fr Edwin continues in that established tradition.

I commend to you a careful and reflective reading of the warm, wise and insightful sermon, printed in this Newsletter, which he preached at the High Mass at St John's on the last Sunday of his placement with us (at the end of which we presented him with two gifts to mark his time with us: an Italian silk biretta and a token for some of the books he will need!).

I believe it enriches our parish to have ordinands on placement and is a part of the contribution which we can make to the wellbeing of the Body of Christ both in our local area and further afield, and I hope we will continue to offer such placements in the future – and, too, to explore other ways in which we can be of service to the Church of which we are part, because there is much that we can teach and much that we can learn from those who come among us.

Ordination season should serve as a stimulus for all of us to consider our own work and ministry in the Church, and to recognise that each of us really does have one! It doesn't look the same as someone else's, it won't necessarily involve standing at the altar or preaching in the pulpit or taking a lead in organising youth work or going to join a Religious Order or signing up for a Diocesan lay training course or anything like that – though it *might* do, and we need to stay open and alert for the promptings of the Holy Spirit at work within us and the gentle suggestions of our brothers and sisters – but the New Testament makes clear over and over again that each of us has a part to play in building up and nurturing the Body of Christ. We seek to embody this particularly in the great parish liturgy on Sundays at 11am, when clergy, servers, musicians, sidespeople, readers and intercessors, young people and old, refreshment-providers and many others come together in one dynamic movement of praise, worship and hospitality. How can we take that lesson and apply it to the rest of our life?



Fr Peter Barnes-Clay, pictured above, was celebrant for the High Mass on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, Tuesday 29 June

Think of those wonderful words which St Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus (*Ephesians 4*). After giving thanks for the one baptism which we have all received, he explained that the unity of the Body of Christ is entirely consistent with a diversity of gifts which contribute to the service of the whole, and all of this flows from our sharing now in the divine life of the Risen and Ascended Christ:

‘Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it is said, ‘When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.’... The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the

work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ... Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.'

As we renew the patterns of our Church Family life following the restrictions and challenges of the pandemic, let's remember this call addressed to each of us, and pray for the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit as we work together in our parish. We need you: there is a place for everyone! Pray too for unity of purpose and for good humour! The Eucharistic food which we receive Sunday by Sunday (and, if we accept the opportunity, day by day whenever we can) nourishes us for such service in the Church and beyond its borders, as expressed not least in one ancient prayer of our Syrian Christian forebears, turned into a hymn (*NEH 306*). I love its words: let's make them our own as we go from the altar to glorify the Lord with our lives.

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands
That holy things have taken;
Let ears that now have heard thy songs
To clamour never waken.

Lord, may the tongues which 'Holy' sang
Keep free from all deceiving;
The eyes which saw thy love be bright,
Thy blessed hope perceiving.

The feet that tread thy holy courts
From light do thou not banish;
The bodies by thy Body fed
With thy new life replenish.

Your friend and parish priest,

R. Richard

What's on in July and August

Saturday 3 July • Feast of St Thomas the Apostle

- 10am Low Mass with the Reception of a new
Companion of Julian of Norwich (*St Julian's*)
12 noon Low Mass (*St John's*)

Thursday 22 July • Feast of St Mary Magdalene

- 12 noon Low Mass (*St John's*)

Sunday 25 July • Feast of St James the Apostle

- 9am Low Mass (*St Julian's*)
11am High Mass (*St John's*) followed by meeting of sidespeople
4pm Songs of Praise and afternoon tea (*St Julian's*)
to welcome the Revd Edwin Wilton-Morgan

Thursday 29 July

- 7.30pm Parochial Church Council meeting (*St John's*)
preceded by Low Mass at 7pm

Friday 6 August • Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord

- 12 noon Low Mass (*St John's*)
5pm Low Mass (*St Julian's*)

Sunday 15 August • Feast of the Assumption of the BVM

- 9am Low Mass (*St Julian's*)
11am High Mass (*St John's*) followed by bring-and-share parish lunch

Sunday 29 August • Feast of the Beheading of St John the Baptist

- 9am Low Mass (*St Julian's*)
11am High Mass (*St John's*)

Parish Day Pilgrimage
to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham

Saturday 18 September

Save the date: details to follow!

From the Parish Registers

Communicants and collections

	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Weekday</i>	<i>Collection</i> <i>(envelopes and cash)</i>
<i>Week beginning</i> 30 May	58	44	£531.00
6 June	50	45	£135.00
13 June	55	47	£70.00
20 June	52	88	£210.00*
27 June	43	72	

**including St John's Day: £95.00*

The collection figure above does not include the amount given by standing order, which averages £3,000 a month.

Holy Baptism

'As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ'

13 June Beck Robert James COLMAN

Funerals and committals

'Lord all-pitying, Jesu blest: grant them thine eternal rest'

14 June Brian MacKINNON, aged 78

Situations vacant!

As we resume the routines of our Church Family life, we're keen to get our rotas and organisation sorted out so that as many people as possible can participate. Don't be shy: we'd love to have you on board! So, whether you were involved pre-Covid or not, if you can help with...

- **servicing coffee and refreshments** speak to Mary Barnes-Clay
- **taking money to our bank** speak to Shirley Buxton
- **assisting as a sidesperson at services** speak to Shirley Buxton or Gudrun Warren
- **servicing at the altar** speak to Andy Berry or Jackie Hazell
- **flower arranging** speak to Lynton Johnson



Our Church Family supports the Norwich Foodbank. Current needs at the Foodbank include long-life fruit juice, tinned sponge pudding, snack bars (e.g. breakfast biscuits), tinned fruit, individual wrapped biscuits, sweets or bars of chocolate, and dog food. Contributions may be brought to St John's

or to the Rectory at any time. In the twelve months to 30 June, Norwich Foodbank gave 11,709 food parcels to local people, including 4,011 children.

Parish notes

New Safeguarding Officer

The PCC has appointed **Sue Bisley** as the Parish Safeguarding Officer, replacing Shirley Buxton, whom we thank for her years of diligent service. Sue's role is to implement and monitor good safeguarding practices in our parish, and to receive (but not investigate) any concerns or allegations of abuse. You can contact her on sukibiz@hotmail.com or 07940 265954.

Making an entrance

Our contractors have finished (for now!) at St John's, leaving a gleaming refurbished porch behind them. The finishing touches, noticeboards etc will be added in a few weeks when the drying-out is complete. New lime pointing outside, repainted and refitted downpipes, renewed plasterwork, cracks and holes neatly filled, stonework repaired, floor washed, panelling polished, new ventilation added, the old green paint removed from the ceiling and coats of fresh limewash applied throughout: it's now a good entrance to our church, 'house of God and gate of heaven'. The project cost just under £5,200 and we hope to fund it with a grant from the St John de Sepulchre Parish Houses Charity.

Patronal Festival

The Nativity of St John the Baptist was celebrated in style on Thursday 24 June. We prepared for the feast with the usual Parish Novena, and on the day beautiful flowers, glorious organ and choral music (including Victoria's *Missa 'O quam gloriosum est regnum'* and Gibbons' *The record of John*) and a full church (with distancing) combined for an uplifting Mass followed by sparkling wine in the churchyard. *St John the Baptist, pray for us!*



Fifteen of us gathered on the morning of Saturday 19 June for a very interesting and inspiring presentation by Anne Aves, explaining some of the work of the **John Aves Education Project** among Palestinian refugees the Dheiseh refugee camp in Bethlehem. Founded in memory of Fr John Aves, the Project funds young people to obtain a degree from one of their local universities: 57 young people have been funded to date. JAEP was one of the charities we supported at Christmas 2019.

*This is an extract from a letter received from the General Secretary of the **Additional Curates Society**, Fr Darren Smith, thanking us for the gift of £179.50 which we sent to the ACS following a collection on Good Shepherd Sunday in April.*

Your generosity is quite literally a beacon of hope during these sad times. More and more we are seeing parishes and dioceses come to ACS for financial support making up stipends enabling parishes to remain open. The founder of ACS, Joshua Watson, had a vision to provide priests for poor and populous parishes and this vision has always been at the forefront of everything we do. Tesco have coined the phrase 'every little helps'; for as long as I can remember ACS has used the phrase 'every penny goes towards providing a priest, and this is as true now as it was in 1837 [when ACS was founded]. Every penny that you have sent to us is going to make a considerable difference, and for what I would like to thank you.

July 2021

1	Thu	of the Precious Blood of Jesus
2	Fri	of the Sacred Heart
3	Sat	St Thomas the Apostle 10am and 12 noon LM
4	Sun	The Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Trinity V)
5	Mon	Feria
6	Tue	Feria
7	Wed	Feria
8	Thu	of Requiem
9	Fri	St Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions
10	Sat	Our Lady on Saturday
11	Sun	The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Trinity VI)
12	Mon	Feria
13	Tue	St Henry
14	Wed	St Camillus de Lellis
15	Thu	St Bonaventure
16	Fri	Our Lady of Mount Carmel
17	Sat	Our Lady on Saturday
18	Sun	The Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Trinity VII)
19	Mon	SS Gregory and Macrina
20	Tue	St Margaret of Antioch
21	Wed	Feria (commem. Herbert de Losinga)
22	Thu	St Mary Magdalene 12 noon LM
23	Fri	St Bridget
24	Sat	Our Lady on Saturday
25	Sun	St James the Apostle
26	Mon	SS Joachim and Anne, Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary
27	Tue	Feria (<i>Week 17</i>)
28	Wed	Feria
29	Thu	St Martha. 12 noon and 7pm LM; 7.30pm PCC
30	Fri	St Peter Chrysologus
31	Sat	St Ignatius Loyola

We pray for...

Thanksgiving for redemption through Christ	1
That we may have deeper compassion	2
Norman and Graham, our Bishops	3
Our Parish and People	4
Norwich City Council	5
Vocations to the Priesthood	6
Our Deanery of Norwich East	7
The Departed: Year's Minds for July	8
Christians in China	9
Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham	10
Our Parish and People	11
The shops and businesses of our parish	12
Our Queen and her Government	13
The sick and those who care for them	14
Theologians and philosophers	15
The Carmelite Order	16
Society of Mary	17
Our Parish and People	18
All spiritual seekers	19
Persecuted Christians	20
Norwich Cathedral	21
Our witness to the Resurrection	22
The people of Europe	23
Deeper devotion to our Lady	24
Our Parish and People	25
All grandparents	26
Friends of Julian of Norwich	27
Spiritual directors and confessors	28
Our Churchwardens and PCC	29
Preachers and teachers of the Gospel	30
The Society of Jesus	31

Thank you from Edwin Wilton-Morgan

Thorpe St Andrew
13th June 2021

Dear Fr Richard, and everyone at St John's and St Julian's who has made this year so wonderful,

Thank you, from the bottom of my Anglo-Catholic heart, for the manifold gifts, joys, lessons, experiences and laughs you have all shared with me over the last eleven months. It has been such a pleasure working and worshipping alongside you all, and I've learned more about myself, our tradition, and Christian love and service here than at any other place.

The witness and ministries offered by you all have been so inspiring, and I enter curacy (still terrified, but) a lot more confident and hopeful about where God is calling me and us all. I won't be a million miles away so do keep in touch – *c'est pas <<adieu>>, c'est <<au revoir>>!*

With heartfelt love and continued prayers,

Edwin



Fathomless riches

A Sermon preached by Edwin Wilton-Morgan, ordinand,
at the High Mass on the Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time:
13 June 2021

Lections Ezekiel 17.22-24: *I, the Lord, make the low trees grow*
II Corinthians 5.6-10: *We are intent on pleasing the Lord*
St Mark 4.26-34: *The smallest of all seeds grows into the biggest shrub*

In his autobiography, *Fathomless Riches*, Richard Coles talks extensively about his journey from hedonistic popstar to priest in the Church of England. Reading it back in 2018 as I nervously prepared for my 'BAP', the three-day selection panel for aspiring ordinands, I was particularly interested in his description of his own panel, which he ends thus:

'Finally, I was asked to see the head selector, a grey-haired Archdeacon who invited me to sit down. He had my file open in front of him on the desk and said, "Why would someone like you want to get involved with a broken-down, failing institution that's lost any sense of its tradition, hasn't got a clue where it's going and can't pay its bills?" I replied "Actually, I'm thinking of leaving the BBC."

A broken-down, failing institution. That's certainly how many of my friends see the Church. As I prepare for my Ordination in two weeks' time, they have the tact not to ask such direct questions anymore. But their implicit doubts, and the echoes of their past cynical questions do resound in my ears. Why would someone like you want to get involved with an institution like that? If attendance trends, financial income projections, and debates about the relevance of a continued established Church are anything to go by, then an anxiety about a career in the Church would seem well founded. Indeed, anxiety seems to form much of the currency of the Church of England today. What will our future be? Will we even have one? In years to come, will our empty buildings stand as a quaint reminder of a simpler past, like police boxes or market crosses?

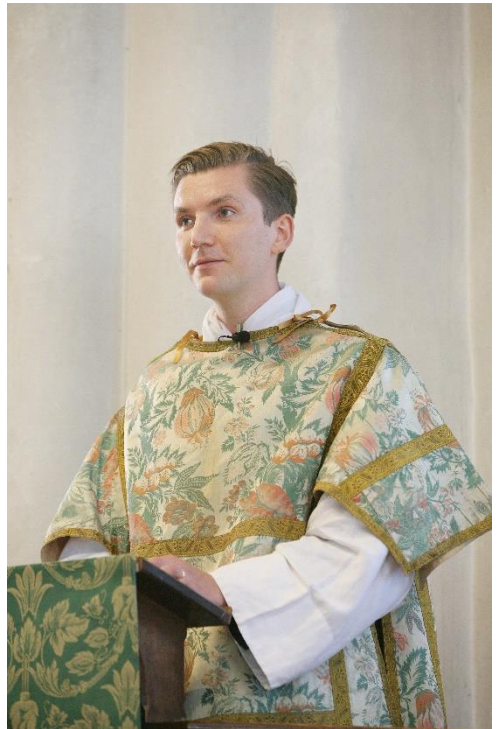
There is a certain fatalism that often accompanies this: that whilst diocesan growth strategists, frantic bishops and even more frantic clergy are desperately rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic, maybe we should, nobly,

go down with our ship. Some might reach to the Gospels' predictions that before the Son of Man comes again in glory, people will turn away from the faith, that the forces of faithlessness, of lovelessness and violence will seem to conquer, that things have to get worse before they get better, so perhaps we just need to sit back, relax, and trust that the waters rising around our ankles are the righteous flood of God's merciful judgement.

Well, perhaps. But I'm inclined to think our Gospel today paints a different, and more hopeful picture. In it, we hear two different parables to do with natural growth. The first is of a farmer who sows the seed on the land, and whilst the mystery of life unfurls itself in each grain, the farmer prepares himself for the harvest. The second is of the

mustard seed, whose tiny size makes the massive shrub it becomes something of a surprise. Both of these provide important clues about how we might understand our future, how the Kingdom of God is growing and being formed in our midst.

The first thing we learn is that this growth is mysterious. In our limited understanding, we cannot possibly draw final conclusions about the state of God's Church on earth, cannot arrogantly determine how the Kingdom of God is being established, cannot second guess God's motives and activity. God is working his purpose out, and what looks to us like decline might well be renewal, what looks like adversity might just be a new challenge, what looks to us like death might well be the seed of new life. Our Church is not a mustard tree that fruited in all its fullness in the 16th, 18th or 19th century (delete according to churchmanship) and has now withered rather unattractively. No, we are still at the seedling phase, fragile and small, subject to change and chance, forging our way through good *and bad* seasons, the mystery of life unfurling in us, though we know not how.



*Edwin Wilton-Morgan preaching
at High Mass on Sunday 13 June*

The second key point is that this is all God's work, God's activity. What so much of our anxious language often contributes to is the idea that it is we who are called to save the world, that we are the authors and builders and saviours of God's Kingdom. Mission, rightly understood, is not a human activity. Mission is part of the will, and so the being, of God himself. To participate in God's mission to the world means being caught up *in him*, overtaken by his activity and presence, swept along in new directions and brought to bear fruit in unexpected ways.

The third point is that, whilst it may be God's work, we are invited to participate in it. Whilst the cure for our anxiety is indeed trusting in God's providential activity, it certainly should *not* result in a complacent laziness. God gives the growth, but it is we that must tend, weed, water and protect the seed with which he entrusts us. In the well-known words of St Teresa of Avila, 'Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours.' Whilst the work that we do may seem inconsequential or perhaps hopeless, the mustard tree stands as witness of the great conclusions God can generate from our feeble and tiny beginnings.

To illustrate this, the Episcopal priest Fleming Rutledge tells the story of the church in New York who wanted just a little more space for coffee and so decided to build a small church hall. Curiously, and entirely unplanned by them, new things began to happen, and the little hall began to be a space for outreach to the poor and outcast, for renewed prayer and study, for welcome and engagement with the diversity of their parish. This little hall soon became the site of complete spiritual renewal of the church, entirely transforming its witness to its parish and its people. Reporting on the building project, one vestryman concluded, 'Our modest aspirations in planning were overtaken and surpassed by God's providence for his ministry.'

If God is to transform our work, then we have work to do. There *is* room for anxiety in our faith. We must be anxious enough not to get complacent. Like in New York, we must be anxious enough to do our little bit, to seek out and nurture signs of new growth, to offer our meagre work up for God to transform. But anxiety should only ever spur us on, and not terrorise or defeat us. Much like those generous Victorians who planted up our parks with trees whose full growth they would never see, we must have patience, trusting that the results of our labours may not be discerned in our lifetimes. We must have faith, knowing that the seed planted by Jesus Christ is growing towards the fullness of the Kingdom, in ways deeper, more mysterious and more beautiful than we can grasp. And we must have hope, that the apparent infertility and

barrenness of the land in front of us will be transformed into the luscious pasture of God's bounteous harvest.

So, why would someone like you want to get involved with an institution like that? It's a valid question, and one we should probably ask ourselves from time to time. But it's a question that only makes sense if we can't see past the apparent hopelessness of the task ahead, can't see past the unfruitfulness of the earth, can't see in the tiny seed the incomparably mighty tree of God's glorious Kingdom.

It has been the greatest privilege to work and worship alongside you this past year. Perhaps at no other time in our lifetimes has the life and witness of our national Church been so tested, and amid so much death, fear and grief, it has been difficult to see how survival, let alone new growth, might be possible. But everywhere at St John's and St Julian's, with dogged persistence, new growth has indeed been poking its head up all over the place. From expertly livestreamed services to hilarious Zoom coffee mornings, from individually wrapped cupcakes to a huge increase in charitable giving, from a renewed appreciation for the Blessed Sacrament to a deepened sense of how we care for the most vulnerable in our parish, this community has demonstrated how, with faith, hope, love, and elbow grease, God's Kingdom is indeed growing magnificently and unstopably among us.

So, if being ordained means getting involved with an institution like *this* one, then sign me up for life.

Quite a character

A Sermon preached by Fr Richard Stanton, Parish Priest,
at the High Mass on the Patronal Festival: Thursday 24 June 2021

Lections Isaiah 49.1-6: *The Lord called me before I was born*
Acts 13.22-26: *John proclaimed a baptism of repentance*
St Luke 1.57-66, 80: *His name is John*

'I was thinking, "I have toiled in vain, I have exhausted myself for nothing", and all the while my cause was with the Lord, my reward with my God.'
(Isaiah 49.4)

The twentieth-century artist Enid Chadwick, whose work has become so indelibly associated with the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, put pen to paper before her death in the 1980s and wrote some memories of life

in England's Nazareth in the early years of the pilgrimage revival before the Second World War. 'Real Walsingham natives,' she said, 'will remember remarkable characters of bygone days, characters who don't seem to exist now unless we have taken their place without knowing it. I am thinking of such people as Billy Redwin, gentle and friendly, known as Mongoose: Jabez Blunderfield, the Snowdrop King, who used to chase off any children who were stealing the snowdrops: Mudderer Mann, who walked back from Fakenham one day and made a "fist o' walking". Then there was Miss Lola Smith, who gave piano lessons. She also played the violin and turned up once to help in a little orchestra with only three strings on her instrument saying: "I'll tumble in when I can".'

Of course, Walsingham is distinctive in many ways, but every parish can claim its share of characters who have passed into corporate memory; Fr Colin Stephenson's comical if occasionally acidic book *Merrily on High* consists of character after character whom he encountered over the decades of his ministry in the Church of England, such as the lady at Cowley St John 'who really enjoyed collecting money for the church and was more than once picked up by the police for pestering people in the street.' Then, too, there was 'a formidable Irish lady, who kept all the lights and fires on in her house day and night saying that a nice young man from the Electricity Board had explained that... the more she used the cheaper it would be.' Yet another to feature in the pages of the book is the curate of Barnes, who only ever said a votive Mass of St Joseph and used to organise a Sunday School treat every year as a present for a poor parish. 'He always took them,' says Fr Stephenson, 'to the same spot in the country. Unfortunately it was sold for building development and every year there was less and less country, until at last he was taking the children into the middle of a housing estate and the residents complained.'

Lest we find this too comical, I'd return our attention momentarily to Enid Chadwick, who noted perceptively that 'characters don't seem to exist now' because, most likely, 'we have taken their place without knowing it.' This parish, too, has had its share of characters over the years, with their loveable quirks and peculiarities and sayings – Amelia? Sylvia? Amy? Peter and Paul? Rosemary? Fr Martin became a legend in his own lifetime, and even I know what he would say to X or Y, not least because he was rather better than your present Parish Priest at being able to persuade parishioners what did and did not count as 'N.P.W.'. And it's good and holy that with a smile and a prayer of thankfulness we should call them all to mind today,

along with the countless others who have gone before us in this place, because a Patronal Festival serves among other things to remind us that we are all of us building on a foundation which has already been laid, that we are relay runners in a race, pressing ahead for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus, holding the baton in our turn before we pass it on to those yet to come, 'looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.' In ordinary times, we would be singing today that

*These stones that have echoed their praises are holy
And dear is the ground where their feet have once trod,
Yet here they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims
And still they were seeking the city of God.*

The problem, sometimes, with the stories of characters which we hand down from generation to generation is that their dominant traits, instructive and indicative though they are, create a rather two-dimensional picture of the complete person. Is there a danger that we might even think of our patron John the Baptist as one of the 'characters' who pepper the pages of the Scriptures, the funny man, awkward at a party no doubt, with his camel hair, his locusts and wild honey, his insistence on a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, his call to be ready to welcome the coming Lord the thong of whose sandals he would not be worthy to untie? A strange little man, parked in the corner, one of our characters, and no more to be said about him.

And yet on this festival day, one of the oldest festivals in the Church's calendar, our attention is summoned to the totality of the life and witness of the Baptizer St John, 'the greatest and last of Israel's line of prophets', and, said Jesus, 'of those born of women, no one has arisen greater than he'. The preface at the start of the Eucharistic Prayer today teaches us that John's birth 'brought great rejoicing; even in the womb he leapt for joy at the coming of human salvation. He alone of all the prophets pointed out the Lamb of redemption.'

Today, at the apex of the year in the northern hemisphere, after which the days will begin to shorten again, the Church calls us to focus on John who said, 'He – Jesus – must increase, I must decrease', and so we find ourselves summoned to a similar pattern of self-consecration, invited to consider how my vocation and your vocation is to work together with God to advance the reign of Christ, to proclaim the coming Kingdom, to summon others not so much with our lips as with our lives to recognise in our midst the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

This can often feel like hard and unrewarded work, a fruitless and thankless task in barren soil. Mingled with our thanksgiving today there must rightly be penitence – penitence because we have made too little of the opportunities offered to us, because the graces so freely offered in worship and the sacramental life have been ignored or wasted, because the Gospel call is hard and we have too often chosen to evade or reduce it for the sake of a quiet life. Then, too, for all of us who work together in the Family of the Church, there is the incipient risk, particularly I think at the moment as we trudge through month after tedious month of this pandemic, of the kind of sadness or resentment of which Isaiah spoke in the first reading: ‘I have toiled in vain, I have exhausted myself for nothing.’ What has it all been for? Why have we done it, year after year? One hears faint echoes of the disciples’ reproachful sigh to their Lord at the lake: ‘We have laboured all night and caught nothing.’ And yet our celebration of St John the Baptist proclaims that our God is always doing a new thing, that ‘water *can* break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert’, that ‘the ransomed of the Lord *will* return with singing’ because, as Isaiah goes on to say, ‘*all the while* my cause was with the Lord, my reward with my God’, and you and I are working to the beat of a very different economy. In the light of the Resurrection, no good work is ever, ultimately, wasted; nothing done for the Lord and his Church is ever futile or trivial; how could it be, when the Lord loved the widow who cast in two small coins to the treasury, esteeming not the monetary worth but the scale of her gift in her proportion to her means? ‘They gave of their plenty, but she of her penury hath cast in all that she had.’

The Patronal Festival, then, is a time of rejoicing and thankfulness, a time for appropriate penitence, and a time too to allow ourselves to be called to fresh consecration and new zeal in living the life of faith as a community in this place under the patronage of John the Baptist. As we celebrate with him today and ask for the help of his prayers, we commit ourselves once again to the work and witness of the Gospel which calls each of us, living stones, to accept the joyful privilege of sharing together in the building-up of the Kingdom through our worship, our witness, and our acts of service, and to recognise in doing these things together, small though they may seem to be, tiring though they sometimes are, we are allowing the Holy Spirit to form within us that only ‘character’ which is of significance in the last analysis, shaped and moulded in the pattern of Christ, so that salvation may indeed reach to the ends of the earth.

Amen.

WORSHIP WITH US

We warmly welcome you.

Sundays	9am Low Mass	<i>St Julian's</i>
	11am High Mass and Sermon	<i>St John's</i>
	6pm Low Mass	<i>St John's</i>

Weekdays

<i>The Mass</i>	Monday 10am	<i>St Julian's</i>
	Tuesday 12 noon	<i>St John's</i>
	Wednesday 10am	<i>St Julian's</i>
	Thursday 12 noon	<i>St John's</i>
	Friday 5pm	<i>St Julian's</i>
	Saturday 12 noon	<i>St John's</i>

<i>The Rosary</i>	Monday 10.30am	<i>St Julian's</i>
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Morning and Evening Prayer

The Daily Office is currently said privately in church, before opening and after closing

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Physically-distanced Confessions may be heard at any time by arrangement with the Parish Priest

St John's and St Julian's are both **open daily** for prayer, quiet and visiting (except St John's which is currently closed on Mondays). The Blessed Sacrament is reserved on the High Altar of both churches for the Communion of the Sick and the devotion of the faithful.

We warmly welcome enquiries about **baptisms and weddings**. We will be pleased to help you in any way we can.



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On the cover:

The Revd Edwin Wilton-Morgan with his family following his Ordination to the Diaconate on 27 June