

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, TIMBERHILL with ST JULIAN, NORWICH

January 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

Shirley Buxton

Deanery Synod representatives

Liz Kilshaw, Rhys Lewis

Parochial Church Council

Mary Barnes-Clay, Fr Peter Barnes-Clay, Andrew Knights, Susan Snasdell, Elizabeth Sutherland, Melissa Symes, Nigel Waller

Sidespeople

Garret Cronin, Barbara Donnelly, Andrew Knights (*Senior Sidesman*), Michael Rayner, Wendy Rayner, Nichola Rose, Diane Sheen, Susan Snasdell, Dorothy Tinkler, Richard Tinkler, Stuart Tinkler, John Woodrow

The Julian Centre Rouen Road, Norwich NR1 1QT
01603 767380 • www.julianofnorwich.org

The Centre is currently closed for refurbishment

Journeying onward, guided

Dear friends,

The Queen's message, broadcast on Christmas Day, has been widely praised this year for its warmth and wisdom. In it, Her Majesty spoke of how a year which has necessarily kept so many people apart has also, in many ways, brought us closer together, both in this country and across the Commonwealth. She spoke too with heartfelt and unaffected conviction of the power of the Christian faith in her own life. She said, 'The teachings of Christ have served as my inner light, as has the sense of purpose we can find in coming together to worship.'

She continued, 'The Bible tells how a star appeared in the sky, its light guiding the shepherds and wise men to the scene of Jesus's birth. Let the light of Christmas – the spirit of selflessness, love and above all hope – guide us in the times ahead.'

We all need a guide. When we wish each other a happy New Year, we are expressing a hope in the face of the unknown. Like travellers on a dark and unfamiliar road, not knowing what lies ahead, but calling out to each other to keep up their courage as they put one foot in front of another, we all need to be cheered and encouraged for the journey ahead, since we do not know where it is leading us nor what may happen around the next bend. And that cheer and encouragement which we share as we wish one another 'Happy New Year!' are good, and we all need to both give and receive it.

But, better than that, we also need a guide – one who knows the road: its pitfalls and danger spots, the nature of the terrain, the destination to which we are travelling. We need one who has travelled the road before us, one to whom it will hold no surprises.

In life, Our Lord has promised to be such a guide for us. 'I am the light of the world,' he said. 'Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life' (*St John 8.12*). Not only has he promised to be a guide for us, but he himself is also the *destination* to which we are travelling, our heart's true home – not just when we die, not in a far-off heaven, but where we are truly at home even now, in the One in whom we live and move and have our being. Even more than that, he is the *Way* by which we will get there. 'Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going.

How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him" (St John 14.5-7).

We know him and have seen him in the child of Bethlehem, whom this Christmas we have adored in the Crib. St John tells us this at the end of the Gospel on the Second Sunday of Christmas: 'No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known' (St John 1.18). At Mass during the Christmas season, the priest says of Christ that 'in him we see our God made visible, and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see.'

Jesus Christ is the revelation of the Father's glory, the exact imprint of his being: he shows us the Father. Fr John reminded us in his sermon at the Solemn Mass on Christmas Day that Archbishop Michael Ramsey expressed it like this: 'God is Christlike, and in him there is un-Christlikeness at all.' And so the discovery of the image of God within each of us involves becoming more Christlike in our thoughts and words and actions (and re-actions!). Our sharing in the sacramental life of the Church immerses us in the life of Christ and is the motor which powers this ongoing transformation.

The Queen's Christmas broadcast continues the tradition of her father King George VI. In 1939, the first Christmas of the Second World War, he included in his broadcast verses by the British poet Minnie Louise Haskins; it's said that his thirteen year old daughter, our Queen, had given him the poem. You all know it:

*And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."*

And he replied:

*"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."*

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

So King George pointed his people, as our Queen did this year, to that Guide on whom we can depend, the Guide whom this Epiphany we worship with the Magi and recognise as the Father's beloved Son in the River Jordan. He reveals to us the face of the Father, and invites us to share in his divine life.

The fullest expression of the Catholic faith as the Church of England has received it, to which we bear witness on Timberhill and St Julian's Alley, is of use to us and to the Church only as far as it helps to express, symbolise and nurture our sharing in the divine life. Above all else, the Christian religion is a *life* – a spiritual life animated and empowered by the Spirit of the living God. My hope and prayer is that, with the Lord as our guide along the unknown way before us, each of us individually and all of us together will grow in that life in this new year of Our Lord.

In that spirit, I wish you a happy, healthy and hopeful New Year.

Your friend and parish priest,

Fr Richard

Coronavirus

During the 'lockdown' which begins on Wednesday 6 January, places of worship are permitted to remain OPEN. The Cabinet Office says: 'You can attend places of worship for a service. However, you must not mingle with anyone outside of your household or support bubble. You should maintain strict social distancing at all times.'

We must be scrupulous in observing good practice and keeping each other as safe as possible. The Parish Priest, Churchwardens and PCC are committed to keeping our arrangements under constant review and if necessary we will have to curtail our services if we can't operate safely.

We have reduced the number of servers at the Solemn Mass, and, at the 6pm Mass on Sundays, the organ will not be used and Benediction will not be given. Only come to church if you feel well and are able to comply with the precautions we have put in place.

Please wear a face covering in church; maintain physical distancing; observe good hand hygiene; and, **in particular, do not mingle after services but leave the church promptly.** Most importantly, keep calm and continue to pray for one another, and together we will get through this!

Festivals in January

Friday 1 January • Mary, the Holy Mother of God

11am Solemn Mass (*St John's*)

Sunday 3 January • Second Sunday of Christmas

9am Low Mass (*St Julian's*)

11am Solemn Mass (*St John's*)

6pm Choral Evensong and Benediction (*St John's*)

Music by Wood, Smith, Stanford, Britten, Howells and Harris

Wednesday 6 January • Feast of the Epiphany

10am Low Mass (*St Julian's*)

7.30pm Solemn Mass with the Blessing of the Epiphany Crib,
Offering of the Epiphany Gifts, Blessing of Chalk and
Proclamation of the Date of Easter (*St John's*)

Monday 25 January • The Conversion of St Paul

10am Low Mass (*St Julian's*)

Wednesday 27 January • St Julian of Le Mans, Patron of St Julian's

10am Low Mass (*St Julian's*)

From the Parish Registers

Communicants and collections

	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Weekday</i>	<i>Collection</i>
<i>Week beginning</i> 6 December	58	58	£305.00
13 December	63	53	£366.00
20 December	54	102	£284.20 [†]
27 December	34	61	£145.00

The collection figure above does not include the amount given by standing order, which averages £2,850 a month.

[†] *This figure does not include the collections on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, nor the retiring collection on 27 December, which together totalled £508.30, all of which has been given to charity.*

Edwin Wilton-Morgan

One of the happy features of the past four months has been the presence among us of Edwin Wilton-Morgan, undertaking a year's placement in our parish as part of his training for Ordination at Westcott House, Cambridge. Offering these opportunities enriches our Church Family, and Edwin's humour, willingness to work, enthusiasm, prayerfulness and insight have been warmly appreciated.



So we were delighted to announce on Sunday 3 January, both at Norwich Cathedral and at St John's and St Julian's, that Edwin will serve his curacy at Norwich Cathedral following his Ordination this summer. Although Edwin will be sharing in the life and work of the Cathedral, the major focus of his ministry will be at the Julian of Norwich campus – St Julian's Church, the churchyard, the Julian Centre and All Hallows' guest house – where he will be working with me, as Priest Director, to develop the ministry to those visiting Julian's Cell and our outreach to the local community around the church.

Please join with me in congratulating Edwin on this appointment and all it will bring to our future and his, and please pray for him and his partner, Taylor. God willing, Edwin will be ordained Deacon at the Cathedral on Sunday 27 June 2021.

ROS

Parish notes

Christmas 2020

The ceaselessly-changing situation with the pandemic made our planning for Christmas a more complex exercise than usual, but in the end it was a very happy feast, and we warmly thank all who made it so – flower arrangers and decorators, musicians, sacristy team and servers, cooks, sidespeople, cleaners and many more. Of course the congregations were smaller than usual but the services were beautifully offered with real devotion

and love. Our churches were magnificently decorated and this was widely appreciated by many who accepted the invitation of our open doors throughout the holy season.

Our **Christmas collections** raised an excellent **£508.30** which will be given away to three charities: the Magdalene Group in our own parish, the College of St Barnabas at Lingfield, and *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Given the reduced congregations and the absence of the LGBT+ Carol Service from our programme this year, the amount given is wonderfully encouraging. God bless you for your kindness.

Christmas greetings to local businesses

Thanks to the kindness of some of our bakers, hand-tied gift bags of homemade festive spiced biscuits were distributed by Fr Richard and Edwin as a Christmas gift from the Parish Church for the staff and team members at our local shops and businesses, who have had such a hard year.



The Year 2020: some figures

During the year 2020 your Clergy celebrated the Holy Eucharist 105 times on Sundays and 328 times on weekdays, a total of 433 Masses – 247 at St John's and 186 at St Julian's. Our churches were closed for public worship for 19 weeks this year. In the 33 weeks we were open, Holy Communion was received 3,618 times, an average of 110 communicants a week (58 on Sundays and 52 on weekdays). These figures reveal extraordinary faithfulness in a traumatic year. There were 3 baptisms and 3 funerals, and 4 people were presented to the Bishop for Confirmation. Sermons were given by 10 different preachers. ***Thanks be to God.***

Parish finances

The financial position of our Church Family is vastly improved following the reinvigorated engagement with the principles of Christian Stewardship which began with our campaign in autumn 2019. **THANK YOU!** The parish has been carried through the challenges of the last year – including months of closed doors – because of the number of people who now make

their regular gifts to their Church through the bank. If you aren't among them, and would like to give in this way, simple forms are available at the back of St John's, and Fr Richard or Chris Bushnell will happily provide full details. Our Parish Share – the contribution which we make to the Diocese of Norwich to help provide mission and ministry (and meet the costs of the clergy) – for the year was £65,000; we have fallen short of this for the first time in years, but we did manage to pay £60,000, a greatly encouraging effort. Any special gifts to make up the deficit would, of course, be thankfully received.

Coffee morning every Friday

During the latest 'lockdown' there'll be a Church Family coffee morning online **each Friday from 10.30am to 11.30am**. You'll have to bring your own coffee and biscuits, but hopefully it will offer a chance for a friendly catch-up with friends old and new. If you'd like to come, just let Fr Richard know and he'll send you the Zoom log in details.



Shirley Buxton and Gudrun Warren were admitted as Churchwardens of our Parish by Fr Richard, acting with authority delegated from the Archdeacon of Norwich, during the Solemn Mass on the Second Sunday of Advent. Here they are together on the steps of St John's after Mass. The congregation that morning pledged their faithful support of Shirley and Gudrun as they serve us.

January 2021

- 1 Fri **MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD** 11am SM
2 Sat SS Basil and Gregory
- 3 Sun **The Second Sunday of Christmas**
4 Mon Christmastide Feria
5 Tue Christmastide Feria
6 Wed **THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD** 10am LM; 7.30pm SM
7 Thu after the Epiphany
8 Fri after the Epiphany
9 Sat after the Epiphany
- 10 Sun **The Baptism of Our Lord**
11 Mon Feria (*Week I of Ordinary Time*)
12 Tue St Aelred of Rievaulx
13 Wed St Hilary
14 Thu of Requiem
15 Fri Feria
16 Sat Our Lady on Saturday
- 17 Sun **The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Epiphany II)**
18 Mon for Unity (*Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins today*)
19 Tue St Wulfstan
20 Wed SS Fabian and Sebastian
21 Thu St Agnes
22 Fri St Vincent
23 Sat Our Lady on Saturday
- 24 Sun **The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Epiphany III)**
25 Mon **The Conversion of St Paul** 10am LM
26 Tue SS Timothy and Titus
27 Wed **St Julian of Le Mans, Patron of St Julian's Church** 10am LM
28 Thu St Thomas Aquinas
29 Fri Feria
30 Sat Charles I, King and Martyr
- 31 Sun **The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Epiphany IV)**

We pray for...

God's blessing on the New Year	1
The Orthodox Churches	2
Our Parish and People	3
Schools and teachers	4
Our musicians and servers	5
Thanksgiving for Jesus Christ, revealed to all nations	6
The missionary work of the Church	7
The Julian of Norwich Partnership	8
Vocations to the Religious Life	9
Our Parish and People	10
Peacemakers	11
Our Deanery of Norwich East	12
Wisdom for those in authority	13
Year's Minds for January	14
The homeless and all who support them	15
The Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham	16
Our Parish and People	17
Christian Unity	18
Norman and Graham our Bishops	19
All suffering from Coronavirus disease or its effects	20
The children of our parish	21
Deacons	22
Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary	23
Our Parish and People	24
Christian Unity	25
Our friends	26
St Julian's Church on its Patronal Festival	27
Theologians	28
The shops and businesses of our parish	29
Her Majesty the Queen	30
Our Parish and People	31

The Moveable Feasts • AD 2021

After the Gospel at the Solemn Mass on the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6), the moveable feasts for the year are announced to the people, using the same chant which is employed in the presence of the Paschal Candle for the great song of rejoicing, the 'Exsultet', at the Easter Vigil. The use of the same chant on the two occasions reminds us that each passing year is anchored in the reality of the Paschal Mystery: Christ's death and Resurrection.



*The Elevation of the Host
on Christmas Day 2020*

We share in this mystery through our baptism and our faithful living of the life of grace. Each year as the Church progresses through the story of salvation in the Christian year, we are given fresh opportunities to grow in this grace and respond to the mystery with lively faith. Thus the liturgical year shapes and forms us, immerses us in Christ, and helps us to grow up into the fullness of his stature, who fills all in all.

All the moveable feasts in the Church year take their date from the date of Easter, and this year they fall as follows:

- Ash Wednesday**Wednesday 17 February
- Palm Sunday**Sunday 28 March
- Easter Day**..... Sunday 4 April
- Ascension Day** Thursday 13 May
- Pentecost (Whitsunday)** Sunday 23 May
- Trinity Sunday**..... Sunday 30 May
- Corpus Christi**..... Thursday 3 June
- The Sacred Heart of Jesus**Friday 11 June

- First Sunday of Advent** Sunday 28 November

*Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega:
all time belongs to him and all the ages*

A family we didn't choose

A Sermon preached by Fr Richard Stanton, Parish Priest,
at the Solemn Mass on the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas:
27 December 2020

Lections Genesis 15.1-6; 21.1-3: *Your heir shall be of your own flesh and blood*
Hebrews 11.8, 11-12, 17-19: *More descendants than could be counted*
St Luke 2.22-40: *They took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord*

'There came from one man more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.' (*Hebrews 11.12*)

Yesterday lunchtime Fr John Fellows posted in our Church Family Facebook group a photo of a clerical mug (that's a drinking receptacle, not, in this case, the Parish Priest's face) which bore on its side the warning, 'Be careful or you will end up in my sermon.' So here is, as they say on the radio, a 'shout out' for those who commented on it – Fr Peter Barnes-Clay, Melissa Symes and Minisha Gupta – and those who also interacted with the post: Jackie, Liz, Sue, Fr Jay, Clive, Bev, Fr Aiden, Roger, Kay, Ross, David, Bridget and Sherry. *Not* among that number, but ending up in today's sermon nonetheless, is a priest of my acquaintance who once, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, advertised his Christmas Day services in the notices, finishing with the line, "and there is Evensong and Benediction at 6 o'clock, to give you somewhere to come when you've fallen out with your families."

In saying this, he not only encouraged participation in the daily prayer of the Church, a thing always to be encouraged, but also deftly alluded to the reality which, for many people a lot of the time and for most of us sometimes, lurks behind the tinsel and the trimming of a domestic Christmas. I once got a laugh, which helps to give a preacher a much-needed boost, when at the start of a sermon I mentioned that the traditional subject for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, coming after 'Death, Judgement and Heaven' is 'Hell', and that this might strike a chord with those who would shortly be setting off for Christmas with their in-laws.

Of course, Christmas in 2020 is rather different and many will be missing the warmth of a family Christmas, as Her Majesty the Queen alluded to on Christmas Day when she said, 'For many, this time of year will be tinged with sadness; some mourning the loss of those dear to them and others missing friends and family member, distanced for safety, when all they'd really want

for Christmas is a simple hug or a squeeze of the hand.’ I myself haven’t been able to see my family this Christmas for the first time in my life. For others, of course, this is nothing new, perhaps because their work always keeps them apart or because the challenges, frustrations and disappointments of family life mean that the glitter-dusted image of a family Christmas has always been more a theory than a reality. Some people don’t want to see their families because of memories of hurt or failure; some would love to, but don’t feel wanted or accepted; for some, the gulf has grown too great. Some are like the man who was in the porch of this church after Evening Prayer on Christmas Eve, with two carrier bags containing his possessions, who said in response to the offer of hot food, ‘It’s not really the food that’s the problem; it’s the loneliness.’

Each year, on the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, the Church proposes for our contemplation the Holy Family of Nazareth: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, that unconventional family unit whom we see front and centre in the Christmas celebrations. In today’s Gospel, we see the family going up to Jerusalem to present the forty-day old Jesus in the Temple, an event which we celebrate at Candlemas at the beginning of February. In other years, the Gospel today tells of Mary and Joseph’s fear and pain when they lost the child Jesus in Jerusalem and found him in the Temple among the doctors, or it tells us of the flight into Egypt when Joseph took Mary and Jesus hastily away to escape from the cruel Herod, whose massacre of the Holy Innocents the Church commemorates tomorrow, Holy Innocents’ Day.

For some people, the image of the Holy Family can feel uncomfortable and challenging when it is presented as a vision of domestic contentment and satisfaction which judges the messiness and untidiness of our own lives and experiences, and Christians have not always spoken with sufficient care when setting forth the Holy Family as a model for our own family life, especially if, to elide two carols which we can’t sing this year, the ‘little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes’ becomes an impossible standard for ‘Christian children’ who, as Mrs Alexander put it, ‘all must be mild, obedient, good as he.’ Such an idyllic vision of the family can cause us to feel excluded from the community of faith if we feel it is beyond our attainment or outside our own experience; and there are, indeed, people for whom Jesus’s own language of ‘Father’ to refer to the First Person of the Blessed Trinity has painful resonances because their own experience of fathers has nothing to commend it.

The Holy Family, however, is emphatically not a stick with which to beat Christians. The Holy Family is the inauguration of that ever-growing

family of which we are all made part in our baptism. A couple of weeks ago Fr Peter suggested to me that, although we live separately, we might legitimately take advantage of the permission for households to eat in restaurants together since we are both part of 'the household of faith', that family which demonstrates that for Christians water is thicker than blood (though what the waitress would have made of that, I couldn't say), and even though (as we heard in the Gospel for St Stephen's Day yesterday) in this life 'brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death' the new family of the Church is for us a gift to be treasured and a responsibility to be accepted.



'Mary, of whom was born Jesus'

It's not always easy, of course, this business of being a Church Family – because no family life is always easy. It places demands upon us, especially when we think merely in terms of 'churchgoing' or 'being part of a congregation' and forget the fundamental significance of the change we have undergone in our baptism. It's expressed liturgically after the Baptism itself, in the modern liturgy, when the People of God say to the newly-baptised, 'We welcome you into the fellowship of faith; we are children of the same heavenly Father; we welcome you.'

This new family of which our baptism makes us part, the family whose members, like the descendants of Abraham in the readings before today's Gospel, are 'more than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore', is one part of the unfolding of the mystery of Christmas in our lives. We are called, here on Timberhill, to be nurturing and building a family of faith in which we have genuine regard for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and live in such a way that shows we believe that to be true. This, in itself, equips us to serve and support one another in our domestic lives, especially those whose family life has met with adversity, and makes the Holy Family of Nazareth an inspiration for daily living, not because they are removed from us in a realm of purity and innocence, but

because the trials of life were (and are) familiar to Jesus, Mary and Joseph – fear of betrayal, flight from danger, anxiety over a child’s progress and future, the wonder at what he would become (as the prophetess Anna spoke in today’s Gospel), the need to make ends meet, and finally, for Mary, after Joseph’s death, the indescribable pain of ‘standing by the cross of Jesus’ as he died a criminal’s death, before she experienced with his apostles the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, gathering the scattered families of the nations into a new household and family of faith.

Hanging on the wall at the Night Shelter in Kings Lynn is a blue and gold icon of the Mother of God with the Child Jesus, an invitation to belonging which speaks to those who come there, home-less and often with deeply traumatic experiences of family life. That Christian project of providing the gifts of shelter and family is a witness to the power for good which lies in the household of faith.

I pray that our Christmas celebration, this Covid year, might lead us to rely more fully on the grace and truth which are revealed in Jesus Christ, that through the prayers of the Blessed Mother and St Joseph our life in this world may have the integrity, courage and charity of true Christians, so that we might be counted among those who, as St John puts while unfolding the mystery of the Incarnation, ‘received him [and] believed in his name’, and so were given ‘power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.’

The Saviour, born of a woman

A Sermon preached by Fr Richard Stanton, Parish Priest,
at the Solemn Mass on New Year’s Day:

1 January 2021

Lections Numbers 6.22-27: *They are to call down my name on the sons of Israel*
Galatians 4.4-7: *God sent his Son, born of a woman*
St Luke 2.16-21: *When the eighth day came, the child was circumcised*

‘When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law.’ (*Galatians 4.4*)

At the Midnight Mass of the Nativity I began the sermon with the opening line of *Little Women*, one of the most famous opening lines from the literature of the nineteenth century: “‘Christmas won’t be Christmas

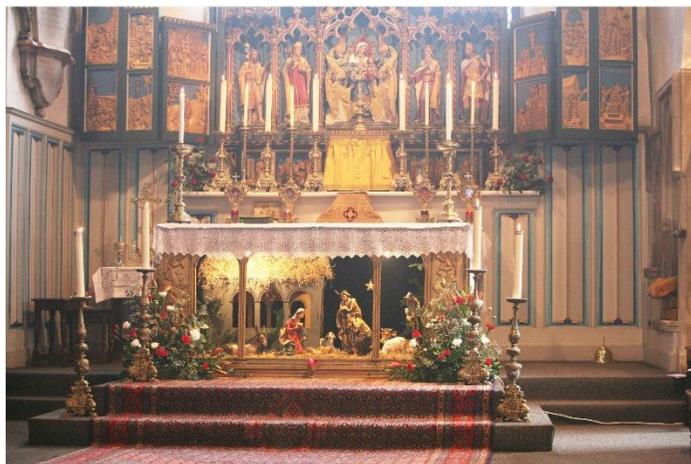
without any presents,” grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.’ Today we’ll move forward a century and travel back across the Atlantic, where in one novel we read another opening line which has become famous: “Take my camel, dear,” said my Aunt Dot, as she climbed down from this animal on her return from High Mass.’

You may well recognise it from *The Towers of Trebizond* by Rose Macaulay. Part autobiographical, this, her last novel, recounts the experiences of Laurie, travelling from Istanbul to Trebizond in the company of the waspish Father Chantry-Pigg and Aunt Dot, who is determined to emancipate the women of Turkey via conversion to Anglicanism and the popularising of the bathing hat. The novel is in some ways an extended reflection on the author’s own wrestling with her Christian faith and the demands it placed upon her. We’re given further insight into this in a volume called *Letters to a Friend 1950-52*, which contains her collected letters to Father Hamilton Johnson. A Cowley Father, he read a novel of hers in 1950, wrote her a fan letter, and a correspondence and friendship flowered between them which tells the story of her return, after thirty years estrangement, to the life of the Church.

In one letter, dated 2 January 1952, she writes: ‘People like New Year’s Day and take it seriously, often, thinking things over and taking stock and making resolutions. We always did this in my family, and I certainly do now. It seems one of those natural, as distinguished from church, seasonal days, that have deep roots, and I think should be used. Of course, a lot of people prefer to merry-make, and see the year in with babble and revel and wine; but many others like to pray. I suppose Anglo-Catholics don’t have watch-night services because RCs don’t; but why don’t both? Did you have it as a boy in Norfolk? When we were children in Italy, we didn’t, of course; anyhow, we were sent to bed before midnight. But my father always read aloud the part of *In Memoriam* about “Ring out, wild bells.” Then, after we lived in England, the waits came round and sang and rang handbells, and all the bells [rang] for miles [a]round.’

Not, perhaps, as much revel and babble and wine this New Year as in others, but still open to us is prayer, that exchange of the heart with its loving God, and we gather today to consecrate the new year of our Saviour to his loving purposes and to fulfil one of the most important roles of the priestly people of God: to intercede for others as well as for ourselves, and to pray for the blessings of peace, health and hope to be enjoyed by all the people of the earth.

This was a great feast of the Church long before it was ever New Year's Day in this country, and has the twofold aspect of giving thanks for Mary as *Theotokos*, Mother of God, on the Octave Day of Christmas, and recalling the scriptural account of her Son's naming and circumcision, in accordance with the Law, on the eighth day after his birth. When, like all Jewish boys born of Jewish mothers, the infant Lord was circumcised, he was given the Name



The altar of St John's on Christmas Day 2020

'Jesus', the Name (says St Luke) 'the angel had given him before his conception'. The name 'Jesus' means 'Saviour' and it is given to the child of the manger because, as St Matthew tells us, 'he saves his people from their sins.' It is the Name above all other names, the Name before which

every knee must bow, and indeed the Church of England still teaches, though few observe it, that worshippers must 'give due reverence to the Name of the Lord Jesus' whenever it is mentioned during public worship.

Jesus saves: he saves his people from their sin – its guilt, its dominion and power, its presence and its consequences. Through Jesus, the Father delivers us from the ruling power of darkness and transfers us into the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom, says St Paul, we enjoy our freedom, the forgiveness of sins. So the Church rejoices to write his Name high on the doorposts of the year and to recall in doing so that this is the Name by which all must enter, that there is no other Name given under heaven by which we may be saved.

And this Jesus, our Saviour, born subject to the Law, was born of a woman, a woman whom we do not pack away with the Christmas decorations when Twelfth Night comes and the tea-towel headdress goes back in the drawer for another year. What Mary was at Nazareth and Bethlehem she is for all eternity – the Mother of God, as the Church has proclaimed for sixteen

hundred years – and so the People of God can turn to her with confidence and hope as a sign of our salvation through Christ.

As the arrival of January lessens the number of days when we will experience ‘Trump from east to west’, nonetheless ‘my flesh in hope shall rest’, and those words, from the carol ‘This joyful Eastertide’, came from the pen of George Ratcliffe Woodward, a Victorian vicar of Walsingham, whose successor we are glad to welcome among us today. Woodward, who also gave us ‘Ding dong, merrily on high’, was a great hymnographer and translator, and undertook much of this work in company with W. J. Birkbeck, a lover of the East and the Orthodox Church who was, in fact, the organist of *this* church in the nineteenth century – whose successor we *also* have among us today! Birkbeck and Woodward together translated the Akathist Hymn of the Holy Orthodox Church, a great hymn of praise in honour of our Lady. Here is part of it, setting forth the honour of the Mother whom we venerate today:

*Hail Mary! Star that shall display
The Sun of Justice' brighter ray:*

*Hail Mary! Of whose generous womb
The Word of God doth flesh assume.*

*Hail Mary! For by thee subdued
The whole creation is renew'd:*

*Hail Mary! For the Holy One
The world's Creator, is thy Son.*

*Hail Maid Mother
Like none other.*

Though ‘like none other’, we rejoice that through her, Jesus our Saviour came to the world and enabled us to be adopted as fellow-heirs with him, children of his Father. As a new year stretches out before us, with Covid and Brexit and challenges unknown, let us entrust ourselves to her loving prayers and to the mighty love of our Saviour, that whatever this year may bring we may not only face it but *embrace* it with the hope and confidence of those who have found life in Christ, since, as we say at the Easter Vigil when the great Paschal Candle is marked beside the crackling fire of new life, ‘All time belongs to him and all the ages; to him be glory and power, through every age and for ever.’

WORSHIP WITH US

We warmly welcome you.

Sundays	9am Low Mass	<i>St Julian's</i>
	11am Solemn 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>
-------------------	----------------	--------------------

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.



stjohnstimberhill.org



[stjohnthebaptisttimberhill](https://www.instagram.com/stjohnthebaptisttimberhill)

On the cover: Nigel Waller painstakingly lights the great chandelier for the Midnight Mass. Photo by Jeremy Warren.