

The Orthodox Parish of St Aidan & St Chad, Nottingham (EP)

**Worshipping in the Church of St Aidan, Arnold Road, Basford,
NG6 0DN**



Parish Newsletter January - February 2025



Parish information and contacts

Priest in Charge

Revd Fr Julian Lowe CJN
Chaplain: University of
Nottingham
Email:
julianlowe1215@gmail.com
Mobile: 07952 174 206

Associate priest

Very Revd Hegumen David
Tel: 0115 9622351

The Advisory Council

Fr Julian Lowe (Chair)
Fr David Gill
Tina Lowe (Church Warden)
Katharine Dryden (Secretary)
Barry Dryden (Treasurer)
Dominic Pote
Margaret Handley

The Trustees

Fr David Gill (Chair)
Fr Julian Lowe
Tina Lowe (Church
Warden and Secretary)
Jim Moulton
Jeanne Usher (St Aidan's
Church)

Church Warden

Tina Lowe

Safeguarding

Tina Lowe
Fr Julian

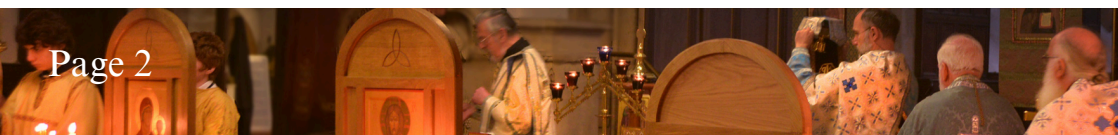
Newsletter Editor

Barbara Bates
Frances Thompson

Website: www.nottinghamorthodox.org.uk

Deanery Website: www.thyateira-deanery.uk

Registered charity #1174715



Fr. Julian's Letter

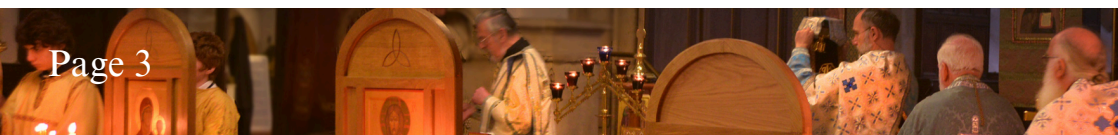
One of my least favourite family traditions always took place on Boxing Day evening. It was then that my father would announce, “Well, that’s it, it’s all over!”.

Now, if you think as my dad did, and it is post Boxing Day, ‘Happy New Year!’; for everyone else, ‘Happy Christmas!’.

I am sure that by now we are all aware of the ‘inaccuracies’ we see in ‘religious’ Christmas cards and Nativity scenes; for example, the presence of the wise men at the birth of our Lord, when clearly they visited some time after His birth. And that it was a house, and not a cave, into which they brought their gifts.

However, I must be honest and say that I do very much like this ‘traditional’ image. This is in part because it reminds me of our Orthodox icons and how these are to be ‘read’ and not simply looked at.

Our icons invite us to enter into contemplation, prayer, and silence; to enter a place where space is not defined as three-dimensional, and time is insignificant.



Fr. Julian's Letter

The Nativity icon is a good example of this. We see in the icon the cave, in which Christ is born, in the background with those who come to adore, in small vignettes. In the Nativity icon we see different elements of the event grouped together, because they are all participants in the 'mystery', of greeting our Lord after His birth.

As Orthodox Christians, we can find ourselves celebrating our Lord's Nativity at different times (December 25th or January 7th). Yet despite this difference we are reminded by the traditional nativity scene that we are all participants in the Mystery of greeting Him upon His birth. While some have arrived at the cave, others are still 'journeying with a star,' continuing the Nativity Fast.

Whatever stage of the journey you are on, may I wish all who are greeting Our Lord a blessed feast; may His birth in a lonely cave in the insignificant town of Bethlehem be a source of peace, joy, and comfort for us all.

Have a blessed Christmas! Fr Julian



Our Life

Farewell to Jude! See p. 11

Chaplaincy

Our work and support of the Chaplaincy teams at the Universities of Nottingham and Leeds continues. At Leeds there has been significant growth in the number of students attending the Liturgy; for which we give thanks to God.

The University of Nottingham Chaplaincy held its annual Festival of Lessons and Carols. Despite the best efforts of storm Darragh, this was once again very well attended by those working or studying at the University, Civic dignitaries, and members of the public.

Christingle Service

On Saturday 30th November we joined our brothers and sisters of St Aidan's Church for a united Christingle Service. Fr Julian had the opportunity to give a short talk about St Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra (Sinterklass), whilst Rev Dan was transformed into an Orange and then into a Christingle. For those who are not familiar; a Christingle is a symbolic object used during the season of Advent - see next page.



Our Life

This is the symbolism of the Christingle: the Orange represents the world, the red ribbon represents the love and blood of Christ; the sweets and dried fruits represent all of God's creation, and the lit candle represents Jesus's light in the world, bringing hope to people living in darkness.



Fr David

Fr David continues his busy life on the road. This has included attending the funeral and memorial service for Br Harold at Shepherd's Law, and supporting the 'reforming' community in Dunblane.



Our Life

SACRE

Fr Julian has continued his role in SACRE (Statutory Council for Religious Education). At our latest meeting we have begun to compile a calendar of 'Religious Holidays' as a resource for Nottingham schools.

This will include details such as Orthodox Nativity (Christmas) which, depending on jurisdiction falls on December 25th or January 6th.

NSAB SG Week

Tina and Fr Julian have continued to ensure awareness of current regulatory requirements for Safeguarding, having been invited to participate in the workshops and presentations for this year's 'Nottingham Safeguarding Adults Board Week'.

New editor!

Barbara has taken over as newsletter editor after several years of faithful and witty service by Frances; I shall be relying on her good sense and advice! I shall also be grateful for contributions - what's going on in your life, books you would like to share, and so on.



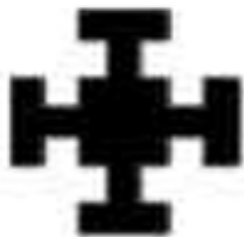
Our Life

Lovely news from St. Aidan's

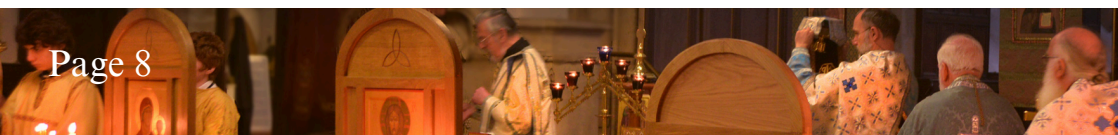
We have heard that Rev Dan Bishop, the vicar of the parish, and his wife Anna Marie are expecting a happy event in mid December, in the shape of the arrival of their first child. We keep them and their family in our prayers and await the news!

St Chad Network

The St Chad Network is a fellowship linking all institutions and people with an association with St Chad: from churches and schools, to Universities and Cathedrals. We have been featured in a recent edition of their newsletter - watch your emails for more information to follow from Fr Julian in due course.



The St Chad Cross



A trip to Bulgaria

In October I saw a very cheap holiday for five days in Bulgaria; I thought that this would be my opportunity to go on pilgrimage to several Holy sites including Rila.

When the details of the booking came through I found the hotel was at 'Sandy Beach'. I looked it up and saw that it was a popular destination for young people - not what I had in mind. Talking to friends about this location my anxiety increased. What had I done?

My fears increased when some friends, who knew the bad reputation of the resort, described it as Bulgaria's version of 'Magaluf,' a place where place where young people go and where 'anything goes'.

What was I to do, cancel the holiday or risk going and hoping that I would be able to find excursions to the monasteries that I wished to visit?

Two young friends researched the excursions for me and I was put at ease, although I was disappointed to find that not all the excursions were available because it was the end of the holiday season.



I had lots of help and support in travelling to my destination, which was a considerable relief, as I have a pacemaker and a wheeled walker.

On arrival, I found that the hotel was on the very edge of the resort, and because it was out of season the only tourists were retired people and families with young children. What a relief!

The pool area was crowded, but the hotel was exceptionally quiet and I was able to rest.

I travelled by bus at minimal expense to Nesebar, a UNESCO World Heritage City.



Nesebar is a most beautiful city, on a peninsula reached by a raised causeway. This, and the bus stop, were the only metalled roads in the city. All other roads are large slabs of random size, and streets are cobbled in a similar way. Not easy using a wheeler!





There are several Byzantine Era churches, many partly demolished by the Turks, who had previously controlled all of this part of the world.

All the ruined churches were museums; a lot of conservation had taken place and a few churches had been fully restored. Two were very much like English churches were before the Protestants of two eras whitewashed all the church interiors. They portrayed events from the Bible in a linear form all around the church - a 'Poor man's Bible' (sic), as it is often called, for those who could not read.

Another church has frescoes rescued from the partially demolished churches. The guardian of that church spoke a little English and we tried to have a conversation.



This lady, Anna, was much older than me and asked me for a blessing. What could I do, as I'm not a priest? So I simply asked for God's Blessing on her, and she in turn gave me a small copy of the Pilgrimage icon. I found all the people I had spoken to, mainly artisans, very friendly.



Every surface of the two churches was painted with Icons of the saints or decorative patterns. The effect was overwhelming. Spending time in the churches gave me a chance to say my Hours (the prayers at set hours of the day), rest and escape from the heat outside.



In my time in Bulgaria I spent every day in Nesebar and was able to reverence the Pilgrimage Icon of the City, so I was able to say I went on Pilgrimage, not the one I expected but one that I will treasure for the rest of my life.

Brother Iain

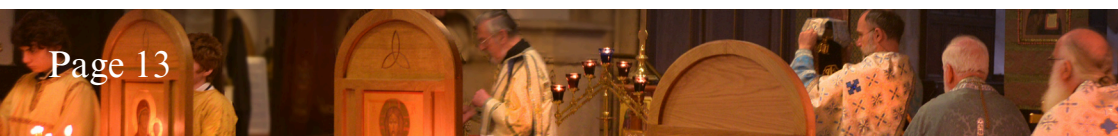


Back to my Roots

Why this title? The answer is both literal, as I am returning to the town where I grew up, and spiritual, as the town where the seeds of Orthodoxy were sown.

To cut a long story short, I was attending my local church as a member of the congregation and a server for several years, when I began to be disillusioned, asking myself, why I am I here? This was not a crisis of faith, as I still loved God and enjoyed being a server. The root of it was the Anglican doctrine, and I reduced the number of services as I sat in the congregation. But what was the alternative way to worship God?

Over five years of soul searching I investigated various denominations, faiths ranging from Catholicism to Baptist, but none of them inspired me spiritually. During this time a friend lent me Timothy Ware's 'The Orthodox Church.' Once I started reading this book, I felt in my heart this was the right way to worship. Unfortunately at that time there were no Orthodox churches or priests in the wilds of Dorset, let alone Wimborne.



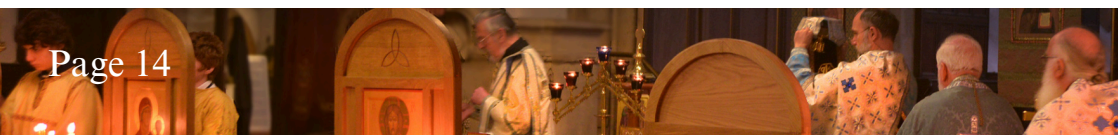
So I returned to limited church services in the congregation and as a regular server, not knowing that the seeds of Orthodoxy were being sown.

Some years later I came up to Nottingham to study for a Masters, only planning to stay a couple of years then return to Wimborne. However, this didn't happen, but I was led spiritually to experiences and situations that I would not face in Dorset.

Here, my seeds of Orthodoxy began to germinate and give fruit. The church of St Aidan's where I was parish warden offered a new home to Father David and the church of St Aidan and Chad.

I attended a number of Orthodox services before my heart confirmed this was the best way to worship and I was later received into the Orthodox faith. Recently I have been shown signs indicating I should move back to Wimborne for the next stage of my Orthodox journey. Hence the title, 'Back to my Roots'.

Jude Pink



What is ‘The Matter With Things’?

This is a shortened version of a piece I wrote in another context about the latest book by Dr Iain McGilchrist, ‘The Matter with Things’, available on Amazon and elsewhere. He has a great deal to say about the state of the world and the importance of spiritual awareness and I think his work is very significant.

Dr Iain is a literary scholar, psychiatrist, philosopher and neuroscientist and has produced an enormous critique of contemporary Western society based on his studies of the brain, the left and the right hemispheres (LH and RH). The LH and RH tend to deploy different kinds of attention; like a bird pecking for seed amongst all the other tiny things it would not want to eat, the LH has focussed, narrow attention.

It looks for what is useful; what can be manipulated and controlled. It provides a representation of reality (whatever that is) such that we can survive within it, take it apart to see how it works and create machines of our own. It needs to co-operate with the RH, which takes in experience directly, intuites the whole, and can tolerate ambiguity and paradox.

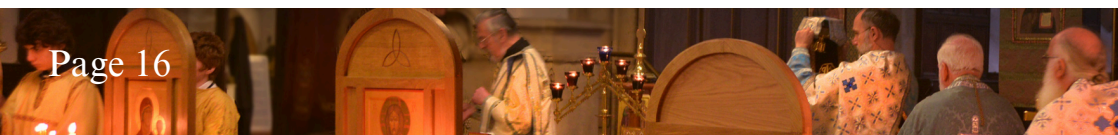


He arrives in the final chapter at ‘The Sense of the Sacred’. Bear in mind that this is a scientific and philosophical inquiry, not an overtly ‘spiritual’ book. Dr Iain’s publishers and colleagues begged him not to write such a chapter. You will lose all credibility, they said. You will undermine your scientific credentials and respectability, they said. Happily, he did it anyway, and he reports that it was the most difficult piece of writing he ever did, yet perhaps the most satisfactory.

His inquiries took him to the point that the spiritual traditions have always known, for example ‘by love He can be caught, but by thinking never[1]’.



We are not separate from Nature, but intimately joined to it, in co-creation, always drawn towards what we can intuit but never understand and grasp, ‘something outside our conceptual grasp but nonetheless present to us through intimations that come to us from a whole range of experiences we may call “spiritual”[2].



Our Eastern Orthodox ‘apophatic’ traditions understands this very well. It is probably a good idea to read this last chapter first, for all its exciting conclusions, and then refer back if you want to know how he arrived at them.

Fundamentally, this is a comprehensive rebuttal of reductive materialism written in language that the West itself invented. I regret to say that I have not read the Summa Theologica of St Thomas Aquinas, but I understand that it is a 13th century synthesis of all theology, at a time when science and religion had not yet developed the spurious opposition that has been dreamed up in the last few hundred years. Dr Iain has created a ‘Summa’ for our times.



He lives in the Scottish Islands!





I end with Dr Iain's own words,
from his equally comprehensive
website,



'...I search out what it is we have lost sight of, all that is there for us to see, if only we were not blinded to it: an inexhaustibly, truly wondrous, creative, living universe, not a meaningless, moribund mechanism. By bringing to bear up-to-the-minute neuropsychology, physics and philosophy, I show not only that these are in no way in conflict with one another, but that they all lead us, time and again, to the same insights. And that this is not in opposition to, but rather corroborates, the wisdom of the great spiritual traditions across the world.'

[1] 'The Cloud of Unknowing'

[2] P 1846

Barbara



A visit to Walsingham

I had the pleasure of visiting the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Walsingham, Norfolk. Walsingham is the site of the Marian apparitions to a woman named Richeldis de Faverches in 1061.

According to the tradition preserved in a ballad, Richeldis had a series of three visions in which the Mother of God appeared to her. In these visions Richeldis was shown the house of the Annunciation in Nazareth, and was told to build a replica in Walsingham as a place of pilgrimage where people could honour the the Mother of God. She is said to have promised, 'Whoever seeks my help there will not go away empty-handed'. There were construction problems. One night, Richeldis heard singing and went out to her garden where she found that the house had been completed. Richeldis saw angels leaving the now completed building. This became the shrine. The Mother of God is therefore venerated at the shrine with the title of Our Lady of Walsingham.

This was my second visit - the first was with Fr Julian and Tina for a day trip, whilst this trip was a weekend-long stay with my friend, Zoe.



When you say you are ‘visiting Walsingham’ for a pilgrimage. you’re spending time in several locations across the village. First, there is the Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. It is a Church of England shrine church built in 1938. It includes the church with the original location of the house. In the shrine church, you can visit the house and pray before an image of our Mother. Above the Anglican Church is a small Orthodox chapel. It is called the Chapel of the Life-Giving Spring of the Mother of God. Services are sometimes conducted by Father Stephen Platt but often by Mother Melangell and visitors. Around the church are gardens and a café. In the village, there are more cafes, and religious themed shops, where you can buy a range of items including icons and incense. Just outside the village is the second pilgrimage location. The Basilica of Our Lady of Walsingham, informally known as the Slipper Chapel or the Chapel of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, is a Catholic basilica just outside the village. Built in 1340, it was the last chapel on the pilgrim route to Walsingham.



Here, there is a Catholic minor basilica, the medieval chapel where pilgrims once prayed when travelling to Walsingham, gardens, café, and a gift shop. The original medieval chapel is called the ‘slipper chapel’ because it was where pilgrims would leave their shoes before walking to the original shrine site barefoot.



Zoe and I had a wonderful time visiting all of these locations. We stayed at a hotel in the village, and walked to the Anglican shrine every day to pray at the house. We attended the prayers provided by the Anglican

and Catholic Churches, and attended evening prayers, a rosary prayer session, and a mass. We visited the small Orthodox Church of St Seraphim, also in the village, which has an icon museum and garden with a very friendly cat. We managed to say hello to Mother Melangell, who looks after the day to day running of the Orthodox chapel, and also peruse all the icons available in the village shops. I even managed to attend Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Transfiguration at Great



Walsingham, and said hello to Fr Christopher Knight there after liturgy.

We felt a profound sense of peace visiting Walsingham. It is a 'slow' place - somewhere you can relax and take life at your own pace, without much else going on around you either.

You can walk the original pilgrimage routes that people for hundreds of years walked. But above all, you have the joy of praying in a historic place where the Mother of God spoke to a woman and told her, build my house and those who visit will never go away empty. This is very true. Walsingham provides a sense of renewal and spiritual nourishment. I crave returning to pray at the house, because it is a profound and beautiful place where I can pour my heart out to the Mother of God.

I truly recommend anyone to go and visit. You too can then feel the holy presence of our Mother and come away renewed.

Jaz Higgs



Mince Pies and Shepherds

On the recent Sunday morning service on Radio 4, on 15th December, listeners were taken on a trip round the pubs in the Sheffield area where they traditionally sing carols. These carols have been written by local people and are valued and sung by crowds of people clearly enjoying the occasion. The most popular is a rendering of the Shepherds' story in many tunes, different from the ones we may know, but equally, or more, expressive.



It is of great interest that the first visitors to the newborn king lying in a manger were these very Shepherds. They were not intellectuals or theologians; not leaders or distinguished in any way. They

were just simple shepherds, often shunned by society because they were unwashed and wore well used clothes, which smelled of the animals they cared for. The men and women of Sheffield could sing rousing of these men. The shepherds probably had little contact with the local churches, but their faith in the new child was aroused.



I have in mind the Methodist movement, where John Wesley, rejected by the Church, established worship which reached out to so many ordinary folk. They were enlightened by his preaching and could sing their hymns with gusto and devotion just as well as could the ones we heard on the radio from Sheffield.

The story of the humble mince pie also comes to mind. Before the Reformation it would be shaped like a crib, with strands of pastry cross crossed across the minced meat, representing straw. This powerful symbol of



Christ was abolished by the reformers. After the dissenters were overcome, the pie was reinstated, but now made round, filled with the sweet ‘mincemeat’ now available and still widely used to this day. So we have the symbol of the Nativity in every household.

Often now, we see the lid shaped as a star, or criss-cross pastry on larger mince tarts. Whether realised or not, this potent symbol sits on the festive table for all to see and taste, just as did the shepherds in the fields originally called by God.

Fr David



Time to smile

Steve Charters has come across a few gems to lighten our moments - here's a couple of my favourites! More next time.



A poem for Christmas by John Betjeman

I haven't space for the full poem, but the point comes across in the final three verses - enjoy!

And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall ?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me ?

And is it true ? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissue'd fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.



Acknowledgements and photo credits

Many thanks to all our contributors this time. Please feel free to write something yourself - deadline for the March-April issue will be 14th February.

Picture credits as follows,

Header & footer - Dominic Pote

p6 Canva Pro

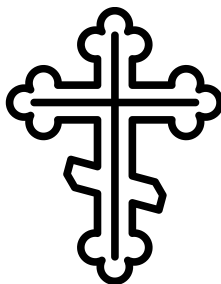
p17 pexels.com Archie McNicol pexels-archie-mcnicol-559645417-16948704

p18 Top & bottom - pexels.com. Middle - Barbara's own.

p 20, 21, 28 - Jaz Higgs

p 24, 27 Canva Pro

p25 Steve Charters



From Jaz's visit to Walsingham

