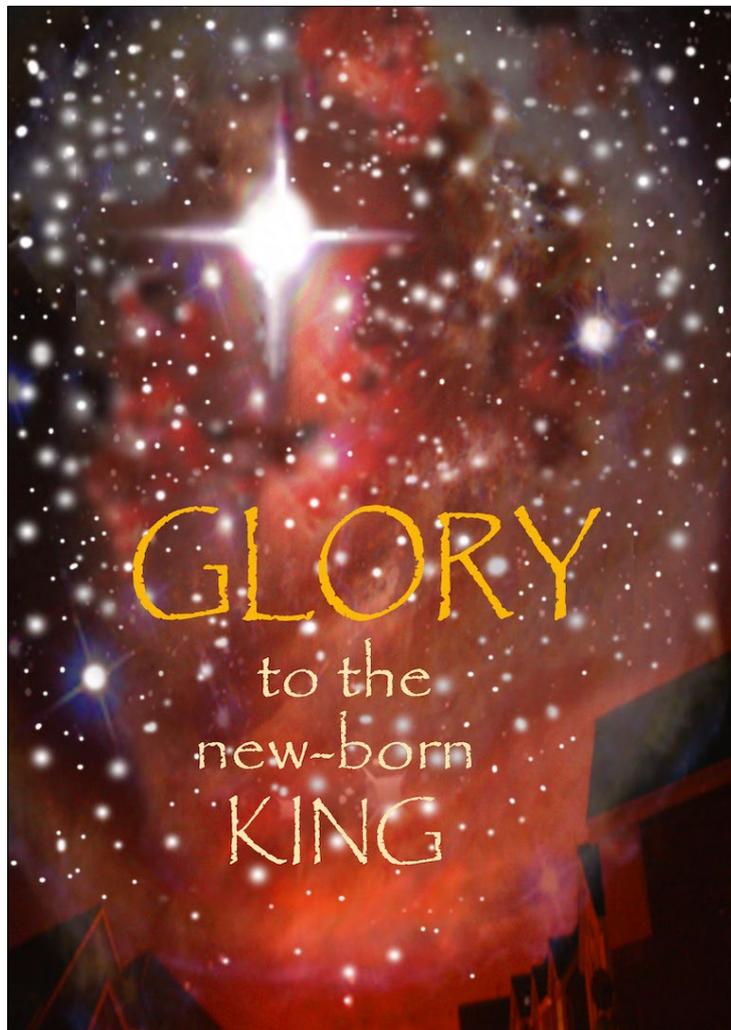


Saints Alive!

***The parish magazine of
All Saints Church, Kings Heath***



**December 2022
& January 2023**



£1
(suggested donation)



Christmas Together

Email: christmastgetherkh@gmail.com Phone: 07763 044986

Christmas Together is a joint venture by the churches of Kings Heath

Community Christmas Lunch 2022

Christmas meals this year are home deliveries only

Do you know of anyone who would like a Christmas meal delivered to their door?

To order a meal please phone:
07763 044986 or email christmastgetherkh@gmail.com.

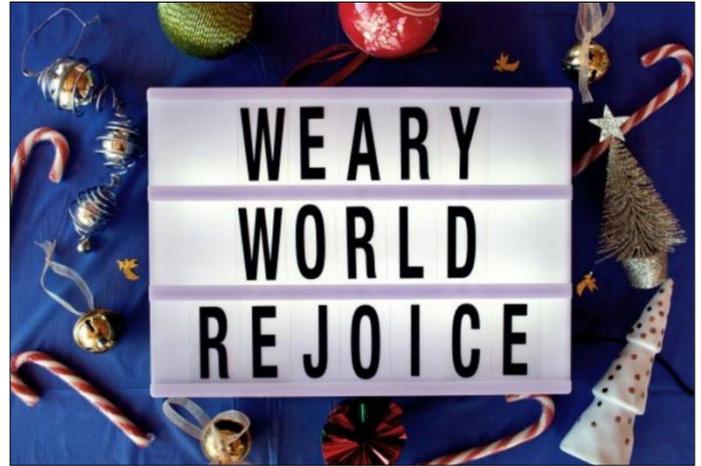
- We will deliver to families as well as individuals.
- The meals will be delivered cold and can be reheated in a microwave. Instructions will be given. If there are no reheating facilities, we will be able to help out.
- Deliveries may be on 23rd, 24th or 25th December.
- We are pleased to receive a £5 contribution towards the cost of the meal(s), if that can be afforded, payable at the door.
- Volunteer drivers are needed. Meals are to be collected from an address in Kings Heath on 23rd December, and delivered any time up until Christmas Day morning. Any meals kept overnight before delivery, must be kept in a fridge. Please get in touch if you can help out.
- Gifts of individual bottles of wine, satsumas, chocolates, Christmas crackers or a donation towards the cost are much appreciated, and may be left with the All Saints office staff between 10am – 3pm throughout Advent, or in church on Sundays.



From the curate

Dear friends,

As days increasingly become shorter and temperatures drop, I cannot help but look back longingly to the warm, sunny days that made our summer. This, however, highlights how much time has flown by as already it is December. Christmas is almost here!



At Christmas, we take time to be together with family and friends as we care for one another. Christmas, however, will look and feel different for most of us what with the cost of living crisis and many other issues going on around the world that have left many families displaced and/or mourning the loss of a loved one. As bills go up and we all try to cut down on expenses by looking for ways to save money, one cannot help but wonder what things will be 'sacrificed'? Will it be the lighting and decorations? Or maybe it is the heating? Will it be the trip to gather with family? Will there be enough food around the table?

One thing that is comforting to know, however, is that the Christmas story does not change and there are no parts that have to be sacrificed. Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem, they found an inn, baby Jesus was born and all who heard the good news were filled with joy and rejoiced.

It is this joy that through centuries many have shared through stories and music, despite the highs and the lows. So, as we sing the Christmas carols, be it at home, church or school, during private and public worship, or maybe listening as we drive or take a ride on the bus, may they bring a smile to our faces. May we remember that it was indeed No Small Wonder and In the Bleak Midwinter, Hark the Herald Angels Sing Joy to the World.

These carols not only make us smile, but they encourage us to have joy in our hearts, to be compassionate towards those in need and to be generous, and there is no time like the present to do that – making Christmas Christmas. They remind us of Immanuel, God who is with us in all circumstances. While there may be a lot of uncertainties for us, and the future might look daunting, let us remember that we are never alone.

Christ came and was born in the most unexpected place to us. This Advent, as we prepare to celebrate Christ coming to us, may we open our eyes and our hearts to encounter him in unexpected ways and in unexpected places. May we be open to see and hear what he is doing in and around us.

So may the joy that the Christ Child brought be with you and remain with you always and, as you look to 2023, may his presence and peace go with you.

With every blessing,

Tariro

Whatever happened to the Coat of Hopes? – Part 2: A Tale of Two COPs (continued)

Following the first section of this article in last month's magazine, below is the conclusion of Damian Hursey's reflection on his visit to COP26 in Glasgow last autumn. At the end of the previous instalment, Damian and his fellow Caministas had just arrived at their destination on Glasgow Green, and hit a wall of local, national and international press – at the front of the procession, he was helping to hold up the edge of the coat, helping to reveal its full splendour and magnificence to the world's waiting media.

The whole experience was quite overwhelming. And also strangely sad and moving. On trees around the edge of Glasgow Green, local XR activists had planted flags to symbolise the nations of the world most affected by global warming, but with least voice in decision-making.

The effect of the flags, the autumnal colours, long shadows, crisp air and clear light with the police standing silently among them gave the occasion a solemnity, and almost funereal air, in contrast to the vibrancy and excitement of the media presence, and intense positive emotion and energy of the newly-arrived activists.



It was at this point that I became aware of the astonishing police presence in Glasgow. There were police, police, police everywhere you looked. And not all of them seemed like they had all that much to do, apart from looking menacing by gruffly folding their arms. It seemed

sometimes as if half the local forces in the country had been squeezed into one average-sized city. (The petty criminals of the UK must have been having a Queen's birthday jubilee of thievery). Police vans were on every street corner. And the ominous sound of the police helicopter was omnipresent, an unceasing drone overhead. My impression of the police was mixed. Some of them, like the Scottish police we talked to on the Green, couldn't have been more polite, and agreed with our cause to an extent. Others from across the UK had the reputation of being more heavy-handed, like those who kettled protestors for hours after an officer got sprayed with washable green paint. Perhaps this was a case of good cop, bad cop writ large.

I had my own scary police experience. They tried to get inside my van twice while I was in it, one time in the middle of the night. Bravely, I hid in the back. And they eventually went away.

That evening we made the local and national news in a big way. Several of the Caministas gave interviews, and our message, journey and purpose came across loud and clear.

But what I hadn't realised when we'd set out that morning was that after only a short break the Camino walkers would be forming part of much a larger protest march to St George's Square in the centre of Glasgow. It had been decided that the



coat should be near the head of the protest march. And so I found myself being formed into a line near the front of the procession and squeezed behind a banner we had brought along with us on which 'COP26 Walk The Talk' was emblazoned – still without entirely realising exactly what was happening. This was quite alarming, but at the same time it felt exciting and daring.

Shortly after we set off some of us were interviewed by Sky News Scotland, including me. 'What was Extinction Rebellion's approach going to be in Glasgow?!' the interviewer asked me, challengingly. Possibly because I was wearing a large 'hourglass' medallion, one of the symbols associated with XR, he'd taken me to be a ringleader. (For the record, I don't normally wear this particular medallion – just on special occasions.) I honestly had very little idea what XR's approach in Glasgow was going to be, but I remembered hearing someone being interviewed on the radio saying they were aiming for 'subtle yet persuasive tactics'.

'I think we're aiming for subtle yet persuasive tactics in Glasgow,' I told the interviewer (I hope convincingly).



Our colourful march to St George's Square in Glasgow

There followed a two-hour march into Glasgow, with drums, chanting and singing, a rapturous rainbow blur of colour, signs and sounds, our marching and chanting intermingling with the first glimpses of Glasgow's spectacular Gothic Victorian architecture (beautifully captured by Ben Wigley's recent film, debuted recently at the Encounters Film Festival in Bristol, at which I felt very blessed to be present).

For some, this was a Palm Sunday experience. A triumphal march into Glasgow, post-Camino, followed by the heartbreaking disappointment of the actual depressing, dismal reality of the results of COP26. This sense of disappointment was shared by many of the delegates from the majority world who were often shut out of the conference negotiations both figuratively and literally. Lingering Covid restrictions (much more of a concern in Scotland than in England at the time) and strict security measures meant that it could take half an hour or more to negotiate the gates to the Blue Zone. Within the conference itself, I've read, the main negotiating floor was off limits to many majority world delegates. There were, apparently, more lobbyists from the oil and gas industry than delegates. And in Glasgow, accommodation was scarce. For a majority world delegate who had flown halfway across the world to be there, with English as a foreign language, this must have all been extremely challenging to navigate, to say the least.

For these delegates, especially those from low-lying island nations, the failure at COP26 to get commitments to keep warming to below 1.5°C

For some, this was a Palm Sunday experience. A triumphal march into Glasgow, post-Camino,

Big emissions cuts still need to limit warming to 1.5°C

Projected greenhouse gas emissions in 2030, gigatonnes (Gt)



must have been especially galling, as well as the continuing failure to secure \$100 billion climate finance from rich countries to ameliorate the effects of 'loss and damage'. ('Loss and damage' is the technical term for the destructive consequences of global warming upon countries that have done least to cause it. The fund is meant to compensate them.) And yet at the same time, there WAS welcome for outsiders in Glasgow, in the conference fringe and activist contingent who were there in Glasgow, in as much force as the police. One particular venue I frequented regularly with other activists was the Climate Café in Adelaide's. This was an inspiring and inclusive space that featured regular interviews, music and conversation, with activists from all over the world.

The Coat of Hopes itself became also, in its own unique way, a place of welcome for delegates from across the majority world. It became more of a place of solace and empowerment for those marginalised by the conference than a challenge for leaders and lobbyists. They were mainly



inaccessible, hidden in luxury limousines with galvanised glass that sped to and from the Blue Zone, and then cocooned within glazed lounges behind security fences. The warmth of the coat's message from the many hands that stitched it together was one of solidarity, and many of the delegates who wore it, and had the coat song sung over them, testified to its uplifting and empowering effect. But this could be seen also in the tranquillity of the faces of those wearers without English.

Back home in Birmingham

A couple of weeks after the conference, back in Birmingham, I heard a local Imam speak at Birmingham climate coalition. As a member of an inter-faith delegation he

was one of the lucky few able to access the Blue Zone. He spoke of the delays and difficulties getting in and out of the conference, and frustrations for delegations within the conference itself. But he said he was also fortunate enough to spend time as part of the conference fringe festival. He said that, for him, there were two starkly contrasting COP26s: the dull, corporatised UN conference, and the vibrant COP26 coalition event.

This reminds me of the introduction to *A Tale of Two Cities*: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.'



As I said recently when interviewed for the Methodist Action Stations podcast, if I hadn't been to COP26 but simply watched it on TV, I would have felt profoundly depressed about the prospects for the world responding robustly to the climate crisis.

But if I had stayed at home, I would only have seen half the picture.

There is complacency and delay due to corporate collusion with, and corruption among, our political leaders, but alongside and at the same time as that, huge innovation in all spheres of our economy, the way we produce energy, food and many potential revolutions reworking the underpinnings of our material culture.

Worldwide networks of activists such as Extinction Rebellion, Avaaz and Fridays for Future, holding oil companies' and governments' feet to the fire, give hope that at some point in the future oil production will become socially unacceptable and, perhaps more importantly, economically untenable, as financial flows shift away from the stranded assets of oil production.

But isn't this something that needs to happen in the next five to 10 years? My understanding is that this is a mischaracterisation of the science. As the climate scientist Michael E Mann writes in his recent book *The New Climate War*, there is 'urgency, but also agency'.

The climate crisis is already here, now.

Crisis comes from a Greek word, meaning a time of reckoning, decision and discernment.

Especially in the global south, the climate crisis' effects are increasingly felt in extreme weather events, fires, floods and drought. But with that same urgency comes the agency that everything we can do to hold the overall average temperature rise down by 0.1° is worth doing. We are not so much in a race against time to prevent a cascade of catastrophic tipping points, Mann says, analogous to a ball rolling down an ever-steepening slope to a cliff edge, but by risking further temperature increases it is more as if we are stepping out further into an uncharted minefield. With every fraction of a degree rise, there is more energy in the climate system. With more energy in the climate system come greater, and increasingly chaotic, weather effects.

What this means in practical terms is that we are living in a time, similar in some ways to other times of crisis such as WWII, when our actions can make a real difference to the future of the world. This could be something to shy away from, but it could also be something to feel excited about.

It is for each of us to decide what is we are able and willing to do in this time of crisis. I decided to go to Glasgow, because it was something it was within my capacity to do (just about!).

But I could have easily just stayed at home.

I'm glad that I didn't.

Christmas services at All Saints

Sunday 18 December

6:30pm – Carols by Candlelight

Christmas Eve, Saturday 24 December

3pm – Children's Carol Service

11:30pm – Midnight Communion

Christmas Day, Sunday 25 December

8am – Holy Communion

10am – Holy Communion

New Year's Day, Sunday 1 January

10am – Holy Communion

Warden's musings

Welcome to Christmas... (well Advent, anyway – the waiting room for Christmas). By the time you read this, the Christmas cake fruit will (belatedly) be soaking in brandy, Clare Noakes will have been eliminated in 'Whamaggedon' (elimination by virtue of hearing Wham's *Last Christmas*), and I will probably have allowed myself my first listen to my Christmas music. Thea Gilmore's *Strange Communion*, from which I have reproduced lyrics before in this publication, was a favourite throughout December when I was commuting to and from Gloucester – perpetually in darkness. Jane Taylor's *Songs we are working on* is a collection of Christmassy tracks for a comedy-opera she wrote about Santa Claus – I'm not sure if it ever made it to the stage but the lyrics are great and her jazzy, spare, guitar and fiddle style mixed with a generous dollop of festive brass is just right. *'I used to be a greener man, I used to be a saint, but Coca-Cola did a job on me and now I don't know who I am. And I'm stuck in this neon circus; the lights are freaking me out. Nobody knows who's running this show, but with ebay and Amazon, ain't no one relying on me.'*

In addition to a CD of carols which came free with *Good Housekeeping* we also have a lovely CD of alternative Christmas tunes by Low, an indie rock band from Duluth, Minnesota. They are Christians, which I think is evident in their Christmas album. Their music uses minimalist arrangements, haunting harmonies and very slow tempos. The first track on the album, by contrast, is ludicrously upbeat with an accompaniment throughout of sleighbells at a foot-tapping tempo. It always makes me smile and I usually listen to it three times in a row.

Mimi Parker, the co-vocalist and drummer who was married to the other mainstay of the band, died on 5 November, so listening to their album this year will be particularly poignant. I suppose it is a positive legacy for artists to think that their music will live on and be loved long after they have died but it's no consolation in the immediate term to her family. The band's Twitter account said the following, which I think applies to all of us who are missing someone at Christmas:

'Friends, it's hard to put the universe into language and into a short message, but she passed away last night, surrounded by family and love, including yours. Keep her name close and sacred. Share this moment with someone who needs you. Love is indeed the most important thing.'

right: Low (from perfectduluthday.com)



I wonder what classical composers would have made of what has happened to their music and how much it is performed hundreds of years later. I know it was written as a ballet, but what would Tchaikovsky have made of the hundreds of worldwide performances of *The Nutcracker* EVERY year; including our Birmingham Royal Ballet's sell-outs, well over a century later in a city very far from St Petersburg where it had its debut in 1892? *The Nutcracker Suite* is another Christmas favourite. Not only is the music wonderful but it reminds us of taking Joe to the Rep when he danced as one of the children as part of Birmingham Royal Ballet's Dance Track programme. It is a magical performance and I know marks the start of Christmas for many people. Joe and his girlfriend Niamh deserve a special thank you here as I roped them into getting the Christmas tree up in church this year. Advent seems to have crept up on us and, as a result, I hadn't even thought to order it until Thursday evening just before Advent Sunday. Woods Farm amazingly managed to deliver the next day, which didn't give me time to arrange an erection team. So I was thankful for the help getting the tree upright and

fixed in position and putting the lights on – especially as it seems slightly taller than last year’s. And the three of us shared the pine needle rash – never let anyone say I’m not generous... I am a little concerned that the tree will have no needles left by Christmas Day, and by Epiphany it will certainly be a collection of twigs in a bucket. *[Great, I’m sure we can repurpose that in the panto – Ed.]*

At home, I have finally managed to find time to connect the electrics in our loft conversion so we now have light and can decorate much later into the evening. Such joy. We do have a deadline as we have friends coming over from the US for Christmas and they will be sleeping in the new loft rooms (hopefully after we have finished decorating them). It’ll be lovely when it’s finished but we are both feeling quite worn out with the DIY. Becky was having trouble walking today after painting half a mile of skirting board. And my right knee seems, through some strange and highly localised temporal vortex, to have aged much faster than the rest of my body. That and the Covid booster this weekend mean that I am feeling distinctly tired. Becky just tells me I need to do more yoga.

That is her answer to most problems. Me: ‘My knee/back/elbow hurts.’ Becky: ‘You need to do more yoga.’ Me: ‘I feel very tired today.’ Becky: ‘You need to do more yoga.’ Me: ‘I can’t reach the remote control.’ Becky: ‘You need to do more yoga.’ I know she is right – when I saw a physiotherapist about a really bad backache (too much driving and sitting), the physio basically said it’s all down to core muscles. When you’re young, you balance on stuff, jump off walls (or buildings) and run round lots. When you grow up and become an engineer, you spend your days sitting at a computer writing risk assessments about not jumping off walls, wearing safety harnesses and not walking down the stairs without holding the handrail. And getting a bad back.

That was one good thing about the lockdown: Becky and I used to get up and do the New York City Ballet workout every Sunday before joining the virtual service. Perhaps I’ll have to start yoga again after Christmas. Or ballet. Now where did I put that tutu?

Chris Pearce
Churchwarden

On the subject of Christmas music, there will be carol singing in the Village Square to raise money for a local charity between around 11am and 12:15pm on Christmas Eve and we would welcome anyone who would like to join us to sing – or to enthusiastically shake a bucket! Likewise do contact Ben & Clare Noakes (details at the back of the magazine) if you would like to sing in the choir for any of the Midnight Mass, Christmas Day or New Year’s Day services.

From the registers

	<p>Baptism – we congratulate: Romy O’Connor, baptised at All Saints on 18 November</p>
	<p>Wedding – we congratulate: Laura Hawkeswood and Reese Hinks, married at All Saints on Advent Sunday, 27 November</p>
	<p>Funeral – we remember: Janet Prvulovich, whose funeral took place at Robin Hood Crematorium on 4 November</p>

ALL SAINTS PLAYERS PRESENT

Dick

Whittington



Saturday 11 February 2023

14:00 & 19:00

All Saints Church, Kings Heath

Tickets: £7 (adult), £4 (children and concessions)

£20 family ticket (2 adults + up to 3 children)

Tickets available in advance from Clare Noakes.

To book tickets for collection at the performance,

please email players@allsaintschurchkh.org

or call 07929 593097 and leave a message.

High days and holy days

21 December – Winter solstice

A midwinter festival has been a part of life since pre-Christian times. When the hours of daylight are fewest, the warmth of the sun weakest, and life itself seemingly at a standstill, our ancestors, the pagan peoples of Europe and Western Asia, kept festival by lighting bonfires and decorating their buildings with evergreens. Perhaps they believed that the dying sun could be enheartened by fire, and the life of the buried seed assured by the presence of evergreen branches.

With the advent of Christianity, the spring gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World. The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations. 'Let those who have no light in themselves light candles! ... You are the light of the world, you are the tree ever green...' But by the time of St Gregory and St Augustine, four centuries later, this had changed. Pope Gregory instructed Augustine not to worry about harmless outward customs, as long as the right God be worshipped through them. And so many Anglo-Saxon customs were never discarded, but simply endowed with a new significance. By 1598 one John Stow of London wrote how 'against the feast of Christmas, every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeare afforded to be greene'.

1 January – The naming of Jesus

Matthew and Luke tell how the angel instructed that Mary's baby was to be named Jesus – a common name meaning 'saviour'. The Church recalls the naming of Jesus on 1 January: eight days after 25 December (by the Jewish way of reckoning days). In Jewish tradition, male babies were circumcised and named on their eighth day of life. For early Christians, the name of Jesus held a special significance. In Jewish tradition, names expressed aspects of personality. Jesus' name permeated his ministry, and it does so today: we are baptised in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38), we are justified through the name of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:11); and God the Father has given Jesus a name above all others (Philippians 2:9). All Christian prayer is through 'Jesus Christ our Lord', and it is 'at the name of Jesus' that one day every knee shall bow.

(adapted from www.parishpump.co.uk)

We are always pleased to receive contributions for *Saints Alive!* –thanks to everyone who has supported the magazine during 2022.

There is no magazine in January, but if you have any comments, suggestions, ideas for articles or would like to submit something for inclusion in the February edition or beyond, please contact Ben & Clare Noakes, Editors:

E: magazine@allsaintschurchkh.org T: 07967 730156 / 07929 593097

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Music matters

No time now for woe, sadness, rants, fa la la la la, la la la la!

'Tis the season to sing descants, fa la la la la, la la la la!

Firstly, I should probably apologise for the terrible rhyme above... Also, in actuality, descants are sung by choirs at All Saints end elsewhere throughout the year. But it does seem that the music of Advent and Christmas particularly attracts these adornments, and certainly there are firm favourites that singers look forward to and indeed expect to sing at this time (such as David Willcocks' for *O come, all ye faithful* – twice in the Carols by Candlelight service in recent years we have snuck in an alternative to this one and, while we haven't quite faced a mutiny, it was certainly good that there were other chances over the following days to sing the 'normal' descant!).

So what exactly is a descant? As often with matters of church music, there's no one simple answer... Descants developed in medieval times, when single-line chants were embellished by others singing improvised counter-melodies around them. From this, Stephen Johnson writes, 'grew the more disciplined notion of counterpoint [described simply in my Chambers Dictionary as "the art of combining melodies"] ... Now musical voices could interweave with or bounce off each other in a dynamic but orderly way.' With this term 'counterpoint' now in use, descant later came to refer to the highest voice or instrument – Johnson adds that the term is 'still interchangeable with "soprano" in choral or recorder music' – and it was only in the 20th century that it 'became associated with high soprano lines soaring above hymns'; it is these that this *Music matters* article is all about.

It's been a long time since a descant has been within my vocal range, and it can be hard to describe music using words, so for these reasons I asked Clare for a few thoughts. 'A good descant,' she says:

- 'has an easy-to-pitch first note: some of the best ones start on the same note as the main melody line (*Lo, he comes with clouds descending*, for example) or even have the same first few notes or line (*Immortal, invisible, God only wise*);
- is a melody in its own right, so feels like a counter-melody (*As with gladness men of old*) rather than a random set of notes (we have given up on trying to make the descant we have for *All my hope on God is founded* work) – and it needs to fit in well with the accompaniment;
- is high, but not for too long... and ends on a high note, rather than below the melody (*Hark, the herald-angels sing*).'

Regarding the first of these notes, Clare adds: 'That said, some of my favourites [including the aforementioned controversial alternative to *O come, all ye faithful*] start a few beats after the rest of the choir/congregation – but the comment still applies!' Successful descants can also move either slightly before or slightly after the main melody (as in the fifth and seventh lines of that for *Of the father's love begotten*), and even leave out some of the words; the key in these cases is to ensure rhythmic interest without complicating things for the sake of it. Simple can be best – we have sung a very effective descant to *Bright the vision that delighted* which essentially follows the rhythm of the melody line, with just a couple of 'passing' notes added in. As for Clare's last point, occasionally a descant will move lower than the tune, as in the middle of the one that we use for *Amazing grace* – this can be effective (and keeps the sopranos on their toes!) but as a tool is best used sparingly; too much and the line ceases to be a descant. As with balancing rhythmic interest with the need not to make things difficult unnecessarily, there is a fine line between 'florid' and over the top – a descant should always complement and enhance what's already there rather than overshadow it completely thereby diverting focus solely on to the descant line. Likewise, a descant for every hymn in a given service – even a carol service! – would be too much.

Sometimes a descant will be written that works with the accompaniment used for the other verses (whether this has been four-part harmony, or the tune has been sung in unison throughout), and sometimes the composer will write a different last-verse part for the accompanying instrument(s) which works with their descant; occasionally, I have to adapt a descant slightly to fit the harmony in our book. In hymns without a descant, on occasion the organist will play a differently-harmonised or embellished last-verse accompaniment (even when a hymn is written in harmony, the last stanza – and usually, at All Saints at least when there are four or more, the first – will be sung in unison, so the accompaniment can be adapted without affecting what is being sung).

The descants we include at All Saints are usually taken from sources other than our book – the new *Ancient & Modern* and the 1983 *Methodist Hymns & Psalms*, for instance, both have numerous excellent examples, and some that we sing (such as to *Christ is made the sure foundation*) are ones that Clare remembers singing in her childhood and has written down from memory. An article on Classic FM's website notes that descants are often composed 'long after the hymn or carol is written, so the descant melody is considered to be separate from the SATB choir arrangement [or, I would add, the unison tune and keyboard accompaniment]', and our *Complete Anglican Hymns Old & New* contains the grand total of one 'optional descant', which was composed by Malcolm Archer alongside the tune of his – not one that we know – that it adorns, **Vicars' Close** (as opposed to 'The Vicar's Close', which is a warning that a member of the clergy is approaching). Certainly, modern composers are more likely to incorporate their own descants into compositions – Stuart Townend's in the refrain of his setting of *The Lord's my shepherd*, for instance – but even contemporary pieces are often arranged or added to by others.

(A complete aside: going down the rabbit hole of following various links from that Classic FM article led me to a related page quoting 'commonly misheard' Christmas lyrics. Most of them are at best somewhat contrived, but I did like the idea of Rudolf's many taunters in that red-nosed reindeer's famous song being personified as: 'Olive the other reindeer used to laugh and call him names.')

The Wikipedia article 'Descant' notes that 'the *Carols for Choirs* collection, which features descants by David Willcocks and others to well-known Christmas tunes... has contributed to the enduring popularity of the genre', and this is certainly true: some have been referred to here already but there are numerous examples, from *It came upon the midnight clear* to *Good King Wenceslas*, *Once in royal David's city* to *O little town of Bethlehem*; some of these are so ingrained that sopranos can find it difficult if required to sing the tune for the last verse of certain carols! Sometimes a short descant can increase its impact: often one is added just to the short refrain that follows the final verse of *The first nowell* or *O come, O come, Emmanuel*, for instance, finishing those pieces with a burst of light (particularly when the latter shifts to the bright major key on the final chord). The carols of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany often tend to use several stanzas to tell their story and so, particularly for ones where we tend to sing all (or most) verses such as *See, amid the winter's snow* or *While shepherds watched*, a descant can help to avoid things becoming too repetitive.

It is certainly true that we have a glut of descants coming up over the next few weeks – indeed (in the slightly ungenerous spirit of the stereotypical soprano joke: 'How does a soprano screw in a lightbulb? She just stands still and the rest of the world revolves around her') the Classic FM piece describes singing these embellishments as 'the perfect festive opportunity to show off' – but do listen out for them popping up alongside other hymns (*Be thou my vision*, *Now thank we all our God*, *Sing of the Lord's goodness*, *Ye holy angels bright* – the list goes on) in all seasons: after all, a descant is for life, not just for Christmas.

Ben Noakes
Music Co-ordinator

From the PCC

A Standing Committee meeting was originally scheduled for 17 October but this coincided with Bishop David's retirement activities, so it was decided to postpone the meeting until 1 November. This meeting took place, as did a PCC meeting on 15 November.

Both meetings were constructive and there were a number of important issues discussed, many common to both. The following incorporates the key items that were discussed at both meetings.

Finance: As ever, our treasurer gave us a comprehensive update on the financial position of the church. Expenditure to the end of October for the year was circa £135K which is slightly more than budgeted, partly due to it being difficult to predict some items following the Covid pandemic. Income was marginally lower at circa £125K. Overall, the account was currently in deficit to the amount of circa £10K. If the cost of the tower repair work at circa £26K is excluded, as it is necessary to secure the building for future generations, overall the account would effectively be in credit to the amount of £16K.

Regular giving: The treasurer reported that the average for the past twelve months was some £342/month up on the previous 12 months, which is about 3% more. However, in real terms this does not really represent an increase if inflation is taken into account. Future utility bills are likely to impact on this also.

Long-term debtors (Development Company): This is now fully paid.

Overall net worth: Our treasurer reported that overall, at this time, the church balance net worth stood at circa £190K.

Christmas charities: The Justice, Peace and Green Group have recommended the following charities for the Christmas services' donations:

- Practical Action
- National Energy Action
- B30 and New Life Baptist Church foodbanks

These are subject to the Children's Group not wishing to choose a different charity in place of one of the above.

Budget for 2023: Our treasurer presented an estimate of the 2023 budget based on extrapolating from the actual expenditure as at 31 October 2022, with a 10% inflationary expenditure increase.

The estimate also allowed for an increase in the cost of power of £5,000 to cover an estimated rate increased for gas and electricity, but allowing for a government grant and a diocesan gift.

Additionally, it was decided that in the event that our current organist decided to leave the church we should allow for the eventuality, not that it was anticipated at this time.

These two items would represent an additional £15K on next year's budget. However there has been a generous bequest of £10,500 which had been offered to the church, but not yet received.

Summary: The treasurer commented that he considered that the underlying trend appeared to be quite healthy. However, David cautiously proposed that a budget breakdown pie chart be prepared and incorporated into a leaflet to present to the congregation to encourage an increase in giving next year.

Vision Review: Following the last meeting when the questionnaires that had been received were reviewed, the Vision Review group is going to produce a booklet detailing the initial steps for the next couple of years. All the questionnaire responses were positive. Reordering the church was a popular response and there were also several small items which individually could be problematic in terms of getting faculties, but if incorporated into a reordering proposal could have a more positive likelihood of being accepted.

Youth Centre/CircusMASH: There are indications that the Centre could receive a very significant grant from the Government's Youth Fund for Capital Projects which would enable the completion of the Youth Centre and also incorporate new facilities for CircusMASH. The provision for CircusMASH if permanent would, however, require a change to the original proposals for the overall development on the site.

Working group: It was evident that a working group was needed to take on the task of both the reordering and the possible completion of the Youth Centre and provision for CircusMASH. It was acknowledged that this would not be an easy group to set up and that some 'young blood' would be a benefit. It would not necessarily have to comprise church people but a representative from the PCC would be required as part of the group.

Values Statement: The Values Statement originally prepared in 2008 has been revised and was presented to the PCC for initial approval, with final approval to be in the new year.

Toilet facilities in church: Some concern has been raised regarding the state of the existing toilet in the church and the adequacy of toilet facilities for larger gatherings in the church. The matter is being considered as part of the Vision Review at the moment, to be made public in due course.

Oversight: This is a new initiative from the diocese where parishes would be grouped into 'clusters' so that available resources could be distributed within the group fairly and according to demand.

A Synod meeting has taken place and the outcome was reported at the meeting of the proposals discussed. So far as All Saints is concerned, the decision as to which of the local churches should be in which group and how many groups there will be is still in flux. It had been agreed at the Synod meeting that the kind of opportunities that there were for working together included sharing worship and prayer, family matters, administrative matters, preparation for baptisms and confirmations etc. Each group would require a lead oversight minister and there was some concern that this could overburden already busy ministers. It was understood to be 'work in progress'.

Safeguarding: Principal points that were highlighted in the meeting were that the Ex-Offenders Policy was in the process of being finalised, DBS renewals have commenced and volunteer forms are almost complete – the latter relating to any volunteers who assist with the functioning of the church in terms of clearance from the point of view of child protection and vulnerable adults.

One member of the congregation has agreed to assist with safeguarding and is liaising with the diocese regarding training.

Our current safeguarding co-ordinator, Mary Miles, has been at the forefront of this aspect of church matters for many years and has been doing an excellent and essential job for the church and Centre. She has now decided to retire and a successor, Rosalyn Clare, has agreed to take over the role of the whole Centre and church from Mary. Rosalyn is a member of the church with professional experience in this area and is very positive about taking over the role.

David was pleased to report that there have been no incidents since the last PCC meeting.

Digital giving: The treasurer has been liaising with the diocese regarding a digital card reader with which debit or credit card donations can be made. He has collected a card reader from the diocese for use on a temporary basis to see how well it functions, especially over the Christmas period. It is understood that the gifts would be collated in a JustGiving page for subsequent transfer to the church bank account.

Churchwarden: Our current churchwarden, Chris Pearce, has completed approaching three years as a warden almost single-handedly and done an excellent job. The three years will be completed next April. In the past, it has been the custom to have two wardens in post at any one time with a phased changeover to facilitate passing on of duties.

Discussion took place regarding possible ways in which suitable candidates could be encouraged to take up the post. Further consideration is being given to this important matter before time runs out in April.

Church public address system: The current PA desk in the church is understood to be becoming problematic; a new one has been ordered and is due shortly, together with a replacement lapel microphone.

Curate's accommodation: Tariro, our curate, has now moved from Dad's Lane to a vicarage associated with the Church of the Ascension in Pineapple Road, Stirchley, owned by the diocese, that has become available. Tariro's presence in the vicarage property was welcome as it would be looked after and also, from a security point of view, that it would not be standing empty. David added that he found that Mr Khan, the owner of the property in Dad's Lane, was very accommodating and would recommend him to anyone looking for accommodation.

That just about sums up the bones of the matters discussed at the last Standing Committee and PCC meetings and is the last report for 2022. May I take this opportunity of wishing everyone a merry and relatively peaceful Christmas and a happy new year ready for the next instalment of PCC matters in February.

Next meetings: These are scheduled as follows:

SC meetings: 15 December 2022 (revised from 20 December); 21 February, 18 April, 20 June, 17 October, 12 December 2023.

PCC meetings: 17 January, 21 March, 16 May, 18 July, 19 September, 21 November 2023.

Tony Cocks
PCC Secretary

Accessing and paying for the magazine

The *Saints Alive!* magazine is available in digital form on the All Saints website at <https://allsaintschurchkh.org/about-us/publications/>, with hard copies available to pick up from the back of church each month (when it is open). The suggested donation for each issue is £1, but cost should not be a barrier to anyone in the church reading the magazine in either online or printed form. Cash donations can continue to be made via the slot at the back of church; alternatively a standing order can be set up to pay in advance for a year's-worth (10 issues) of the magazine – please see the form below – or a cheque made payable to All Saints Kings Heath PCC can be sent to the Parish Office (address is on the back page). The form gives the individual the ability for their payment to go towards one of three areas – please select the General Purpose Fund (GPF) and delete the other two. Finally, if you or someone you know would like a copy of the magazine posting out each month then please contact us as below to arrange this.

Ben & Clare Noakes
Editors

magazine@allsaintschurchkh.org
07967 730156 / 07929 593097

STANDING ORDER MANDATE AND BANK PAYMENT INFORMATION	
<i>(Please detach and send to your bank) or use for Internet Banking Payments</i>	
To:	The Manager
Address:	_____

Postcode:	_____
Please pay to	HSBC PLC, Kings Heath Birmingham Branch
	Sort Code: 40-11-15
For the credit of:	
The PCC of Kings Heath Parish All Saints Church	Account Number: 71801163
the sum of £ _____	First payment on _____ / _____ /20
and monthly / weekly thereafter on the same date until cancelled by me, or on.....	
Reference:	G.P.F. V.D.F. M Garden Magazine <i>please delete the ones that do not apply</i>
<i>Please cancel any previous mandates to this beneficiary on this account number.</i>	
Name:	_____
My Sort Code:	_____
My Account Number:	_____
Signature:	_____
Date:	_____

If you bank online, you will be able to use the details below to set up a standing order:

Name: The Parochial Church Council of All Saints Church **Account no:** 71801163
Reference: GPF (magazine) **Sort code:** 40-11-15

If you have any problems or questions about setting this up, or the church's finances in general, please contact Steve Brittle, Treasurer on 01905 772171 or zena_steveb@btinternet.com.

Campus focus

With plenty going on around the church campus each day of every week, it's always interesting to find out about a bit more about the different activities that make up part of life at All Saints. This month we are pleased to bring to your attention a couple of initiatives from the Youth Project.

All Saints Youth Project



12 Days for Christmas



The festive season is a time of giving and receiving.

For 12 days in December, we're asking you to donate one non-perishable food (or toiletry) item per day in a Christmas box for those less fortunate.

You can bring them in a fancy box or a carrier bag, every item matters.

Please bring your donations to ASYP (you may want to call first to ensure somebody is here) by Wednesday 14th December.

We will pass your kind donations to Kings Heath Food Bank.

Some daily ideas:

Tins Rice/ pasta Cereal Chocolate/ sweets/ edible tree decorations
Biscuits/ cakes Pasta sauces Ketchup/ mayonnaise Long life milk/ juice
Tea/ coffee/ hot chocolate Popcorn/ crisps Pet food/ treats
Seasonal treats—mince pies/ puddings etc.
Free from: products for those with allergies
Toiletries (deodorant/ shampoo/ shower gel/ face/ baby wipes)
Feminine products/ nappies



Company number : 6473845

Charity number: 1136158

0121 443 1842

info@asyp.org.uk



Tea Time Club

At All Saints Youth Project

Every Thursday - Term Time
5pm - 6pm

We are providing free, hot and healthy meals for young people (11+ yrs) and their families.

No need to book, just come and join us!

You will also be able to access our Staff Team for Advice/ Support/ Information on all our activities.



All Saints Youth Project
2 Vicarage Road
Kings Heath
B14 7RA

0121 443 1842

info@asyp.org.uk



Please let us know about any allergies or dietary requirements on arrival.

- Under 11's to be accompanied by a parent/guardian
- 11+ are welcome to be unaccompanied

Company Number 6473845
Charity Number 1136158



Getting to know you

We see so many people at church each week, but often we know very little about them. In this regular article a person from the congregation is interviewed and we get to know each other a bit better.

What is your name?

Jake: I'm Jake!

Heather: And I'm Heather!

What is (or was) your day job?

Jake: I'm a primary school teacher at a great community school in Ladywood.

Heather: I'm a social worker at the Family Drug and Alcohol Court where I work with and support parents in addiction.

How long have you been at All Saints?

Jake: We've been at All Saints for just over a year now!

What are you currently involved in at church?

Heather: We're part of a growing 20s and 30s community at All Saints who enjoy meeting once a month for a social.

Jake: I also help out on the kids' team – we're always looking for volunteers!

Heather: And, of course, we're doing the panto!

Jake: Oh no we're not!

Heather: Oh yes we are!

What has been your most memorable service/event/activity since you've been here?

Heather: I loved the Carols by Candlelight service last year. It was such a beautiful and special way to celebrate Christmas amid the festive frenzy.

Jake: YES! What a highlight. I also really enjoyed our first Worship Evening service.

Do you have a favourite hymn/Bible passage?

Jake: I'll be honest, a lot of the hymns are new to me! I grew up in a Vineyard church so you'll probably all be horrified at how few hymns I know! However, I love music, and my favourite worship song at the moment has to be *Jireh* by Elevation Worship.

Heather: My all-time favourite song is *In Christ Alone*. It often brings a tear to my eye.

What are you reading at the moment?

Jake: I've just started a book by an author I love: *Upgrade* by Blake Crouch. He's a fast-paced sci-fi author, and this book is all about genetic modification.

Heather: I'm in a book club, so I'm reading the chosen book of this month which is called *Take My Hand* by Dolen Perkins-Valdez. It's about a black nurse in Alabama in the '70s working at a family planning clinic.

Who from history/literature/film would you like strike up a correspondence with and why?

Heather: I recently listened to an excellent talk by Bryan Stevenson, author and protagonist of *Just Mercy*. His work fighting against the death penalty for black convicts is inspiring, and I'd love to get a dose of his wisdom and justice-fighting spirit.



Jake: It's got to be Gandalf for me. That man has many stories to tell, and I'd love to sit beside a campfire and listen to his dulcet tones as the magic unfolds. Brené Brown is also high up there. She's no wizard, but she is pretty magical.

Tell us a joke...

Jake: A joke?! And I can't steal one of my panto one-liners?

Heather: Absolutely not!

Jake: Fine. What did Batman say to Robin before they got in the car? 'Get in the car, Robin.'

Heather: ...

Jake: You've got to love an anti-joke!

Heather: Hmmm. Why do bees hum? Because they've forgotten the words!

Jake: Better.

The ASYP Big Christmas Word Quiz 2022

Our annual festive fundraising quiz was a winner last Christmas, so we have a new quiz this year! It's a fun activity which can be easily shared with friends and family while supporting the running costs of the All Saints Youth Project. As with all charities, the current economic climate makes fundraising both a necessity and a challenge.

This year's quiz is now available electronically on the ASYP website allsaintsyouthproject.org.uk or direct by email from tedhammond74@gmail.com.

Last year we raised over £1,000 and this year our ambitious target is £1,500! Please join in the fun and enter the quiz this year. We suggest a minimum donation of £3 but your added generosity would be greatly appreciated. However, it is equally important that you share the quiz as widely as possible: the wider we share the quiz, the more people will have an opportunity to support this wonderful work and raise funds for the charity.

Donations can be made through the ASYP website or by bank transfer – details are on the quiz.

Once again there is a prize for the winner (£30) and the runner-up (£20), plus all entries will be entered into a prize draw for one of three £10 M&S vouchers.

Lindsey & Ted Hammond

A reminder that you can sign up for the regular All Saints newsletter here:

<https://landing.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/o7a2q4>

Who's Who

Worship (for clergy see back page)

Children's Worship Co-ordinators	Becky Cuthbert	0121 244 7683
	Grace Storey	07813 322697
Youth Group (year 7 upwards)	Jenny Warbrick	0121 444 0260
Music Co-ordinators	Ben & Clare Noakes	07967 730156
		07929 593097

Church upkeep

Vergers	Liz Haskins	c/o 0121 444 0760
	Paul Smart	c/o 0121 444 0760
Sacristan	Bernice Mattis	c/o 0121 444 0760
Altar Linen	Wendy Ross	0121 444 1423
Head Server	Tony Price	01564 824420
Electoral Roll Officer	Tony Cocks	0121 441 2945
Parish Magazine	Ben & Clare Noakes	07967 730156
		07929 593097

Finance team

Treasurer	Steve Brittle	01905 772171
Expenditure Officer	vacant	
Income Officer	John Watling	c/o 0121 444 0760
Insurance & Investments	Tony Cocks	0121 441 2945
Gift Aid	Philip & Martha Ann Brookes	0121 444 5655
Envelope Giving Scheme	Martha Ann Brookes	0121 444 5655
Cash Counting Team	c/o Sarah Wilson	c/o 0121 444 0760

Groups, clubs and organisations

All Saints Ramblers	Pam Coley	0121 572 3553
	Gill Parkin	0121 604 6127
Badminton Club	Des Workman	0121 443 5292
	Steve Brittle	01905 772171
Bible Reading Fellowship	Des Workman	0121 443 5292
Lunch Club	Elizabeth Turner	0121 604 6086
Meditation Group	Daniel Wilson	0121 449 9869
Safeguarding & Child Protection	Mary Miles	0121 449 0851
Traidcraft	Gill Parkin	0121 604 6127

Planned giving: All are invited to join the planned giving scheme, contributing by weekly envelope, banker's order/standing order, or Direct Debit through the Parish Giving Scheme. Taxpayers: please sign a Gift Aid declaration for reclaiming of tax and use of payroll giving if possible. Contact the Finance Team for further information.

Parish Office: For enquiries about baptisms, baby naming services, banns and marriages, please contact the Parish Office to arrange an appointment at a vestry hour – 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month, 10-10:30am.

Ministry to the sick: Visiting the sick at home or in hospital – please inform the Ministry Team of anyone who is sick. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved and oil is kept for ministry to the sick.

Ministry of healing: Laying-on of hands and anointing – last Saturday in the month at 9:15am as part of Morning Prayer, occasional Sunday evenings (as announced), and at home or in hospital as requested.

Communion of the sick: At home or in hospital, as requested, communion is taken, monthly, to the long-term sick or housebound.

Other ministries: For blessing of homes, celebrations of anniversaries, thanksgiving after childbirth, confession and counsel, please contact the Ministry Team.

Parochial Church Council (PCC)

Officers	Lay Vice Chair vacant	Secretary Tony Cocks, 0121 441 2945	Treasurer Steve Brittle, 01905 772171
Members	Jim Andrew Margaret Andrew Fiona Briggs Martha Ann Brookes Philip Brookes Tim Cuthbertson	Brian Miles John Parkin (Reader) Chris Pearce (Warden) Vivien Tilsley David Warbrick (Vicar) Chris Watts	Claire Wesley (Reader) Daniel Wilson Sarah Wilson Des Workman

All Saints Community Development Company (ASCDC)

Chair	Andy Savage	c/o 0121 444 0760	andy@allsaints-cdc.co.uk
Facilities Manager	Dave Priday	07732 137772	david@allsaints-cdc.co.uk
Administrator	Angela McDermott	0121 444 0760	angela@allsaints-cdc.co.uk
Hall & Room Bookings	Angela McDermott	0121 444 0760	angela@allsaints-cdc.co.uk

All Saints Community Projects (ASCP)

Chair	Mary Miles	0121 449 0851
All Saints Youth Project	Vicki Willinger	0121 443 1842

The Robin Centre for Older People

Centre Manager	Paula McGrath	0121 483 4400
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Ministry Team

Vicar	David Warbrick	4 Vicarage Road, 0121 444 0260
Assistant Curate	Tariro Matsveru	c/o 0121 444 0760
Churchwardens	Chris Pearce	07891 924149
	vacant	
Licensed Readers	Margaret Healey-Pollett	c/o 0121 444 0760
	John Parkin	0121 604 6127
	Claire Wesley	0121 444 2778
Reader Emeritus	Mike Cheesbrough	0121 444 5620
Pastoral Team	Juliet Bick, Stuart Blissitt, Becky Frall, Wendy Ross, David Warbrick, Jenny Warbrick	0121 444 0260
Prayer Circle	(for confidential prayer requests)	parishoffice@allsaintschurchkh.org 0121 444 0260

Worship

We have reopened for our Sunday services (said at 8am, sung at 10am and an evening service at 6:30pm), and 11:30am Wednesday service.

We will continue to provide an online order of service via the website and newsletter for those at home.

Up-to-date information can be found at www.allsaintschurchkh.org and we look forward to seeing you again soon.

All Saints Church, Kings Heath

2 Vicarage Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 7RA

Administrator: Angela McDermott

Parish Office: 0121 444 0760

parishoffice@allsaintschurchkh.org

www.allsaintschurchkh.org



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND