

# THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

Autumn 2020 | Issue 308

**THE REVEREND CANON  
DR. MAUREEN PALMER  
- A VALEDICTION**



**REVD ROSEMARY  
DURWARD**

**100 YEARS OF HOUSING  
FOR CHRISTIANS**

# FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR



**A**s I sit at my laptop trying to decide what to say (and trying not to get distracted into on-line conversations with friends who keep “popping up”) I, too, am amazed at how much life has changed with the outbreak of COVID-19. So much more of our lives is now “virtual”. I’ve been to three churches this morning - one in person and two on-line - and I must say that it’s wonderful to be able to catch up with different congregations, and listen to previous curates preaching, now comfortable in their own parishes. It’s comforting to know that BCP Communion services are still being said, in churches, as serene and unchanging as ever, seasoned with thoughtful and thought-provoking preaching. Also to see how ex-curates have grown into their new places (and this week, this particular ex-curate was our Diocesan live-streamed service), and how our sister Team churches are expressing their faith in different formats (Morning Prayer rather than Holy Communion) and including our still-shielding SSM in a series of sermons pre-recorded from his home office.


I’ve heard that the Church of England has been heartened by this move towards “virtual church” and has realised that many new people have been moved to attending these on-line services, reinforcing their cry that “Church is not the building, but the people...”. Our church has now moved to “Live-streaming” the in-church service, so the workload of producing two different services each week will now lessen, but I hope that the current trend towards a variety of worship styles and services will continue into the future. It may not be so spiritually fulfilling to some of us, but the need is there - and if it gets the message to the wider, secularised world, then so much the better! Looks like “Pick’n’mix” church is here to stay!

**Jane Gorrie**  
Editor

Please note that all submissions for the next edition should reach Jane via email, [CEGVMedia@gmail.com](mailto:CEGVMedia@gmail.com) no later than the date here:

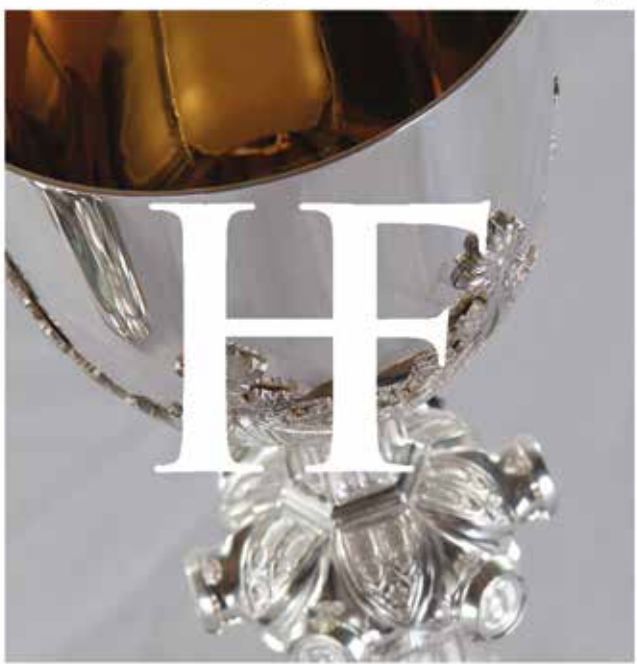


How should you do this....  
Submissions for all editions of The Virger should reach me before the set deadline. If they miss this date, they may be held over to the next edition. All articles should be sent in MS Word files only and photographs in JPEG format. Please attach text and image files separately in one email.



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## FOR YOUR DIARY MEMBERS

If your Branch has any events that you wish to have advertised please contact the Media Officer  
[CEGVMedia@gmail.com](mailto:CEGVMedia@gmail.com)

# FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN



**A**ugust is usually the time when we all get together for our Annual Training Conference in West Malvern. Sadly, this year, Corona Virus has put paid to that and we have had to be subjected to lockdowns and long periods of isolation. It has been an interesting time. Technology has thrust the church into a new dimension with services being streamed on a weekly basis. As we move forward into the next phase and we emerge from our imposed isolation a new crisis has manifested itself. Due to the lack of tourism, a financial crisis is affecting our churches and cathedrals. They are experiencing the lack of income resulting in radical plans to streamline operations. With some churches under the threat of closure, others have dispensed with choirs and choir schools and some have made redundancies. It is a deeply worrying time for all concerned. We see in the news about redundancies in other parts of our society, but we never expect it to happen to us. My deep concern is that when we finally get out of this current situation, numbers will fall as churches have discovered a new way of communication with their congregations – via Zoom, Skype and Teams. The parish church or group ministry will have to close churches for good.

If you are aware of major changes either in your diocese or branches, do let us know so that we as a Guild can be of some support to our members. All we can do during this period is to have hope that some sort of normality will prevail. We all find that change is a word that we do not like to accept or work with, due to the uncomfortableness that what it throws at us. Please uphold all our members in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

At the end of August Canon Maureen, our National Chaplain and Fellow, retires and steps down from the role of National Chaplain. It has been a joy to have her within our midst, giving prayerful support, visiting any branch that invites her whether for a meal or to host an awayday. We have been blessed with her willingness to get amongst us and we all wish her a long and happy retirement. Having said that, Canon Maureen will be duty Chaplain at the Conference in 2021 where we will say a more formal farewell. At the same time, we will be welcoming Rosemary Durward, our new Chaplain, who takes up the reigns from the 1st September

2020. Rosemary will be invited to take part in our meetings from that point onwards. There will be plenty of time to get to know Rosemary during the year and also, she will be at next years conference to experience us at work and play.

The Executive Committee will continue to meet remotely, but long for the day when we can all get together in person as I am sure you all do within your Branches. In the meanwhile, stay safe, sane and well until we can all meet up again soon.

**John Kirby-Shearer**  
**August 2020**

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# FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN



Dear Friends,

This will be the last letter that I write to you as your National Chaplain and I would like to begin by saying 'Thank you' for the enormous privilege of walking alongside you all during the last fifteen years. I have found the friendship and fellowship [and tolerance!] I have received quite overwhelming. You have supported me in some of the quirky things I have introduced, you have prayed with me and for me in the good times and the bad, and above all, we have worshipped God together, glorifying his holy name. I am enormously grateful to you all. You won't be ridding yourselves of me totally because I shall lead Conference next year and I am a Fellow so will still play some part in the Guild. I know I shall leave you in very good hands and I that you will support Rosemary in the same wonderful way as you have me.

In the very first sermon I preached as National Chaplain all those years ago, I told the story of the four years girl, who,



having watched a television programme about a mediaeval cathedral said, 'Now I know why churches are true. The people in them enjoy singing and walking about in patterns.' This small girl sensed the awe and transcendence of worship in that remark and the impact it can have on all our lives as we walk about in patterns, and use the elements of our buildings to enhance our perception of the glory of God during the course of our worship.

*"We all know that our offering is imperfect and yet we give it freely in love, knowing that whatever is given will be accepted."*

Above everything else that you all do: cleaning and polishing, being responsible for security, pastoral care of the public when they come in search of comfort and reassurance, coping with the clergy, the most important thing is the conduct of worship where your contribution is of paramount importance. Perhaps I could remind you [as if you need it!] of the purpose of worship: First, it is the establishment of relationship between human beings and the transcendent God. The awe and wonder that we feel as we take the host into our hands and recognise this as the 'bread of life': the very life which our Lord Jesus gave us when he died on the cross and rose again for us. It is a realisation that we are at that moment part of the created order, created by the love of God, made of star dust, and his

servants upon earth. We are also part of the rich colour woven into the fabric of worship, whether the colour comes from vestments, or stained glass or flowers.

Secondly, worship is a celebration of the whole community. This is why the 'lockdown' caused by Covid-19 has been so hard for so many of us, for we miss the wholeness that the community brings to us as the 'body of Christ'. The 'still centre' is the table of our Lord at which are guests, and worshippers will attend with varying degrees of perception making concentric circles around that still centre. You will be 'walking about in patterns, making sure that the appropriate priest is in the right place at the right time with all that s/he needs at that moment. You are one of those concentric circles, and yet even though your mind might be on the minutiae of worship, you are still able to respond to God as he pours out his love and grace.

Thirdly, worship is a way for all of us to express our love to God for all the benefits that he gives us, and as we express that love we are 'sent out to love and serve the Lord' in whatever way we are able.

We all know that our offering is imperfect and yet we give it freely in love, knowing that whatever is given will be accepted.

I thank you all that you have accepted my ministry, however imperfect, and be assured that I will continue to walk with you in love and joy. I pray that you all keeping safe and well.

With every blessing and all my love.

**Canon Maureen**

# REVD ROSEMARY DURWARD



I have been asked to write a little bit about myself and how I came to seek out the position of National Chaplain to the Guild of Vergers. In simple terms, I am a Church of England priest licensed as an Associate Minister to St Martin's Church, East Horsley in the Guildford Diocese.



*"For your tomorrow we gave our today", Winchester Cathedral 11th November 2011. Pilgrims' School.*

I trained for ordination part-time at Sarum College, Salisbury and enjoyed my first foray into the London Diocese, with a placement in the so-called journalists' church of St Bride's, Fleet Street. Until then, I had watched vergers from afar in services but in this Wren church the verger was a historian, talking knowledgeably about skeletons in the crypt.

A good part of my curacy was in St John's Church Notting Hill, dubbed a mini-United Nations and famous for its Filipino Chaplaincy. I have more recently enjoyed the rich diversity of visitors to Westminster Abbey as Duty Chaplain, although now there are few visitors and sadly these are anxious times for job security.

Both at the Abbey and in Winchester Cathedral, I have enjoyed the support of vergers as unofficial guides and carers before, during and after taking the Eucharist. A keen eye for detail has saved me from many an embarrassment. I believe you to be unsung heroes!

How did I have a connection with Winchester? My son was a chorister there. A bit like being furloughed, in my son's last year singing and soon after priesting, I had to leave my curacy so that I could travel monthly to stay in Istanbul for reasons of my husband's work.

By the grace of God, the Cathedral invited me to deacon, preach and in time, to take the Eucharist when in the UK. I went on to be Volunteer Section Head of Children's Church and I got to know and rely on the vergers to smooth the way. Their diverse skills included expert training for the leaders in paediatric first aid.

As Chaplain to the High Sheriff of Hampshire, Sarah le May, the high point of the last year was the Law Sunday Service. Question: Who was it that made sure we were processing and finding our seats according to the plan? Answer: the vergers!



*The Great Hall, Winchester prior to the High Sheriff, Sarah Le May's Declaration in Winchester Crown Court.*



*Investments for the lunch-time Eucharist in the Epiphany Chapel, Winchester Cathedral.*

I have enjoyed travelling, but in Sunday services, the spoken word has so often been incomprehensible.

Every time, the vestments and liturgical gestures and movements have overcome any language barrier. Perhaps it's for this reason that I have so valued vergers' seamless choreography of regular and occasional, civic and ceremonial services.



Still, there may be room for improvement in all of us on the hospitality front. One group of Moldovan women after a Sunday service, handed out chocolate cake and tumblers of whiskey!

Prior to ordination, I was teaching at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. I began there in 1985 as a Senior Lecturer and technically, a Ministry of Defence Civil Servant. I took voluntary early retirement from the MOD in 2011, just before my priesting. That Sandhurst experience, with breaks for maternity leave, has given me a love for ceremonial. It also gave me a passion for training, education and development, that I hope might be useful to the Guild.

I continue to research and write, although as with everything else, I'd like to do more. These are challenging times when local guild chaplains will be feeling the strain as much as vergers. I hope I will be able to offer support as Maureen has so ably done. I look forward to getting to know you all.

**The Revd Rosemary Durward**



# 100 YEARS OF HOUSING FOR CHRISTIANS



Even though 'Fairfield' in Torquay, was not registered as a charity until 1974, **The Fairfield Trust** has celebrated 100 years of providing comfortable homes for Christians. Traditionally this has been missionaries, either retired or on furlough; but these days, the Trust has expanded its reach to a broad fellowship of committed Christians (as well as their spouses, widows or widowers), who during their careers have worked for churches or missions, either in the UK or abroad and are now unable to provide a home of their own.

It started after industrialist and Christian philanthropist, Alec Dick (son of the metallurgist, inventor and founder of the Delta Metal Company), inherited a large house in Torquay from his Godmother, in 1915.

Alec was unsure exactly what to do with *Fairfield* and was conscious that whilst the property had been left to him, it was also meant to be enjoyed by other members of the family. Influenced by his mother, a devout Christian, Alec Dick had already developed a keen interest in foreign missionary services, including the China Inland Mission and the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, learning that there was no money for missionaries returning on furlough. So Alec consulted widely and expressed his desire to additionally offer it as a home for returning missionaries. He also sought advice from a friend (later to become his Father in Law), who pointed out, "God has given

you the vision, so get on and do it". It was therefore after WW1 ended that Alec's vision started to materialise and a growing stream of missionaries and family members found their way to Torquay. At the time Alec was the Chairman and Managing Director of the Delta Metal Company, based in Greenwich and he personally sponsored Bible classes for employees in the factory, as he was keen to support committed Christians to better their lives.

Coming from a wealthy family, *Fairfield* employed domestic staff in those early days: so returning missionaries or other committed Christians were sent a 1st class train ticket, met at Torquay station by the butler with a horse drawn carriage and welcomed at the front door by the housekeeper. How things have changed; it's not like that now. There was also a short break during WWII, when international travel was restricted, so Fairfield housed young family members, billeted out of cities to avoid the blitz.

Today, **The Fairfield Trust** is entirely devoted to providing social housing for a diverse group of Christian clergy, missionaries and church workers, their wives and widows, who have devoted much of their lives to serving the Lord and are financially unable to provide for a home of their own. It is still very much a family project and is run by a board of trustees, mostly made up of Alec Dick's family descendants. The Trust has two large adjoining, Victorian villas overlooking Torbay. Extensively refurbished and extended in 2011, Fairfield offers fifteen one bed roomed flats,



with peaceful South facing communal gardens, together with a guest suite for visiting family and close friends. Many residents are supported financially by the local authority and additional funding can often be arranged by the Trust.

Three flats have recently become available and potential new residents are invited to apply. Unfortunately, the 1st class rail ticket, butler and housekeeper provided a hundred years ago, are no longer possible!

Website: [www.fairfieldtrust.org](http://www.fairfieldtrust.org). Applications to The Manager, email: [fairfieldtrust@outlook.com](mailto:fairfieldtrust@outlook.com), or tel: 01803-606560 (please leave a message if unattended).







# BRANCH DIGEST

## YORK BRANCH

**2**020 has been the strangest of years so far... The Coronavirus pandemic not only stopped life for a brief period but has also ensured that life will look very different from now on. As I write this we are thankful that, where possible, churches are open, and that we can have public worship again, albeit with a few extra measures to ensure everyone's safety. Sheffield Cathedral is no different. We are open Tuesday to Saturday 11 – 2, with a Eucharist each day at 12.30, and Sundays, open from after the 10.30 Cathedral Eucharist until 1pm.

However, much has happened since lockdown. Firstly there was the Archer Project fire in May, which the media reported simply as "Fire at Sheffield Cathedral". I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who messaged me at that time and offered prayers.

In June it was decided to change how the award winning coffee shop was run, and all staff except the manager were made redundant. Next, the Master of the Music resigned, followed swiftly by the disbanding of the choir in its present form, which made National news. It never rains but it pours, and it makes one wonder what is next! At this time do please continue to keep the Cathedral, and all connected with it, in your prayers.

As for me, I took the opportunity during lockdown to start the Guild's Diploma course and I hope, by the time you read this, to have completed the Foundation Unit.

*"I would like to thank our chairperson, Su, and our chaplain, Marian, for the support they have given to Branch members over these past few months."*

As was mentioned in the last issue of The Virger the branch, and, indeed, the Guild, was saddened to learn that Doreen Cook had passed away. Unfortunately I never got to meet Doreen in person, but I was friends with her on Facebook. I always knew when Doreen had been online because my notifications greatly increased as she would 'like' every post I had put up, whether it was the Saint of the day, which church I had recently visited, or even which rock concert I had recently been to(!). Doreen was clearly interested in what people liked to do, in and outside of the working environment.

Despite the pandemic, Maria and I were able to celebrate our first wedding anniversary back in June, as well as our birthdays in July as best as possible given the restrictions.

In addition to being back at work in the Cathedral (part time hours at present – 4 days on, 4 days off and always off on Mondays) I have been volunteering as a church sitter at St. Matthew Carver Street, where I attend when not at the Cathedral, and where Maria and I were married.

Finally I would like to thank our chairperson, Su, and our chaplain, Marian, for the support they have given to Branch members over these past few months. I would also, on behalf of the branch, like to extend our best wishes to Canon Maureen as she steps down as National Chaplain (Christmas meetings for the branch will never be the same again!) and welcome Reverend Rosemary, and hope we will all get to welcome her in due course.

**Ben Elliott-Hill**  
**York Branch Publicity Officer**

## CHICHESTER, GUILDFORD & PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

**A**nother quiet quarter from us, I'm afraid.... We did manage a lovely day out at the end of June, to Leonardslee Gardens near Horsham. It had been our plan to go in April as a post-Easter treat, to see their famous display of rhododendrons

and azaleas, and we have vowed to go back next year! We found the gardens just as lovely in June and it was great to meet up and enjoy each others company. Colin wisely kept his hat on, but I think our "lockdown hairstyles" were very much in evidence too - the

group shot will be one to keep in the "Memories" photo album!

We are currently planning another day out, this time to Fishbourne Roman Villa near Chichester, but the date is not yet set.



## LEICESTER BRANCH

**W**ell what are you are year. Many of you are now out of lockdown and enjoying some new freedom, but please pray for us in Leicester as we will, by the time you read this, be in our eighth week of further lockdown. We did have a very interesting programme of events planned for 2020 but due to Covid 19 are now unable to meet together, so we have transferred the whole programme to 2021. One highlight of the year (a new event for us this year) was to enjoy a cream tea in my garden. Having been furloughed by the Cathedral for twenty weeks I have been working hard to get the garden in good order for everyone to enjoy, but to no avail as we currently, again, can't meet each other in our gardens. I only hope I can keep it up for this time next year!

Our Parish Churches and Cathedrals are gradually beginning to open up for private prayer and Sunday communion services, as, no doubt, yours are too.

Our branch has been very disappointed that we have been unable to hold the admissions service that was planned for Vergers of Derby and Peterborough Cathedrals this summer. It is hoped that we will be able to hold a Midlands Regional admissions service at Peterborough Cathedral in the spring, more details of this will appear in the next issue of the Virger.

I don't think I will be able to grow another one as big as this next year it stands about 18 ft tall and has 14 flower heads.

**Les Mitchelmore**  
Regional Rep



## PRAYER REQUESTS

If you know of someone for whom prayers would be of benefit, or someone who has been prayed for and has recovered shown improvement, please inform the **National Chaplain** or the **National Welfare Officer**.

Prayers for our Vergers during this time of half-open churches, for those who feel alone, are furloughed, redundant or struggling in new, unfamiliar and uncertain times.

### **Oxford Branch**

Thanks for the recovery of Molly Payne and Gerald Knight

### **Somerset & Avon Branch**

Marek Barden, Joy Stevens, Trevor Llewellyn, Mary Holway and Roger Lawrence

### **York Branch**

George Cook

### **St Albans Branch**

Peter Hudson

### **East Anglia Branch**

Val Pizzey

### **Blackburn, Chester & Manchester Branch**

Patricia Platt, Margaret Scott

## **In Memoriam**

### **Somerset & Avon Branch**

Lionel Holway,

### **Hereford, Gloucester & Worcester Branch**

Peter Young

### **St Albans Branch**

Kathleen Horne

**And everyone not specifically mentioned who need love, counsel and the grace of our Lord.**

## SOMERSET AND AVON BRANCH

### Hello Everyone!

It must be at least 18 months since you last had any information from the Somerset & Avon Branch. Unfortunately we have not had meetings of any kind since the outbreak of the Covid19 virus, other than to speak on the telephone to ensure we are currently safe and well. We have yet to hold our AGM for this year, but as many of us in the Guild are elderly we fear catching the virus could prove fatal, which would no doubt apply to me as I unfortunately have Diabetes and Kidney disease!

During 2019 we had a series of successful outings - one each month - whereas before they were bi-monthly. We organised a boat trip around Bristol City Harbour and were fortunate in seeing the replica ship "Matthew" also performing trips for tourists - she looked magnificent although her sails were down as she was propelled by her emergency engine.

Our Branch members always seem to enjoy a Pub Lunch (honestly we are not a load of drunkards!!!) and in July we had a meal at the Sidcot

Arms, Sidcot, which is a few miles from Cheddar. The pub is part of the Brewers Fayre group so meals are always reasonably priced.

During September we had a wonderful day at Shipham, which again is not far from Cheddar, courtesy of the Verger - Trish Ashmore - who is the Verger of St Leonard's Church. We met for Coffee in the Village Cafe, which is a very quaint little building, and afterwards went on to visit St Michael and All Angels Church at nearby Rowberrow. It is a beautiful old church and, on what was a lovely warm day, we were able to enjoy the cool atmosphere and soak up the delights of the building remembering all those people who have worshipped there over the centuries. We adjourned to a nearby pub for lunch which was most enjoyable.

In October we visited Tintern Old Station in the Wye Valley, which was of interest to me because of my love for railways. Also our Chaplain - Colin Maggs - who is a prolific author of books on the history of railways, was able to answer any questions we had on the Wye Valley Line. We had coffee here as there is now a Visitor Centre for the Wye Valley and the Forest of

Dean. After this we had, yes, another Pub Lunch!!!! - this time at The Anchor Inn which is immediately opposite the ruins of Tintern Abbey. We were again blessed with fine weather.

Sadly, I have to tell you we have lost several of our most stalwart supporters of the Guild. On the 8th July, 2019, Howard Cooper died. He was the Verger at St Nicholas Church, Uphill, near Weston-Super-Mare. His son did not wish to see his father's robe gathering dust in a cupboard and wanted it to remain in use in Howard's memory. Trish Ashmore did not have a robe and was grateful to accept it for her duties at St Leonard's, Shipham.

*"It is a beautiful old church and, on what was a lovely warm day, we were able to enjoy the cool atmosphere and soak up the delights of the building remembering all those people who have worshipped there over the centuries"*

Then during October 2019 we sadly lost another Verger - Lionel Holway - from St Martin's, Knowle, Bristol.



At St Peter & St Paul's Bleadon/ the late Lionel Holway, Chris Eynon, Ivor Watts, Colin Maggs, Jill Eynon.



Jill Eynon and Colin Maggs at Tintern Abbey.



Lionel had been ill for a number of years, but battled on right up until the time of his death. A Memorial Service to celebrate his life was held at St Martin's on Thursday, 31st October 2019 and I felt very privileged to be asked to read the Lesson at this service.

Another sad blow was on 30th November 2019, when Jeanette Badger, wife of former Committee Member Reyn Badger died. Both Jeanette & Reyn are Vergers at St Peter & St Paul's, Bleadon, again near Weston-Super-Mare. This was a terrible tragedy for Reyn and his family occurring just a few weeks before Christmas. Jeanette's funeral was held on Friday, 3rd January, 2020 at St Peter & St Paul's Church, Bleadon.

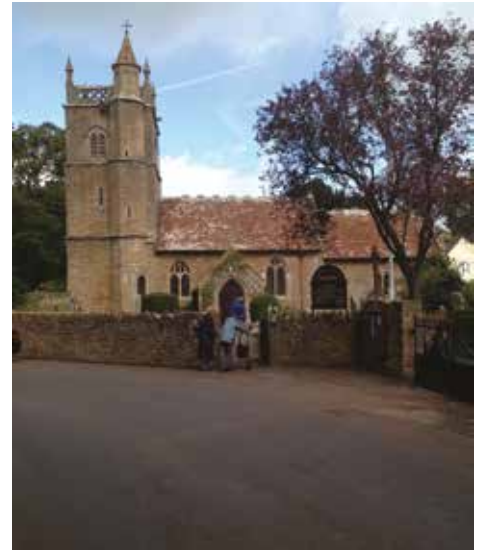
Finally, earlier in 2019, Ivor Watts, our Vice Chairman, retired from the Branch when he moved from Bristol to Melksham in Wiltshire, to be nearer to his family. However, my wife and I still meet up with Ivor and his wife Hilda for lunch together in Bath as and when we can. Covid19 has unfortunately delayed our next get together - it is nice not to lose touch with one another.

Numbers in the Branch continue to diminish, some members have not renewed their membership, one Verger at Bath Abbey has moved on and the remaining two have not renewed their membership - maybe because the Abbey who paid their fees is short of cash due to the lack of visitors during this current pandemic. Many of our members are now in their 70's and 80's and it is difficult to attract younger members. When arranging social events we have to consider distance to travel, accessibility, toilets and suitable venues for Lunch. Regrettably, it is also becoming more difficult not to repeat events we have already done.

Please would you all remember in your prayers Joy Stephens - a Verger at St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, who has been on long term sick leave. Joy is seriously ill with a brain tumour - something she has had to previously endure in the past. If ever there is a person who needs our prayers now it is our dear friend Joy.

Thank you all of you!

**Christopher M. Eynon**  
**Branch Chairman**



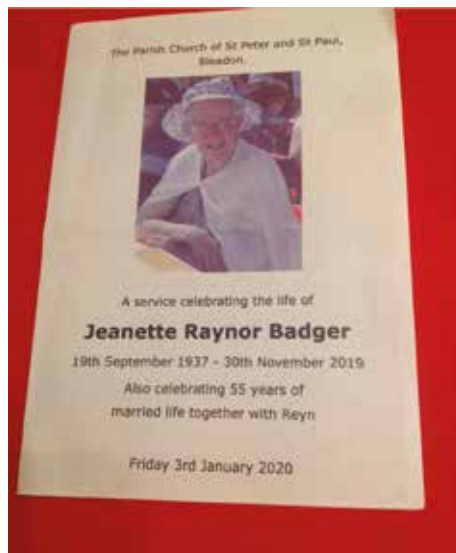
*St Michael & All Angels, Rowberrow.*



*Chris Eynon 70 years of singing.*



*Replica sailing ship "Matthew".*



*Order of Service for Jeanette Badger's funeral.*



*Paul Ashmore, Jill Eynon, Trish Ashmore, Norah Broomfield.*

## LINCOLN BRANCH NEWS.... TWO VIEWS OF OUR JULY

### Through all the changing scenes of the Guild...

Since joining in 1978 I have experienced several changes within the Guild; the Virger magazine morphing from a photocopied broadsheet, through a Gestetnered, folded black and white A5 pamphlet, to the first coloured [and later glossy] A4 publication. Seeing the Conference setting develop from a convent and later a university in Birmingham to the present pastoral setting in Malvern, and hearing of the aspirations of our present chairman striving to develop and endorse the training programme - all of the above embracing modern technology.

These seminal times of the past have driven the Lincoln branch to embrace the present restrictions, governed by the Covid pandemic with [what I believe is] the first Zoom branch meeting - when in July 15 or so members were joined by the Guild's Chairman and Chaplain and were able to meet & worship at a distance but together in spirit. Is this the thing of the future? Maybe. Will it diminish branches meeting in person? I hope not, Will we do it again? if the pandemic continues, I hope so. Thanks

to Colin Beevers, Branch secretary, for being wizard-in-charge.

**John G Campbell**  
Branch Chairman

### Branching Out

With traditional branch meetings for March and May lost because of the coronavirus precautions we decided that we would hold our July meeting on 'Zoom'.

So, despite a little bit of trepidation, members found it easy to join the meeting. Attendance was actually better than for many of our customary meetings. We were fortunate to be joined by John Kirby-Shearer, National Chairman, and by Canon Maureen Palmer, the outgoing National Chaplain.

John gave us a talk about the Guild nationally; the change from Area Leaders to Regional Representatives, the changing role of vergers, and the impact of Covid-19

on our employment. Canon Maureen then led us in a service of Compline, the order of service of which she had prepared for us earlier and circulated.

The meeting did not end with shared refreshments over mugs of vergers' tea, but it did enable us to meet and talk together and I would recommend it!

**Colin Beevers**  
Branch Secretary



Screen shot of the meeting courtesy of Jason Stephenson.

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## OXFORD BRANCH

### Ministry in a time of lockdown and social distancing

I guess we can each recognise in retrospect our own reactions to going into Lockdown on 21st March. I'd returned home from holiday the day before, and I was expecting to be at church making posies for Mothering Sunday on that Saturday. Making posies was cancelled, as were the services on Sunday, the Home Communion, the service at the Day Centre, Friday's film night (a showing of "Risen" - recommended!), the midweek service in a neighbouring parish, etc. I was horrified by the amount of ministry and socialising I was crossing out in my diary. I am quite the introvert, so being confined to quarters as an over-70, was not a huge problem to me. But the loss of ministry time became huge. Looking back, I can see that I grieved. Easter Day's online service was lovely, but my heart ached, and I spent the rest of the day bingeing on Box sets on the TV.

*"I am quite the introvert, so being confined to quarters as an over-70, was not a huge problem to me. But the loss of ministry time became huge. Looking back, I can see that I grieved."*

The Monday after lockdown started, I attended my first ever Zoom meeting. There was a steep learning curve as I found out more about Zoom, recorded a sermon, and attended an online Communion. Our staff team of Vicar, two OLMs and three Readers was working hard to create an all-embracing, up-to-date list of the church members and "the fringe". From the start, we agreed to make the effort to keep in contact with all the people on this list, most of whom had email addresses. The Vicar agreed to send twice-weekly email updates to the list, with news, Zoom and YouTube links for services, requests from the local food bank, etc... but we were concerned about the folks with no email address.

The pastorally-minded members of staff shared out the task of phoning on a regular basis, but I knew that wasn't my forte. God had something else in mind for me. I had a "light-bulb" moment and suggested I transcribed the vicar's email updates into printable form and posted the resultant weekly newsletter to our 35 - 40 "offliners". The first mailing was dated 22nd April, and I have sent a mailing every week since then. If I can wrangle sermon notes from Sunday's online preacher, then I include those, plus other items of interest that might fill in an empty space.

I have found this task is satisfying my vocation to help people connect with the Risen Christ, and the process creates a framework for my week and gives purpose to my time. I still binge on box sets on a bad days, but I can testify that there are no retirement plans in the Bible. All I have to do is be willing to look for what new doors might open when all the old doors appear to be shut.

Stay safe and God bless you from Marie.

**Revd Marie Jackson,**  
**OLM at the Church of Christ the**  
**Servant King High Wycombe**  
**Chaplain to Oxford Branch.**

*Chairman's Footnote: Marie performs a valuable and supportive role within our Branch structure, especially at this difficult time.*  
*Michael Golby, Oxford Branch Chairman*



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# FROM THE SECRETARY OF L S & C BRANCH

**F**or many of us Lockdown has been hard and for all of us, being locked out of our churches has been the hardest of all. I was furloughed on the understanding that I could go into the office as a 'volunteer' on the very odd occasion when it was warranted i.e. when the alarms went off at 3.00am! Thankfully that didn't happen too often. The phones and emails were routed to my mobile so I never really stopped being in touch. I was also part of a team doing food shopping for any of our parishioners who needed it.

Just before Christmas we'd appointed a PA to our Priest-in-Charge (soon to be Rector). She's much younger than me and is far more IT savvy, so it's certainly taken some of the burden from my shoulders. She's a young mum called Angela and we communicate regularly. She also lives very close to me. Anyway, once we were forced into lockdown, like most of you, I expect, depression and torpor took over. At first I couldn't see a way out of this. However Angela told me about a local campaign to keep small children amused as they were out on their daily walks. The idea was that houses put a Teddy Bear into their front window so children had something to smile about as they walked or scooted past. So this 'bah humbug' thought she'd join in - of course, taking it one step further!

Day 1 – Teddy sat upright in the window

Day 3 (or so) – Teddy had 1 paw up to wave at the children

Day 5 (or so) – Teddy had 2 paws up to wave at the children

Day 7 (or so) – Teddy lay reclining (sunbathing)

And so on: Teddy read a book, read a magazine, with reading glasses, without reading glasses, Teddy wore PPE,

Partial PPE, sunglasses, sported a fan, dressed for Ascot, was a bridegroom, then a bride, was mother of the bride, had bunny ears for Easter, wore his rainbow tie and then, horror, I ran out of costumes. Our Maltese neighbour trained as a fire fighter in Malta so leant me his firefighting helmet. My step-son is a police officer but I didn't like to ask to borrow a real police hat! However I knew someone who had one and hit upon an idea to ask my step-daughter if I could borrow a couple of hats from the grandchildren's dressing up box. We sat in her front garden more than 2 metres away whilst she went and got the hats along with a vanity case full of dressing-up bits. Once home Teddy became a police officer, first flat cap and then pointed helmet (which the local beat bobbies thought highly amusing & photographed), Robin Hood, a pirate, Mr Tickle etc. etc.

After a couple of week, Melvyn and I realised that not only were the local children coming past to see how Teddy was dressed, but several adults were as well. There were endless photos taken of him and selfies taken with him and he even received fan mail!

At the beginning of June when I was called back to work, I withdrew Teddy from the front window and returned the dressing up clothes to my grandchildren. A couple of days later as Melvyn was putting out the recycling, a neighbour walked past and asked him where teddy had gone. She said her small children had looked forward to seeing him every day. Melvyn told her, in his rather dry sense of humour, that Teddy had gone on a Spa break as he was totally exhausted.

I'm sure there is a moral in this tale somewhere! Carry on keeping safe everyone.









# THE MUSIC OF THE CHURCH AND COVID-19: ONE PERSPECTIVE FROM THE UNITED STATES

**A**s with nearly every aspect of our lives, COVID-19 has affected the beautiful music that once resonated through our beloved churches throughout the world. Here in the United States, we are no different in this respect.

Once our collective cities and states started having lockdown orders placed on them near the end of March, the shock was stunning and dumbfounding. While people were rushing grocery stores and stocking up on toilet paper, Clergy were already trying to figure out what on earth they were going to do about church. Certainly, church isn't just the building, but for many, they can't imagine church *without* the building.

To further the confusion and sense of loss, in mid-March, a church choir in Washington State made international news when nearly everyone in attendance contracted COVID-19 as a direct result of an evening choir rehearsal. How could something so integral to our worship be so dangerous?

By early April, most churches had settled into conducting some sort of Sunday morning service over Zoom or other similar platform. As was the case with our friends across the pond, there was a beautiful variety of service offerings in this new world: some churches began offering Morning Prayer, others began to offer a modified Eucharist. Still others began offering expanded Daily Office services for the very first time in a long time, if ever.

Ah, but the music! During this time of sudden change, industrious Ministers of Music were right behind the Clergy, trying to figure out what they were going to do given the early reports that singing was literally one of the most dangerous things people could do in groups.

For those with the time, talent, and treasure to embark on such a mission, the now-ubiquitous "virtual choir" seemed like an initial stopgap. Individual choir members would capture themselves on video to a provided click track, and then someone would compile the videos into one cohesive unit. For

Easter 2020, the Episcopal Church coordinated a 600-person virtual choir for Easter, complete with instrumental accompaniment.

Virtual choirs are time and labor intensive. With the reality setting in that we're going to be outside of the church for quite a long time, this seems like an unsustainable way of making music for a long period of time.

Making music synchronously on a platform like Zoom is impossible, due to varying internet connectivity speeds and latency issues, not to mention the aural feedback that is unavailable to musicians when they're not in the same room making music together.

But God has gifted humanity with ingenuity, and since March, I've encountered a number of ways that churches have tried to provide meaningful music for Sunday worship services. Here are just a few examples that I've seen from all across the US:

## **Smaller virtual ensembles**

As I mentioned, virtual choirs take a great deal of time to coordinate and put together. Smaller ensembles are easier, and these have been one very popular way to provide a perfectly lovely musical offering. One offshoot of this idea is where a single musician will record themselves several times playing or singing different parts of a piece until each part has been performed. The results can be quite remarkable.

## **Soloist with or without accompaniment**

Another option is for a soloist (with or without keyboard accompaniment) to provide an Offertory anthem. This also includes a solo keyboard player or other instrumentalist. These can be pre-recorded with minimal risk to the participants so long as they adhere to physical distancing guidelines and sanitation protocols.

## **Small groups of musicians**

There have been several instances of small groups of musicians (again, with and without keyboard accompaniment) who have found ways to follow physical

distancing guidelines and be able to record music together in the same space.

## **Live or pre-recorded hymn accompaniment**

As I mentioned earlier, making music together as a group is impossible. But what is possible is to have a hymn accompaniment playing (say, a single organist) while Zoom participants mute themselves and can sing along. It doesn't offer the same feeling of singing with one's congregation, but it does help fill a need that people have to sing.

There are no doubt more than I've listed here.

From my vantage point, churches are now beginning to move away from trying to make in-person worship fit into an online world and instead are crafting new ways of worship to account for the strengths and limitations in this new landscape. Some are (and have been doing so for some time) moving to entirely pre-recorded worship experiences. Others are worshipping outside on the church lawn or other spacious place. Others are using a hybrid model that combines pre-recorded and live elements for online worship.

Churches all around the world are learning to tolerate--and even lean in to--ambiguity. We don't know the course that is ahead of us. As a church musician for most of my adult life, my heart aches to think about how long it might be before I can robustly sing something out of The Hymnal 1982 with my congregation or contribute my voice to an anthem with my church choir.

What gives me great hope is the hardworking people who have forged ahead to lead music in our worship in a medium previously unknown. There is no doubt in my mind that these musicians will continue to help us worship our God, soothe our souls, and give voice to our prayers.

**Michael Sanchez, Verger and Musician  
Christ Church Episcopal Parish  
Lake Oswego, Oregon (USA)**



# AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF COLIN G. MAGGS MBE, MA, CHAPLAIN, SOMERSET & AVON BRANCH OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND GUILD OF VERGERS



**H**il I'm Colin Maggs. You may have come across me in two ways: I've been Chaplain to the Somerset & Avon Branch since 1989 and also you may have read one or more of my 107 books published to date - mostly on railway history. Quite significant number of vergers are interested in the subject.

My churchmanship has been interesting. I was brought up as a Baptist, but my father was very ecumenically-minded and took me to various places of worship, including Bath Abbey, and little did I think that I'd ever end up leading services there.

When I decided to become a teacher, as there was no Baptist college, I went to the next best thing - a Methodist one. Westminster College was sited in Horseferry Road and when lectures allowed, I always attended Choral Evensong at Westminster Abbey. On Sundays I went to Matins at St Stephen's, Rochester Row, where the Revd George Reindorp (later Bishop of Guildford) was Vicar.

After teaching for 2½ years in Bristol, I managed to secure a post at a Church of England school only a mile from my home and soon after decided to join the C of E. I became a member of a very good parish choir as alto and in due course became PCC secretary, Deanery Synod secretary, Reader and deputy organist. The choir never knew whether I was going to sing with them, play for them, or preach to them.

I'd had many railway articles published in magazines and newspapers and even got my foot in the door of the BBC's Children's Hour just before they closed it down. I then began to think that I'd like to write something more permanent than words used to wrap up fish and chips. I contacted a publisher, my title was accepted and in due course wrote my first book. Having written one, I thought it would be nice to write another - it's like a drug, you can't stop once you've started. My work has been nationally recognised and in 1992 was awarded an MBE 'for services to railway history' (the first to be so honoured) and actually received it from the Queen herself.

In 1989, the Somerset & Avon Branch, quite a few members of which were interested in railways, invited me to become Chaplain and I was pleased and honoured to accept and have had the time to attend most of their meetings.

Being part of the branch certainly opened my eyes. Before being appointed Chaplain, I'd considered Vergers to be sort of glorified cleaners, but soon found that they are a grand, hard-working, friendly, hungry group of people who cover a vast range of activities, make the Church as perfect as possible and I realised that the Church would be a lot poorer without them.

My most embarrassing moment? A Verger, (not at Bath Abbey now), one day as we were leaving the vestry for Evensong said: 'Colin, I should sit down in your stall gently as I've hidden a whoopee cushion in your seat.'

I sat down very gingerly. There was no untoward embarrassing noise - it was just a leg-pull.

Some 30 years ago, as my parish church changed to the 'happy-clappy' style of worship which was not to my taste, so I moved to Bath Abbey. In addition to leading services, I'm Abbey Chaplain about twice weekly.

One other important factor of my life which I've yet to mention, is that for 22 years I owned a horse Dear Brutus. I hacked around the country lanes and thoroughly enjoyed being close to nature; with his help I also delivered the parish magazines.

Initially I found the coronavirus lockdown disturbing because the weeks lacked a pattern. Instead of being Abbey Chaplain, leading at least one service there, writing a sermon, leading 2-4 services elsewhere on Sundays, there was empty space.

A new pattern then evolved. On Sundays I read Matins and Evensong at home, while on weekdays I tend to spend mornings gardening and afternoons reading books. As two of my holidays have been cancelled, as a consolation, since I've kept full diaries of my holidays since 1942, each day I've been reading one holiday and looking at relevant transparencies or pictures, thoroughly enjoying these recollections. Evenings I spend phoning friends to check that they're well. I don't watch much TV, but when I do, tend to patronise Talking Pictures, Channel 81, particularly enjoying the short films of the 30s and 40s lasting about 15 minutes or less.

Although this would be a good time to write a book, I'm not doing so as I'd finished one towards the beginning of the lockdown, and at the moment, with the market in a state of flux, publishers aren't enthusiastic about making new contracts. It's a good time to pause and remember: 'Be still, and know that I am God'.

# THE REVEREND CANON DR. MAUREEN PALMER – A VALEDICTION



**A**natomically speaking, it's impossible to imagine how such a large and caring heart can fit into such a petite frame; intellectually speaking it's difficult to see how such a huge intellect with such diverse interests and vast knowledge can be contained in one small head; physically speaking, it's hard to see where all the huge reserves of energy are stored in such a delicate form... but that is the wonder which is our Canon Maureen !

Having survived doodlebug raids on their East London home in the Second World War, and a childhood punctuated by illness, Canon Maureen began her career as a zoologist and physiologist, studying at Queen Elizabeth College in the University of London, where her deep passion for the ecological well-being of our planet led her to study ecosystems both at home and in far-flung places. She gained a Batchelor of Science degree, followed it with a period of detailed research (if you're brave enough ask her about *Tubifex Tubifex* - or the 'sludge worm' - a tiny creature that lived in the Thames!), during which she became very ill for a year having picked-up something nasty in the Thames; fortunately Maureen recovered and completed her study, being awarded a Doctorate of Philosophy. Sixteen years teaching physiology at the university was to follow, during which Maureen also provided a great deal of pastoral care to worried students. This work of pastoral care eventually led to Maureen being persuaded to test her vocation, and a varied and fulfilling ministry followed in Hereford, Salisbury, Birmingham,

Guildford and Hereford (again) dioceses. What a heart; what a mind; what energy !

Over the past 15 years we have been hugely privileged to have Canon Maureen as our National Chaplain. It was my honour to be National Chairman when the now-legendary Fr Bill McLaren decided to retire after 25 years in post, and to pay tribute to him, but as National Chairman it also fell to me to preside over the search for a successor. There was much angst in Central Council about who might succeed 'Fr Bill', but we needn't have worried; 'The Lord Will Provide' said a wise council member, and so he did, and in 'good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over' - and how fortunate have we been. Unbeknown to many, Canon Maureen had been - for some years - the mysterious and anonymous 'External Assessor' for the Guild Diploma, evaluating the work of our students, maintaining standards, meticulously marking and commenting on the submissions, and so was well placed to be our chaplain, having known some of us 'on paper' from a distance.

Some of us had also met Canon Maureen at one the Guild's National Festivals (called 'Rallies' in those days) held at Birmingham Cathedral in September 1995 (thanks to another legend of the Guild, Dennis Sumner, who wished to mark the 40th Anniversary of the Birmingham Branch that year) where the Reverend Dr. Maureen Palmer was Chaplain and Succentor at the time, and one of the speakers at the Rally. At the end of the day, having gathered to robe in a building

a short distance away, we processed in all our finery along the busy Colmore Row to enter the cathedral. On our way we passed various troubled souls who were openly easing their pain by abusing solvents in one of the bus shelters. During the service in the cathedral, one of these young ladies came into the cathedral and took a seat near the front, just in front of me. After sitting and listening for a while she decided that she didn't think much of what was going on and felt moved to tell the assembly exactly what she thought of it. Maureen quietly left her seat in the chancel, from where she was conducting the service, and came and sat next to the young lady and calmed her down, explaining what was happening, and won her confidence. When this same priest was nominated as our Chaplain some years later, I knew we would be blessed with a calm, but quietly determined pastor, able to win our confidence and - when necessary - calm us down ! What a heart; what a mind; what energy !

Her exceptional ministry to us began at the Conference in 2005 when she was admitted as National Chaplain by the then bishop of Birmingham, and Archbishop Elect of York, John Sentamu. Since that moment she has faithfully, year on year, preached at our Festivals, presided at our liturgies, awarded our Diplomas, admitted members, officers and Branch Chaplains, written every quarter without fail for our magazine, and prayed for - and with - us. What a heart; what a mind; what energy !

I began by saying 'Our Canon Maureen' - but a quick Google-search (other





search engines are available!) reveals that whilst being our National Chaplain, Canon Maureen was also a Residentiary Canon and Sub-Dean of Guildford Cathedral; an active member (and Warden from 1996 - 2003) of the Society of Ordained Scientists and the current editor of their scholarly periodical; taught on the Guildford Ministerial Training Course; was Academic Registrar for the Archbishop's Examination in Theology (who administer the 'Lambeth Degree' programme); and is much in demand as a speaker, preacher and retreat leader. Whilst maintaining all her other interests

Canon Maureen has poured out her love to hundreds of members of The Guild over these years in person, on the phone, or by letter; travelled thousands of miles to attend Festivals, Branch Meetings and services, Central Council Meetings and to assess our diploma submissions; written squillions of words as articles for The Virger magazine or as sermons preached at our gatherings. Since 2006 she has continued to fulfil all these commitments whilst also enjoying something laughingly called 'retirement' in the City of Hereford, a stone's throw from the beautiful cathedral. Having travelled to Hereford

myself several times over the years, I can vouch for the fact that it's not exactly the centre of the rail network !

So, all that remains for me to say to Canon Maureen is a huge Thank You from all in The Guild, past and present, who have been touched by your extraordinarily generous ministry of heart, mind and soul. We have been truly blessed.

**Chris Crooks, FCEGV,  
National Chairman, 2004 - 2011  
Vesturer of Canterbury.**

## OBITUARY

### Peter Young

23rd January 1952 – 9th July 2020

On Tuesday 28th July 2020 we said goodbye to our chairman Peter Young whose funeral was held at the beautiful Malvern Priory where he had served as Custos/Head Verger from 2001 to 2017. The sun shone and the driveway was lined with friends and members of the Priory family who clapped as the hearse passed by. A small guard of honour from the Branch stood outside the North Porch and Peter was verged into the priory by one of our number.

Peter was born in Portsmouth in 1952 and was raised as a Roman Catholic. After leaving school he joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers - as an apprentice. His last Army posting at the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment was in Malvern and Malvern became his home.

During this time he married for the first time and became the proud father of Russell. Sadly, the marriage was not successful. In 1984 he met Alison and in 1985 they were married - this month would have been their 35th wedding anniversary. They were blessed with two girls Veronica and Felicity. His family were especially important to him, he was immensely proud of his children. He was a wonderful husband and father.

In civilian life Peter worked for twenty years as a technical writer for two Ministry of Defence suppliers in Malvern. In 2001 the role of Custos/Head Verger at the Priory was advertised, he applied (with Alison's blessing) and was appointed. He was accepted into the Church of England and was to serve in this role until his retirement in 2017. This was his true vocation. He was to be an outstanding Custos/Head Verger. As Mary Weatherill the Parish Administrator said in the tribute to him "I've worked with no one better than Peter in terms of commitment and sheer hard work - because he had a sense of duty, of getting the job done and getting it done properly. It was more than a job to Peter, it was a Vocation, a Ministry. Peter loved this church - not just the church with a small c but the church with a capital C, the Priory family."

Peter joined the Guild in 2002 and served a tour as Chairman of our branch and again as Chairman from 2015 until his death as well as other offices including Branch Correspondent. He was a great ambassador for the Guild, he had a wealth of knowledge and experience, was a first rate Branch Chairman, was very well liked and highly respected. He had a lovely manner and approach, a wonderful sense of humour, and even when busy with other things he was always ready to help. His commitment to the Guild was second to none and it was always

a pleasure to be involved with the excellent events he organised.

In late May, this year it was discovered that he had a lung tumour which was later diagnosed as cancerous. Following treatment for complications caused by the tumour he was discharged home to convalesce. When I spoke to him the day before he died, he was upbeat and looking forward to planning his treatment with his Oncologist. Sadly that night he had to be taken by ambulance to hospital and died there the following morning. By the grace of God he was able to have his beloved Alison and their family by his side as he made that final journey home.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Yours in Christ

**David Anwyl-Hughes  
Branch Secretary - Hereford,  
Gloucester and Worcester.**



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## The Guild Prayer

Almighty Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named,  
who has called us into the fellowship of your Church,  
grant, we pray, that in all our churches we may fulfil the duties  
and enjoy the privileges of our spiritual home.  
And on those who offer themselves for service as vergers in the house of God  
bestow the fullness of your grace,  
that, united in love to you and to one another,  
we may show forth your glory and hasten the coming of your kingdom.  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



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