

THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

Winter 2024 | Issue 325



www.cofegv.org.uk



Welcome to Our Winter Edition!

*'Tis the season to be jolly, organized,
and—if we dare say—verger-iffic!*

As we enter the most wonderful (and busiest!) time of the year, Vergers across the country are bustling to bring Christmas cheer to churches from Cornwall to Cumbria, and everywhere in between. With every wreath hung and candle placed, we're "decking the halls" and preparing our beloved spaces for the season's joyful celebrations.

In this season of *O Come All Ye Faithful*, we're reminded of the great work we share as Vergers, creating spaces where congregations can gather, rejoice, and find comfort. From Advent services to midnight Mass, we're the silent shepherds who ensure every detail is ready for the many who will pass through our doors. There may be no *Silent Night* for us, but it's a privilege to serve during a time that holds such deep meaning for so many.

With a packed schedule of events, services, and perhaps a few ladders to climb, let's take a moment to share "tidings of comfort and joy" with one another. This issue is packed with stories from

Vergers around the nation who are preparing for a bright and blessed Christmas season. So whether you're setting up for a *Joy to the World* sing-a-long or organizing a cozy Christmas service, we hope these pages bring a bit of inspiration and a good dose of festive spirit. To all of you, may your Christmas season be blessed, bright, and filled with the knowledge that your service—no matter how behind-the-scenes it may feel—truly brings light to your communities.

With warmest holiday greetings to Vergers everywhere,

Jason Stevenson

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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From the desk of the Chairman



In a few weeks' time, churches up and down the country will be preparing for Advent. It is the time when out comes the purple frontals and we have a period of reflection on the nativity of our Lord at Christmas. In recent years Christmas seems to arrive earlier and earlier. No sooner has the summer holiday adverts finished than we are bombarded with Christmas shopping, decorated trees popping up in shopping centres and hotels in early November. To many, this is an anathema as it is negating the Advent season in the Church. It is refreshing that we can tune in to Radio 3 for the annual Advent Carol service broadcast from St John's Cambridge and on Christmas Eve, we can listen to Carols for Christmas from King's College Cambridge.

The debate on when to put up a Christmas Tree in churches has been ongoing for many years, but sadly, many are losing the argument. School carol services held before the end of term appear to need the visual aid of a fully decorated tree, twinkling with white or coloured lights. Perhaps a compromise could be made. If a tree is required early and during the first few weeks of Advent, why not have a plain tree with no decorations or lights not switched on. Prayer papers could be used and the tree become a reflective focal point through out Advent. As Christmas draws nearer, decorations could be added and the focus of the tree could change and lights switched on much nearer Christmas, perhaps at the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

During Advent, I hope and pray that all vergers up and down the country, will find time to reflect and focus on the celebration that is to come on the 25th December. I know it is a difficult and hectic time, but a few moments when you have closed the church doors to visitors and tourists, go and sit in a chapel and have a few minutes of quiet either at the start of the day or at the end.

Looking forward, our Annual Training Conference and Retreat in August 2025 in West Malvern promises to be an exciting time when we focus on the Ministry of Music. Further information can be found further in this edition of The Virger. I hope that once you have seen the programme, you will be reaching for the booking form and submitting it to achieve the Early Bird rate to gain a place. The line up of speakers will include Sir John Rutter - celebrated conductor and composer; Andrew Kirk - freelance organist and choirmaster; Stuart Freed - the Elgar Society; Canon Philip Banks - Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral London; and David Waters - producer of Songs of

Praise. It promises to be an exciting programme, and I look forward to welcoming you in the shadow of the Malvern Hills.

I wish you all a prayerful, peaceful Advent and when it comes - a joyous Christmas.

Yours in Christ

John Kirby Shearer

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**.

Blackburn, Chester and Manchester
Freda Murphy, Anne Woodward

Oxford
Michael & Betty Golby, Audrey Ashby,
Heather Ringrose, Molly Payne

Chichester, Guildford and Portsmouth
Sue Ansell

St Albans
Jackie Rudom, Peter Hudson

HQ Member
Marek Barden, Chris Eynon, Roger Lawrence,
Barbara Taylor

London, Southwark and Chelmsford
Gordon Leonard, Arnel and Ian Solarno

For those who have died
Robert Willis

**And all people facing hardship and difficulties
and who are facing uncertainties.**

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

Annual Training Conference and Retreat 4th - 7th August 2025

Elim Conference Centre, West Malvern Ministry of Music

I am delighted to announce that all the speakers for conference this year have been booked and the timetable has been confirmed. As vergers, we experience music in our worship Sunday by Sunday and in some churches and our cathedrals, music plays a large part of our daily worship. At our conference, the standard of our hymn singing is quite high, to assist our services.

Our keynote speaker this year will be the celebrated conductor and composer, Sir John Rutter.

To get a perspective of who organises the music from a clergy viewpoint, Canon Philip Banks, Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral, London will share his views.

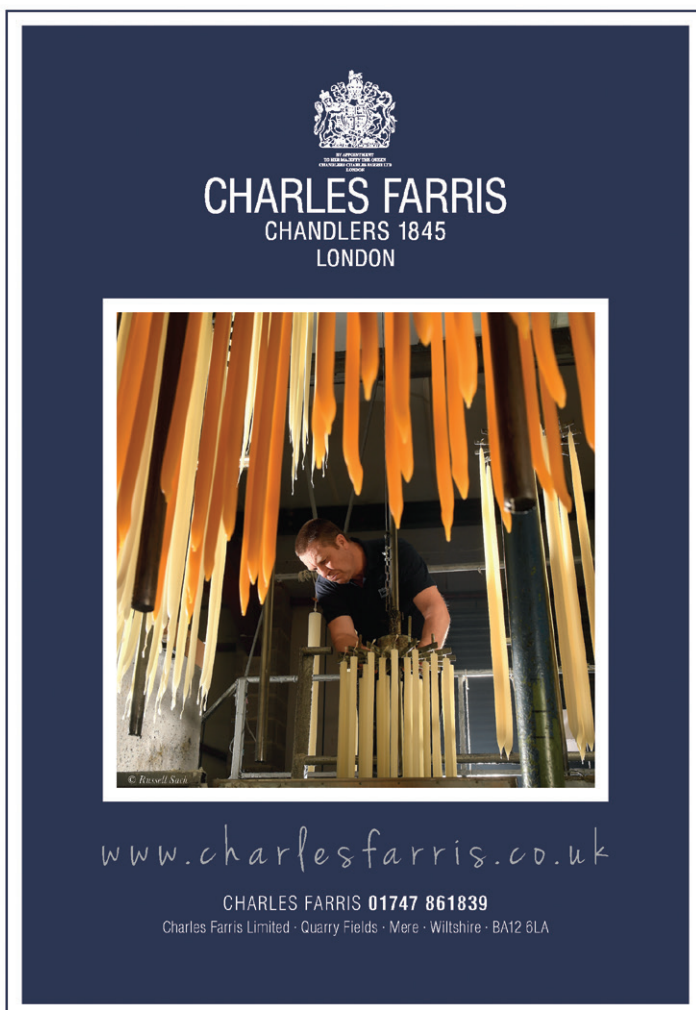
Being in Elgar Country surrounded by the Malvern Hills, we have

invited the Chairman of the Elgar Society, Stuart Freed, to give us a flavour of this quintessentially English composer.

Andrew Kirk was Director of Music and organist at St Mary Redcliffe Church in Bristol. This is a fine church and member of the Greater Churches Group. Andrew will share his thoughts and experiences of music in a parish church with mixed choirs.

Songs of Praise has been on our television for many years. We have invited one of the show's producers, David Waters, to share how the programme is put made and put together.

I hope that this year's programme will inspire as many of you to book and join us to share in fellowship, worship and hear some inspiring tales of behind the scenes exploits on how music in our churches is put together.



The Gathering

**Today there was a gathering
of people who are following
"ancient" thoughts of word and deed.
Parts of which, all should at least, try to
heed.**

**A part of this is that we are not one,
Yet part of a whole and not be conned -
into believing, that we are alone?
"We are the children of the Holy One",
So those today who gathered in
know that this is where the power is.
Not just in me and not just in you!
I hope this poem gives you the clue!**

M J Hockin 1.2.24 ©

Sir John Rutter

John Rutter was born in London and studied music at Clare College, Cambridge. He first came to notice as a composer during his student years; much of his early work consisted of church music and other choral pieces including Christmas carols. From 1975–79 he was Director of Music at his *alma mater*, Clare College, and directed the college chapel choir in various recordings and broadcasts. Since 1979 he has divided his time between composition and conducting. Today his compositions, including such concert-length works as *Requiem*, *Magnificat*, *Mass of the Children*, *The Gift of Life*, and *Visions* are performed around the world. His music has featured in a number of British royal occasions, including the two most recent royal weddings. He edits the *Oxford Choral Classics* series, and, with Sir David Willcocks, co-edited four volumes of *Carols for Choirs*. In 1983 he formed his own choir the Cambridge Singers, with whom he has made numerous recordings, and he appears regularly in several countries as guest conductor and choral ambassador. He holds a Lambeth Doctorate in Music, and in 2007 was awarded a CBE for services to music. In September 2023, he received the Ivors Academy Fellowship, joining a prestigious list of 24 Fellows including John Adams, Pierre Boulez CBE, Kate Bush CBE and Sir Elton John.



In 1988 he became a fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians. In 1996 the Archbishop of Canterbury conferred a Lambeth Doctorate of Music upon him in recognition of his contribution to church music. In 2008 he also became an honorary Bencher of the Middle Temple while playing a significant role in the 2008 Temple Festival. John Rutter was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2007 New Year Honours^[22] and knighted in the 2024 Birthday Honours, both for services to music.^[23]

Canon Philip Banks – Precentor of St. Paul's Cathedral London

Philip is Chair of the National Precentors' Network and joins St Paul's from St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Suffolk where he has been Residentiary Canon and Precentor for over 12 years. During his time at the Cathedral, he has led and overseen the establishment of girl choristers, a graduate and post-graduate organ scholar programme and the Cathedral's 'Singing in Schools' initiative. Coupled with this, he has helped arrange a weekly all-ages service, which brings in young children all the way through to octogenarians.



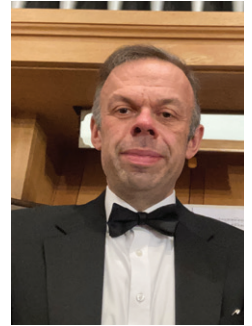
Prior to this role, Philip served as Bishop's Chaplain and Press Officer in Essex. He has been ordained for 30 years, serving in a variety of parochial roles and as Area Dean. Before ordination Philip had a career as a Chartered Surveyor.

The Revd Canon Philip Banks commented: 'Cathedrals are extraordinary places of encounter, speaking of God's transcendent presence in stone, wood and glass. They are also communities of living stones, journeying together to the Kingdom. It is my privilege to be appointed to serve as a Residentiary Canon at St Paul's, unique amongst Cathedrals, and to have a hand in shaping the worship of the Cathedral as it seeks to serve the Diocese, city and nation, and its role as an international icon of Christ's inclusive heart of love.'

"Having established girl choristers in St Edmundsbury Cathedral, I am delighted that on Sunday St Paul's welcomed girls' voices into their Cathedral Choir for the first time. I look forward to seeing them flourish and supporting further work like this at the Cathedral.'

Andrew Kirk

Is a freelance organist, accompanist, choral director and composer working mainly in the Bristol and North Somerset area. He is an occasional accompanist for various choral societies, community and church choirs. He is Director of Henbury Singers, a chamber choir of 20 singers. For five months in 2024, he held the position as Interim Director of Music at Cirencester Parish Church. In Autumn 2024 Andrew was appointed Director of Good Afternoon Choirs in North Somerset and Chepstow.



From 2003-2023, he held the position of Director of Music and Organist at St Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol, where he had responsibility for directing several choirs at the church and regularly gave concerts on the famous 1912 Harrison and Harrison organ. In the past year, his organ concerts have included St David's Cathedral, St Chad's Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey, Christchurch Priory, Albert Hall Nottingham and Brangwyn Hall Swansea.

From 1994-2003 he was Director of Music at St John's Church, Ranmoor, Sheffield. He also taught class music at three secondary schools, including Lady Manners School, Bakewell. He has been an external consultant for the appointment of Directors of Music in some of the larger churches in the UK.

Born and educated in Leicester, he won an Organ Scholarship to Pembroke College, Oxford where he studied organ with David Sanger. He spent two years in Western Australia as Assistant Organist at St George's Anglican Cathedral in Perth. He holds the FRCO Diploma, gaining the Turpin and Durrant prizes for organ playing.

The Very Reverend Robert Willis 1947 – 2024

The sudden death of Dr Robert Willis on 22nd October, aged 77, whilst in America, has come as a shock to many; his family and friends, colleagues and worshippers at his former churches, and his not inconsiderable following across the world via his daily broadcast on YouTube. We can hardly believe that we will not be physically present to be able to join him in person to hear his well-crafted and eloquently delivered sermons – usually perfectly timed and without any notes in front of him – and he won't be gracing us with his charm, erudition and impeccable manners at events up and down the land.

Described affectionately in *The Telegraph* as 'perhaps the last of the old-fashioned Church of England deans' and by Archbishop Welby as 'one of the most exceptional deans of the post-war period', Robert studied theology at Ripon College Cuddesdon, where his interest in catholic liturgy. Ordained deacon in 1972, Robert served his title at St Chad's Shrewsbury before moving to Salisbury Cathedral in 1975, kindling a life-long love of the cathedral and diocese, and an abiding friendship with Richard Shephard, musician and composer; Dr Shephard's death aged 71 was keenly felt by Robert, who wrote a moving obituary to his friend in the *Church Times* in March 2021.

It was at Salisbury that Robert was first introduced to The Guild of Vergers by the Head Verger of the cathedral, the legendary William (Bill) Haynes, FCEGV, Robert spoke fondly to me of Bill all those years later. It was via this friendship that Robert, by then Team Rector of Tisbury in Salisbury Diocese, was approached to be the 'Spiritual Leader' of that year's *Guild Conference* (legend has it at very short notice, when the booked speaker pulled-out) held at Harborne Hall Convent, Birmingham.

The Guild's National Chaplain – Fr Bill McLaren – later wrote in *The Virger*

magazine how he had been "transported from the ordinary problems of everyday life into a world of art, music and worship... I could have listened for hours to a man who is indeed an expert in his subject". This was to be the hallmark of Robert's ministry, and his popularity as a preacher, retreat leader and conference speaker endured for the rest of his life. So impressed was the Conference with Robert's presentations that he was awarded Associate Life Membership of the Guild, a lasting relationship with the Guild of which Robert was quietly proud throughout the rest of his long ministry.

After nine years in Tisbury, Robert was called to be Vicar of Sherborne in Dorset in 1987, still in Salisbury Diocese, which brought him into close association with the independent Sherborne School, and its neighbour Sherborne School for Girls, with whose formidable Headmistress,

June Taylor, Robert made another life-long friendship until her untimely death, June often being invited to events in Canterbury during Robert's tenure as dean. Many former girls at the school, now mature women with children of their own, if they met their former headmistress in the street, could still only address her as 'Miss Taylor'!

I first met Robert at Sherborne Abbey on 22 September 1988. See if you can spot a very young me in the photograph, along with younger versions of others you may recognise. The bishop in the picture is the late John Kirkham, Suffragan Bishop of Sherborne.

In 1992, Robert was humbled by the 'invitation' (which was more of an instruction !) from 10 Downing Street informing him that he had been nominated as the next Dean of Hereford.



Guild of Vergers Southern Rally in Sherborne Abbey - 22 Sept 1988.



Dean Robert and the Canterbury With Rochester Branch, at their visit to the Deanery Garden - Sept 2021.

But was sad at leaving Sherborne, and his beloved Diocese of Salisbury. However, he enjoyed the recently re-ordered interior of the cathedral, formed a collaborative friendship with Roy Massey, Hereford's Organist and Master of Choristers, enthusiastically embraced the *Three Choirs Festival*, and saw to fruition in 1996 the opening of the *Mappa Mundi* Centre to house the cathedral's mediaeval map and chained library.

In 2001 Dean Robert was summoned to Canterbury as its 39th Dean. He launched himself fully into the role, learning its history, examining its buildings, steering the cathedral into a multimillion pound restoration project to repair the Corona Tower, rebuild the Great South Window, restore the nave roof and western towers, re-landscape the Precincts, restore the cathedral clock, and completely rebuilding the Grand Organ, commissioning new vestments and frontals and numerous other projects along the way, some of these running – exhaustingly – simultaneously!

Our paths crossed many times over the years in the dear old Church of England, until I eventually became his Dean's Virger when I joined the senior staff in 2005 in my role as Vesturer of Canterbury Cathedral. When I suggested that the Guild should celebrate the 80th anniversary of its founding in 1932 with a *Festival* in Canterbury in September 2012, Dean Robert wholeheartedly supported

the idea, and agreed to preach at our Festival Eucharist. 120 members had a fun filled 24-hours and I was delighted to be presented with my certificate and Fellowship hood and gown at that Eucharist by Dean Robert in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral.

He was devoted to maintaining the daily rhythm of worship in the cathedral and was devastated when the lockdown imposed during the COVID pandemic closed the cathedral to everybody – clergy included. His determination to maintain the tradition of daily worship led to 'virtual' worship via a daily broadcast from the Deanery Garden, and the unexpected formation of the now world-famous 'Garden Congregation' who met daily with him on-line for prayer and Bible study until the day before he died. Once the lockdown restrictions were lifted, the Dean hosted the Canterbury with Rochester Branch of the Guild in the Deanery garden, for members to see first-hand the garden and animals that had become so famous during his broadcast.

Dean Robert's associations with his beloved Salisbury were renewed when his colleague on Chapter in Canterbury, Canon Treasurer Nick Papadopoulos was installed as Dean of Salisbury in 2018, for which Robert gladly wrote a new pilgrim hymn 'Praise the Lord for Holy Places'. With his permission we sang it at my installation in St Davids. He was

also immensely proud when his former curate in Sherborne – Stephen Lake – was enthroned as Bishop of Salisbury in 2022. Bishop Stephen often wears Bishop Kirkham's pectoral cross – as worn in the 1988 'Rally' photograph.

Through his many preaching engagements and invitations to attend services in the great churches across the world, Robert got to know many vergers by name, and always had encouraging words for them, and brought their greetings back to me and the home-team in Canterbury. He was particularly proud of his godson Matthew Power, son of David Power – his organist at Tisbury – who became Dean's Verger of Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford, and later Verger of Temple Church in London.

The day after we learned of Robert's death, we changed the hymn at Choral Evensong in St Davids to his masterful composition 'Earth's fragile beauties we possess' and I wore my Fellowship hood with a mixture of pride, thanksgiving for a good man, and sadness that his ministry here on earth has ended too soon.

Requiescat in pace.

Chris Crooks, MA, FCEGV,
Head Verger of Salisbury Cathedral, 1997 – 2005, Vesturer of Canterbury, 2005- 2022, Dean's Verger of St Davids Cathedral



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Windsor Festival

Picture it – Windsor Castle, 2024. A group of vergers queuing to enter the Castle gates, met by a policeman and the Head Verger Mr Vaughn Wright. Armed with a clipboard to check off our names, we were led into the Castle Grounds, through the archway into Horseshoe Cloister, passing those famous steps that lead up to the West Door of St George's Chapel. Through the carpark on the north side and into an area where coffee, tea and cakes awaited our arrival. Once everyone had arrived, we were welcomed by a member of the clergy and our visit and tour of the most famous chapel began.



Split into small groups, we were taken into different parts of the chapel by our superb guides who instructed us on the beauties of the Chapel. It is also known as The King's Free Chapel, The Chapel of the Most Honourable and Noble Order of the Garter. The Chapel of the College of St. George.

The initial breathtaking sights are truly wonderful, with fan-vaulted ceiling, Garter Flags, memorials of members of the Royal Family, the marble decorated chapel in memory of Prince Albert all make up this chapel which is known to many for Royal Family occasions, The King's Wedding Blessing, Prince Harry's Wedding and the funerals of HM Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, just to name but a few.



As part of our tour, we gathered outside to witness the Changing of the Guard ceremony. During our visit, the Royal Gurkha Rifles were relieved of duty by a company of the Welsh Guards. What a thrill to see a group of women and men moving with such precision.



The afternoon gave some free time to explore Windsor and for those who booked for a tour of the Royal Apartments, time to explore more of the King's residence. It was marvellous to wander around the many rooms and seeing the area that was restored after the fire in 1992 and the many treasures that were saved. Particularly poignant was seeing the stain glass window at the point of where the fire started. The craftsmanship of those who worked on the building to restore the St George's Hall and other drawing rooms and towers was simply breathtaking.

We met up again in time to be seated in the Choir for Evensong, sung by the choir of the Chapel under the direction of their Director of Music, James Vivian. Prayers were said for Vergers in the Church of England.



After the obligatory photograph on the Altar steps, we departed Windsor having experienced a wonderful day which was rich in pageantry, beauty, splendour and majesty. Grateful thanks must be given to our hosts, the Dean and Chapter of St. George's, the Stewards and Verger team, all headed up and organised by Vaughn Wright – Head Verger.



GV letter

Dear Friends

Each year the readings for the Sundays in Advent stir up anew our hopes for the in-breaking of the kingdom of God into our lives. The narrative here at the beginning of a new church year is a familiar one: we watch the skies for signs in the heavens, we go out to John the Baptist at the Jordan River, we hasten with Mary up into the hills to find Elizabeth, and we rejoice in Mary's Magnificat. Each part of the story redirects our attention forward into the future from which we expect the coming of our Lord. It is always a great joy to return to these beloved stories of the season. But of course, the context in which *we hear* these stories also changes year on year. 2024 has been yet another extraordinary year and the world feels very different from this time last year and our experiences in this past year will act as a prism through which we will view these stories afresh.

And then, like now, it is a time of upheaval. Luke warns us that "There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars, and on the earth distress among the nations confused by the roaring of the sea and waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding for what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and glory." The world is being shaken loose. For some of us the secure, predictable world we have come to know and rely upon is threatened and can no longer be relied upon.

One hopes that those early Christians who heard these words in the New Testament period heard them as reassuring words. Words that expressed the faith that although the world around them appeared under threat and insecure Christ was still imminent. We know, of course, with 20/20 hindsight that 'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well' (attr. Julian of Norwich, an English Christian mystic, 1342-1416).

The point is that the security of the familiar is an illusion of time, and in time we eventually all come to know the feeling of a world that no longer feels secure. This surely provides our touching point with the world of those who first heard these omens. We too today need such a word of hope and reassurance as we become fearful and insecure in the face of the world's changes. There can be a fearful clinging to a fictional secure past which is not open to the new thing that God is doing in our midst. We need to remember that a world where the certainties we have counted on are shaken loose offers us the opportunity for new life, new hope, and new faith in the God who comes to meet us even as the foundations are shaking.

Of course, in truth the Advent word is not simply a word of reassurance, but also a word of challenge, and an invitation to change. There are things about all of us that *need* shaking to the foundations, and surely things in our society that could well be shaken loose to make the world a more just and Godlier place. The Christmas carols we will sing mostly focus on the tiny baby Jesus, asleep in the manger bed. But our Advent hymns – they embrace this Jesus who comes preaching redemption – *our* redemption, the redemption of all the earth. "Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee." The time *is* near – not for our end, not for destruction, not for judgment. The time is near because God is near to us – *always*. The time is near because the kingdom of God is in our midst – *always*; the Prince of Peace; a precious child, and a champion of the down-trodden and oppressed. A helpless newborn, and God-with-us.

May this Advent be for you a time of reflection, challenge, and change. May you know God's presence in your lives and ministry as vergers and may our churches and cathedrals continue to be places where Christ's love is freely offered to his world.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



Monday 4 until Thursday 7 August 2025

Annual Retreat and
Training Conference

If your Branch has any events that you wish to have advertised on this page, please contact the Communications Officer CEGVMedia@gmail.com

Retirement of Pam Derbyshire

A service of Thanksgiving on retirement was held on the 26th September at St Peter's Church, Scorton, Lancashire for our colleague and friend Pam Derbyshire.

Pam has served as Verger for 38 years at St Peter's and no words can sum up the lifetime of service, loyalty and devotion she has given to St Peter's and the community of Scorton.

Presiding clergy Canon Peter Ballard gave a service of thanksgiving for the years of hard work and dedication given by Pam. The service was attended by a large number of the congregation,

including Pam's family and also four fellow Guild Vergers; Tony Hales from Blackburn Cathedral, Penny Waters from St Chad's in Poulton le Fylde, Stanley Parkinson from Wrea Green and Michael Gray from Tarleton, Preston. The service concluded with the Verger's Guild hymn; 'We love the place, O God'.

Many of you will have had the privilege of knowing Pam and been touched and inspired by her during her tenure at St Peter's. We all know the work required behind the scenes to ensure the smooth running of our churches, and much of this goes unseen. Vergers

are often perceived as the proverbial 'Swan'.... Calm and serene on the surface, but in reality, paddling furiously underneath! I'm sure this strikes a chord with many of you.

Following the service, congregation representatives gave speeches and presented Pam with flowers and gifts, and this was followed by drinks and a buffet. The whole evening was a great success, and I'm sure you will all join me in wishing Pam a long and happy retirement.

Penny Waters



Lincoln and Southwell Guild



"On a beautiful Autumn evening, following a steady amble we arrived at

St. Annes, Bede Houses for our branch visit and eucharist in the Chapel.

On entering the Chapel, we were greeted very warmly by the Chaplain Rev'd Pam Rose. I was struck by the beauty, serenity and warmth of the Chapel which dates from the 1850's. It contains many memorials to the Sibthorp family.

Following refreshments, we had a very uplifting Eucharist Service with renewal of our vows. The evening ended with a short tour and talk of the Bede Houses and Chapel by the warden Paul Birkinshaw."

Written by Lynne Drew

Oxford Branch



On Tuesday, 10th September 2024, ten members of the Oxford Branch of the Guild of Vergers, a smaller group than usual, met at Douai Abbey, Woolhampton for our Autumn Quiet Day. As usual, on arrival we made our way to the Refectory for a welcome cup of coffee or tea before moving to the room that was to be our base for the day. Michael Golby, our Chairman, said a few words of greeting explaining why some members were unable to join us and then it was on to the morning talk. This was given by our member,

Dave French, whose career had been with the Met Office. He began his talk by saying that weather is different from climate and can be affected in different ways by latitude, altitude, local geography and proximity to the sea. Humidity is affected by the clouds. Comparing climate changes over the years 1960 – 1990 there have been positive signs of global warming with it being the hottest in the last eight years. Observations of the weather are now made automatically, replacing human observations and these give a better coverage of the weather with computer working 24 hours daily.

Dave then asked the crucial question – does God or man control the weather? He gave us quotes from the Bible including Jonah, Noah, the water spouts and waves in Exodus 9 and the storm

on the Sea of Galilee in Matthew 8. The conclusion is that God controls everything. After the talk we were able to look at Dave's meticulous records of the weather from several years back and ask questions.

Before lunch we joined the Brothers in the Oratory for the a peaceful Noonday service then it was on to the Refectory to enjoy the delicious lunch that had been prepared for us.

In the afternoon the Revd. Marie Jackson, our Chaplain, assisted by Janice Allerston, led us in a service of Holy Communion in St Mary's church in the grounds of the Abbey. Afterwards we returned to the Refectory for tea and cake before saying our 'goodbyes' and leaving for home after a very enjoyable day.

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NATIONAL CONTACTS

National Chairman

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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.



www.cofegv.org.uk



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