



ST GEORGE
EDGBASTON

PARISH MAGAZINE

OCTOBER- DECEMBER 2025



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SERVICES AND EVENTS

OCTOBER

SUNDAY 5 OCTOBER, 12PM

HARVEST LUNCH

Following our Harvest Festival service, there will be a bring-and-share lunch in church. All are welcome!

FROM SUNDAY 19 OCTOBER, 12-12.40PM

CALLED TO CARE: CHRISTIAN SOCIAL TEACHING TODAY

Join us for a 6-week exploration of Catholic Social Teaching after our 10.30am Eucharist

NOVEMBER

SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER, 5PM

COME & SING EVENSONG

All are welcome to sing in the scratch choir for this service of Evensong - no previous experience needed!

SATURDAY 29 NOVEMBER

DAY TRIP TO LICHFIELD

This trip to our neighbouring city will include a guided tour of Lichfield Cathedral and a pub lunch

OR JOIN US REGULARLY ...

WEEKDAYS

Morning Prayer:

9am Monday-Friday

Eucharist:

9.30am Tuesday

11.30am Thursday

SUNDAYS

8am BCP Holy Communion

10.30am Sung Eucharist

Junior Church for children 0-11

Refreshments after the service

5pm BCP Evensong

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2025

SUNDAY 30 NOVEMBER

5PM ALL AGE ADVENT CAROL SERVICE

Join us as we bless our Christmas tree and switch on our Christmas lights in church!

FRIDAY 19 DECEMBER

7PM CIDER & CAROLS

Bring your friends for informal carol singing around the piano with a warming winter drink (alcoholic or otherwise)

24 DECEMBER

3PM FAMILY CRIB SERVICE

8PM FIRST MASS OF CHRISTMAS

25 DECEMBER

8AM BCP SERVICE WITH HYMNS

10.30AM ALL AGE EUCHARIST

28 DECEMBER

8AM MATTINS SERVICE

10.30AM CAROL SERVICE



The poster features a background photograph of a busy outdoor market with people walking and shopping. Overlaid on the left side is a decorative geometric pattern of teal and dark green squares and triangles. In the center, there is a large white logo consisting of a circle and a stylized leaf shape. The text 'Edgbaston Village' is centered above the logo, and 'artisan MARKET' is centered below it. At the bottom, the event details are listed in a teal font, followed by social media information and icons.

Edgbaston Village

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8th
NOV

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DEC

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A MESSAGE FROM THE VICAR

“What does it mean to really welcome and be welcomed in our diverse city?”

Recently, we have been reflecting as a congregation on hospitality. So often, life seems rushed and our interactions can become transactional. In the current moment, the whole concept of hospitality has become contested, as we deal with crises of climate, inequality and migration.

There are no simple answers, but the Scriptures repeatedly instruct us to consider and do justice to the stranger and newcomer in our community. Jesus teaches us that he is present – hidden, in a way – in the heart of our neighbour, whom we are called to love unconditionally.

How we treat our neighbour – especially the stranger, the one who is different to us – reveals who we are. ***I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*** (Matt 25:35) This, then, is what it means to be hospitable; to truly welcome the gift of the “other”. To overcome our anxieties about what difference might entail and to practice a radical, sacrificial, welcome.

My hope is that this renewed magazine will play a part in our hospitality as a church and contribute to a sense of welcome in the Edgbaston community. We are a thriving neighbourhood, and many new people arrive here year on year. Perhaps in picking up this magazine, people will feel that they get a glimpse into the lively, warm welcome that our urban village offers.

I hope that as you read about all our church does that you will feel welcome here, even (especially) if you practice another faith or are unsure where you fit into church. Whatever you get from this magazine, may it be a blessing and may you know that you are accepted, loved and welcomed.

Father Sam





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THINGS TO CELEBRATE

It seems like a long time ago, but we had a wonderful time at the **Easter Vigil at Birmingham Cathedral**, during which four members of St George's were confirmed and one was received into the Church of England. **On Easter day** we had six of our number baptised. At the time of writing we are looking forward to more **baptisms, confirmations, first communions and the licensing of Lis Fisher as Lay Reader here at St George's at Michaelmas** - photos to come in the next edition of the magazine! It is such an exciting time for our church community so please keep praying for all those exploring their faith and vocations.

We have had one, full academic year of our **Saints club** at St George's CofE Primary School. The children have enjoyed learning about stories from the Bible, what Communion means, and key saints from their school houses, as well as taking leadership roles in regular Eucharistic services in school.



It was fun and uplifting to have St George's represented at **Birmingham Pride** this year. We marched with other Christians and had a joyful time giving out stickers and telling people that God loves them.

NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY



As of September 2024, St George's Church has worked in partnership with our parish school to create a **new Christian worshipping community**. Last Autumn, the Saints community was established and has enjoyed a year of worship and learning through music, crafts, prayer and Eucharist services.

This Summer, we enjoyed spending time together as a community during the holidays. The week was full of fun, worship, craft and music - we had a great time!

The focus of the week was prayer. We created items for a home prayer station, including **making our own rosaries, creating designs for candles, and painting icons**. Take a look at our creations!

Copies of the icons painted by the children were also featured in a prayer station at the **Bishops' Prayer Network launch event** in September. It is wonderful that our young people are inspiring people to pray, whatever their age.



NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY

CELEBRATING ST GEORGE'S DAY



In May, we celebrated our patron saint with a **family day of craft**. The group enjoyed a clay workshop from one of our talented congregants and helped to create a special St George's sculpture. We made dragon sock puppets and colourful shields to use in a play performed by children during our Sunday Eucharist. The fantastic performance told the story of the Catalonian tradition of **St George and included a dragon fight, a princess leader and a rose angel!**

BYE BYE, BRODERICK!

We have enjoyed a summer with Broderick the Bull here at St George's! As part of the **Bulls in the City trail across Birmingham**, it has been a pleasure to welcome visitors from across the city and beyond.





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AUTUMN THEOLOGY: WHAT IS HALLOWEEN?

*“Christians have nothing to fear from Halloween”
says Fr George Reeves*

When I was a child, one of the highlights of the year was my primary school’s annual Halloween disco. The school hall was filled with decorations as we enjoyed an evening of games, music, snacks, and fancy dress (I was always very proud of my Dracula costume which my Dad helped me with, complete with fake blood!) Many people will have similar happy memories of Halloween, perhaps involving trick-or-treating or pumpkin carving. **So why do many Christians view this day with such suspicion?**

I didn’t realise that such controversy existed until I started attending evangelical churches as a teenager, where Halloween was strictly taboo. Friends of mine spoke about ‘light parties’ organised by the church, but I must admit I never saw the point. **If we’re going to celebrate Halloween, we ought to do it properly.** And the idea that Halloween is a sinister festival of the occult never persuaded me. Indeed, the fact that some Christians make a connection between Halloween and the forces of darkness represents, to me, one of the shortcomings of the Western Protestant mind.



Far from having satanic origins, **Halloween is rooted in Christianity.** The word 'Halloween' means 'All Hallows' Eve', pointing us to All Saints' Day, and Christians have celebrated some kind of 'day of the dead' throughout the history of the Church. These took place at various times throughout the year until Pope Gregory IV chose 1st November as a standard date in 835 AD. Many of our supposedly modern and secular Halloween practices come from the period between then and the Reformation.

In medieval times, children would participate in 'souling', a kind of precursor to trick-or-treating where they would go door-to-door requesting food in exchange for songs and prayers for the dead.

This would often be combined with dressing up in costumes, and even the use of turnip lanterns (pumpkins hadn't yet crossed the Atlantic!) The Reformation put an end to these practices in this country, but similar customs survive in the Catholic world, an obvious example being the Mexican Day of the Dead.

We will all die one day. Western Protestantism has struggled to work out exactly how we should recognise this truth, but elsewhere Christianity has a vibrant tradition of doing just this. Halloween is not devil-worship or witchcraft. It is, at the very least, harmless fun; but at its best it offers the Church an opportunity to re-engage with its own history and to allow Christians to reflect on our own mortality, and **the ultimate defeat of death that Christ has won for us.**



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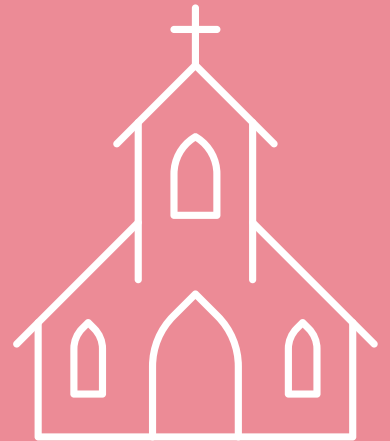


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LEARNING TOGETHER

I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done,
and in what I have failed to do;
through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.
Amen.



In church, we remember that we are all children of the same father (God). We also remember that Mary, as well as being the mother of Jesus, lives in heaven and so is like a mother to us. We consider each other family (even when we don't agree) and try to remember that we are all siblings together. In the prayer above, and others we use in church, we remember that we all do things wrong. It can be helpful to remember that we can pray for each other, just as all those who are in heaven with God (like Mary) pray for us.

Are you comfortable with the idea of God being a parent to you?

How do you feel about having an extended family in the church?

Is there anything that you sometimes pray or think about?

Why do you think people pray?



ANGLO-CATHOLIC MISSION PROJECT UPDATE

Mother Charlotte writes:

It has been a really exciting eighteen months of the project so far, and **St George's have been a wonderful model for Anglo-Catholic ministry**: running seekers' courses and the vocations course, being willing to take part in missional activities and events, and genuinely being interested in what growth looks like in an Anglo-Catholic context. Thank you!

In this next season, **we welcome Anna Henderson** for ten months as Mission Assistant on the **Birmingham Anglo-Catholic Mission Scheme**. She will run courses and missional initiatives in churches across the diocese, as well as serve and occasionally preach here. Please welcome her!



Anna writes

I'm excited to be your incoming **Mission Assistant**! I am from Wales, and have recently finished studying Maritime Law in Southampton. I have always found myself escaping uni to be in church, so I'm **looking forward to dedicating this year to my favourite things** – learning about Christian spirituality and sharing our vibrant faith tradition with others. I'm passionate about connecting to God through nature, feminist theology, and my **favourite Christian mystery is what exactly happened on Holy Saturday**. In my free time I love swimming (especially wild swimming), sailing, and working on creative writing projects.





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THE POWER OF OPERA TO UNITE

Zoë Challenor is the Director of B'Opera (bop-ra), a baby opera company based in Birmingham and the West Midlands. B'Opera are Regular Visiting Artists at Birmingham Children's Hospital.

As we entered the ward, a father rushed toward us, his eyes shining. His wife, seated at the bedside, smiled shyly and nodded encouragingly. Doctors clustered around the couple's baby.

His words spilled out in excitement. We had sung to their newborn just last week. As we did, she stopped crying and drifted off to sleep. He had recorded the moment and sent it to his brother, who was deeply moved. His brother compared it to a scene from The Shawshank Redemption, where Andy Dufresne plays a duet from Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro over the prison loudspeakers, bringing the entire facility to a standstill.

Apparently, we had the voices of angels. They were overjoyed that we had returned. Would we sing for the baby again? She had a name now. Before we could respond, he was eagerly showing us a video of his brother playing that iconic Shawshank scene, animatedly explaining how our singing had evoked similar emotions.

As this Muslim family referenced a European opera duet to describe the depth of their feelings, I was struck by the profound power of music to transcend culture, language, and tradition.

I was struck by the profound power
of music to transcend culture,
language and tradition





We don't typically sing opera on the hospital wards, where our repertoire leans more toward gentle lullabies, folk arrangements, action songs, and melodies in various languages that hold personal meaning for the families.



Yet this baby's uncle saw a connection between our song and that transcendent Mozart duet that momentarily dissolves the walls of Shawshank Prison, uniting its inhabitants in shared wonder.

At B'Opera, we craft first experiences of opera that invite and engage audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and beliefs. This work has the power to bring people together, to break down barriers, and to remind individuals that their voices matter, that they can tell stories, convey messages, and, ultimately, change the world.

We are making opera in a way that is the very antithesis of elitism.

The babies who once attended B'Opera in their earliest days now return as confident five, six, and seven-year-olds, fully immersed in our performances. They sit in the heart of the action, engaging with ease, not disruptive, but actively participating, singing, moving, and responding with a sense of ownership.

These are children who will grow into creative thinkers, adaptable to an ever-changing world. They will know how to present themselves, how to persuade others to listen, and how to appreciate and interact with theatre, music, and the arts throughout their lives.



This Autumn sees a busy touring schedule for B'Opera combined with releasing our first CD, and launching Mini Musical Foundations, an online course to support educators and caregivers to harness the power of making music with children in the early years. Looking ahead, Christmas With B'Opera at St George's Church will take place on Saturday 6th December, at 10.30am and 1.30pm.

Team B'Opera comprises Zoë and Phil, who are regulars at St George's, and Jac and Aliyah.

To learn more or book a First Songs session or Relaxed Concert, visit www.bopera.co.uk



The B'Opera Team



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HYMN OF THE SEASON

At St George's, music is really important to us so we have invited members of our community to share their favourite hymns. This time, we hear from Philip Couse . . .



One of my favourites is *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*, one of Charles Wesley's most wonderful poems set to the Welsh tune 'Blaenwern'. Incidentally a family I knew well always referred to it as 'Blindworms!' One of my lucky investments was a couple of sears in what was then Cardiff Arms Park.

It was to that stadium I took Carol, my wife, to see a match between Wales and England, always Wales' most hard fought game.

One of the joys of matches at the Arms Park was the singing by the crowd, reinforced by the local beer, of hymns and songs and accompanied by a brass band and kept in good timing by a conductor.

As luck would have it, as we had settled down into our seats, Love Divine was being sung. What amazed Carol was that it was a Hymn that was being sung, but in four part harmony. She enjoyed the experience hugely. Made even more significant when the lady sitting next to me said to Carol "he don't sing badly for an Englishman!"

LOVE DIVINE

**1. Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of Heav'n to Earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown;
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter ev'ry trembling heart.**

**2. Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into ev'ry troubled breast;
Let us all in thee inherit,
Let us find thy promised rest;
Take away our love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.**

**3. Come, Almighty to deliver;
Let us all thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy host above,
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.**

**4. Finish, then, thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory
Till in Heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!**

Charles Wesley (1747)



Scan the QR code to hear a
beautiful rendition of this classic
hymn!

CHURCH SCHOOL UPDATE

It has been truly wonderful to welcome back all our children and families to the start of a new school year at **St George's Church of England Primary School**. The energy and excitement around school have been palpable, and we are looking forward to a year filled with learning, growth, and joyful moments.



Over the summer, we've seen some exciting developments. **We are delighted to have opened our brand-new nursery**, creating a nurturing space for our youngest learners to begin their journey with us. We've also added an extra class in Key Stage 2 to support our growing school community. These changes reflect our commitment to providing the very best for every child.

We're thrilled to share that **two new hens have joined our school community!** They're currently settling into their new home and getting used to their surroundings. Soon, the children will be introduced to them and begin helping to care for them as part of our wider learning about responsibility and nurture.



Our Reception 2026 and Nursery Welcome Meeting and Tour bookings are now open.

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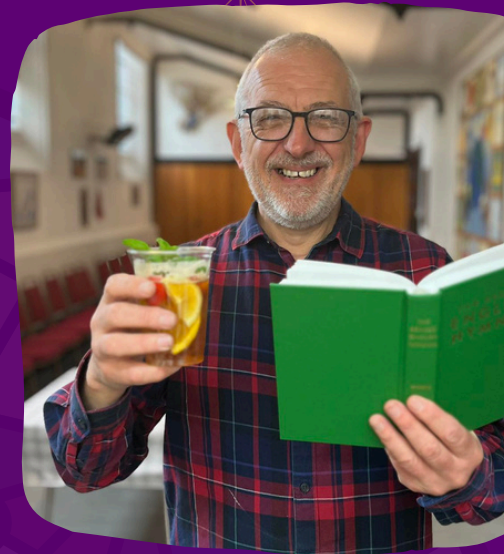
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ON WAITING IN ADVENT

Phil Ypres-Smith, Director of Music

As a Christian musician on the Anglo-Catholic end of the spectrum - so the carols of John Rutter et al. are probably my limit for worship - Christmas itself can come as something of an anticlimax. In some of my busier years I've sung in, played for, or conducted **as many as thirty Christmas concerts** and services between the last week of November and Christmas Eve's First Mass!



This has often meant my Advent is overfilled with Christmas spoiler alerts. All ye faithful have come (and gone) many times, and the herald angels have almost sung themselves hoarse – not that I ever tire of their wonderful descants, however raucous and enthusiastic the rendition.

As I've got older, **Advent has become something I especially cherish**, and it fills me with as much excitement as when I was a child awaiting the arrival of Santa's magic reindeer-powered sleigh.

Two of favourite Advent hymns are O come, O come, Emmanuel! and Wesley's Lo, he comes with clouds descending. I love the references to Old Testament prophecies and Messianic expectation in the first. The second speaks of the Passion and beyond and reminds us all **that Christmas is just the beginning of the story.**



You are warmly invited to a joint Christmas Concert from Obsidian and Opera Emporio at St. George's on Saturday December 13th. Proceeds split with church - all are welcome!

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