

MORE THAN 26 YEARS OF BRINGING THE NOTTINGHAM DIOCESE TOGETHER

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Inter-faith and ecumenical conference celebrates progress



The Bishops of England and Wales recently organised a conference for those who lead ecumenical and Interreligious work nationally.

Bishop Patrick of the Nottingham Diocese attended in his role as a member of the Department of Dialogue and Unity, with responsibility for Interreligious relations. He talked of the importance of promoting cooperation and understanding between different faiths.

Archbishop Bernard of Birmingham Archdiocese, Chair of the Department for Dialogue and Unity, responsible for Ecumenism, spoke about how the

ecumenical landscape has changed in the past 40 years, and how the Catholic impact has born fruit. Today we expect as a norm to be working more closely with other Christian traditions. Bishops from different churches meet together regularly, both nationally and internationally.

Fr Jan Novotnik, Chief Ecumenical Officer for CBCEW, gave a talk on the Vatican II document 'Ecclesiam Suam' (dialogue in the Church). The need to engage in dialogue with others is essential, we cannot make assumptions about others beliefs.

David Jonathan spoke about his interfaith work with Grassroots based in Luton,

where he is responsible for community cohesion and interfaith work.

Doral Hayes, CTE's Principal Officer for Ecumenical Development, led a session on the current ecumenical climate. Today CTE is more diverse than ever, having begun with 16 churches, it now has 53 member churches, half of which are Pentecostal. Ecumenism brings challenges and opportunities, there is a danger that instead of being integral to Christian life, it can slip into being an add-on.

The goal of ecumenism can be seen differently - some seek shared mission, others full unity/Communion. Spiritual

ecumenism emphasises praying and worshipping together; social ecumenism is more focused on justice and joint community action. Doral spoke about the need for all Christians to stay connected to Jesus, the True Vine. We need to connect with each other, and remain in Christ together, even in the hard times.

Perhaps a symbolic sign of how far we've come ecumenically is that five Christian traditions prayed over the new King at his Coronation. In 1953, at his mother's Coronation, the Catholic Cardinal chose to remain outside the Abbey."

Fran Hazel
Chair Nottingham Diocesan
Ecumenical Commission

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The monthly paper for the
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Catholic News

Editor: Nick Layton

Editorial Office: Bellcourt Ltd,
N2 Blois Meadow Business
Centre, Steeple Bumpstead,
Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 7BN
Telephone: 01440 730399

email: cn@cathcom.org or
davidl@cathcom.org

Website: www.bellcourtltd.co.uk

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cn@cathcom.org

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The Logistics of Care

(adapted from the SVP book of reflections)

At this time of year we are experiencing the harsher aspects of our weather, with many people suffering from the cold and other privations. Those who care, as professionals or volunteers, recognise the importance of health and safety at this time with the need to offer support with shelter, food, clothing and emotional support too.



Whilst our knowledge of things might expand, shift and sharpen over the centuries, wisdom never really changes. With this in mind let us consider our approach to 'Health and Safety' in works of charity. History shows us it has always been important. Here are some pertinent observations the SVP's patrons wrote hundreds of years ago:

St Vincent de Paul



30th January 1638 – Monsieur, please go and rest in Montmirall until you have regained your strength so that you may begin your work again in the villages which depend on Montmirall and the diocese of Troyes.

9th November 1649 – I have news from one of our houses that the poor food there is having a harmful effect on bodies and minds. Make an effort to serve good bread and good meat and not to sell the better wine so as to serve what is inferior.

St Louise de Marillac



27th August 1648 – if she still has tertian fever and the shivers, it would be good if her shivering ceases, to give her half a glass of blessed thistle-water. You have but to inform the doctor, and if he finds it wise, she will be able to obtain some easily from the Ladies.

I am very troubled by a rumour which went round the countryside that there is unrest and murder in the streets of Paris. Please be extremely careful to close the house up well and leave enough people there to watch it.

St Vincent and St Louise clearly invested much time and thought on the health and safety of those they cared for. It was not enough to have food and wine – it had to be of a decent quality. Keeping a check on the welfare pulse of their members was vital. And it was important to keep the house secure in the face of danger. These are not so different to what concerns us today

regarding safeguarding and data protection. The early SVP founded by Blessed Frederic followed the example of these saints, ensuring that their service to others was the most dignified they could make it. This is still a requisite today.

Blessed Frederic



The face of the SVP has not changed much in centuries. However, in today's times there is a safety net to fall back on with carefully thought-out policy and procedures as well as volunteer insurance. This is a reflection of how society has evolved over the years.

Safety net



If you find yourself helping someone in need, be patient, wise and generous about how you go about it, ensuring nothing significant goes awry and the best possible care is sustained, physically, socially and spiritually. SVP members will always strive to be the safest and do the best work possible. This is as true today in the 21st century as it was back in the 17th century.

FRANKLY SPEAKING



During 2024 a vast variety of people voted in what was a remarkable number of elections in many parts of the world. When you read this article a new President will have taken office in the United States of America. All new leaders in the world of politics are all fully aware of the tasks that they have inherited, their decisions can have a profound influence of how the next phase of this century will proceed.

It is all too rare these days to hear of great politicians who have been influenced by Christianity. The next President of the USA will serve a second 4 year term, he has a distinguished predecessor who passed away as the New Year commenced. James Earl Carter was a farmer from Georgia, a sailor in the US Navy who became a politician and wanted a competent but compassionate government.

Although he only served as President for 4 years unlike many former politicians his faith drove him with a commitment to finding peaceful solutions in international conflicts. In 2002 some 21 years after he left office he was rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize.

Once you have become a public figure in politics you will have your critics and life becomes more stressful. Jimmy Carter knew all about this. Sadly today we appear to have too many career politicians who seize every opportunity to constantly criticise their opponents even when they are right. Jimmy Carter continued to pursue his strong faith - tributes paid to him right to his passing 43 years after his presidency should be an example to all in the dangerous world in which we now live. Whilst most of us do not get involved in

politics we should be aware of the need for them to follow Christian principles. We often hear about Justice and Peace, and the persecution of Christians in sometimes horrific circumstances. Writing this article on the feast of the Epiphany I am aware of two observations often made.

The first is that the Wise Men witnessed how Jesus was revealed to the world in his infancy. The second is that these same distinguished visitors chose a change of direction after the right guidance. If only some of our political leaders would follow their example.

Frank Goulding,
Holy Trinity Parish,
Newark

Finally made it through the door

A Christmas Carol Service might not seem anything special. Not quite nine lessons and carols, but near enough. Familiar readings from Scripture, traditional carols and mince pies and a cup of tea afterwards.

This took place in churches across the country in the lead up to Christmas, and St Augustine's Church on Woodborough Road in Nottingham was host to just such a service. As well as it being the Parish Carol Service for Holy Family Parish, of which St Augustine's Church is a part, families in all three parish primary schools were invited to it and, crucially, a banner went up on the outside of the church a couple of weeks beforehand. The parish is fortunate that all three of its churches are on busy roads, bus routes even, so there is a lot of 'passing trade'. The banner simply invited anyone to come along.

Any they did. Not in huge numbers – there were about 50 or so people there – but several people whose faces were not recognised some locals from the area, people who had seen the banner, a colleague of a parishioner who had been 'persuaded' to come to her first ever service in the Catholic Church, a man who had, again, been 'persuaded' by his neighbour to come along.

And then there was the man who came who had been resident near the Church for over 40 years but had never come in. As he came in leaning on his walker for support, he stood at the back, saw the beautiful interior, candlelit and festooned with wreaths, ribbons and lights, and simply said 'I've finally made it through the door'. He received a warm welcome, a helping hand to go over to the hall afterwards, and a simple 'Thanks for coming, you're welcome anytime' from one the parishioners. Through the service and the people, whether he realised or not, he encountered Christ, incarnate, alive and well.

What happened was that he, and others, crossed the threshold of the Church. A simple action, but with many layers of meaning. A few years ago, the Bishops Conference ran a project called just that; 'Crossing the Threshold'. A process by which a parish could identify who it needed to reach out to, what they already did to engage with those who didn't cross the threshold into church, and how they could run established parish activities differently, often with the slightest of tweaks, to change the attitude and feel of the parish. Those who participated in the project found that it opened their parishes up to the local community, to lapsed Catholics, and brought to the fore the mission of the



Church to 'Go and make disciples of all nations ...'

All sorts of phrases, buzz words and jargon can be tied to the responsibility of the Church, and each church, to be open to those who don't ever or rarely darken the doors. 'Mission', 'Evangelisation', 'Missionary Disciples', 'outward facing'

corporate speak for what is simple; doing what we do well, and intentionally inviting, directly or indirectly, those who don't usually come through the door. Whether it is a banner on the outside of the church for all to see, or Christmas cards or leaflets being distributed through parish schools to all families, or joining with local churches to go carol singing round the streets it

doesn't take much to shift the focus of what we already do, so that the doors of our churches are literally and figuratively open. And then someone might finally make it through the door.

Fr Joe Wheat - Parish priest
Parish of the Holy Family, East Nottingham

St Mary's Derby Has Advent Night of Light



Parishioners from St Mary's Derby opened the Church up the weekend before Christmas for a Night of Light. They invited passersby into the Church to light a candle and say a prayer.



People from all backgrounds were welcomed into this beautiful Pugin Church, many of whom would otherwise not have entered a place of worship this Christmas.

For the first time, the Church also had a lovely outdoor nativity scene lit up with lights for people to enjoy.

Fran Hazel,
St Mary's Parish Catechetical Coordinator

Mass for Altar servers, presented two servers with the medal of St Stephen



It was a joyful occasion at the Mass for Altar Servers, at St. John the Baptist, in Melton Mowbray, on the feast of St. Stephen.

All 8 of the parish Altar Servers were in attendance, and Monseigneur Thomas McGovern received 2 of the Altar Servers into the Guild of St. Stephen, Victor Chukwudebe and Noah Pritchard.

The Mass was enjoyed by family and friends, along side other Parishioners.

Sarah Pritchard



From: Elston Hermitage.....



The world day for Consecrated Life is celebrated on February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord or Candlemass.

This day is set aside as a day of prayer and celebration to honour those who have dedicated their lives to Christ, as a living sacrifice. Pope John Paul II established this day in 1997. And so this day is a day to give thanks for the gift of Consecrated Life in all its forms and to pray for those discerning such a vocation and to recognise the contribution of Consecrated men and women in the Church and our Society. Candlemass symbolises Christ as the Light of the world, through the lighting of candles. Consecrated men and women are called to spread the light of the love of Jesus Christ through their service of prayer and lives of sacrifice.

However, it is not just those living a vowed and consecrated life who are called to live lives of dedicated sacrifice, but on reflection perhaps it is true for all of us.

At every Mass during the offertory the bread and wine are offered which will be transformed into the Body and Blood of

Christ. Along with his bread and wine, we also offer the money from the collection. The Priest, after blessing the offering, invites us to pray that "my sacrifice and yours be acceptable to God."

The sacrifice is not just bread and wine, it includes everything we have just presented along with everything that our offering represents. The offertory is our opportunity to join all the sacrifices of our lives - the collection and every sacrifice we make in the name of the Lord - so the bread and wine. It's our opportunity to consecrate and place our very lives on the altar and offer them to God as a living sacrifice.

And so whenever we are at Mass, remember that at the presentation of the gifts we are an integral part of the celebration because we are an integral part of the sacrifice. Then, when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, know that we are receiving our own lives back only transformed, filled and blessed by the Holy Spirit. At the offertory we have offered to him our treasure, our heart, our mind, and our life, and he has accepted it and blessed it, so that we can go out to love and serve him and the people around us.



And so as followers and disciples of Jesus, we serve in countless ways, both as consecrated men and women, or whatever vocation our lives lead us to through the Lord. We can be sure that the Lord is pleased with our sacrifices and all we do for others and that each act of service, no matter how insignificant it might seem, has a spiritual significance in the eyes of the Lord. Through acts of service all our lives Consecrated or otherwise, we offer ourselves to God - we offer back to God what he has given us, we unite ourselves to the Lord and to the people we serve. We can be assured that God loves it when we give to people from the heart, whether it be material gifts, our time, our forgiveness, our prayers, our companionship, our

understanding and compassion, when we reach out to the hurting and the anxious with that peace the Lord has given us.

Every Christian along with those called to the Consecrated and Religious life are called to a life of service because every Christian is called to follow in the footsteps of their Master. This is the blessed life we should all lead.

Pray for all those living a Consecrated Life at Candlemass as we pray daily for the people of God and the world. Give Thanks for Consecrated and Vowed life and pray for more vocations.

Fr David + h.d.n. Priest and Hermit

Advent: Forward in Hope from the Parish of St. John Paul II, Nottingham

(The Churches of St. Anthony, Calverton and The Good Shepherd, Woodthorpe)



Traditionally Mrs. Celine Toner, her colleagues in School and the children of the Good Shepherd Primary Academy open Advent for us at the Good Shepherd Church at 9:45 am Sunday Mass on the First Sunday of Advent. This year was particularly exceptional, not only because it marked our closure of the 60th Anniversary year of the Good Shepherd Church, but it emphasized our preparation for the Year of Hope and Jubilee called by Holy Father, Francis. Whilst the theme was

celebrated in all of our Sunday Masses at St. Anthony's, Calverton and the Good Shepherd with our weekly congregants, this 9.45 am celebration alone drew a record congregation of 698 parishioners to open our Advent. The children were exceptional in their confidence, leadership and joyful musical expertise, which has become a characteristic under the guidance of Mr. Tom, the schools' musical lead.



The Parish community is particularly grateful to offer free hospitality to the organizers of the annual carol service in support of the Loughborough Children's Hospice on Tuesday, 10th December. They welcomed a tremendous assembly of 300+ to the Church in support of their work and enjoyed mulled wine and mince pie hospitality in the Parish Assembly Rooms afterwards. It has been our privilege for two years now, to offer this hospitality and enables both of our Parish Communities of St. Anthony, Calverton and The Good Shepherd, Woodthorpe, through such work as well as our continued support through our Society of St. Vincent de Paul to support Emmanuel House Nottingham, and our local Arnold Food Bank with an exceptional amount of donations throughout the year.



The Gospels remind us, "a great expectancy had arisen among the people", and so it followed the next Saturday, when the annual Parish Christmas party with nearly 100 children attending with their parents gathered to be entertained by Spiderman, Rapunzel and many games and sideshows as well as a delicious party tea enjoyed by all. This was indeed a "Secret Santa" for the inspiration and preparation of the afternoon is always tremendously supported by our youth and Mrs. Staiano in front of house, and "Auntie Katie" and her team in the kitchen, whilst the one who is the inspiration and provides the games and party food remains shrouded in mystery! Our thanks to all who made this tremendous event such a great time for our children (and parents!).



Christmas Day drew a community of 1650 people to gather in our two Churches to hear once again, the joyful news of "Emmanuel; a name which means 'God is with us'", and celebrations continued into St. Stephen's Day, when young people were enrolled into the Guild of St. Stephen, and two were recipients of Silver Medals in recognition of over ten years' service each. Our thanks to our Parish Guild of St. Stephen Leadership, Adriano & David Staiano and our Parish Guild Secretary, Mrs. Julia Blazewicz Bell.

Finally, our year culminates with great hope as we look to the future with confidence, as our Bishop Patrick has

issued a Decree, to create our two Church Communities of St. Anthony, Calverton and the Good Shepherd, Woodthorpe into one parish Community under the patronage of St. John Paul II, Nottingham. We enter a New Year of Redemption, 2025 under the Lord's Great Command, "Go out and teach all nations", and through our existing John Paul II Foundation look to continue to evangelize and support our Parish Youth in their journey of Faith, especially in financial support in accompanying the Holy Father to World Youth Day, and Bishop Patrick in his leadership of the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage. A Blessed New Year of Hope to all.

Civic Carol Service a grand success



The Good Shepherd Church's annual Carol Service is a highlight of the festive diary and this year, the church was honoured to host Mayor of Gedling, Cllr Ron McCrossen's official Civic Carol Service.

Guests included various VIPs and dignitaries from Gedling and around Nottinghamshire including Michael Payne MP as well as Manu Donati, the mayor of Vandœuvre-lès-Nancy, Gedling's twinned town in France.

The hard work of the choir paid off and, led by Robert O'Farrell, they all performed superbly.

The evening concluded with mulled wine and mince pies in the parish centre. Over £850 was raised for the Mayor's chosen charity Parkinson's UK. Thank you to everyone who attended and those who made this evening possible. It was a joy.

Cheryl Broodryk



Scripture Focus

By Fr Jeremy Corley



A Call from God

Throughout history people have had experiences of God's presence. Often it happened while they were praying at a holy place or shrine, or sometimes on a mountaintop. Such experiences can strengthen faith and offer hope.

The first reading on 9th February (5th Sunday of the Year) describes Isaiah's encounter with God, experienced when he was praying in the Jerusalem temple. In his vision he saw the Lord sitting upon a high throne, surrounded by the heavenly court of angels (seraphim).

He heard the angels calling to each other: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory!" Isaiah was awestruck by the holiness of the scene, with the temple foundations shaking and the house being filled with smoke (perhaps incense).

Faced with God's terrifying majesty, Isaiah realised how weak and insignificant he was: "Woe is me! I am lost, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" He became

conscious of his own sinfulness as well as the sinfulness of his people.

But God had appeared to Isaiah to call him into service as a prophet. By his words, he would be an influencer for his people, even if they would not always listen. Yet, to proclaim God's word, he needed his lips to be made clean. Hence one of the seraphim touched his mouth with a burning coal from the altar.

After being purified for his mission, he heard God's voice, asking, "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah responded generously, "Here I am! Send me." Henceforth he would be God's spokesman, bringing God's message even when the people did not want to listen. In his later years, when facing opposition from the unresponsive people, Isaiah doubtless recalled his awesome experience of the holy God, which gave him the strength to continue on his mission.

The gospel for the same Sunday describes Simon Peter's experience of a miracle worked by Jesus, when he personally became deeply aware of the Lord's power. Beside the Sea of Galilee, Simon Peter was washing the nets, after a disappointing and

fruitless night of fishing, when Jesus asked to use his boat. Because of the crowds, Jesus wished to teach the people from the boat, a little way out in the shallow water.

After Jesus had finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon Peter, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." This seemed strange to Simon Peter: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!" Even so, he knew that Jesus had cured his mother-in-law, so he was hopeful: "At your word I will let down the nets."

What happened next? His awesome experience of Jesus' power was beyond all his expectations. Once they had let down their nets into the water, they enclosed such a huge number of fish, that their nets were breaking. Even using the boat of their partners (James and John) as well, the catch of fish filled both the boats, almost to sinking point. Jesus had provided super-abundantly for the needs of Simon Peter and those around him.

Just as Isaiah was overcome by his experience of the awesome holiness of God, so Simon Peter was overcome by the

power and the generosity of Jesus. Seeing what had happened, he fell down at Jesus' knees with a deep sense of unworthiness: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

But Jesus had worked the miracle for Simon Peter to call him into service as an apostle. Hence Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." And in response, Simon Peter left everything and to follow Jesus.

In his later years, when facing opposition to his preaching, Simon Peter doubtless recalled his amazing experience of Jesus' miracle when he was called as an apostle. This memory would have given him the strength to continue on his mission.

In the dark days, when we face difficulties, it can be helpful for us to recall the times when we have felt close to God, so that we can gain renewed strength to live as the Lord's disciples.

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View from the Pew

By Dr Jay Kettle-Williams



One, two, three ...

I walked self-consciously across the floor and coyly invited her to dance. No way would I have considered myself a dancer and certainly nothing like the dancer she then turned out to be.

We took to the floor. From then on I more or less followed her - 'One, two, three, one to three ...' - me randomly rising and falling as she waltzed effortlessly, leading me across the floor. I shuffled along under her stewardship feigning my mastery of the situation. I could hold my own all the time we kept to a straight line: 'One, two, three, one, two, three...'

I remember her to this day: tallish, slim, long dark hair, a smile ever on her lips as she fluttered her eyes incessantly. We were both in our teens. This was long before Strictly.

The band finally stopped, the dancing ground to a halt. She must have been relieved. As for me, I could escape further embarrassment and shame after what had seemed like an eternity.

As I turned to thank her for the dance, she raised her head and, asking to look at me, brought her hands up to my face and gently felt its features. She was then escorted back to her seat by one of the mistresses from her school, back to where her schoolfriends were gathered.

The girls school for the blind which she attended owed its foundation to Christian philanthropy in the 19th century, or maybe even long before that. It had been customary over the years for the older girls to be invited to the annual VI form dance at our boys school, also of Christian foundation.

The adjective 'blind' and the associated abstract noun 'blindness' are used in English in both a physical sense and metaphorically, in a virtual way. Occasionally English does have distinct descriptors for such different phenomena ('Height' and 'Highness' being an example) but, strangely enough, not in the case of blindness.

The Bible carries many references to the blind and blindness, both spiritual and physical. The story of the blind beggar Bartimaeus is a memorable case in point, among the most noteworthy. It's featured in the Gospel of Mark where Bartimaeus calls to 'Jesus, Son of David' thereby affirming his belief that Jesus was indeed the Messiah - see 2 Samuel 7: 14-16 (JB). Bartimaeus persists in trying to attract



Jesus' attention from among the crowd until finally he gets to say to Jesus: 'Rabbi, I want to see.' And Jesus replies, 'Go, your faith has healed you.' Bartimaeus could then immediately see.

I don't think I'm alone in having thought that the proverb 'There are none so blind as those who will not see' must surely have come from the Bible. But that's not so. First recorded in the 16th century and to have entered common parlance soon thereafter, the sentiment does admittedly run along the lines of Jeremiah 5:21 (JB), further steered by Matthew 13:13 (JB) and Matthew 9:26-27 (JB), all reminiscent of Isaiah 6:9 (JB). However, the term 'none so blind as those who will not see' is often attributed specifically to John 9:39-41 (JB), where Jesus speaks about spiritual blindness and refers to those who refuse to acknowledge the truth.

The proverb as such has been traced back in English to 1546 (John Heywood) with the

exact wording reputedly first appearing in print in 1548. Since then it has been paraphrased and adapted in various forms in literature and discourse asserting that some people are wilfully ignorant of or choose to ignore the truth, making them 'blind' to reality despite having the ability to see. Be that as it may, Bartimaeus comes shining through, notably for his conviction, dedication, hope and faith.

The pervading message is one of faith, the charism or spiritual gift which we are all asked to preserve and nurture. Faith is an issue with which we may all have to wrestle from time to time, following in a straight line, albeit taking one step at a time.



Dr J L Kettle-Williams is an experienced business communications consultant and wordsmith (tutor, writer, translator).

Incredible opportunity that the Youth SVP had the privilege of experiencing



Many of you will remember the bake sale that we organized on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of Advent to raise money for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and we cannot thank you enough for your incredible generosity in buying our cakes, and sometimes for giving us more money than we were actually charging!

In addition to this, the Deanery Choirs spent one evening singing Christmas Carols at Asda – again, for the SVP – and a lot of money was raised there as well.

In total, we managed to raise an amazing £250, so thank you again for all your kindness.

Two weeks ago, four of the members of the Youth SVP, supervised by Catherine, Stuart

and Louanna, went to Asda and spent this money on toiletries, food and clothes for the homeless at Derby City Mission. We then went to drop off these necessities at Derby City Mission, where we were lucky enough to go inside and talk to somebody who worked there. Terry talked to us about the main places where our products would go: the Basics Bank, where people going through a rough patch can receive the necessities they need for free, and the Café, where people can go for a free meal, not just if they are struggling to make ends meet, but also if they are experiencing a different type of poverty: loneliness.

Derby City Mission also has a safe space for those experiencing homelessness, to keep them off the streets until they get back on their feet.

Derby City Mission is such a wonderful organisation, but often Council Funding is not enough to provide for all of the amazing things they do, and in the last few years, they have been forced to end some of their projects due to lack of funding.

As you enter the church, you will notice what appears to be a shopping trolley outside the door. This is actually a food donation bank, that you can put canned food, rice, pasta and so on, into, and this will be donated to the Derby City Mission Basics Bank that I mentioned earlier.

Thank you for reading, and I hope that what I have said has encouraged you to donate to the SVP or to Derby City Mission. Thank you.

Maria Rowlands

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Ex-student returns to give talk about being a production assistant on the blockbuster film *Wicked*

An ex-student at Saint Benedict Catholic Voluntary Academy returned to talk to students about being a production assistant on the new blockbuster film *Wicked*.

Neil Lwanga, 32, left Saint Benedict, in Derby, in 2012 after studying A-levels in Media, IT, Drama and Sociology.

He was invited back to talk to Performing Arts and Media students about his career which has seen him work in production on *The Landscapers*, starring Olivia Coleman and films including *The Marvels* and *Wicked*.

After school Neil went on to study at the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham but then he struggled to find work, picking up jobs in call centres and sales.

In 2020 he gained a place at MAMA Youth Project, a four-month training programme for people from under-represented backgrounds to gain the skills and opportunities for work in the film and TV industry.

A key part of the training was to produce a magazine show for Sky Arts. Neil's role was to research and pitch guests to producers and during that time he managed to book social media influencer, boxer and musician, KSI.

Once he completed the MAMA Youth project, he became part of their alumni and had a number of calls with production companies about potential opportunities. A month later, he received his first job as a runner on a HBO series called *The Landscapers*, starring Olivia Coleman.

After *Landscapers* he worked on the *Marvels* as a Set PA trainee in the Assistant Director's department, after that he went onto do a variety of Floor Runner jobs on various productions from ITV, Apple and Netflix.

In 2022 he received a call to work as a Set PA on *Wicked*, with the same team from the *Marvels*, starring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande.

A Floor Runner / Set PA's roles are interchangeable; Set PA is a common term on big budget productions. They are responsible for managing the cast, co-ordinating transport, liaising between departments and resolving any issues.

Neil talked to students about what happened when he got the call for *Wicked*.



Neil Lwanga middle with pupils from Saint Benedict's

He said: "I had a call for a job, but they withhold details of the project in the first conversation.

"I was informed that it would be with the same team from the *Marvels*, so I checked in with a mutual colleague to see if they received a call and they told me it was for *Wicked*. You were required to drive on the job but I didn't have car, but I said I would just make it work and I did.

"*Wicked* was the longest job I've done so far; 12 hour days, including some weekends over eight months. It was filmed across Sky Studios and a backlot in Invinghoe. The Invinghoe shoots invited several drones flying over, operated by paparazzi, trying to get shots while filming was taking place.

"I met Cynthia and Ariana; it took Cynthia four hours in make up as she was green and they also had to cover up Ariana's tattoos. It's really interesting to see how a film is put together. They had to film songs in segments of verses, they had to sing to a specific bar and then stop. It's mind blowing really.

"I had a horn which I had to sound when filming was due to start so that the construction crew stopped working and were quiet. I met the Director, John Chu. and I like to think that me talking to him about things other than work gave him a chance to escape. He's a really nice man.

"I had a photo taken with Ariana on a night shoot when she had some friends come in. We were around the trailers and she took the photos on her personal phone. I had to wait for the right moment to ask her to Air



Neil with the director of *Wicked* John Chu

Drop the photos! She's the nicest actor I've ever worked with and just to see what she's achieved is amazing, it's something she wanted over 10 years ago and now she's living her dream."

Anna West, Director of Learning Performing and Creative Arts at Saint Benedict, said: "What an inspiring afternoon our students had. They learnt so much about the film industry, working with

superstars, the importance of being true to yourself, always having integrity, surrounding yourself with good people and never giving up. It would be hard to find a more powerful and positive message for our students as they begin to consider their future. It was also the most wonderful moment as a teacher to have a past student come back and inspire a new generation. It's moments like this that make this job so utterly worthwhile."



Neil with Ariana Grande

An all day danceathon at St Thomas' Catholic Voluntary Academy in Ilkeston has raised £1,450 for charity



Every child at the school took part in the sponsored event which saw Clubbercize instructor Lyndsey Ford, who is a teacher at St Thomas', taking a class at a time into the hall and leading a dance exercise session.

She said: "It's just wonderful seeing the children enjoy exercising. They all put 100% effort in and it was just so heart-warming to be dancing and singing with them all. Bring on the next danceathon!"

Clubbercize is a fun, full body workout for all fitness levels which is set to club anthems, from 90s dance tunes to the latest hits, with party lights and glow sticks.

Money raised from the event will go to support a community in Malawi, following an appeal at a local church.

Pupil Lillia, 10, said: "We have got lots of people to sponsor us, all of our family and friends. My younger sister has raised £13. I like dancing so I really enjoyed taking part in this."

"I go to a lot of discos when I go on holiday and I like dancing. The dance sessions really got our blood pumping and they had a real positive vibe," said pupil Harrison, 11.

Pupil Jarvis, 10, said: "We danced for about 30 minutes and it was great to be doing something fun which will also help children in Malawi. I'd love to do something like this every week."



"It was so exciting and it was like a fun way of doing exercise. I felt like it helped me to focus more in lessons after the session too and we got to wear colourful clothes," said pupil Maja, 10.

Michael Sellors, Headteacher at St Thomas', said: "As a school we have really supported local charities in recent months,

so we wanted to help an international cause this Advent. There was an appeal at our local church recently to help support a community in Malawi and we thought this would be the perfect opportunity to help out through the children getting sponsored. The children have loved coming to school in brightly coloured clothes and taking part in the high energy dancing and hopefully

we have raised some money to help those in need in Malawi."

Sponsorship money will be donated to a charity called Network for a Better World, a lay missionary group which works to relieve poverty, with specific support for women and children, in a rural mission parish in Southern Malawi.

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You can use both sets of clues to solve the puzzle: the solutions are the same.

CRYPTIC Across

- 5 German heretic Diaspora hit badly (11)
- 7 Arkwright: name of American hospital at first (4)
- 8 Its English, eccentric, retro style introduces these biblical people (8)
- 9 Barker's part of this universal UK institution (6)
- 11 Persian god, legend says, is meeting with one in Egypt (6)
- 12 Turkeys lord it in the oven? (3)
- 13 Aramaean maybe investing a Welsh girl with a little time (6)
- 14 Horse or pig meat that's served up in a Canaan town (6)
- 15 Distress bearings found in the sea off Dover (8)
- 17 Women's headgear, providing it's firm at the front (4)
- 18 Into pit come the sporting opposition (11)

CRYPTIC Down

- 1 One from India to look out for, they say (4)
- 2 This recipient of a letter is a kind of record: he's a Scot (8)
- 3 Part of Malta's no-go 'zombie' sector (4)
- 4 Religious type - one to find in York, for example (8)
- 5 One Coptic play that turns out to be prophetic... (11)
- 6 ...notice Earth in turmoil? (3,8)
- 10 Fuming after Ulster's reversal over weapons (2,2,4)
- 11 Place in Gilead's a goal for leading actor's comeback (8)
- 16 What you used to be is there - just get rid of the

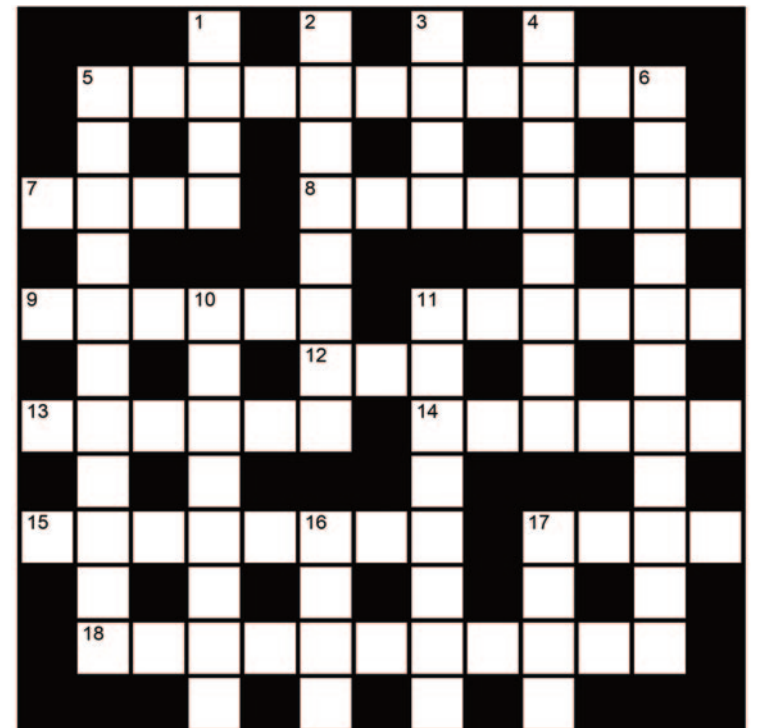
- 17 radical element (4)
- 17 There's a tiny number in jail, brother, for murder (4)

QUICK Across

- 5 Member of a 16th Century German protestant sect condemned as heretics by Luther (11)
- 7 Along with Daniel and Job, one of Israel's three righteous men (4)
- 8 Bible people from southern Dead Sea area (8)
- 9 Domestic dog, aka Persian greyhound (6)
- 11 Ancient Persian god of light and truth (6)
- 12 --- Khan, spiritual head of Ismaili Muslims (3)
- 13 Native of a middle eastern Arabic republic (6)
- 14 Town in Canaan which after the Conquest was given to the tribe of Judah (6)
- 15 Restrict; impoverish (8)
- 17 Cap worn by fundamentalist Mormon women (4)
- 18 Formal sporting event, tournament (11)

QUICK Down

- 1 Adherent of a monotheistic religion established in the 15th century by former Hindus (4)
- 2 Recipient of one of Paul's epistles (8)
- 3 Mediterranean home of the Giant's Tower, the world's oldest man-made religious structure (4)



- 4 Clergyman, as usually called in Protestant churches (8)
- 5 Significantly prophetic (11)
- 6 Part of Genesis featured in Haydn's landmark oratorio of 1798 (3,8)
- 10 Strongly protesting; actively rebelling (2,2,4)
- 11 Where Jacob saw angels before reuniting with Esau (8)
- 16 Biblical pronoun (4)
- 17 First child of Adam and Eve (4)

SOLUTION

Across: 5 Adiphorist, 7 Noah, 8 Edomites, 9 Saluki, 11 Mithra, 12 Aga, 13 Syrian, 14 Hormah, 15 Straten, 17 Coff, 18 Competition. Down: 1 Sikh, 2 Ephesian, 3 Gozo, 4 Minister, 5 Apocalyptic, 6 The Creation, 10 Up in arms, 16 Thee, 17 Cain.