

EDGEWAYS

2024

The Sacred Heart Parish Magazine
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SACRED HEART PARISH
Edge Hill
Wimbledon
SW19 4LU

Edgeways Christmas Memories...

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Hello from the Editor

Now in its 35th continuous year of publication ...
welcome to the first Edgeways of 2024!

Primarily available by email and from the parish web site, a small number of printed Edgeways will also be available at the back of church.

Our front cover shows the wonderful Christmas Crib which was very popular with adults and children alike. Guests and volunteers enjoyed the annual Christmas Day lunch for the housebound and homeless in the upper hall and photographs on the inside front cover show previous visits by Father Christmas.

This year the guest of honour - apart from 'you-know-who' - was Deputy Mayor of Merton, Councillor Martin Whelton.

This month the parish welcomes our new faith minister, Rob Hitchcock, who joins us in this busy and important role from the Church of Our Lady Immaculate and St Andrew in Hitchen, where he has been doing a similar job for the past four years - Rob's story will feature in February Edgeways.

In an interview with Fr Sebastian Jackson he tells us a little about his background and journey in his Catholic faith before he joined us last year.

We meet two more of the Parish Pastoral Council volunteers and also learn about lifelong parishioner, Alison Lobo.

On **Sunday 21 January at 6.30pm** the parish will host the annual service for Christian Unity, followed by a reception, and all are welcome to attend.

Finally, we give the names and contact details for the three new **Safeguarding Representatives** working for the parish.

As Edgeways is your parish magazine, please let the editor know your thoughts and ideas for future stories to cover by emailing David at dthurst52@gmail.com



From the desk of Father David

The Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity this year runs from 18th to 25th January. Where are we in terms of Christian Unity? The first Unity Service I ever attended was marked by thunder and lightning and snow at the same time and perhaps this has influenced my view of unity ever since! Certainly, it is difficult to be optimistic about unity at the moment because it is difficult to find people to be ecumenical with, as so many other ecclesial bodies are so divided. Further, many Christians don't think that disunity is a problem, and are uninterested in working towards it.



Are we, then, to give up in despair? No. Just because something is difficult doesn't mean that we should give up. Church unity is not an optional extra or an unrealisable ideal for Catholics. The Vatican II document *Unitatis Redintegratio* states that “the attainment of union is the concern of the whole Church, faithful and shepherds alike” (§5). The Church's commitment to unity is based, of course, on Christ's prayer in *John 17:21*, “that they may all be one”.

Ecumenism doesn't mean simply requiring non-Catholics to rejoin the Catholic Church. Pope St John Paul II stressed this in *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), which above all refers to the 'primacy of prayer': “When Christians pray together, the goal of unity seems closer” (§22).

Prayer for Christian Unity, then, is more necessary than ever, not least in a 'post-Christian' world where Christian disunity obstructs our efforts to spread the Good News of Christ. Our ecumenical prayer can bring about renewed efforts for unity despite the obstacles, if it occasions greater recourse to confessing our own sins and failures, if it deepens our own comprehension of the Church's teachings and doctrines, and if it brings about a growth in prayer.

Introducing Father Sebastian Jackson

'By profession I am a teacher; by vocation I am a priest.'

In my interview for Edgeways to introduce Fr Sebastian Jackson to parishioners, this powerful statement jumped out at me as the clear headline for the article.

Fr Sebastian joined as assistant parish priest in September last year and it seems that he has settled in very quickly.

He was born into a Catholic family in Kerala, the state on India's tropical Malabar southwest coast with the highest proportion of Catholics in all of India. With its many lakes and canals, Kerala is very beautiful and is known as 'the Venice of the east'.

The youngest of five children, Fr Sebastian has two elder brothers and two elder sisters and two of his nieces are nuns in different orders. His family are part of the large Catholic parish of St Sebastian in the town of Pallithode which, amazingly to us, claims to have 34 priests and 250 nuns of different orders working with the faithful.

From the age of nine until he was in year twelve at his eponymous St Sebastian High School, Fr Sebastian was an altar server. He was inspired in his vocation by the assistant parish priest and, after leaving high school, he attended St Joseph's Pontifical Seminary in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church where he studied philosophy and theology for three years.

Fr Sebastian was ordained on 27 December 2010 together with two close friends from his home town and 39 other new priests. India has in the region of 5,000 vocations, many of whom travel to work in dioceses worldwide when they have been ordained.

When he arrived in the UK on 27 February 2019 he worked for the parish priest, Fr Keith Sylvia, at Our Lady of the Annunciation in Addiscombe near Croydon which has a large and dynamic Catholic community with activities for all ages.

Whilst at this vibrant church, with a congregation of widely mixed ethnicities, Fr Sebastian particularly enjoyed visiting the sick and singing in one of the choirs. Indeed, he is a musician and plays the piano, guitar and flute.



Although he has been very happy for the past four years, when his 'boss', the Vicar General of Southwark Diocese, Monsignor Gerald Ewing, came knocking to invite him to move, he says that he was ready.

The Sacred Heart church, he told me, is widely known as a 'second cathedral' and the parish has a good reputation – it is always good to hear that!

With an MA in English literature from Kannur University in Kerala, south east India, Fr Sebastian says that his favourite English poets are Keats, Shelley, Tennyson and (of course) our own Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins!

His diploma in Spiritual Guidance and Counselling will no doubt support his stated desire for the future which is 'to bring more vibrancy to young Catholics in the Sacred Heart parish'. He has already introduced an open badminton session in the upper hall on Sunday afternoons for girls and boys from ages 12 to 17. Just turn up and join in!

He also says, 'I am an outreach person' and, working with Frs David and Matthew, he looks forward to supporting our many activities and especially to visiting the five schools and numerous care homes that lie within the parish boundary.

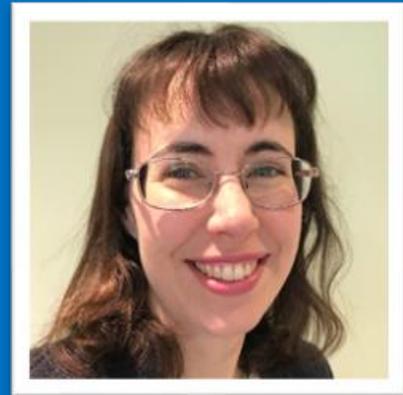
Having read for Fr Sebastian at Mass, I complimented him on his clear and beautiful delivery of the liturgy.

We welcome Fr Sebastian and hope that his enthusiasm and open approach will be met with a good response by all.

Members Of the Parish Council

Primavera Moretti, PPC Secretary

Born in St Teresa's (when it was a maternity hospital), Primavera is a true Womble and has mostly lived one side of the Common or other. Her career in Christian communications, project management and fundraising has been truly ecumenical, encompassing organisations such as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome and The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge where for seven years she was head of fundraising.



As a freelancer, Primi has worked with Aid to the Church in Need, Missio, Marriage Care, The Methodist Church and The Archbishop of Canterbury among others. Primavera lives near Britain's second most-hit railway bridge with one husband, two cats, three teenagers and ten koi carp.

Chris Woodward, Finance Committee Chair



Christopher Woodward has lived in the parish since 1969 bringing up a family of two daughters and a son with his late wife Patricia. The children attended Hollymount Primary, St Catherine's Middle School and the Ursuline High and Wimbledon College.

Having taught in two large London comprehensive schools, he then moved over to education management in the London Boroughs of Ealing and then Sutton. The family have been involved in parish life over the years, but Chris became increasingly so having taken early retirement and then

following the death of his wife. He was on the initial steering group for the first Parish Pastoral Plan and chaired the coordinating group overseeing its implementation.

He is currently chair of the Parish Finance Committee having served on the Parish Pastoral Council for over six years. He is involved in the local SVP conference, the Soup Run, the Friendship Group, Social Club but cherishes most the privilege of taking the Blessed Sacrament to the housebound as a Eucharistic Minister.

Churches Together Wimbledon

'One in Christ Jesus, engaged in God's mission, empowered by the Holy Spirit.'

Churches Together West Wimbledon is not formally operated as part of the Churches Together in England organisation (www.cte.org.uk) but activities are broadly based on it.

Our parish priest and representatives attend quarterly meetings with other local churches: Christ Church, Copse Hill; St Matthew's, Durham Road; St Saviour's, Grand Drive; Holy Cross, Motspur Park; Raynes Park Lantern Methodist Church, Worple Road; Raynes Park Community Church (Salvation Army) and Wimbledon Quakers to discuss, for example, areas of social action in which we can support each other's endeavours in the community.

These range from the winter night shelter to plays and concerts and carol singing, joint prayer and other services, such as the World Day of Prayer for Peace, held at St John Fisher church on New Year's Day to pray for peace in Israel and Gaza (using a prayer contributed by CAFOD); in Ukraine contributed by the Church of England; for persecuted Christians (contributed by Pope Francis), for refugees and asylum seekers and for peace generally (by John O'Donoghue).

There have also been interesting films, talks and discussions by external speakers hosted by member churches about climate change and other environmental issues.



The focal point of this year's week of prayer for Christian Unity will be the annual service, this year hosted by our parish, at **6.30pm on Sunday 21 January** which will be followed by refreshments and socialising in the lower hall.

All parishioners are warmly invited to attend.

After the event on Sunday 21 January, we shall be asking for people to join in our Good Friday walk of witness in Raynes Park on **Good Friday morning 29 March 2023**

A Christmas Story

The night that Elys saved Christmas!

'Twas the night before Christmas and all was set up and ready in the parish hall for otherwise housebound and homeless guests to enjoy the parish lunch in convivial company.

A willing bunch of volunteer elves of all ages had spent most of the day peeling potatoes, parsnips and carrots, cooking the turkey and ham, dressing the room with festive decorations, wrapping presents and filling goody bags with mini wine bottles, sweets and mince pies.

Just one final check had to be made by the organizer. But, hark! There was a problem, and a serious one that could have ruined Christmas: last year's Santa outfit was missing one vital piece – his white beard!

Father Christmas could end up making his featured appearance and handing out gifts ... beardless. It just couldn't happen.

Now the parish Father Christmas was to be our popular Ghanaian assistant parish priest, Fr Joe Donkor, dressed in red trousers, tunic and hat with white trim, all set off with the final piece of the outfit – the white beard. Normally a ripping good disguise that would probably fool no one but, wearing his white bushy beard, you never know!

The sleigh simply could not leave the north pole until a beard was found. The white bearded helper working in the hall could not lend his real one (!) - and it was 4.30pm on Christmas Eve. The lunch organizer was on his way. But where to start?

Three toy shops later and despair was setting in. A final gift purchase of ladies black leather gloves from the Elys counter (who had left his gift buying to the very last minute?!) was followed by the hopeful request, 'I don't suppose you have a white beard as our Father Christmas has not got one for tomorrow?'

The alert shop assistant had a cunning plan and led the parish organiser to meet Elys' Father Christmas, now 'retired' for another year after working tirelessly every day in December.

'Of course, you can borrow our white beard. Anything to help your charity lunch - just bring it back before next year's Christmas season begins!'

So there we were, sorted, just minutes before the store closed for Christmas.

The wonderful Fr Joe, complete with bushy white beard, did his very best to impersonate the real Santa and everyone was happy. Ho! Ho! Ho!

This really was 'the night that Elys saved Christmas.'



Parish Christmas Lunch

On Christmas Day, the parish welcomed guests for the annual Christmas lunch in the upper hall. A large team of volunteers set up and decorated the room in advance, guests were met with smiles and a welcome drink, and the Family Mass team entertained the audience with music and sing-along carols.

One guest regular, Pat Jenkins (aged 93), who lives in Princess Alexandra Court, said, *'there was a very pleasant atmosphere when we arrived and the room was decorated beautifully. We had a lovely hot meal with all the trimmings and we even took away a goody bag with a present (a Sacred Heart mug!) and a bottle of wine. I would like to thank Fr David, Fr Sebastian and all the volunteer helpers for giving up their precious time on Christmas Day.'*

The guests of honour were, of course, Father Christmas - 'thank you' Fr. Sebastian! - and the Deputy Mayor of Merton, councillor Martin Whelton.

A big vote of thanks to all who helped to put his important event together: the drivers who collected and returned all of the guests, those who decorated the hall in advance (especially filling the 90 or so 'goody bags'!), those who bought the food and drinks; the musicians who entertained on the day, the chef and his 'little helpers' and the many greeters/servers/clearers.



Pantomime Preview

'Oh, no, it's parish panto time again.' (Oh, yes it is!)

Your parish panto is on its way to give a boost to this traditionally quieter time of the year! This time, we are performing another classic, namely, '**The Sleeping Beauty**' with a cast - wait for it - of over 90: we have 25 primary school children and 38 secondary school students - the adults are so outnumbered that we've had to swap dressing rooms!

Dancing in Edge Hill Players' last show, the ever popular 'Oliver!' (see photo), proved so popular that all the girls signed up again and brought their friends. Needless to say, this entails a mountain of costumes and multiple rehearsals with Bob Rathbone, our musical director, Terry Marsh and Wendy Tansey the writing/directing team and Lillie Rodger, as the indefatigable choreographer.

We have some luxury casting with our members who have been professional music theatre people and give us their all to the great joy of all the cast.

You may think you know the story - but not the way we tell it! Be prepared for surprises as usual and guess what we've done with the cow this time?!

So, hurry up and get your tickets for performances at **2.30pm and 7.00pm on Saturdays 27th and 3 February** from www.edgehillplayers.com or phone 07742 230493 - and don't leave it until the last minute as it sells out fast!

Oh yes it does!



The Edge Hill Players perform 'Oliver!' in 2023

Meet The Parishioner: Alison Lobo

“I have lived for my whole life in this parish so the Sacred Heart Church is very special to me. I am a former pupil at St John Fisher, St Catherine’s and Ursuline High School.

You will always find me standing at the back of church, usually with Sr Dorothy. I regularly attend the 12.00pm Mass with my twin sister Elaine, my nieces Maria & Rebecca and my mum Grace. Elaine and I love our hymns and we have a thing about the way the sound of ‘The Hosanna’ fills the church.



Apart from welcoming at the 12.00pm and the ‘big’ Masses, I support our church choir and help at parish events when needed, most notably looking after the church during the pandemic and organising the daily teams of stewards.

This was a lot of work but was an honour and great fun. It was a brilliant way to get to know fellow parishioners and I loved the way we all came together as a community. I know it really did make a positive difference to peoples’ lives.

After a very enjoyable 27 year career at the BBC, working in television production, I now work for Nerve Tumours UK, a charity based in Raynes Park. I got the job on the basis of having interviewed the charity director Karen, for ‘Meet the Parishioner’ in Edgeways some time ago!

‘Meet the Parishioner’ was first started in the parish magazine by former editor John Symes in October 2014 with his tagline, ‘Everyone has a Story’.

Do you ever look at fellow parishioners during Mass and wonder what they do in real life, outside of church? You see them week in, week out and share no more than a ‘Peace be with you’. I interviewed over 20 parishioners in the hope that the interviews make people care about each other a bit more.

Outside work, I am a huge Liverpool fan and, although I have now stopped going to live games, I attended about 41 European away matches and made multiple trips to Anfield. I am also a big tennis fan and enjoy my annual visits to Wimbledon.!”

Parish Diary January 2024

1 st January 2024- 31 st December 2024	<i>Pope Francis' Jubilee Year of Prayer. For Pilgrims of Prayer booklet visit www.jesuit.org/uk/news/a-symphony-of-prayer</i>
1 st January 2024- 31 st December 2024	<i>Dates and events from the Agency for Evangelisation & Catechesis are available at http://aec.rcaos.org.uk</i>
10.00am Sun 7 Jan	<i>Children's Liturgy during Mass in the lounge and lower hall</i>
10.45am Sun 7 Jan	<i>Café after the family Mass in the lounge</i>
6.30pm Tue 9 Jan	<i>Merton Citizens leaders' meeting by Zoom</i>
3.30pm Thu 11 Jan	<i>Merton Faith & Belief Forum in the council offices</i>
Sun 14 Jan	World Peace Day - for info visit www.paxchristi.org.uk
8.45-12.00am Sun 14 Jan	<i>Continental breakfast in the lower hall</i>
7.30pm Sat 20 Jan	Paul Kerenza: BBC's first religious broadcast , Lantern Arts Centre
10.00am Sun 21 Jan	<i>Children's Liturgy during Mass in the lounge and lower hall</i>
10.45am Sun 21 Jan	<i>Café after the family Mass in the lounge</i>
6.30pm Sun 21 Jan	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity , service & reception
Thursday 25 th Jan	<i>Weekly Merton winter night shelter starts in the lower hall</i>
2.30 & 7.00pm Sat 27 Jan	'Sleeping Beauty' Edge Hill Players pantomime in the upper hall
10.45am Sun 28 Jan	<i>Café after the family Mass in the lounge</i>
2.30 & 7.00pm Sat 3 Feb	'Sleeping Beauty' Edge Hill Players pantomime in the upper hall
10.00am Sun 4 Feb	<i>Children's Liturgy during Mass in the lounge and lower hall</i>
10.45am Sun 4 Feb	<i>Café after the family Mass in the lounge</i>
10.45am Sun 11 Feb	<i>Café after the family Mass in the lounge</i>
Fri 23 – Sun 25 Feb	<i>Medugorje retreat at the Kairos Centre</i>
11.30am Sat 2 Mar	<i>Walk & Talk Movement meet in the church for talk and coffee</i>

and finally ... Parish Safeguarding

Safeguarding Team

The contact details for the newly appointed Parish Safeguarding Reps are:

- Victoria Wheatley wimbletonsg1@safeguardrcaos.org.uk
- Kate Kirkland wimbletonsg2@safeguardrcaos.org.uk
- Siobhan Heffron wimbletonsg3@safeguardrcaos.org.uk

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, do not delay in contacting one of the reps. As they are all volunteers, their work is spread over the course of the week and there is a possibility that your email may not be seen within 24 hours.

If you need support or help more quickly, contact the Archdiocese of Southwark Safeguarding Office by telephoning **0207 261 1606** at any time, or the parish office on **020 8946 0305** Monday - Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm.

Thank you to these three people who have stepped up to fill this important role.

