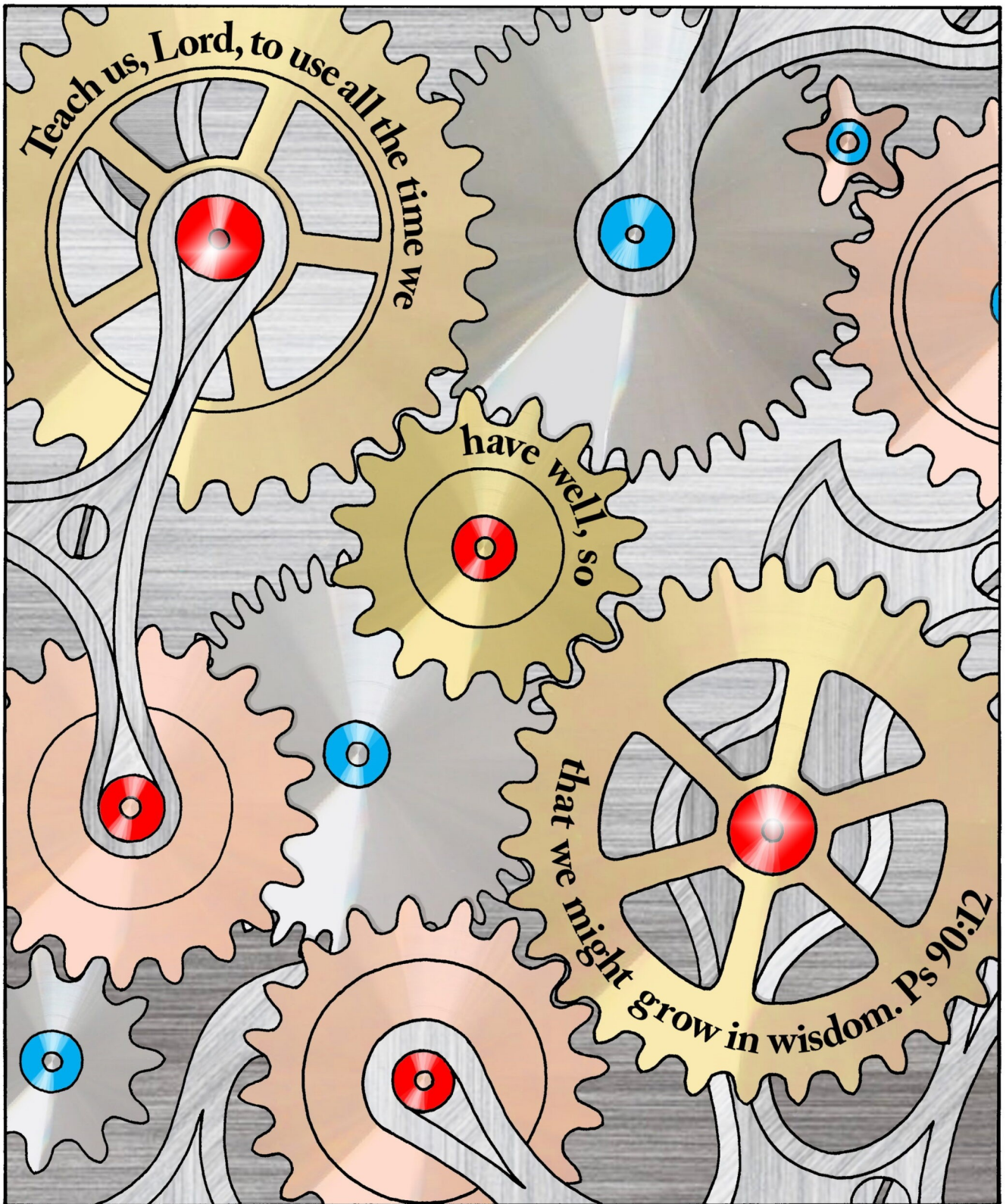


# St Mary the Virgin—North Shoebury

SEPTEMBER 2021



WEDNESDAY 6TH SEPT— NATIVITY OF ST MARY

THURSDAY 23RD SEPT— AUTUMN EQUINOX



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on**

**Saturday**

**11TH SEPTEMBER**

**from 2-4pm**



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# Lead Minister's Monthly Newsletter – September 2021

## Forgiveness

*“We shall never forgive; we shall never forget” – Joe Biden 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021*

### The Golden Rule

<sup>12</sup> *“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. – Jesus (Matthew 7:12*

<sup>21</sup> *Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if a brother sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. - Matthew 18:21-22 (NRSV)*

These three quotations provide an interesting contrast. We need to understand that the current situation that is happening in Afghanistan at the moment has pretty much nothing to do with religion. This might surprise people given what we read in the press and hear in the radio and television news. But the fact is that it has nothing to do with religion.

If it has nothing to do with religion, what is it about?

As I look at it, it is about power, money, greed, corruption, and it seems that those who seek this take advantage of inadequate or politically motivated teaching to radicalise others to achieve these evil aims by exploiting a partial understanding of religion.

It is easy to “cherry pick” bits of any scripture take them out of context and use them to inflame passions in those who are vulnerable.

The universally accepted Golden Rule is “Love your neighbour as yourself”. It is not difficult to understand, and this rule is common across most if not all world religions.

It is found in Islam, which of course has a common foundation together with Judaism and Christianity. It is found in the Sikh writings, in Hinduism, in Jainism, and in Buddhism. From the far east it can be found in Confucianism and in Taoism. In the secular world it is found in Humanism and in Existentialism.

I lived in Birmingham during an extensive campaign of terrorism delivered by the IRA, but they were not called Christian Terrorists.

So how is it, I wonder, that we look at these atrocities and blame adherents of a religion. Maybe there are those who through the power of the media are in turn attempting to radicalise us. I think it is necessary to keep ourselves informed to prevent being diverted away from a deep understanding of the Golden Rule, and what it means to us, and to the world.

We need to keep ourselves grounded. How can we do this? As a Christian Minister, I would suggest developing a deeper Christian faith, but then I would, wouldn't I.

Maybe we could keep in mind the Golden Rule, and when we see that rule being abused, or we suspect that the news is being manipulated, we may take time to remind ourselves that we need to look more deeply into the situation.

But beware, in the opening quotes I "cherry picked" verses to suit what I wanted to say. But I feel justified because the theme of loving neighbour runs through the entire Bible like words through a stick of rock. It is difficult to find a different interpretation.

Please pray for all those caught up in the entirely man-made disaster that is unfolding both in Afghanistan and other places in the world. Pray for those who have to flee to save their lives. Pray for those who do not make it to safety.

**God bless  
Revd. David Pierce  
27<sup>th</sup> August 2021**



## **1<sup>st</sup> Sept Drithelm - vision of the after-life**

Drithelm is the saint for you if you have ever wondered what lies beyond death, or have had a near-death experience. He was married and living in Cunningham (now Ayrshire, then Northumbria) in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when he fell ill and apparently died. When he revived a few hours later he caused panic among the mourners, and was himself deeply shaken by the whole experience.

Drithelm went to pray in the village church until daylight, and during those long hours reviewed the priorities of his life in the light of what he had seen while 'dead'. A celestial guide had shown him souls in hell, in purgatory, in paradise and heaven... suddenly the reality of God and of coming judgement and of what Christ had done in redeeming mankind became real to him, and his life on earth could never be the same again.

Next day he divided his wealth into three: giving one third to his wife, one third to his sons, and the remainder to the poor. He became a monk and went to live at Melrose, where he spent his time in prayer and contemplation of Jesus.

Drithelm's Vision of the after-life is remarkable in that it was the first example of this kind of literature from England. It was SO early: seventh century Anglo-Saxon England! Drithelm has even been seen as a remote precursor of Dante. On a lighter note, Drithelm can also be a saint for you if you didn't get abroad this summer, but ventured to swim instead off one of our beaches: he used to stand in the cold waters of the Tweed for hours, reciting Psalms.

### **HAVE YOU ANYTHING FOR THIS MAGAZINE?**

**Thank you to Sue & Tony Arnold for their sponsorship of this month.**

**Thank you to David and Francine for their contributions. If you have anything which would be of interest, please contact the editor, Craig Hunter early in the month, so that your space can be reserved.**



## On the perils of taking a wedding

The Rectory

St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren



As with many of your ideas, your intentions are admirable; it is just that they don't work.

So it was with the recent wedding in your church, where you allowed the happy but quite mad young couple to try and imitate the marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. It was kind of them to want to celebrate Will and Kate's recent 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, but it did not seem to occur to anybody that your church, converted from a 1960s warehouse, is fractionally less impressive than Westminster Abbey. And I feel that a backdrop of a car park and canal make a poor substitute for the Houses of Parliament and the Thames. Finally, even 43 very enthusiastic young people can hardly pretend they are a congregation of several thousand.

However, I do applaud your decision to invite me to take it, in order to impart a degree of gravitas to the proceedings, though of course I would not presume to upstage the Archbishop of Canterbury. (Although were he to ask my advice on how to run the Anglican Church, I have several helpful suggestions to hand.) But even I struggled to keep things on a proper course when the bride, lacking a horse-drawn carriage, simply walked up the lane with her ancient pony. (Which then tried to bite me at the church door!)

Her arrival was greeted with music. I will pass no comment on this, as the Bible says we are to make a joyful noise, not necessarily music, unto the Lord. I am sure that drums and kazoos and guitars all have their place – somewhere or other.

It was a pity that the groom, unlike Prince William, had not thought to get to the church on time – or indeed, at all. It was fortunate that the bride's mother found him in that pub nearby, or really, we would have struggled to complete the wedding.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

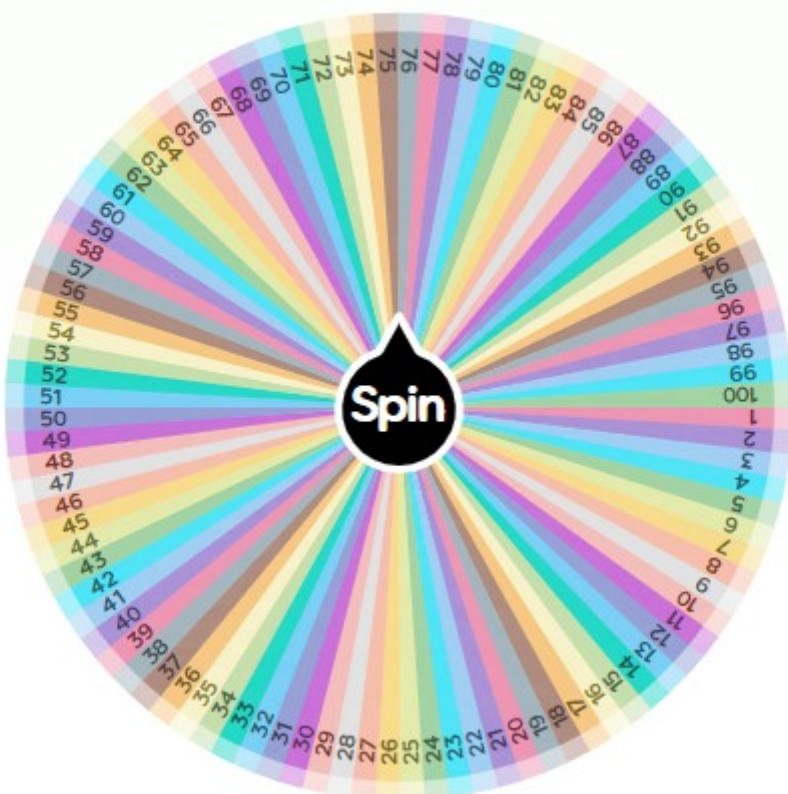


## A new group at the Hall

A beginner's florists group will be starting at St Mary's Church Hall on Tuesday October 5th at 2-4pm and will then be held on the first Tuesday of each month for the next 8 months. The cost will be £6.00 per person, all you need to bring will be the flowers.

If anyone is interested in joining please contact me by email at [jvpartridge@gmail.com](mailto:jvpartridge@gmail.com)

## numbers 1 - 100



## Winning numbers

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**2nd Prize £12.25**

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## 8<sup>th</sup> Sept The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

In both eastern and western Churches, Mary has always been held as pre-eminent among all the saints. The unique, extraordinary privilege of being the mother of the One who was both God and Man, makes her worthy of special honour. Thomas Aquinas believed she was due *hyperdulia*, or a veneration that exceeds that of other saints, but is at the same time infinitely below the adoration, or *latria*, due to God alone.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke give Mary most mention. Luke even tells the story of Jesus' infancy from Mary's point of view. Her Song, or *Magnificat* appears in Luke 1:46-55.

The virginal conception of Christ is clearly stated in the gospels. But after Jesus' birth, Mary fades quietly into the background. During Jesus' public life, she is mentioned only occasionally, as at the wedding at Cana. She reappears at the foot of the Cross (John's Gospel), and is given into John's care. In the early chapters of Acts, Mary is with the Apostles, and received the Holy Spirit along with them on Whitsunday. But her role was not the active one of teaching and preaching.

Mary's significance grew with the centuries. By the fifth century she was called *Theotokos*, The Mother of God, and from the seventh century onwards, she was given four festivals: the Presentation in the Temple (2<sup>nd</sup> February), the Annunciation (25<sup>th</sup> March), the Assumption (15<sup>th</sup> August) and her Nativity (8<sup>th</sup> September).

Marian devotion has played an enormous role in the church down the years. Mary has been the object of countless prayers, accredited with performing many miracles, and the subject of thousands of artistic endeavours. She has had hundreds of chapels or parish churches named after her. During the Reformation many images of Mary were destroyed. The Second Vatican Council 1962 made an extended statement on her, stressing her complete dependence on her Son, and regarding her as a model of the Church.

Principal Marian shrines of today include Lourdes (France), Fatima (Portugal), Walsingham (England), Loreto (Italy), Czesochowa (Poland) and Guadalupe (Mexico).



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### **IT IS FREE—WE JUST NEED YOUR TIME !**

The Diocese has arranged a course for us, it “does what it says on the tin”. David, Tony and I will be attending on **Zoom** with a view to making a plan for our growth through 2022 and beyond.

As many of you have experienced our wonderful church has not always enjoyed the full support of the Diocese and as we continue into the second year of “suspension” our best plan will undoubtedly be to be so big, strong and vibrant that we can set our own course.

### **WE NEED YOUR HELP !**

Even if you can not see yourself being able to contribute an ongoing commitment to any particular responsibility we would really appreciate your experience and common sense involvement in the discussions we will have—giving us all the greater chance of coming up with a sound plan.

### **REGISTER HERE**

**[https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZloceirpjktH9ZTW7IUDqQ6c\\_gXarETj7Fe](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZloceirpjktH9ZTW7IUDqQ6c_gXarETj7Fe)**

## Climate Sunday is this month

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September is being designated Climate Sunday, ahead of the UN's climate change conference, COP26, in Glasgow during November. How should we approach the challenge of climate change?

*We have damaged God's creation:* God delights in His creation: 'God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.' (Genesis 1:31). However, we have damaged this world and impacted people, created in His image. The burning of oil or gas and cutting down forests is increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere. The global average temperature could increase by 1.5°C in 2030, resulting in significant damage to our planet. Already, increasing temperatures are melting ice caps, raising sea-levels, changing rainfall patterns and creating extreme climate events. It's the 70% of the world's poorest population who are being impacted most!

*Hope is found in Jesus:* He has an intimate knowledge of the workings of creation. 'For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.' (Colossians 1:16,17). Our hope for the future lies in what Jesus has done and continues to do in the world. He is the one who sustains creation and will bring everything to completion.

*An invitation to respond:* Simple everyday actions can help to sustain our planet, including recycling of waste, energy saving and changes in our lifestyle and diet to help the planet. We can fix our eyes on Jesus, as we pray for our world for our world leaders, gathering in Glasgow, asking that they may reach a good agreement for the future of our world.





# 'Wake up world!'

- Bishop calls for action to protect God's creation
  - after climate report.



The Bishop of Norwich, Graham Usher, the Church of England's lead bishop for the environment, said: "The message of today's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report is loud and clear: 'Wake up world!'

"It is time to stop playing political games and take action now.

"We are already seeing the effects of the climate emergency around the world - and it is the world's economically poorest people who are already suffering the most.

"So it is our moral duty and a Christian calling to do all we can to try to turn the tide.

"In just a few months at COP26 there will be an opportunity to act, our leaders must seize this moment and deliver real and impactful change for the future of God's creation.

"We don't have a spare Earth – this is our precious home."



The UK is presiding over the International Conference on Climate change to be held in Glasgow from the 30th October until the 12th November 2021.

## What do we need to achieve at COP26?

### 1. Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach

Countries are being asked to come forward with ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets that align with reaching net zero by the middle of the century.

To deliver on these stretching targets, countries will need to:

- accelerate the phase-out of coal
  - curtail deforestation
  - speed up the switch to electric vehicles
- encourage investment in renewables.

### 2. Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats

The climate is already changing and it will continue to change even as we reduce emissions, with devastating effects.

At COP26 we need to work together to enable and encourage countries affected by climate change to:

- protect and restore ecosystems
- build defences, warning systems and resilient infrastructure and agriculture to avoid loss of homes, livelihoods and even lives



## CONTACT DETAILS

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## **The demise of the parish? (Part 1 of 2 –more next month)**

In the Spectator Magazine dated 28<sup>th</sup> August 2021, Charles Moore wrote:

“By great good fortune, our Anglican parish, in which my wife is a churchwarden, has recently secured the services of a brilliant young organist, Jack Gonzalez Harding. Although only in his early twenties, Jack is already making his name as a harpsichordist as well. He is a great organiser and one of those people whose enthusiasm is infectious. There is widespread sadness about parish decline nationally, exacerbated by the hierarchy’s dismally passive reaction to lockdown. This has galvanised those who value parish life to set up a campaigning group, Save the Parish. The absence of organists is a symptom of the decline. If there is to be any revival, they will matter. Even their modest pay will be a stretch for many rural parishes, but if it is seen as an investment, it makes sense. A parish that cannot make its own music will tend to be a parish without a song in its heart or a means of bringing new people in. A parish with good music is unlikely to die.”

Thank you Sue Arnold for bringing this to all of our attention.

This resonates at St. Mary’s, because at the moment, we are not able to have a choir. But he raises many other important points. After providing some context, I would like to pick two parts of what he said for further comment.

As you may remember, during August, the Gospel readings were taken from John chapter 6. We focussed on bread, and just what people of Jesus’ day were looking for. The chapter started with about five thousand people following Jesus, and ended up with just twelve, and even they had questions. Maybe we should also consider if Matthew 22:14, “For many are called, but few are chosen” has resonance with us.

I pointed out in the sermon series that bread just does not happen, it takes time, skill and effort. This is also true of our church, as well as the “parish system”. I pointed out that the parish system began in Medieval Times.





In the documentation supporting the Review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure we are reminded, “It was in the Anglo-Saxon period that a network of localised churches first developed, and they were gradually supplemented by churches serving individual communities, at first mostly chapels subservient to a Minster (mother) church, but increasingly after the Norman Conquest each serving a village in what we would now understand as a formal parish system. “The parish was but the village or township to which a priest ministered. The incumbent with a cure of souls was a natural development...”

The Minster Church to which St. Mary’s would have been subservient may well have been St. Mary’s Priory in Prittlewell.

In the course of the sermons, I pointed out that after the Reformation, the parish system existed and developed in a rural setting. As we held our Lammas Day service, and the Lammas loaf was presented and I reminded everyone that the seasons of the church year are still oriented around the agricultural year.

Much has changed since the Book of Common Prayer was published in 1662.

In that time, the church grew closer to the state, many of the roles became blurred. But it still remains that everyone living in England is a parishioner of the parish church. This means that every citizen has the right:

- to be baptised

- to be married in their parish church

- to be buried

- to attend services

St. Mary’s still functions under these assumptions.



St. Mary's is still, and will continue to function as, the Parish Church of North Shoebury. We are "The Village Church".

When I was growing up, most church members would attend both a morning and an evening service every week. Those days are gone. It is not realistic for us to expect our members to attend every Sunday, or is it?

So I would like to pick two passages from Charles Moore's article. First, he writes, "There is widespread sadness about parish decline nationally, exacerbated by the hierarchy's dismally passive reaction to lockdown. This has galvanised those who value parish life to set up a campaigning group, Save the Parish."

I believe that this a reference to those who claimed that by closing the churches for services, "the church was closed". This of course is not true. We have a duty of care. The minster has a responsibility for "the cure of souls". This applies not only to spiritual matters, but to a wider concern and love of neighbour. At the time of the early pandemic, many of us thought it would have been disastrous to have kept churches open. Most churches continued to operate. From the point of view of worship, services were held online. It is true that online services are not the same, and we all missed attending church (at least I did), but the church was never closed. As soon as it became safe, worship continued.

The second point that needs consideration is this, "The absence of organists is a symptom of the decline. If there is to be any revival, they will matter." There is no doubt of that, but again, some context is needed. I do not know where Charles Moore worships, but Jack Gonzalez-Harding is Music Director of the London Baroque Orchestra at St. John's Smith Square.

This is not an average Parish Church!

**Rev David Pierce**  
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