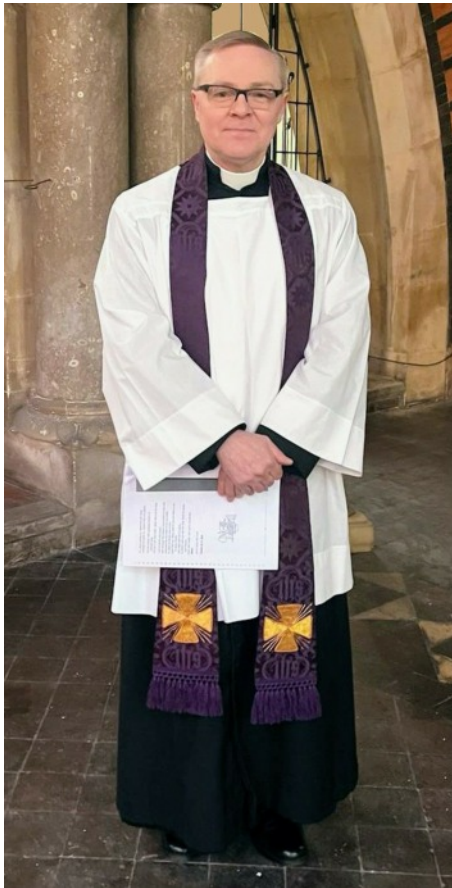




# the flyer

## The Flyer talks to Fr John Blackburne

**‘Fr John Blackburne** joined us as Vicar in November, having previously been Assistant Curate at All Saints’ Notting Hill with St Michael’s Ladbroke Grove.’



**Flyer:** *Can you tell us a little about your background.*

**JB:** I was born in Chelsea, London in 1962, and we lived in a place called the ‘World’s End’. As a family we moved around Chelsea so it wasn’t until I went up to Lancaster University in 1981 that I left and ever since it feels like I have been on the move. I have just retired after 34 years in the civil service so this a new challenge, a new start.

**F:** *Where did you study/train as a priest?*

**JB:** I studied for the priesthood at St Augustine’s Theological College based at Trinity House in Southwark and with the Benedictine nuns at West Malling in Kent. The course was originally the Southwark Ordination Course designed for mature students who would train whilst working, it emerged from the worker priest movement after the Second World War. It meant that I trained part-time for three years whilst working in my home parish of St Cyprian’s Clarence Gate in London and working full-time as a civil servant, working in the Ministry of Justice for Judicial Office. Not ideal because it was difficult to balance working, meeting the essay deadlines, and weekends away in West Malling.

**F:** *What were your previous posts?*

**JB:** I finished the theological course as we went into lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic so my ordination as deacon was postponed until September 2020 and then I was ordained priest in 2021 so I served my title as Assistant Curate at All Saint’s Notting Hill with St Michael’s Ladbroke Grove. I had just finished my curacy when the parish priest, Fr Philip Corbett drew the position at St Michael’s to my attention.

*F: What prompted you to apply for the St M's post?*

JB: The same Catholic tradition, the wonderful church and the care and kindness of the congregation and the Friends!

*F: How are you settling in?*

JB: It is taking a bit of a while because I have moved from a small one bedroom flat in London to what seems to me to be a huge house at the top of Buckingham Road. I am getting there but it is taking time, but the house is beautiful and I am very happy here.

*F: What have been your key tasks since being appointed?*

JB: I have been trying to get to know the parishioners, find my way around the sanctuary without tripping up (I did my first week!) and then find the heart of the community, which is more difficult than you might think. I have been trying to get to know the other local churches and clergy and met some local clergy who I was at college with, which has been very nice. I have visited the local Church of England School, established a working relationship with the local care home and recently had a very interesting conversation with the local councillor. After that we need to think about the future and where we want to be in say five years' time, that will involve a consultation with the parishioners and wider groups like the Friends.

*F: What are the joys and what are the challenges of your role?*

JB: The joy is the joy of the gospel we have a wonderful message and my role is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and minister to the people of the parish, whether they are religious or not, Christian or not, well disposed towards us or not. I am still wedded to the idea of the parish system, although I can see it looks increasingly anachronistic. The challenge is to evangelise the culture in Church speak – basically extend to people a radical welcome based on the hospitality of God.

*F: Why do you think St Michael's is special?*

JB: I think every parish has a character and the catholic character in Word and Sacrament and the stunning historical physical setting combine to afford us an excellent opportunity to reach out to the local community and wider city. I don't underestimate the challenge in the current culture but we have some great things going for us.

*F: When Sir Roy Strong, Patron of The Friends, gave the Annual Lecture he urged all churches to 'throw out the pews' and be much more open to other activities as well as worship, to become the hub of the community as they were in the Middle Ages. How do you feel about that?*

JB: I am all for making St Michael's a local community hub, with or without pews. We have a particular liturgical tradition which it would be sad to lose but there is plenty of scope for opening up the church, and welcoming as many groups and people into this wonderful space as we can, it will be the only way that we will be able to survive. But we can't do that on our own.

*F: Why do you think the Friends might be important to St Michael's?*

JB: I am hoping that the Friends will be a link to the local community and that it might be that we can draw on support from the friends to maintain a presence, keep the church open as a space for the wider community and enhance the lives of the local community.

*F: Do you have a sense yet as to what projects the Friends might be involved with?*

JB: If you look around the church there are things that need repair or upgrading, and if we can do something about the heating it would be much easier for us to let the church to other groups, particularly during the winter. I was at a concert the other week with the 'Brighton16' and it really was chilly towards the end, the acoustics are wonderful but it is too cold for anything much over an hour. I'd also like to draw out more of the history and culture but I can see you already have a tradition of working together on that.

*F: Do you have a message for the Friends?*

JB: It was lovely to meet as many of you as I could at the 'Icicles Party' event and I look forward to working with you in the future. I know the parish greatly appreciates the support you provide and I hope we can develop our work together sharing a common vision for the future as I get to know you.

*F: Anything else you'd like to share with us?*

JB: It is great to be here and I am very grateful for how welcoming and kind everyone has been since I arrived.

*F: I'm sure the Friends will join me in thanking you and wishing you all the best in your new post.*



## A chilly church, a cramped kitchen, a cantankerous cooker and... a convivial crowd

Alison Minns

They say there's no such thing as a free lunch, but the Friends of St Michael's was offering a free drink, hot soup, canapés and nibbles at their Annual Icicles Party. And Friends (and their guests) turned out in significant numbers, despite the chilly weather and even chillier church.

But it wasn't just an endurance test for those attending as party goers. Ian Crammond joined me at the drafty and ill-lit welcome desk where, besieged by muffled up and barely recognisable guests, we vainly attempted to decipher and tick off names on a list, almost unreadable in the candlelight. Simon Thompson, Judy Irwin, Coreen Sears and Jonathan Prichard struggled and do-si-doed in the cramped kitchen coping with (though surely not cursing in a church?) the cantankerous and idiosyncratic oven to provide wonderfully cheering and warming mulled wine, hot soup and canapés served by Frankie and Henry.



Despite the odds, all appeared to enjoy themselves, several people saying afterwards that it was the best Icicles ever. The party, after the excesses of Christmas, is a welcome diversion from the vicissitudes of winter and an excellent format for gathering in



small groups to chat to old friends and meet new ones over a glass or two.

And the Bodley part of the church seemed almost cosy this year! It looked particularly stunning, festooned with low hung fairy lights, giant paper cut out snowflakes made by the very talented Alexia Lazou, and dotted with glowing candles. Jonathan Prichard, our Vice Chair, who doubled, nay trebled up as church decorator (ably assisted by Mel Goodsell and Teddy Gorham), chief mulled wine maker and sommelier supremo deserves particular praise. I am always pleased when I see Jonathan approaching clutching his pitcher.

Perhaps best of all was to have the opportunity for us to meet the new vicar, Father John Blackburne who seemed to enjoy the occasion and, from what I observed managed to get to talk to a large proportion of those present.

Events such as these do not run themselves and thanks should go to all who helped make the party such a success. If you think you can help in any way with future events we'd love to hear from you. We are always grateful for people who can, for example help set up the seating or technical equipment, prepare or hand round food, serve on the bar, welcome guests at the door or help with publicity. We can only be as active as our active members.

For those of you who have inadvertently forgotten to rejoin, our Membership Secretary, David Sears is always happy to take your money!



# Spritzing with Simon

Coreen Sears

Text & photos



T'is the season to be jolly! No doubt of that. And for aspiring wreath makers who are associated with St Michael's, an essential element of the jollity is undoubtedly Simon's wreathmaking sessions. This last year, I believe the numbers were so high that Simon felt he had to insert another evening in the schedule.

These sessions are heartwarming for two reasons: the first is that even the complete beginners among us, under Simon's tutelage and thanks to the wonderful array of foliage he supplies, produce wreaths that are professional-looking, express our individual personalities and are long-lasting. ('Keep spritzing' is Simon's constant refrain). The second reason that the heart is warmed, or more accurately, the cockles, is the copious quantity of coffee, croissants, mince pies and prosecco that Simon provides to accompany the heavy work of making the wreaths.

We're lucky to have Simon, with his professional knowledge and generosity of spirit to put on these happy occasions. I wouldn't miss these sessions for the world. They mark the beginning of Christmas for me, and with a special hook, I hang my wreath on the kitchen door where it gives me and others the greatest pleasure.



*I, for one, have always been unclear about the structure of the church – its hierarchies, structures and governance. When I got chatting to St Michael's Associate Vicar, Fr Kevin Humphrys at the Icicles Party I asked him to see if he could demystify the subject for our readers. And he rose superbly to the challenge... [Ed]*

## Understanding the Tapestry of Anglican Ecclesiastical Structures

Dear Friends of St Michael's,

In the vibrant life of the Anglican Communion, we encounter a rich tapestry of titles and structures that harken back to the early Church, yet are ever-evolving. For the benefit of *The Flyer* readership, I hope to interpret the ecclesiastical architecture of the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion, drawing parallels with the corporate world for clarity.

### The Apostolic Holy Orders

At the foundation of our Church's structure are the Apostolic Holy Orders, which consist of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, mirroring the threefold ministry Jesus Christ entrusted to his Apostles. These orders are sacramental, each with a distinct role within the life of the Church.

#### Bishops

Bishops are the successors of the Apostles and hold the fullness of the priesthood. They are the chief pastors, teachers, and administrators within their dioceses, akin to CEOs in the corporate realm. They oversee the spiritual well-being of their flock and the administration of the sacraments.

#### Priests

Priests, or presbyters, serve under bishops and are like senior managers. They have the authority to preside over the Eucharist, forgive sins, and perform other pastoral duties. In the corporate analogy, they manage the day-to-day operations of their parish or congregation.

#### Deacons

Deacons are the servants of the Church, much like the operational staff in a company. They

assist bishops and priests and hold a special calling to ministry to the marginalised. While they cannot consecrate the Eucharist, they play an essential role in the liturgy and in serving the needs of the community.

### Varied positions within the Church

Beyond these holy orders, various other titles exist, reflecting the complex administrative and pastoral needs of the Church:

#### Vicars and Rectors

Vicars and Rectors are priests who have charge of a parish. The title 'Vicar' implies that they are exercising their ministry on behalf of a higher authority (often a bishop or a patron). A 'Rector' historically had more autonomy and often held the rights to church property and tithes. In many cases today, the terms are used interchangeably.

#### Deans, Provosts, Canons, and Prebendaries

These positions originated in medieval monastic and collegiate church settings. A Dean leads the cathedral community, is the head of the chapter of a cathedral and assists the Bishop. They are comparable to managing directors. Provosts, a less common title, often fulfil similar roles. Canons form the cathedral's governing body or Chapter and are akin to board members. Prebendaries are canons with specific duties and were clergy historically supported by the 'prebend', a historical form of financial endowment or income from cathedral assets.

#### Suffragan, Area, and Diocesan Bishops

Suffragan Bishops assist Diocesan Bishops, similar to deputy directors or deputy CEOs. Area Bishops have oversight of a specific geographical area within a diocese, operating much like regional managers. The Diocesan Bishop is the principal bishop of a diocese and holds significant executive authority.

#### Primates, Archbishops, and Metropolitans

At the highest levels, we find Primates, Archbishops, and Metropolitans. An Archbishop presides over an ecclesiastical province, while a Metropolitan may lead a province within a national church. Primates are senior archbishops of a national or regional church. They function at an executive level, overseeing several dioceses and provinces, much like chairpersons or presidents of a corporation.

## Shared Historical Context

The Anglican Church shares much of its structure and terminology with the Roman Catholic Church, having diverged at the time of the Reformation. Both have retained the historic episcopate and the threefold ministry, though the governance and theological emphasis may differ.

## Synodical vs. Papal Governance

The governance of the Anglican Church is synodical, meaning it operates through councils or synods. This structure promotes a democratic process, where clergy and laity alike have a voice in decision-making. It is a system with checks and balances, similar to a board of directors with stakeholders.

In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church operates a papal structure, where the Pope has supreme authority, similar to a CEO with broad, overarching powers. This centralisation can provide unity and swift decision-making but can also lead to challenges in addressing local concerns.

## Pros of Synodical Governance

- **Democratic:** Synodical governance allows for broader representation and input.
- **Adaptability:** It can be more responsive to the needs and context of regional congregations.
- **Accountability:** Leaders are accountable to the synod, which includes representation from the wider community.

## Cons of Synodical Governance

- **Slower Decision-Making:** The democratic process can be slower and cumbersome.
- **Potential for Conflict:** Diverse opinions can lead to conflict and division.
- **Complexity:** The structure can be complex and difficult for all members to understand or engage with effectively.

## Pros of Papal Governance

- **Unity:** A central figure can serve as a unifying presence.
- **Decisiveness:** Decisions can be made quickly and efficiently.
- **Clarity of Teaching:** Doctrine and teaching can be articulated clearly and authoritatively.

## Cons of Papal Governance

- **Centralisation of Power:** Can lead to abuse or neglect of regional concerns.
- **Less Representation:** The laity and lower clergy may have limited input in decision-making.
- **Inflexibility:** The system may be less responsive to cultural and local contexts.

## Conclusion

Understanding the ecclesiastical structures and terminologies of the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion is like deciphering the complex hierarchy of a large multinational corporation. Both have evolved over time to meet the needs of their respective communities. While our Anglican structure with its synodical governance may seem unwieldy at times, it reflects a commitment to shared leadership and broad participation in the spirit of the body of Christ.

Our shared history with the Roman Catholic Church provides a common foundation, yet our distinct paths have led to different approaches in governance. As we continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities these structures present, may we do so with wisdom and grace, ever mindful of our calling to serve God and one another.

In faith and fellowship,

Fr Kevin Humphrys