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St John's Cathedral in Norwich. Picture by Brian Lafferty.

Cathedral added to heritage 'at risk' list

The Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich has been listed as "at risk" by Historic England in its annual Heritage at Risk Register 2024. Keith Morris reports.

■ The Cathedral, which was completed in 1910, is deemed "at risk" due to issues with the rainwater pipes, which are at full capacity, and failing gutters, leading to leaks into the roof. Investigation work will be carried out to understand the scale of the repair work needed and to prevent continuing damage. Short term repairs to address leaks have already been carried out.

The Register, published on November 14, gives an annual snapshot of the health of England's valued historic buildings and places. It helps to ensure they can be protected and continue to be enjoyed in the future.

St John's Cathedral is among 29 sites added to the Heritage at Risk Register in

the East of England with 14 sites saved and removed.

One of Norwich's most spectacular buildings and a community hub for many local people, St John's was designed by the prominent architect George Gilbert Scott Junior and was completed in 1910 by his brother, John Oldrid Scott.

It was originally built as the parish church for the Catholics of central Norwich and became the Cathedral of the newly created Diocese of East Anglia in 1976. It is the second largest Catholic cathedral in the country.

As one of Norwich's finest buildings, the Cathedral attracts visitors from across the world with its external grandeur, magnificent interior, and beautiful stained glass.

The Cathedral is home to many groups supporting the local community. The parish hosts an active St Vincent de Paul Society group, supporting those in need in the city, and the Justice and Peace Group. The Cathedral has also supported Norwich City Council in offering space

for winter night shelters for rough sleepers in Norwich.

With keep fit, Zumba, and mother and baby groups also using the facilities, the Cathedral is a safe haven for many and there are a number of volunteers who support the Cathedral for this reason.

Cathedral General Manager, Charley Purves, said: "Our Cathedral provides space for so many people, from school and college visits learning about the architecture and Catholic traditions, to community outreach groups like the Prison Fellowship and Justice and Peace groups. This building is pivotal to the lives of those who regularly come to worship and a beacon for visitors of all faiths and none.

"Highlighting the issues that the building faces is the first step to enhancing what the Cathedral has to offer and ensuring that we preserve it for current and future generations."

Matthew Champion, Diocesan Heritage Officer, said: "The Cathedral of St John the Baptist is an iconic building, ■ story continued on page two.

Diocese deficit starting to fall

■ The Diocese of East Anglia's million-pound deficit is beginning to fall, according to the 2023 Annual Reports and Accounts, recently submitted to the Charity Commission.

Director of Operations and Finance, Rev Paul Raynes, said: "The recovery from the Covid pandemic has been slow. But total income rose 8 per cent in 2023 and is now back to the same level in cash as in 2017, thanks mainly to a healthy 12 per cent rise in the offertory. Spending rose half as fast as income, at 4 per cent. The operating deficit fell by a fifth, from £1.3 million to £1.0 million.

"These encouraging trends do not take the effect of inflation into account. In real terms, after adjusting for inflation, spending has been cut back by over £1 million since 2017. But total income is some £2.5 million lower in real terms over the same period. This explains why the deficit continues, despite the strong discipline the Diocese – both the Curia and individual parishes – have imposed on spending.

"Spending on common shared Diocesan services – often referred to as the Curia – was dominated by general services such as property, legal fees, finance, and support to the Bishop (about a third of the total), the costs of training new priests and deacons and supporting retired and sick priests (about a fifth), supporting schools (another fifth) and by a grant to the Cathedral of St John the Baptist (a tenth).

"The ongoing deficit can only be funded by running down the Diocese's reserves. That cannot continue indefinitely," said Paul. "The Bishop and Diocesan Trustees have committed to reduce the deficit to zero within three years."

rcdea.org.uk/annual-report-and-accounts

Clergy moves

■ Bishop Peter Collins has announced a quartet of parish priestly appointments, which are to take effect from January.

Fr Simon Davies has been appointed Parish Priest of the Parish of Our Lady and St Joseph, Sheringham & Cromer; Fr Simon is also appointed as Vice-Judicial Vicar.

Fr Trindade Johnson Monteiro has been appointed Priest-in-Charge of the Parish of The Sacred Heart, St Ives.

Fr Dominic Amoah has been appointed Priest-in-Charge of the Parish of St Anthony of Padua, Fakenham.

Fr Bienn Carlo Manuntag has been appointed Assistant Priest of the Parish of Our Lady and the English Martyrs', Cambridge.



Medal honour for SVP service

■ St Mary's SVP Conference in King's Lynn has paid tribute to stalwart Pat Carney for her dedicated service to the society for over 50 years

A framed certificate and medal were presented to Pat at the SVP Mass for the Sick, at Our Lady of the Annunciation in King's Lynn, by fellow member Pauline McSherry.

Pauline said: "The work of the society of St Vincent de Paul began in our parish in the fifties. I have been told that the floods of 1953 brought members to the fore and the society's work has never ceased in our parish or community.

"In very recent years age has caught up and membership decreased. So it is an appropriate time to say thank you to all members past and present. Thank you Pat for your devoted service to SVP in our parish and beyond. A word of thanks too to John, your husband. God bless you both and your family. May your inspiring example encourage younger parishioners to continue the work of SVP.

"Our active, perhaps not to active, members these days, need younger folk if the work of St Mary's SVP Conference here in Lynn is to continue."

Pictured above is Pat Carney with her certificate and medal.

Catholic EastAnglia

Newspaper of the Diocese of East Anglia

EDITOR:
Keith Morris



communications@rcdea.org.uk

Articles and photographs for the next edition are very welcome and should be sent to the editor, ideally via email, by Monday January 20.

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St John's Cathedral deemed "at risk"

■ story continued from page one.

built in the medieval Early English style, as a reflection of the nineteenth century Catholic revival in England, and is a masterpiece of Victorian gothic architecture. It also is a significant local and regional landmark that dominates the skyline of the city of Norwich.

"However, it faces a number of challenges. A historical lack of maintenance, some poor-quality previous repairs, and some questionable choices of building material have all combined to put the future of this fantastic building at risk. The Cathedral is also struggling to cope with the effects of climate change, with the Victorian gutters and downspouts being simply overwhelmed by the increased levels of rainfall in recent years."

"In recent weeks we have made the most urgent and necessary emergency repairs to keep water out; and submitted an application to Historic England for grant funding for the first stage of a wider programme of works to roofs and rainwater goods to address the longer-term issues?"

"The care and maintenance of the Cathedral is a continuous process. The most recent Quinquennial (five years) Inspection identified work of varying urgency that totalled over £8 million.

Since that inspection we have spent over £1 million on urgent repair work to the Transept roof, gutters, electric circuits, and the refurbishment of the toilets and drains, thanks to grants from Historic England, All Churches Trust and Biffa and donations from

supporters.

"Whilst acknowledging that such a fantastic building as St John's Cathedral is at risk is always a sobering moment, it is also an opportunity to focus upon the challenges of making it safe once more.

"We therefore welcome being added to the 'at risk' register as an opportunity to bring together the Diocese and local community to work together to secure the future of the building."

The Diocese of East Anglia has recently appointed award-winning Conservation Architect Nicholas Warns as the new Architect (Surveyor of the Works) at St John's Cathedral.

■ To find out more and donate, visit: sjbcathedral.org.uk/donate/

Former biochemist is new parish priest

A former biochemist and microbiology expert has left the world of academia behind to start a new role in Felixstowe – as parish priest at the Catholic church of St Felix.

■ After a middle-age rethink about the direction of his life, Fr Michael Smith is relishing the challenges he will face in the Suffolk coastal town where he took up his position in September, replacing Canon John Barnes who has retired.

"My main task is to preach the Gospel to a wider audience. If people understood our faith properly, there would be a queue outside the church door," he said.

Fr Michael grew up in Burnley, Lancashire, the youngest of four boys.

He studied biochemistry and microbiology at Sheffield University before doing a PhD

at Herriot-Watt University in Edinburgh.

From there he moved into science publishing and worked for the Royal Society of Chemistry for 20 years in Cambridge, commissioning articles from scientists, sitting on expert committees and attending international conferences.

His faith had always played a major part in his life and before working for the RSC he had been attracted to the idea of life in a religious order. He joined a Carmelite community

and then went to Dublin for five years of study. However, he decided not to finish his studies and headed out into the academic world.

In his early 50s he was on a religious retreat when his female supervisor suggested he might want to think about becoming a priest. "My heart leapt for joy," he admitted.

After studying at Beda College in Rome, a college for older trainee priests, he was ordained in St John's Cathedral in July 2021.

Following a short time at St

Laurence's RC Church in Cambridge he was posted back to the cathedral as assistant priest for three years. "Those three years have been the best thing I have done in my working life until now," Fr Michael said.

Now, though, he is looking forward to guiding his new parish.

"It was wonderful to be sent here by the bishop. I did a short placement here at one stage, so know a bit about the town. I cannot wait to settle in and get to know everyone."



Fr Michael Smith's Induction as Parish Priest at St Felix Felixstowe with Bishop Peter Collins. Picture by Wilfred Ablard.



Appeal to build Mission House in Walsingham

The Community of Our Lady of Walsingham (COLW) is marking 25 years of growth by launching the £2.5m Mary's House Appeal, seeking funds for a mission house in Walsingham and improved facilities in Dereham.

■ On Sunday October 13, COLW marked a significant milestone: 25 years since its founding inspiration. It was on this day in 1999 that Sr Camilla, encouraged by others, first documented her vision for a new religious community. Over the years, this vision has flourished into an established and growing community. Recent highlights include Mairead's first vows, Valentina's entrance into the novitiate, and Rosie's initiation as a postulant on November 21.

Now, the community embarks on an exciting new chapter with the launch of Mary's House Appeal. This campaign aims to raise funds for the purchase of a mission house in or near Walsingham, a place that has long been its spiritual home. Alongside this, the appeal seeks to improve facilities at the formation house in Dereham to accommodate the community's growth.

Since 2011, when Bishop of Brentwood Alan Williams SM, then Shrine Rector, first invited COLW to serve in Walsingham, the community has relied on temporary local accommodation to carry out its mission. The purchase of a formation house in Dereham in 2017 marked a significant step forward, providing a permanent base. However, with increasing numbers and an expanding apostolate, the current facilities are no longer sufficient.

Sr Camilla said: "The proposed mission

Vocational milestones

■ Two Sisters from the Community of Our Lady of Walsingham took important steps in their vocation journeys on the Vigil of the Feast of Our Lady of Walsingham reports Sr Catherine.

On September 23 we had the joy of welcoming Valentina into Novitiate and witnessing Mairead make her First Profession of Vows with the Community. Novitiate is where one truly starts religious life after a time of discernment as a postulant.

During novitiate one enters more deeply into prayer and studies related to religious life. If it is sensed that this is part of God's calling, and with the consent of the community, a request can be made to take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for one year with the Community. These promises are then renewed annually for between three and six years, until it is discerned whether to take them for life at one's final profession.

After welcoming Valentina into Novitiate during Vespers we then had a beautiful Mass, presided over by Fr Mark Hackeson and attended by family and friends of Sr Mairead. Before those gathered, she made

her vows according to the particular formula used by this community. Sr Mairead said: "It was amazing! I never thought the day of my first vows could be filled with so many graces and blessings. It was wonderful to share the occasion with some of my family from Ireland and France, friends from around the country, and of course, with my Sisters in COLW [the Community of Our Lady of Walsingham].

"All have been part of the journey to this very special day. I really feel that I am answering a call from God and trust Him in the path He is leading me on. It is hard to pinpoint one moment in the past when I first thought God was calling me to religious life. I would think 'No, He can't be, so I'll ignore it!'" But God had other ideas and, over the last seven years in particular, He led me to an ever deepening desire to know more about my faith and COLW, helped me overcome my fears and gain the courage to take the steps leading to my first profession."

her vows according to the particular formula used by this community.

We thank God for the gift of Sr Mairead and Valentina and ask you to keep them in your prayers.

needed by summer 2025 and the rest by Easter 2026. The success of Mary's House Appeal depends on the generosity of supporters. The funds raised will enable the purchase of the Walsingham property and ensure it meets the needs of the growing community. Every contribution, regardless of size, will help bring this vision to life."

For more details or to make a donation, visit: www.walsinghamcommunity.org/maryshouseappeal. The community extends its gratitude to all supporters.

news in brief

Radio Maria marks five years on the airwaves

■ Inti Paolucci has been appointed president of Radio Maria England, the second in five years, succeeding Charles Wilson, as the station marks its fifth anniversary with a Thanksgiving Mass in Norwich. Helena Judd reports.

Inti Paolucci replaces Charles Wilson who has been at the helm since Radio Maria's founding in 2019. Inti's appointment comes at a pivotal time as the station celebrates five years of broadcasting. A Mass of Thanksgiving was held at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich on October 23.

The celebration, officiated by Bishop Peter Collins, was attended by listeners and volunteers from the Norfolk and Suffolk areas. The Lord Mayor of Norwich, Vivien Thomas, joined the attendees at a reception afterwards.

In a heartfelt message of gratitude to the former president, Inti Paolucci said, "I am deeply thankful for his leadership, vision, and dedication, which have been crucial in establishing Radio Maria England as a beacon of faith and service."

The new president has been a trustee of Radio Maria since the beginning of the year and is local to the radio station's studios in north London.

Outgoing president, Charles Wilson, said, "Radio Maria is a powerful tool for evangelisation and a true community effort. It has been entrusted to us so that the Good News may reach all, whether it be via DAB+ radio, our mobile phones, the internet, or a smart speaker."

As Inti steps into this role, he hopes to bring renewed focus on expanding Radio Maria's reach across England and beyond, adding "Our mission transcends national borders, reaching a truly global audience. From England to every corner of the world, our programming inspires, comforts, and connects listeners everywhere."

With programming that resonates deeply in homes, hospitals, schools, and community spaces alike, Radio Maria remains committed to fostering a strong sense of community rooted in faith and unity.

Pictured below is Inti Paolucci.



Jubilee 2025 - Pilgrims of Hope

DECEMBER 2024

29th (Sunday): The Holy Family: JUBILEE YEAR OPENING MASS

Bishop Peter to celebrate Mass at the Cathedral.

FEBRUARY 2025

1st (Saturday): ANNUAL MEETING OF RELIGIOUS

-Bishop Peter to celebrate Mass at the Cathedral as part of Jubilee celebrations.

-On the Jubilee of Consecrated life (8-9th of October), celebrations will be encouraged in Parishes where religious are located.

22nd (Saturday): The Chair of St Peter

JUBILEE FOR DEACONS

-Bishop Peter to celebrate Mass at the Cathedral, to which all deacons, including retired, and their families are invited to attend.

MARCH 2025

28th (Friday): Third Friday of Lent: 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD

-Time of Adoration to be encouraged in parishes, with a significant celebration to be arranged at the Cathedral which Bishop Peter will lead.

APRIL 2025

5th (Saturday): JUBILEE OF THE SICK AND HEALTH CARE WORKERS

-Bishop Peter to celebrate Mass with Anointing of the Sick at the Cathedral, as a translation of the celebration customarily held near the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

20th of APRIL: EASTER SUNDAY

MAY 2025

31st (Saturday): The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: JUBILEE OF FAMILIES, GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

-Bishop Peter to lead the Diocesan Children's Pilgrimage to Walsingham, with additional Jubilee elements.

JUNE 2025

8th of JUNE: PENTECOST

26th (Thursday): The Dedication of the Cathedral: JUBILEE OF PRIESTS

-Bishop Peter to celebrate Mass at the Cathedral, at which all Priests are encouraged to concelebrate.

JULY/AUGUST 2025

July 28th to August 3rd : JUBILEE OF YOUTH

-Bishop Peter to lead a group of Young People to participate in celebrations in Rome.

SEPTEMBER 2025

26th (Friday): SCHOOLS' MASS

-Bishop Peter to celebrate School's Mass at the Cathedral

27th (Saturday): JUBILEE OF CATECHISTS

-Bishop Peter to invite Catechists to a gathering and celebration in Newmarket.

OCTOBER 2025

4th (Saturday): St Francis of Assisi: JUBILEE OF MIGRANTS

-A celebration organised in collaboration with Caritas East Anglia at the Cathedral.

10th (Friday): START OF WALKING PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM FROM CATHEDRAL

-This walk would commence in the morning from the Cathedral, to overnight in Great Witchingham/Lenwade, to arrive in Walsingham for the following day's celebration.

11th (Saturday): JUBILEE OF MARIAN SPIRITUALITY

-Bishop Peter to lead a diocesan pilgrimage to Walsingham.

12th (Sunday): JUBILEE OF CONSECRATED LIFE

- Parishes will be encouraged to celebrate any Institutes of Consecrated Life/communities of religious in their boundaries, to acknowledge their contribution to parish life.

NOVEMBER 2025

22nd (Saturday): Feast of St Cecilia: JUBILEE OF CHOIRS

-A 'come and sing' day at the Cathedral, culminating in a Vigil celebration of a Mass of Christ the King.

DECEMBER 2025

28th (Sunday): The Holy Family: CLOSING MASS

-Bishop Peter to celebrate Mass at the Cathedral for the closing of the Jubilee year.

DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA JUBILEE 2026

Opening: January 25th: Sunday of the Word of God

Close: November 22nd: Christ the King

New website

■ A new-look website for the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich has been launched providing an easy online way to find out about its services, facilities and latest news.

Charley Purves, Cathedral Manager, who led the project, said: "After feedback from visitors and parishioners the decision was made to look at redesigning the website, acknowledging that this is a vital resource in today's marketing tools. The Diocese of East Anglia received a generous anonymous donation which enabled the work to begin."

The new site has been designed and developed by Suffolk-based Integrated Ideas Agency, who visited the Cathedral at the end of 2023 to see the space for themselves.

"Their team were awed by the impressive Victorian Gothic architecture and inspired by the stained-glass windows which adorn the Cathedral," said Charley. "They have used these elements in the design of the new site and worked closely with myself to ensure the site would fit the Cathedral's ethos.

"This project has been discussed by so many stakeholders for a few years now, so it is really exciting to see it become a reality. We have worked hard to ensure that the content and images showcase the Cathedral, as well as providing the information the website visitors are looking for, in a clear and concise way." Visit: sjbcathedral.org.uk

Coming into land at end of the year

Fr Alvan Ibeh, reflects on another year coming to an end in his Voice of Hope column, and says that each step, whether joyful or challenging, has brought us closer to growth, wisdom and understanding.



■ As we approach the final moments of 2024, let us pause to reflect on the journey we've travelled this year. At the beginning of the year, I welcomed all of us on board the flight 2024.

If you are reading this December edition, it means you have at least made it thus far and my prayer is that we will all be amongst those who will make it to the final landing. But St Paul in Romans 9:16 reminds us, "So then it is not of Him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of

God who shows mercy."

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, let us reflect on the journey of 2024 with gratitude and purpose. We all may have different stories to tell about our 2024 journey. Some may be ending the year with great joy and satisfaction having achieved everything they set out to achieve at the beginning of the year. Others may have a completely different story to tell about their own journey. But whatever be the case, all we can say is "To God be all the glory", that we were able to see the end of the year, without the year seeing our end.

Every challenge faced was a lesson learned, every triumph a testament to our resilience. This year may have tested us, but it also proved our strength, adaptability and determination to rise above. Each step, whether joyful or challenging, has brought us closer to growth, wisdom and understanding. The lessons we have learned, the love we have shared, and the resilience we have shown are the gifts we carry into the New Year.

As we move into 2025, we should carry with us the wisdom of the past and the hope of what is to come. We should be mindful that it's not the calendar that changes our destiny but the actions we take and the mindset we choose.

We must commit to being bold, to dreaming bigger, and to embracing every opportunity with courage. But for this to be possible, we must not carry over to 2025 anything that is unnecessary for a new beginning – the hates, hurts, regrets, disappointments, etc. We can only give thanks for them ("In everything give thanks", 1Thessalonians 5:18) and then see them as opportunities of growth and self discovery.

This is a sacred moment to let go of what no longer serves us – old doubts, fears, and regrets – and to embrace the infinite possibilities that await us. As the year draws to a close, may we find peace in knowing that every ending is but a new beginning, and every challenge holds the seeds of transformation. Let us step into 2025 with hearts full of gratitude to God for the blessings we have received and faith in the path ahead.

May you find light in your spirit, strength in your soul, and love surrounding you in all that you do. I wish you a safe landing at the end of the year and a smooth take off in the New Year. Do not forget, "God is still in charge".

■ The Vol 2 of my book "A Fountain of Hope" will be out in the New Year by God's grace. I believe it will also bless your heart as the first volume did.

Healthcare workers' blessing



Fr Peter Rollings blessing the parish's healthcare workers. Picture credit: John McGovern.

To mark the Feast of St Luke, the Holy Family Church in King's Lynn honoured healthcare workers by giving the Blessing of St Luke to over 100 parishioners working in hospitals, pharmacies and other medical roles.

■ On Sunday October 20, Fr Peter of the Holy Family Church held a special blessing for healthcare professionals in recognition of their vital contributions. The blessing took place following the Feast of St Luke on Friday, October 18. St

Luke, traditionally believed to have been a physician, is the patron saint of physicians, surgeons, and healers. His feast day is a time to pray for and bless those working in healthcare.

After the 9.30 am Mass, over 100 parishioners, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, porters and healthcare assistants, came forward to receive this blessing. The service provided a reflective moment in which the parish recognised and celebrated the contributions of healthcare workers to the local community.

The healthcare workers in attendance reflected a diverse range of nationalities, including English, Filipino, Keralan, Nigerian and Polish. These individuals are not only regular attendees at Mass but are

also actively involved in parish life, serving as readers, eucharistic ministers, or helping with tasks like preparing teas, arranging flowers, and working with the Knights of St Columba (KSC).

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, one of the largest employers in King's Lynn, has actively recruited staff from Kerala, the Philippines, and Nigeria – many of whom are Catholic and draw strength from their faith. Fr Peter Rollings said: "It's common to see them praying in the hospital chapel before starting their shifts or taking moments for reflection during breaks."

"The blessing is a way of affirming their work in the community and showing what an important contribution the Catholic parish makes to healthcare in North West Norfolk."



Church's 2,000 knitted poppies

■ St Dominic's Parish, Downham Market has been busy for Remembrance Day. Last year parishioners (mostly ladies) knitted or crocheted over 2,000 poppies which were used to decorate the narthex and sold to raise funds.

This year the remaining poppies were added to and Jean Butler and helpers again decorated the church entrance. The poppies were left up for November and prayers for peace said at all Masses. "Lest we forget".

Delight at new priest

■ Parishioners at St Anthony of Padua, Fakenham were delighted to welcome a new priest, following the retirement of Fr Andrew Neate at the end of September, reports Margaret Hulme.

Fr Dominic Amoah (pictured right) arrived in the parish just ahead of Remembrance weekend which saw him not only celebrate the weekend masses but attend the town's Parade and Civic Service of Remembrance at the Parish Church of St Peter and Paul, Fakenham, where amongst others he was able to meet local church leaders and the Town Mayor Cllr Angela Glynn.

Born into a Catholic family and raised in a small town in the central region of Ghana, West Africa, Fr Dominic had seminary training firstly at St Paul's Major Seminary, Sowutuom, Accra, followed by St Peter's Regional Seminary, Pedu, Cape Coast, where he was prepared for the Diaconate and priesthood ordinations.

Following his ordination on December 5, 2004, by Cardinal Peter Appiah Turkson, Fr Dominic served in several different places and capacities as a Parochial Vicar, Archdiocesan Youth Chaplain and Parish Priest.



Fr Dominic arrived in England in September 2023, and was appointed as an assistant Priest at St Mary, Ipswich.

In his spare time, Fr Dominic enjoys walking, both watching and playing football, reading and listening to music.



Bring true Christmas joy



Christmas can be a lonely and tough time of year for seafarers. **But you can bring true Christmas joy.**

Your generosity and kindness will touch the heart of a seafarer or fisher who feels forgotten. Your gift is a gesture of love and gratitude.

Please visit www.stellamaris.org.uk for more information about how you can bring true Christmas joy to seafarers and fishers. Please also keep them in prayer. Thank you, in advance, for any support you can kindly give.

Bishop Peter's engagements

■ **Dec 15, Sun:** Bishop to celebrate Mass – 3rd Sunday of Advent – O'Emmanuel Carol Service at the Cathedral at 16:00.

■ **Dec 21, Sat:** Bishop to attend a Christmas Meeting with the Seminarians of the Diocese.

■ **Dec 24, Tues:** Bishop to Cathedral for Christmas Eve – Solemn Pontifical First Vespers of Christmas Eve at 15:15.

■ **Dec 25, Wed:** Bishop to HMP Norwich for Christmas Mass at 10:30

■ **Dec 29, Sun:** Bishop to celebrate The Jubilee Opening Mass at the Cathedral at 11:00.

2025

■ **Jan 9, Thurs:** Bishop to attend Bishop's Council Meeting in Poringland from 11:00.

■ **Jan 11, Sat:** Bishop to attend the Caritas Steering Committee Meeting in Poringland from 11:00.

■ **Jan 13 – 17, Mon – Fri:** Bishop attending Norfolk & Waveney Ecumenical Church Leaders Pilgrimage to Rome.

■ **Jan 25, Sat:** Bishop to attend Diocesan Commission for Evangelisation in Poringland at 11:00.

■ **Feb 1, Sat:** Bishop to celebrate Annual Meeting of Religious and Mass at the Cathedral at 11:30.

Churches sign unit



The Norfolk and Waveney church leaders ready to sign the declaration of commitment at Norwich Anglican Cathedral, and right, Bishop Peter Collins signing the document. Pictures by Keith Morris.

Senior church leaders from across Norfolk and Waveney publicly signed a Declaration of Commitment for Christian Unity, pledging to work together towards their shared mission, during an Evensong service at Norwich Anglican Cathedral on November 24. Keith Morris reports.

■ A congregation of around 150 saw senior regional leaders of the Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, URC, Quakers and Salvation Army signed the Covenant under the banner of Churches Together in Norfolk & Waveney.

Those signing were: Ms Liz Hoffbauer (Convenor of the Leadership Group – Norwich Quakers), Rev Helen Hollands (Chair of East Anglia Methodist District), Major Howard Russell (East of England Divisional Commander for the Salvation Army), Rev Lythan Nevard (Moderator for the Eastern Synod URC), Rev David Mayne (Regional Minister Team Leader for the Eastern Baptist Association), Rt Rev Peter Collins (Catholic Bishop of East Anglia), Rt Rev Graham Usher (Bishop of Norwich in the Church of England).

Opening the service Bishop Graham Usher said: "This ecumenical gathering is following in the steps of Christ our Lord. Jesus is the type of king who gathers people around him, the type of king who

shares that heavenly wisdom and of himself, rather than taking everything for himself.

"Our best work ecumenically is done locally where a thousand projects bring hope and healing and blessing. Projects across Norfolk and Waveney that gather people around Jesus, that seek heavenly things and projects that share the life of Jesus. Christians working together to Love God and their neighbour.

"Friends, through this vital smorgasbord of vitality, we know that the walls of our divisions do not reach as high as heaven. This is what we come together to celebrate this afternoon. In signing this declaration of our commitment to Christian unity, we are all saying loudly and clearly that we will seek to do all we can to see Christ in each other and be partners in the Gospel with Christ as our foundation."

Introducing the signing, Liz Hoffbauer, said: "I started to attend Churches Together in 2020 during lockdown when diocesan ecumenical officers and church leaders meetings were on Zoom. At that time I learnt that denominations were working together very hard for the benefit of their communities.

"King's Lynn was particularly inspirational and continues now in bereavement counselling and global warming. Churches in Norwich are providing warm spaces this winter and some are providing overnight accommodation for rough sleepers with the help of Norwich City Council. The same is happening in other areas of Norfolk. If all the Norfolk denominations joined forces and resources we

could really make a difference. There is just not enough time for me to praise all of the faith projects supporting Norfolk people," said Liz.

The leaders will signed this list of priorities of ecumenical mission

- 1 Sharing friendship and understanding
- 2 Sharing prayer and deepening our Communion with Christ and proclaiming the Gospel
- 3 Helping the lost and the vulnerable and serving those who suffer poverty and disadvantages
- 4 Speaking with one voice in common witness wherever we are able to do so.
- 5 Supporting the aims and objectives of Churches Together in England.

Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary of Churches Together, was present to witness the signing and during his sermon he said: "Jesus wants his church to know complete unity and by that he means a maturity in our unity. I think it starts with us understanding who we are.

"When we understand the contribution of our tradition, and that the body of Christ is poorer without it, then we begin not only to value ourselves but also to value other around us. It is also being enriched by those who are different too us. There is more than one way to do our faith. But also walking together even when there is profound disagreement.

"Living with difference is the challenge of our time and Scripture encourages us to do the same. We recognize that unity does not mean uniformity but diversity in its widest sense and that is how we enrich one another.

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y pact



Fr Tony Rogers earns his Masters degree

■ Amid lockdown's uncertainties, Fr Tony Rogers completed an MA on 'Death, Religion and Culture'.

His thesis examined Catholic funerals amidst rising secular trends, culminating in a delayed graduation at Winchester Cathedral, followed by celebrations at Montana Care Home. Sr Thaya Moses reports.

The first lockdown in 2020 was a time of great uncertainty. We had no idea when it would end and were unable to maintain a normal work routine. At least we were spared the pangs of guilt for leaving undone those things which we ought to have done.

However, restrictions in one direction can provide opportunities in another, and it was this that prompted Fr Tony Rogers to consider what else was possible. After a bit of searching, he came across an MA course on 'Death, Religion and Culture', offered – understandably – online only. Fr Tony's thesis focused on Catholic funerals in England and Wales, in the face of the rapid growth in secular and humanist funerals spurred on by

the provision of 'direct cremation', often described as being 'for those who don't like funerals'.

In his thesis, he examined the challenges faced by the Catholic Church in Northern and Central Europe and the efforts made to preserve the integrity of the faith in a rapidly changing belief environment.

Deprived of the usual student socialising, the Teams meetings opened doors to new contacts and friendships with funeral directors, healthcare workers, hospice staff, clergy, and others who were simply interested parties. Fr Tony completed the course in September 2022 but was unable to graduate in 2023 because, at the time, he was in hospital.

It seemed too good an opportunity to miss to be able to graduate a year later than normal, and following the ceremony in Winchester Cathedral on August 24, some unexpected celebrations followed after Mass at Montana Care Home the following Sunday.

Ex-priest has clerical status removed

■ Dennis Finbow, who once served as a priest in the Diocese of East Anglia, has had his clerical status and rights as a Catholic priest removed by Pope Francis, following his conviction last year for three historic (non-recent) child sexual abuse offences.

Bishop Peter Collins said: "As I promised when Dennis Finbow was convicted and jailed last March, the Diocese has followed the process of canon law outlined in our policies and procedures and can announce that he has now been laicised, which means that his clerical status and rights as a Catholic priest have been removed by His Holiness Pope Francis.

"We wish to reiterate our willingness to listen and support anyone affected by abuse and all victims of child sexual abuse are in my prayers. We would encourage any victim of child sexual abuse perpetrated within the Catholic Church

context to make contact either directly through our Safeguarding Office or with Safe Spaces, our Victim Support Service."

Dennis Finbow was charged in January 2022 with the offences relating to his service as a Catholic priest in Peterborough in the 1980s and 1990s.

In January 2023, Dennis Finbow was convicted by a jury at Huntingdon Crown Court of three counts of indecent assault on a child and found not guilty of the remaining three offences. In March 2023 he was sentenced to six-and-a-half-years in jail.

Dennis Finbow had been retired and not in active ministry since 2001. Prior to his retirement he had served in parishes in Peterborough and St Neots, Cambridgeshire.

Should anyone have any concerns or queries about the Dennis Finbow case then we would encourage them to contact Mick Thurley, our Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator on 07429 215344.

news in brief

Diocese is fully ethical investor

■ The Diocese of East Anglia has completed its move to become a fully ethical investor, with all its invested reserves now held in stocks and shares that respect Catholic Social Teaching.

During 2023, Trustees decided that it was no longer acceptable for the Church's reserves to be invested in shares linked to companies that engage in business that contradict Church teaching. This reflected the spirit of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'*, as well as the principles for faith consistent investment set out by the Papal Academy for Social Sciences in its document *Mensuram bonam*.

Following a competitive tendering exercise, the Diocese has appointed as its investment advisors the Churches, Charities and Local Authorities fund (CCLA). This body operates a Catholic Investment Fund that is advised by a committee composed of Church representatives. It does not invest in shares linked to embryo research, the global arms trade, pornography, exploitative lending, or fossil fuel extraction. The fund nevertheless targets investment returns which meet the demanding objectives set by the Trustees.

Director of Operations and Finance, Dcn Paul Raynes, said: "East Anglia doesn't have much money to invest. But the little we have should not fund business practices that the Church condemns. This is a project I embraced on day one in this job, so I am very pleased that we have now been able to make our investments consistent with our faith, without jeopardising our ability to preserve their value."

Charity boost

■ The West Norfolk Catenian Circle has raised £1,000 for the charity West Norfolk Carers, thanks to raffles at their monthly meetings reports William O'Brien.

Although not a fundraising organisation, members of the West Norfolk Circle hold a raffle at each monthly meeting, with the accumulated funds allocated each year to a local charity. This year, West Norfolk Carers was chosen, as they are known for their exceptional work supporting young carers and often helping to keep families together in times of great hardship or need. Operating on a very limited budget, the charity has been hit hard by the current financial climate.

The West Norfolk Catenian Circle was established approximately 15 years ago at the request of Bishop of East Anglia Michael Evans, with considerable support from Brothers of the Norwich Circle.

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"As you go back to your respective churches I want to encourage you to be ready for the harvest. May we as Christ's church be ready, may we work together as one, may we know His glory and may the Lord prepare us to welcome those who would be drawn to the love of Christ," said Bishop Mike.

Also in attendance at the service were the Dean of Norwich Cathedral, The Very Revd Dr Andrew Braddock, who hosted the service and gave a reading, Dean of St John's Cathedral Rev Alan Hodgson, Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk Mary Rudd, the Lord Mayor of Norwich Cllr Vivien Thomas and her husband Vaughan and Bishop Graham's Chaplain Rev Sally Theakston.

The church leaders will continue their fellowship and commitment to Christian unity on a pilgrimage together to Rome in January 2025, just before the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

<https://nwct.org.uk>

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The theology of safeguarding

Parish Safeguarding Representatives from across the Diocese of East Anglia met on October 19 for the annual Safeguarding event. Diocesan Safeguarding Administrator, Rebecca Bretherton, reports.

■ At the event we took a step back from the practicalities of safeguarding to reflect on the theology of safeguarding. Our guest speaker was Rev Dr Barry O'Sullivan, a diocesan priest from the Diocese of Salford, currently working internationally as a safeguarding consultant.

Fr Barry spoke about a spirituality of safeguarding. He explored the Gospels and the teaching of recent Popes, as well as the resources of Catholic Social Teaching, to show that safeguarding should be understood as a central part of the Church's mission, and "part of who we are as Christians."

He said: "While we are committed to sound



Fr Barry O'Sullivan speaking at the safeguarding event in Newmarket.

safeguarding practice, based on what has been learned from statutory and voluntary sectors, recent experience has shown that there is a desire and a need for a theological and spiritual foundation for safeguarding in the church." This begins with an understanding of Christ as a victim who shares the suffering of all victims.

He used a quotation from recent research carried out by the Boundary Breaking Project,

"The image of the new-born Christ child is one of immense vulnerability, and the passion and death of Christ reveal his vulnerability. We are more familiar with the idea of God as "almighty" and it can seem scandalous to speak of the vulnerability of God." (Report: The Cross of the Moment, 2024).

Fr Barry reminded us that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is described in Eucharistic Prayer I as "this pure victim, this holy victim,

and wisdom which will be needed to respond appropriately ... is clearly embedded in our own Catholic Social Teaching."

Bishop Peter celebrated Mass and prayed for victims and survivors of abuse and for all those who work in safeguarding.

The annual safeguarding event is an important gathering in our year and aims to give support and encouragement for those working to keep our parishes safe.

this spotless victim."

He showed us that the Church has always taught that Christians should prioritise support of the poor and vulnerable and those on the margins of society. Victims and survivors of abuse should be able to expect our response to their needs to be loving and compassionate and we should be ready to answer those needs practically and spiritually.

He argued that "much of the

Modern slavery in UK has hit record levels

The number of potential victims of modern slavery in the UK reached a record level in the last quarter according to the latest official data, reports Simon John, co-lead of the Diocesan Initiative on Modern Slavery.

■ A total of 4,758 potential victims in the UK were referred to the Home Office between July and September this year. This amounts to a 10% increase compared to the previous three months and a rise of 15% on the same quarter last year.

Simon says that if the increase is maintained as the pattern suggests the annual number of people found in slavery, will be around 20,000 in 2025 and 100,000 in just over a decade.

British is the largest nationality group, at 25%, found over the last eight years.

The joint CBCEW/CSAN Modern Slavery Webinar held in October was recorded and a summary of the event and recordings of the three short talks are individually available on the CSAN website at: www.csan.org.uk/news/modern-slavery-on-our-doorstep/

The speakers were:

Father Mark Odion, at the CBCEW. Fr Mark discussed the importance of raising awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery in communities.

Professor Carole Murphy, at St Mary's University. Carole spoke about British victims of

slavery and exploitation.

Ben Ryan, Deputy CEO at Medaille Trust, one of the leading anti-slavery charities in the UK. Ben described support for survivors of modern slavery.

Shocking discovery of enslaved workers at McDonald's in Cambs

"As if to emphasise the need for this webinar, we woke up a few days earlier to the shocking news that 12 men and women had been forced to work in various places including McDonald's in Caxton, Cambridgeshire," said Simon. "That McDonald's is a short distance from one of our parish churches."

The three gang members who trafficked the 12 people from eastern Europe were jailed for a total of 26 years after being convicted of trafficking and modern slavery. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c99v7vzrz8vo

Volunteers still needed

The Diocesan initiative to tackle Modern Slavery in East Anglia has taken off since its launch in February '24 with volunteers now numbering around 35. More are needed to become Freedom Watchers, learning the signs of modern slavery. Marginalised down-trodden people in our midst are yearning to be found and to be rescued. Once a suspicion is raised it is easy to safely report to the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700.

There is much information on this critical issue available on the Diocesan website that can be found by searching "RCDEA Slavery".

Please contact Simon at john_simong@hotmail.com

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Bishop joins 10k at March for Life

This year's March for Life in London was the most successful yet, with police estimates of some 8,000-10,000 people walking together in support of the most vulnerable members of our society, babies in the womb. They included Bishop Peter Collins and a number of East Anglian parishioners. Sarah Ward from Withermarsh Green, Suffolk, reports.

■ This is the 8th year that our family has taken part and for anyone who hasn't been, I would highly recommend it as an event that the whole family can attend. The day starts with "Lifest" at the Emmanuel Centre in central London. This is an opportunity for all the various pro-life groups in the UK to set out their stalls and talk about their areas of work. Groups include political lobbyists, student associations,

crisis pregnancy support, and post-abortion healing. People often ask if it is okay to bring young children to the March for Life and I would wholeheartedly say "yes" – the atmosphere is overwhelmingly joyful and there is no graphic or inappropriate material on display – it really is a celebration of the beauty and intrinsic value of life in the womb.

During Lifest, there are various activities and games for children of all ages and every effort is made for children to have fun. There is also an auditorium where more serious panel discussions and talks take place, bringing together experts in various fields.

This year the theme of the March for Life was "abortion isn't healthcare", so a number of medical professionals spoke during the morning (videos of all talks can be seen at www.marchforlife.co.uk).

One of my older children, Alastair, was manning the photo booth and captured Bishop Peter Collins for a photo shortly before the march set off.

The presence of five bishops this year was a real blessing and we thank them enormously for their courageous act of public witness.



Above, the March for Life in London and, right, Bishop Peter with Alasdair Ward from Withermarsh Green.



East Anglia invite to join Word on Fire conference

Catholics from East Anglia are planning to join a crowd of over 3,000 people at the forthcoming Evangelisation & Culture Conference hosted by the 'Word on Fire' Catholic ministry on February 21-22, 2025 at the Excel Centre, London.

■ One of the attendees will be Rebecca Bretherton, the diocesan Coordinator for Evangelisation. Rebecca said: "I'm really looking forward to being at this event. One of the largest ever gatherings of Catholics in the UK will hear from world-famous speakers and learn how to share our faith with others. East Anglian pilgrims heard Bishop Barron talk at World Youth Day in Lisbon last year. His

words inspired many of the young people on our trip."

The theme of the conference is The Bible. Word on Fire's Brenden Thompson said: "To proclaim Christ in the culture, we must know Christ; and to know Christ, we must know Scripture. As St. Jerome observed, 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ'.

But in order to uncover the spiritual and theological meaning of the Bible, we need to take a genuinely Catholic approach: reading it within the context of the great chorus of voices from across the centuries of the Church's tradition."

Speakers: Bishop Robert Barron, N.T. Wright, Professor Tracey Rowland, Dr Holly Ordway.

events.wordonfire.org/the-bible-event

Uplifting day of spiritual renewal in East Anglia

Around 70 attendees from the parish of Bury St Edmunds, and further afield in the dioceses of East Anglia and Brentwood, came together on November 9 for a Day of Renewal marked by warmth, community, and spiritual renewal.

■ Rosemary Walters, one of the event's facilitators, expressed her hope that "people will experience God's love and power in a new way and deepen their relationship with Jesus our Lord and Saviour."

Uplifting music from the Praise and Worship team set a joyful tone for the day's activities at St Edmund's Church. The guest speaker, Fr Paschal Uche (pictured) from the Diocese of Brentwood, delivered two impactful talks centred on the theme "Claiming Your Inheritance," guided by Romans 8:14-18. His first talk in the morning drew on sacred scripture and personal testimony, offering practical ways for attendees to integrate these spiritual principles into their daily lives.

The congregation gathered at midday for Mass, celebrated by Fr Paschal, commemorating the anniversary of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica. In the afternoon, Fr Paschal delivered his second talk, warmly expanding on the theme of the day, looking in more

depth on how to claim our inheritance with encouraging insights and quotes from the Saints, fresh reflections on Old Testament scripture and the mysteries of the Rosary.

The day concluded with a period of Adoration, prayer ministry, the sacrament of Reconciliation, followed by Benediction led by Fr Anthony Asomugha, giving participants a chance to

reflect on the insights gained. The atmosphere throughout was one of joy, light, and a profound sense of community.

Pam Smith, the co-ordinator of the CDSC team gave thanks for the "insightful and inspiring" talks given by Fr Paschal, his care and enthusiasm and that of the whole team present at the event.

The next Catholic Charismatic Renewal in East Anglia event is on November 23 in St Ives, Cambridgeshire and events are planned for 2025 the year of Jubilee "Pilgrims of Hope".

Visit www.renewaleastanglia.org or email: renewaleastanglia@gmail.com



Christmas Mass Times

St Mary's Catholic Parish, Ipswich
St. Mary's Church
 St. Mary's Road, off Woodbridge Road &
The Church of the Holy Family & St Michael
 Main Road, Kesgrave
Christmas Mass Times
Tuesday 24th December - Christmas Eve
 St Mary's Mass - 5.00pm - Family Christmas Eve
 Holy Family & St Michael's - 8.00pm - Vigil Mass
 St Mary's Mass - 11.30pm - Carols before Midnight
 St Mary's - Midnight - Midnight Mass
Wednesday 25th December - Christmas Day
 St Mary's - 9.00am
 St Mary's - 10.30am

ST LUKE'S
Benyon Grove, Orton Malborne,
Peterborough. PE2 5XS
stlukesorton.org
 01733 450743
Tuesday 24th December:
 6pm Family Vigil Mass; 8pm Vigil Mass;
 11pm Mass in the Night
Wednesday 25th December:
 9am, 10.30am & 12noon Mass with Carols



Celebrating the Holy Family

On Sunday December 29, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Holy Family; Jesus, Mary and Joseph living together an ordinary life, says Antonia Braithwaite in her latest Faith in the Home series.

■ We are invited by this feast to contemplate the mystery of this family and remember that they, like us, also had their share of struggles, toils, hurt and challenges, as well as joys and love in being together.

Whatever their circumstances they were always a living icon of faith, hope and love. Everything that happened they accepted as being from the hand of God, and they acted and reacted to their life events with love and with the eyes of faith and trust. It is significant that God the Father allowed His Divine Son to be born and brought up in a family. In doing this He elevated family life, and revealed to us that every family is invited to encounter the ups and down of ordinary life together with the Holy Family who understand what we are going through.

The Vatican has provided a few suggestions for how families can celebrate this feast day:

- The family could attend Mass together

-In prayer, every member of their family could be consecrated to the loving patronage of the Holy Family

- The parish priest could be asked to pray the Blessing of Children (as provided in the Roman Ritual Book of Blessings) over the children of the family

- Either arranging a formal ceremony or informally just in front of their family, husbands and wives could renew their marriage vows with these words:

We pledge ourselves anew to love and honour each other for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health to love and to cherish till death us do part.

We pledge ourselves anew to love and support our children and to share with them all we value.

Additionally, there are many images available of the Holy Family and every home should have one image displayed. If we don't have one, we could look to purchase one as a Christmas gift to our family this year. Then, as we go about our daily tasks and we catch a glimpse of the Holy Family it serves as a reminder to entrust the struggles of our own family life to their assistance, and to model our lives on theirs.

Beloved priest Fr Olindo dies at 96

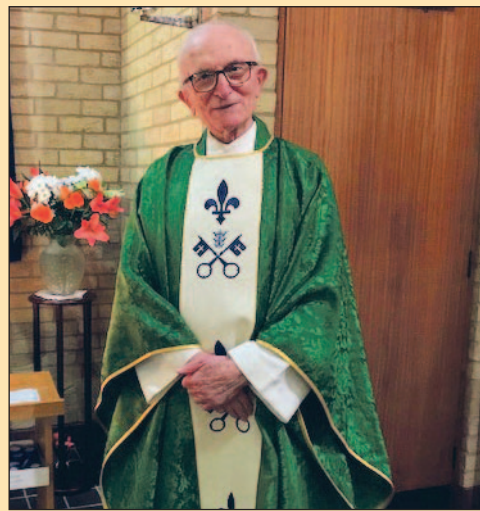
■ The eldest priest of the Diocese of East Anglia, Fr Olindo Cramaro, passed away peacefully at home, a few days before his 97th birthday on Thursday November 31. Fr Jeffrey Downie here pays tribute.

Living in care for most of this year, Fr Olindo celebrated an amazing 70 years of priesthood on January 24, joined by local clergy for Mass, a small party and receiving a special Papal Blessing.

A native of Italy, Fr Olindo was born in a small village near Udine on November 3, 1927. Ordained priest for the Society of St Paul on January 24, 1954, after one year he was transferred to Northern Ireland for three years.

In 1957, Fr Olindo moved to East Anglia, eventually incardinating into what was then part of the Diocese of Northampton, serving in Norwich at the Cathedral and at All Souls Peterborough. He had responsibility for the fledgling Orton Community in the early 1980's, before the now flourishing parish of St Luke's was created. In January 1984, he became parish priest of Sacred Heart Southwold, enjoying 20 years of fruitful ministry there before retirement in 2003.

Fr Olindo then returned to Peterborough, settling in Yaxley close to long-time friends Bridget and Roy Day, who with their family increasingly cared for him as the years passed. Until his early 90's he continued to remain very active, supporting the local Catholic community, schools and parishes, especially St Luke's. Fr Olindo especially enjoyed visits from friends, smoking his pipe



and listening to classical music, driving around in his Fiat along with regular visits to the Italian shop for food and wine.

Up to the end of his life Fr Olindo continued to support us with his daily prayers and received Holy Communion regularly from local clergy, still keeping up with the news and welcoming visits from friends. Greatly loved and respected, particularly in the Peterborough area, Fr Olindo will be profoundly missed. May he rest in peace. The eldest priest of the Diocese of East Anglia, Fr Olindo Cramaro, passed away peacefully at home, a few days before his 97th birthday on Thursday November 31. Fr Jeffrey Downie here pays tribute.

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Fr Colin walks 83km on his 83rd birthday

Fr Colin Carr completed an 83 km walk for his 83rd birthday from October 1-8 to raise funds for the Mutemwa Leprosy Centre in Zimbabwe, surpassing his £3,000 target to support the education of local children.

■ From October 1-8 this year, my birthday fundraiser was an 83 km walk to raise money for the leprosy centre at Mutemwa in Zimbabwe. That was where the remarkable Servant of God, John Bradburne, ended his days in service of those who had leprosy.

I had known John in what was then called Rhodesia. He and I were both working with Jesuits before he went to Mutemwa.

The John Bradburne Memorial Society continues his work with the leprosy centre, and we were raising money for the children of Mutemwa so that they could go to school.

My walk was not a long hike, but simply the accumulation of kilometres in my normal day, with a bit of extra effort. So, walking around Blackfriars Pri-

ory, walking into town, walking to and from St Laurence's Church, all added up. A nice thing this year was that at least three people walked parts of the way with me, including John Bradburne's niece, Teresa.

I posted pictures and a narrative on Facebook each day, and people were remarkably generous so that we raised well over our target of £3,000, reaching almost £3,800, and so were able to help the children of the staff at Mutemwa as well as the children of the Centre.

Last year, we raised nearly £3,000 from an 82 km walk. Next year – 84 km?

It's in God's hands.



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Picture gallery from parishes around the Diocese

■ A packed congregation included 12 civic representatives led by the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk attended Mass to celebrate the feast of St Edmund King and Martyr at our Church in Bury St Edmunds on November 17 reports John Saunders.

The celebrant was Fr Sean Connolly, with three local retired priests (Dick White, Brendan Moffatt, Terry Phipps) as concelebrants.

The music for the Mass was provided by organist Dickon Fincham-Jacques, the Music Group led by Mick Truman and the choir led by Patricia Mason. Choir members received acclaim for their beautiful singing, and the voices of those from the Filipino and Nigerian communities emphasised the diverse range of talented people within the parish.

In his homily, Fr Sean emphasised the



importance of caring and supportive deeds which would ultimately be taken into account at our day of judgement, highlighting the good works of Edmund and the

manner in which he cared for his people and his faith.

Following the service parishioners and guests gathered in the Crypt for a buffet

lunch and an opportunity to view the relic of Edmund which had been gifted by a former parish priest, Fr Mark Hackeson.

Many of the guests who were non-Catholic commented on how they had been impressed by the warmth of their welcome and the support they received from 'buddies' who sat with them in Church to provide support them and answer their questions. Guests also referenced how diverse and inclusive the parishioners were, coming together in a spirit of unity.

It proved a memorable and successful celebration of St Edmund's feast, the actual day of which is November 20 and continues an annual tradition.



From the left: Fr John Ablewhite, Fr Yacob Chilka and Fr David Finegan. Photo by Eunice Kwashie

■ St Etheldreda Parish in Ely welcomed Fr Yacob, a missionary priest from the sister parish of St. Joseph in Prek Toal, Siem Reap, Cambodia on Sunday October 6. The visit was marked by Mass, inspiring words from Fr Yacob, and a shared lunch with the parish community. **Eunice Kwashie** reports.

His visit strengthened the spiritual connection between the twin parishes and raise awareness of the challenges rural communities face in Cambodia through vital missionary work.

Fr Yacob is part of the Mill Hill Missionaries (Maidenhead), an organisation dedicated to spreading the Gospel in some of the world's most remote areas. In Cambodia, where Fr Yacob serves alongside the priest in charge, Fr Totet, and two additional priests, their mission focuses on building faith communities, promoting education, and supporting regions with scarce resources.

Fr Yacob's missionary journey began when he was inspired by the Mill Hill Missionaries who came to his home country of India. "I was touched by their charisma," he said.

After 11 years of formation – including time spent in Kenya – he was ordained as a priest in India. "The missionaries were a fruit to me, and I wanted to be the fruit

for others," said Fr Yacob.

In 2019, Fr Yacob took on a new mission in Cambodia, a predominantly Buddhist country.

Fr Yacob now serves as the parish priest at St Joseph in Prek Toal, a floating community in the Siem Reap region. The area is extremely resource-limited, and his mission extends beyond spiritual guidance to supporting local children through education. The parish works with young boys and girls, helping them expand their horizons. "We try to show them they don't have to follow the same path as their parents, who are often farmers," he said.

Reflecting on his work, Fr Yacob shared a touching metaphor: Just as Jesus called His disciples to be "fishers of men", he now finds himself "literally on the water," spreading the message of Christ to the floating communities of Cambodia.

After celebrating Mass, Fr Yacob gave a brief talk, after which the parish hosted a special lunch in his honour.

The lunch was a wonderful example of the unity and compassion that characterises the Ely parish, with the presence of friends from Ipswich, Yarmouth, and Fr Tony from Peterborough (the former parish priest of Ely) adding to the sense of togetherness.

■ Pupils from St Mary and St Peter Catholic Primary School in Gorleston have been filling shoeboxes packed with gifts as part of Operation Christmas Child.

The initiative started after Mark and Debra Watkins, Church Relations and Community Relations team members with Operation Christmas Child, visited St Peter's church Faith Club back in September.

School governor and parent Matt then asked if the school could take part and Mark and Debra dropped off enough shoeboxes for two for each class, inviting children to bring in items.

Mark said: "So many benefits come from this ministry. The obvious one is the sending of gifts to children with little or nothing, to give them hope, learn about Jesus by an invitation to a 12-week children's programme run by their local church. From the outset of this ministry anyone who cares for children can see how this can be used to teach giving and compassion.

"All the year groups in the school took part and it was evident in talking to Sue, school secretary, that great joy was had in filling shoeboxes by both children and adults."

Debra said: "We are most grateful to the school in reaching out to seek to help others,

when the school will be so busy, thank you, the shoeboxes from you will make a child smile."

St George's Parish in Norwich, where Mark is a parishioner, has also taken part in the initiative.

Operation Christmas Child has been collecting and delivering shoebox gifts – filled with school supplies, hygiene items and fun toys – to children worldwide for three decades. Since 1990, the project has collected and delivered more than 200 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 160 countries and territories.

They have been calling on churches; schools and families in the Norfolk area to pack more shoebox gifts than ever before for the Samaritan's Purse project, which is committed to its mission of reaching millions of children across the globe with the Gospel.

Those interested in more information on Operation Christmas Child for your church, school, group or business can contact Mark and Debra Watkins at markdebrawatkinsocc@yahoo.com

Visit: www.samaritans-purse.org.uk

Pictured below are children at St Mary and St Peter's primary school with some of the shoeboxes they packed.

