

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



DECEMBER 2021

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Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of the parish.
Editorial Team: William Odling-Smee, Selby Nesbitt, Evelyn Harper, Tony Merrick.

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

Advent is here once more and so begins another Church year. The Christmas Carol service will take place at 5:00 PM on Sunday 19th December and the collection at that service will be divided between Christian Aid and the Belfast Welcome Organisation who assist the homeless in our city. Our Advent Giving Tree will also be in place throughout Advent. A silver parcel signifies a gift of food and a gold parcel signifies a monetary gift. All gifts will go to the Simon Community who also work with homeless and marginalised people. Please remember to Gift Aid your financial gifts by putting them in one of the yellow envelopes and writing your details on the envelope.

I have had several inquiries from adults about Confirmation at Easter and a number from young people as well. I plan to begin a class for adults in early January and also a separate class for young people, probably held in the Sunday Club room, after school. The course will last 12 weeks. If you are interested in Confirmation preparation and being confirmed by the Bishop on Easter Eve (16th April), then please speak to me as soon as possible.

Christmas is a very special season when we celebrate Christ's incarnation upon which the whole Christian faith is built. There is a great deal of excitement in our homes, in our families and especially amongst children. This year particularly, after all the restrictions of the last two years, we are all looking forward to a more hopeful Christmas and a much better 2022. In the midst of those hopes, I would ask you to remember two things. Firstly, remember the poor, the needy and those for whom Christmas is a difficult time, and then do something practical and generous for them. Secondly, do not forget that Covid-19 is still very much with us, so please follow all the guidelines, wear a mask, practise hand hygiene and have a care for others, especially the vulnerable.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the coming weeks and celebrating the birth of Our Lord with you.

Every blessing and Happy Christmas

Brian Stewart

**Advent Christmas and Epiphany 2021-22
at Saint George's, High Street, Belfast, BT1 2AG**



Advent Sunday 28 th November	11:00am 5:00pm	Choral Eucharist Advent Carol Service
4th Sunday of Advent 19th December	11:00am 5:00pm	Choral Eucharist Christmas Carol Service
Christmas Eve 24th December	11:00pm	Midnight Festival Eucharist
Christmas Day 25th December	11:00am	Choral Festival Eucharist
Saint Stephen's Day Sunday 26th December	11:00am	Eucharist
Wednesday 29 th December	10:30am	Eucharist
The 2 nd Sunday of Christmas 2nd January	11:00am	Choral Eucharist
Wednesday 5th January	10:30am	Eucharist

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PARISH NEWS

CHRISTMAS AT STOREHOUSE

Hello to all who continue to support Storehouse. They are very grateful to everyone who continued to donate throughout the pandemic.

They are now preparing for the Christmas Hamper/Turkey Appeal. Due to the current situation, we are not able to provide food items; however we can donate money in lieu. Storehouse can then buy all the turkeys and food items for the hampers.

If you wish to donate money towards the Turkey/Hamper Appeal, please put your donation in a yellow Gift Aid envelope, marking it clearly for Storehouse Appeal. If you can Gift Aid your donation, please add your name and put it on the plate in church or alternatively you can give it to me.

Thank you all for your support.

Wishing you all a very happy and blessed Christmas.

Betty Flynn

PORTICO PRELUDES- A TRIBUTE TO DAVID MCELDERRY



Portico of Ards has commissioned 10 chorale preludes for organ from 10 of Ulster's leading musicians in memory of the late David McElderry, who built Portico's magnificent organ.

Portico Preludes will be delivered both as a livestream and an in person event

During the event, Dr Joe McKee will pay tribute to the enormous contribution that David McElderry made to the world of organ building and music.

HOW TO GET THERE

Portico of Ards
8 Steel Dickson Avenue
Portaferry
County Down
BT22 1LE

EVENT DETAILS

Saturday, 4th December
14:00 to 15:30
Tickets £15 / Under 25s £5

The Last Toy - Paul McLaughlin



Four weeks short of my eleventh birthday, my Saturday afternoon December ride with the Lone Ranger was interrupted by my mother. “What do you think Santa Claus will bring you this year, Paul?” she asked just as the masked man was about to take to the screen of our 17-inch black and white television.

I heard the show’s familiar intro blaring behind me as my mother, hands firmly on my shoulders, turned me away from the offending appliance.

“A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty Hi-Yo Silver! The Lone Ranger rides again.”

I was lost for words, but only for the few seconds it took for the shooting to start on my favourite western.

“A rifle, Mammy,” I said. “I hope he’s going to bring me a rifle.” And that was that. She nodded, mumbled something about Santa checking to make sure I had been a good boy and headed for her usual workplace in the scullery.

I threw myself onto the sofa beside my six-year-old brother and we watched silently and intently as Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels continued their fight for truth and justice in the old West.

They caught the bad guys within 25 minutes until the theme music of what sounded like a hundred thundering hooves was played out with us accompanying with the words “To the dumps, to the dumps, to the dump, dump, dumps”.

Then it was out to a street full of Lone Rangers and Tontos – none of our friends ever wanted to be a bad guy – to re-enact the latest episode.

Such had been our Saturday afternoons for months in that year of 1963. Mornings were more predictable. Confession had to be attended every three weeks, the barber’s shop every four. I’m not sure now which of the two was the more stressful; the old priest who dished out penances like prayer-filled confetti – decades of the Rosary were the norm - or the grim barbering Brothers who were given free reign over our heads with electric razors and sharp-toothed clippers. Either way they both had to be endured before our street cleared completely of boys at Lone Ranger time. Only a handful of wee girls, usually with a long rope and a cat’s chorus of skipping songs, were left to play unhindered for a change. They would, of course, be driven off like a gang of rustlers once Kemo Sabe and his Comanche sidekick were finished, and we lads retook the street.

By the time my mother called us to come into the house around six

o'clock, my brother and I had forgotten all about Santa, the rifle and even the Ranger's latest adventure as bath time approached....

The least said about that the better. My mother, a wee slip of a thing, was as strong as a small ox, capable of wringing out sodden blankets without a mangle, and thorough was a word I now care to use for the Saturday night scrub.

In our parallel single beds later that night, my brother Jimmy said that he had written to Santa asking for a rifle for himself. I hadn't the heart to tell him that Santa didn't exist. I remembered how hurt and disappointed I had been when a vindictive older boy had told us that 'secret' just a year before.

"I asked Daddy Christmas to bring you a special rifle, Paul," he said, "One just like the Lone Ranger's." I smiled in the dark and blest him goodnight.

Christmas came damp and dark that year with a mild morning that saw the McLaughlin boys out of bed before 7:00am raiding bed-end stockings for treats and new pennies. And Santa had certainly kept his side of whatever bargain our parents had made as they looked nearly as happy as we did.

Jimmy received a shiny, silver repeating rifle, with a white butt and rolls of exploding caps, while I got a replica Winchester 1873 rifle that held six brass bullets at the mercy of its realistic toggle-link action made famous by The Rifleman Lucas McCain.

We couldn't know it then, but snow was coming in what would be the coldest Winter of the century and, like Christmas, the Winchester would soon be a thing of the past - handed on to our neighbours' children - before six more months had passed. It was the last toy I ever received. Adolescence awaited and the longed-for typewriter.



SHELL FISHY BUSINESS - Terence Mayne

Normally we (mostly royal we), walk from Knock into the city along the old B.C.D.R. rail track to listen to the birds and admire the trees. Sometimes for a difference we stroll the Newtownards Road, passing restaurants, reading menus, thinking about electric cars, air taxis, where to land, flat rooves, observing trucks and vans with their logos, admiring pink buses and violet gliders; and what about the beautiful yellow lines on the roads? And much other musings. The most remarkable thing to notice however is the large number of fish and chip shops on the way. Thus, thinking of seafood, the mind wanders; it is just something similar in New England and San Francisco, but they would be clam chowder joints. There are ten really class ones in both places, and goodness knows how many others. On the east coast the dish is thick, creamy, and milky white; the Maine state legislature having banned tomatoes as an ingredient in 1939. On the west coast and N.Y., it can be called a Manhattan, tomatoey, brothey and clear. That's about it. They both taste just great. Put simply,



for a very pleasant feed, you trot down to St George's Market in Oxford Street to buy some clams (Bar Harbour brand, canned, are an alternative), boil them, remove the shells, chop and along with sauteed onions, salt pork, flour, bay leaf, tomatoes, chopped potato and water, put the lot into a large pot and simmer gently for 15 minutes. East coasters can omit the toms and add cream at the end. DELICIOUS. The dashing young poet Rupert Brooke, (1867-1915) was a great enthusiast, although I think he was going a little far when he wrote:

If you were like clam chowder
And I was like the spoon
The band was playing louder
And a little more in tune
I'd stir you till I spilled you
Or kiss you till I killed you
If you were like clam chowder
And I was like the spoon.

Many countries, among them Japan and India, have their own recipes. Sadly, not everybody can enjoy this gourmet delight, for those Jews who obey the dietary laws following the Torah (the five books of Moses) in which Leviticus 11: 9-12 dictates, "Anything living in the water that does not have fins or scales is to be regarded as unclean and not to be eaten". As for us, do you not think it could be said, if the Norwegians in Oslo, just as an example, are unfortunate enough not to have beautiful yellow lines on their streets, in the same way, we in Northern Ireland must appear a little foolish not to have delicious clam chowder carry out cafes. Go figure.



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See Amid The Winter's Snow - Billy Adair

The Christmas hymn "See amid the winter's snow" is much sung and much loved in the Church of Ireland during the Christmas season, yet it is unknown in the Anglican Church, for it is not included in "English Hymnal", "Hymns Ancient and Modern" and "Songs of Praise", the three main hymnals in England - why, one wonders?

The hymn first appeared in "Easy Hymn Tunes" in 1851 and was entitled "Christmas": it had seven verses originally. The writer was Edward Caswall (1814-1878) who was educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, and after ordination in the Anglican Church in 1840 was appointed perpetual curate of Stratford-Sub-Castle in Wiltshire. He was a High churchman, and strongly influenced by the Tractarian Movement. He resigned his living in 1847, and he and his wife were received into the Roman Catholic Church - surely one of the earliest married priests to be accepted. When his wife died in 1850 Caswall joined John Henry Newman in the Oratory of St Philip Neri at Birmingham and remained there until his death in 1878. He was much loved and respected for his work among the sick and the poor - the mark of a good parish priest.

- 1 See amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below,
See the tender Lamb appears,
Promised from eternal years.

Chorus

Hail, thou ever-blessed morn!

Hail, redemption's happy dawn!

Sing through all Jerusalem:

"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Caswall plunges immediately into the story as related in Luke 2 V 1-20, and he involves us each one - "see", the promised day has arrived and the promised one has been born - the Lamb of God, come to take away the sins of the world. And we are part of it, for it was the ever-blessed morn of our redemption. But it was "in the bleak mid-winter" and some take exception to the substitution of our severe snowy winter for that of the milder Eastern climate. In a pamphlet "Bethlehem Today" (1947), Leslie Farmer strongly argues that the snowy scene is not unreasonable, and he produces a photograph of a snowy Bethlehem, taken at Christmas 1942. So much for that.

- 2 Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies;
He who, throned in heights sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim!

Yes, incredible as it may seem, that tender Lamb in the manger is God's only begotten Son, the Architect of the entire universe, come down to earth to lift us up to heaven - "was ever love like this?"

- 3 "Say, ye holy shepherds, say
What your joyful news today;
Wherefore have ye left your sheep
On the lonely mountain steep?"
- 4 "As we watched at dead of night,
Lo, we saw a wondrous light;
Angels singing 'Peace on earth'
Told us of the Saviour's birth."

Here Caswall uses poetic licence, and makes us converse with the shepherds, who in few words relate their unique experiences. Holy shepherds - perhaps - but humble shepherds indeed, and they were the very first to know that the Saviour had come.

- 5 Sacred Infant, all divine,
What a tender love was Thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this!
- 6 Teach, O teach us holy Child,
By Thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble Thee,
In Thy sweet humility.

MUSIC LIST December 2021

Sunday 5th December

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn Come thou Redeemer of the earth 19
 Setting Mass for five voices - *Byrd*
 Psalm 125
 Offertory Hymn When came in flesh 17
 Communion Hymn Blessed Jesu 275
 Anthem Zion, at thy shining gates - *Guest*
 Recessional Hymn Wake O Wake 16

Advent 2

Parish Choir

Sunday 12th December

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn Bethlehem of Noblest cities 48
 Setting Missa Secunda - *Hassler*
 Psalm 146: 4-10
 Offertory Hymn On Jordan's bank 12
 Communion Hymn 308
 Anthem This is the record of John - *Gibbons*
 Recessional Hymn Of the Father's heart 33

Advent 3

Parish Choir

Sunday 19th December

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn Tell out my soul 186
 Setting Canterbury Mass - *Piccolo*
 Psalm 80: 1-8
 Offertory Hymn A great and mighty wonder 21
 Communion Hymn 180
 Anthem Riu riu chiu - *Arr McGlynn*
 Recessional Hymn Sing we of the Blessed 185

Advent 4

Parish Choir

5:00pm Christmas Carol Service

Parish Choir

Friday 24th December -

11:00pm Midnight Festival Eucharist

Setting Missa Princeps Pacis - *Lloyd-Webber*
 Motet O Magnum Mysterium *Lauridsen*
 O Holy Night *Adam arr. Rutter*

Christmas Eve

Parish Choir

Saturday 25th December

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn O little town of Bethlehem 32
 Setting Sumsion in F
 Psalm 98
 Gradual Hymn What child is this 40
 Offertory Hymn God rest ye merry gentleman 25
 Carols
 Recessional Hymn O come all ye faithful 30

Christmas Day

Parish Choir

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PERSIA - ITS FAITH AND CULTURE (PART 4)

The Parthian Empire was not very centralised. There were several capital cities, several languages, several peoples, and several economic systems. But the loose ties between the separate parts were the key to its survival. In the second century AD the most important capital Ctesiphon was captured no less than three times by the Romans (AD 116, 165 and 198), but the empire survived, because there were other centres. On the other hand, the fact that the empire was a mere conglomerate of kingdoms, provinces, marks, and city-states could at times seriously weaken the Parthian state. This explains why the Parthian expansion came to an end after the conquest of Mesopotamia and Persia. Local potentates played an important role and the Parthian king had to respect their privileges. Several noble families had a vote in the Royal council. Furthermore, the Sûrên clan had the right to crown the Parthian king, and every aristocrat was allowed/expected to retain an army of his own. When the throne was occupied by a weak ruler, divisions among the nobility could become dangerous. The constituent parts of the empire were surprisingly independent. For example, they were allowed to strike their own coins, which in ancient times was very rare. As long as the local elite paid tribute, the Parthian kings did not interfere. The system worked very well, and cities like Ctesiphon, Seleucia, Ecbatana, Rhagae, Hecatompylus, Nisâ, and Susa flourished. Tribute was one source of royal income, and another was tolls. (Parthia controlled the Silk Road, the route from the Mediterranean Sea to China.) The Seleucid empire was assaulted from two sides - the Parthians attacked from the east, the Romans from the west. In 69 BC the two enemies concluded a treaty which made the Euphrates the border. But six years later, the Roman commander Pompey conquered what was left of the empire of the Seleucids. In 53 BC the Roman general Crassus invaded Parthia. However, at Harran or Carrhae, he was defeated by a Parthian commander who was called Surena in the Greek and Latin sources. Because of his name he was most probably a member of the Sûrên clan. And so began a series of wars that were to last for almost three centuries. The Parthian armies consisted of two types of cavalry: the heavy-armed and armoured cataphracts and light brigades of mounted archers. To the Romans, who relied on heavy infantry, the Parthians were hard to defeat. On the other hand, the Parthians could never occupy conquered countries because they were unskilled in siege warfare, which explains why the Roman-Parthian wars lasted

so long. At this time, the Romans were divided between the adherents of Pompey and those of Julius Caesar, and because of the civil war, there was no opportunity to punish the Parthians for their victory over the might of Rome. Although Caesar was victorious in this conflict, he was murdered, and a new civil war broke out. The Roman general Quintus Labienus, who had supported the murderers and feared Caesar's heirs Mark Antony and Octavian, sided with the Parthians and turned out to be the best general of king Pacorus I. In 41 BC they invaded Syria, Cilicia, and Caria and attacked Phrygia and Asia Minor (Turkey today). A second army intervened in Judaea and captured its king Hyrcanus II. The spoils were immense, and put to good use, by king Phraates IV who invested them in Ctesiphon, a new capital on the River Tigris. In 39 BC Mark Antony was ready to retaliate. Pacorus and Labienus were killed in action, and the River Euphrates was again the border between the two empires. The Parthians had learned that they could not occupy enemy territories without infantry. However, Mark Antony wanted to avenge the death of Crassus and invaded Mesopotamia in 36 BC with the legion VI Ferrata and other, unidentified units. He also had cavalry with him, but it turned out to be unreliable, and the Romans were happy to reach Armenia, having suffered great losses. This meant the end of the first round of wars. The Romans were again fighting a civil war, and when Octavian had defeated Mark Antony, he ignored the Parthians. He was more interested in the west. His son-in-law and future successor, Tiberius negotiated a peace treaty with Phraates (20 BC) At the same time the Parthians became interested in the valley of the Indus, where they started to take over the petty kingdom of Gandara. One of the Parthian leaders was named Gondopharnes, king of Taxila, and according to an old and widespread Christian tradition, he was baptized by the apostle Thomas on his way to India. The story is not impossible for adherents of several religions lived together in Gandara and the Punjab, and there may have been an audience for a representative of a new Jewish sect. In 39 BC Mark Antony was ready to retaliate. Pacorus and Labienus were killed in action, and the Euphrates was again the border between the two nations. The Parthians had learned that they could not occupy enemy territories without infantry. However, Mark Antony wanted to avenge the death of Crassus and invaded Mesopotamia in 36 BC with the legion VI Ferrata and other, unidentified units. He had cavalry with him, but it turned out to be unreliable, and the Romans were happy to reach Armenia, having suffered great losses. The Roman-Parthian war broke out again in the sixties of the first century AD Armenia had become a Roman vassal kingdom, but the Parthian king Vologases I appointed a new Armenian ruler. This was too much for

the Romans, and their commander Cnaeus Domitius Corbulo invaded Armenia. The result was that the Armenian king received his crown again in Rome from the emperor Nero. A compromise was worked out between the two empires. The future, the king of Armenia was to be a Parthian prince but needed approval from the Romans. The Armenian compromise served its purpose, but nothing was arranged for the deposition of a king. After AD 110, the Parthian king Vologases III was forced to remove an Armenian leader, and the Roman emperor Trajan, a former general, decided to invade Parthia. War broke out in AD 114 and the Parthians were severely beaten. The Romans conquered Armenia, and in the following year, Trajan marched to the south, where the Parthians were forced to evacuate their strongholds. In AD 116, Trajan captured Ctesiphon, and established new provinces in Assyria and Babylonia. However, rebellions broke out (which proves the loyalty of the population to the Parthians). At the same time, the Jews of the Jewish Diaspora revolted, and Trajan was forced to send an army to suppress them. Trajan overcame these troubles, but his successor Hadrian gave up the territories (AD 117). Nonetheless, it was clear that the Romans had learned how to beat the Parthians. Military clashes continued on and off until the end of the second century AD when it had become clear that Roman military strength was now superior. The final blow came when the Parthians tried to reconquer Mesopotamia during yet another Roman civil war (AD 193), but when general Septimius Severus was master of the empire, he attacked Parthia. Again, Ctesiphon was captured (AD 195), and large spoils were brought to Rome. According to a modern estimate, the gold and silver were sufficient to postpone a European economic crisis for three or four decades and we can imagine the consequences for Parthia. Parthia, now impoverished and without any hope of recovering the lost territories, was demoralized. The kings had to give more concessions to the nobility, and the vassal kings sometimes refused to obey. In 224 BC the Persian vassal king Ardašir revolted. Two years later, he took Ctesiphon, and this time, it meant the end of Parthia. However, it also meant the beginning of the Second Persian Empire, ruled by the Sassanid kings.

Fr. Graeme Pollock and Meisam Khalili

Mattens

I cannot ope mine eyes,
But thou art ready there to catch
My morning-soul and sacrifice:
Then we must needs for that day make a match.

My God, what is a heart?
Silver, or gold, or precious stone,
Or starre, or rainbow, or a part
Of all these things, or all of them in one?

My God, what is a heart,
That thou shouldst it so eye, and woee,
Powring upon it all thy art,
As if that thou hadst nothing els to do?

Indeed mans whole estate
Amounts (and richly) to serve thee:
He did not heav'n and earth create,
Yet studies them, not him by whom they be.

Teach me thy love to know;
That this new light, which now I see,
May both the work and workman show:
Then by a sunne-beam I will climbe to thee.

George Herbert - 1593-1633

Submitted by Geoffrey May



Endpiece by Jo Calder

A Real Exorcist

I am sure many are familiar with the 1973 film *The Exorcist*, and the controversy it caused at the time. I went to the cinema with my friend Shelagh; we were both 21 at the time, and in our view totally grown up, but wondering what to expect given the publicity it had received. I still remember Shelagh sat through most of the film with her hands digging into the arm of the seat, and occasionally she would grab my arm when a really terrifying scene was shown! I have to admit I found the film quite startling, and certainly was like no other "horror" film I had seen before. I recall, after arriving home, going upstairs to my bedroom to hang my coat in the wardrobe. Before I could get to the handle the door burst open by itself. Let's say for a few seconds my heart beat a little faster, until it dawned on me the door hadn't been fully shut, and the draft from opening the bedroom door had caused it to automatically open. The film has been shown many times since, but I have never been able to watch it again.

The film was based on a book and its writer was inspired, in part from a 1949 exorcism performed by a Jesuit Priest on a young boy, whose parents had attributed his aggressive behaviour to demonic possession. I think it is fair to say the Catholic church has always made provision for performing exorcisms. However, I recently read about a book, written by an Anglican Priest and based on his personal encounter when he was a Curate of what he described as "*confronting a masked spirit*" in his own home. He told of the fear on his wife's face, after being wakened by their baby son crying, and on entering the little boy's room it was freezing...but only around his cot. The whole house was cold despite having the heating turned up to the maximum in every room. This followed another occasion just after they had moved into the house when he had gone to the bathroom to wash his hands - before opening the closed door he sensed there was a presence on the other side of the door, staring at him. He then went on to state it wasn't just a sense, but what he called a "*concrete vision*" of someone about his own height, wearing a wooden mask, twice the size of the being's face. Naturally, he was scared senseless. Having discussed the incident with his wife, he decided to speak to his boss, the Rector. He was apprehensive, wondering if the Rector would be dubious, but he was taken seriously. The Rector turned up at the Curate's house the following day with the Bible, a bottle of Holy Water and a sprinkler. He walked into each room praying quietly, blessing the whole house. After this, they gathered in the living room to say The Lord's Prayer. The Curate wrote immediately they felt a change. Over the next couple of days, he turned the thermostat to normal setting, and some days turning the heating off completely.

Naturally, the Curate was mystified, until he had a chat with a

Churchwarden, who informed him when the foundations were being dug it disturbed a Roman graveyard. The Curate was recalling these incidents which took place over 20 years ago, but states in his book over the years he experienced other such happenings. He wrote "*at heart I'm your classic Anglican Priest*" but he decided to become what is called a "*Deliverance Minister*". He says there are actually quite a few in the Anglican Church, all having obtained permission from their Bishops, though he admits the Church does not tend to make it common knowledge. Neither do they use the word Exorcist as it may conjure up alarm at times. All Anglican Deliverance Ministers go on a special course to help diagnose and deal with perceived paranormal events and also to diagnose when nothing is wrong.

He writes about cases he dealt with over the years, and in the article about the book, it gives several examples of the work he has done in this area. One dramatic encounter deals with a visit he made to a couple's home, again freezing cold even though there was a brand-new heating system, and the house was south facing, getting the maximum sunlight. The couple were terrified and had told the Priest they would have to move out. He began the ritual as had been done all those years ago in his home, again returning to the living room to say The Lord's Prayer. He goes on to recall what happened next - as they were praying, the Priest recalled "*I felt my body arch backwards as if it were being stiffened and bent by forces beyond my control. It almost felt that something was travelling through my spine, contorting it*". After they said the final prayer, the lady shouted, "*Oh My God*", and the Priest recalls that within about 30 seconds the room had become light, bright, and warm.

There are other intriguing stories, but one slightly different from the rest. The Priest tells of being contacted by a Social Worker about a family they were working with. Again, they had been experiencing strange happenings, but what the Social Worker said next made the situation slightly more odd than usual. The family were Muslim and had been having strange disturbances in their home for a short while. The lady's husband had died 4 days before from cancer, his wife cared for him at home. The family told the Social Worker a son had seen the ghost of a Monk. They contacted their Imam, who refused to help; he said because the perceived presence was of a dead Monk, it needed to be dealt with by a Christian Priest. There had been Cistercian Monks in the area many years before. After performing the Ritual, the Priest left the house with the local Vicar, who was very impressed at the thought of a Monk haunting the house. However, the Priest told the other clergyman he felt it was actually the husband...he had longed to return to Pakistan but had died before they were able to go back. The Priest had based this on the fact he had asked the wife if the disturbances had stopped following the death of her husband, and she had said they had.

I know there are people who will never believe in paranormal happenings, or events such as this Priest wrote about in his book, but maybe sometimes fact can be stranger than fiction.

