

ALL SAINTS NEWS

23rd August 2026
12th Sunday of Trinity

The Life Scientific - in the Church of England

Dr. John Polkinghorne

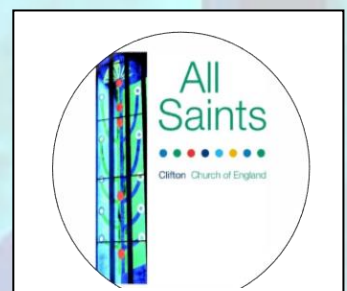


Last Easter was the fifth anniversary of the death of Dr. John Polkinghorne: one of the greatest mathematician and physicist of his age, Anglican priest, and alumnus of the Society of Ordained Scientists. He was, at the very least, one of the most eminent Anglicans of his day, and with Richard Swinburne, D.Z. Philips and Keith Ward, did much to stand up for the credibility of belief in a creator God in the context of modernity, and with Raymond Tallis, to anchor in a context, the Theory of Evolution.

As a scientist, he said “My colleagues view me as a sort of vegetarian butcher!” He established physics as the branch of science most friendly to “theism,” and maintained, in a Newtonian universe, that the physical reality of the world could be seen in terms of God’s purposes: Quantum Theory introduced “probability” into the scientific processes of physics, and “Chaos Theory” established “unpredictability” as axiomatic and “baked in” to the natural universe.

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Consequently, a post Darwinian understanding ensures the place of process and purpose (pace random selection,) in the way that the universe, and our place within it, have developed, and are developing. Polkinghorne's genius meant that he was able to navigate these matters theologically: as he said in a lecture I (Fr Paul T) was privileged to attend, "The theory of Evolution entails that the kenosis or self-emptying of God as creator, means that He allows the Universe the freedom to create itself." He was the only believing theist among a gaggle of scientific colleagues to appear in the Rod Liddle (defunct) BBC documentary The Trouble with Atheism.

He said: "We humans are more than, on the one hand, computers made of meat: or on the other: angels (i.e. intellectual beings,) trapped in matter. But rather incarnate finite beings with immense reasoning power and agency,"

He said: "I have come to realise that the Universe is more cloudlike than clocklike and scientific systems are unpredictable even when the laws that govern them are known." He applied this same description to the microcosm of the human brain. At quantum level he saw nature as full of multiple interactions and genuine novelty., which led him to the conclusion: "there is room for mind, body and soul. Theism simply offers a more intelligible, beautiful, humane and satisfying explanation for the existence of the world, than reductionist atheism. The God of the Bible is also seen as a creator wedded to novelty and the unexpected.

Polkinghorne did much, not least in his book "Questions of Truth," to re-establish and re-anchor theology as a science among sciences: indeed, as the "Queen of the Sciences:" – while implicitly recognising that theology forms a bridge to the insights of the creative arts and the wisdom of instinctive imagination.



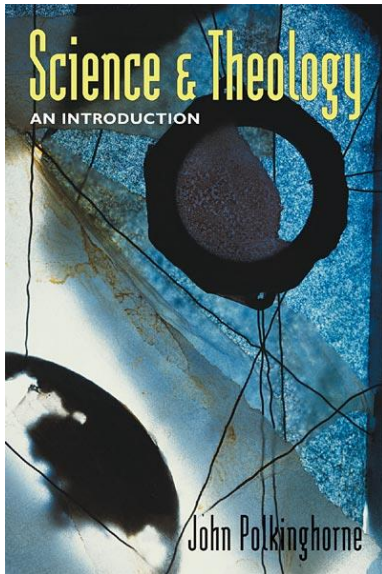
He said: "Scientists believe in the existence of sub-atomic particles because to suppose their existence – like belief in the existence of God – enables us to understand physical experience."" The unprovable world of quantum mechanics is one where the providential aspect cannot be ruled out." Having absorbed lessons from "critical realism models", Polkinghorne's battle-cry and slogan was "" Epistemology models ontology," and this he saw as his populist rebuttal of populist Richard Dawkins.

It will be seen that in all this he was aiming to rehabilitate, from a scientific slant, "Natural Theology," famously defined by Karl Barth as "Taking rational trouble over mystery!" This links him inevitably to Thomas Aquinas. The idea being that, in apologetics, reasoned thinking will get you from London to Crewe: - then Biblical theology is required to complete your journey to Manchester or Liverpool according to predilection. So Polkinghorne was doing something for faith vis a vis science analogous to what Aquinas did when taking on board pre-existent Greek philosophy, he sought to show that where the teachings of Plato and Aristotle were incompatible with Biblical revelation, that their conclusions were not the only ones possible to follow from their own premises.

Polkinghorne's legacy then, lies in his commending science and religion to each other in a church that he saw as increasingly illiterate in both science and theology. Indeed, he averred that "A church that is content to focus on mission, without first addressing the question of whether the Faith is still credible, will inevitably dodge its foundational task of "re-enchanting" its culture and context.

Polkinghorne's legacy is revered still today by many disciples in diverse churches for Orthodoxy to the Welsh Baptists. For example, Theresa Keswick O.D.C. (Order of Discalced Carmelites,) "There may well not be a God, but that cannot be proved either. There are However pointers to it. These are Love and Beauty, in spite of the hideous mess the world has got itself into – there is something beyond: - I don't have feelings of the

Presence of God – I have a very simplistic view of it – but everyone can have a sense of the numinous. You can get it on e.g. a starlit night – sometimes you feel, yes, there is a master plan and love beyond: and sometimes it's just the stars. I don't think it matters very much – I think one's conduct matters more than the way one feels." Polkinghorne is able to speak, even today, to the issues that concern seekers and searchers.

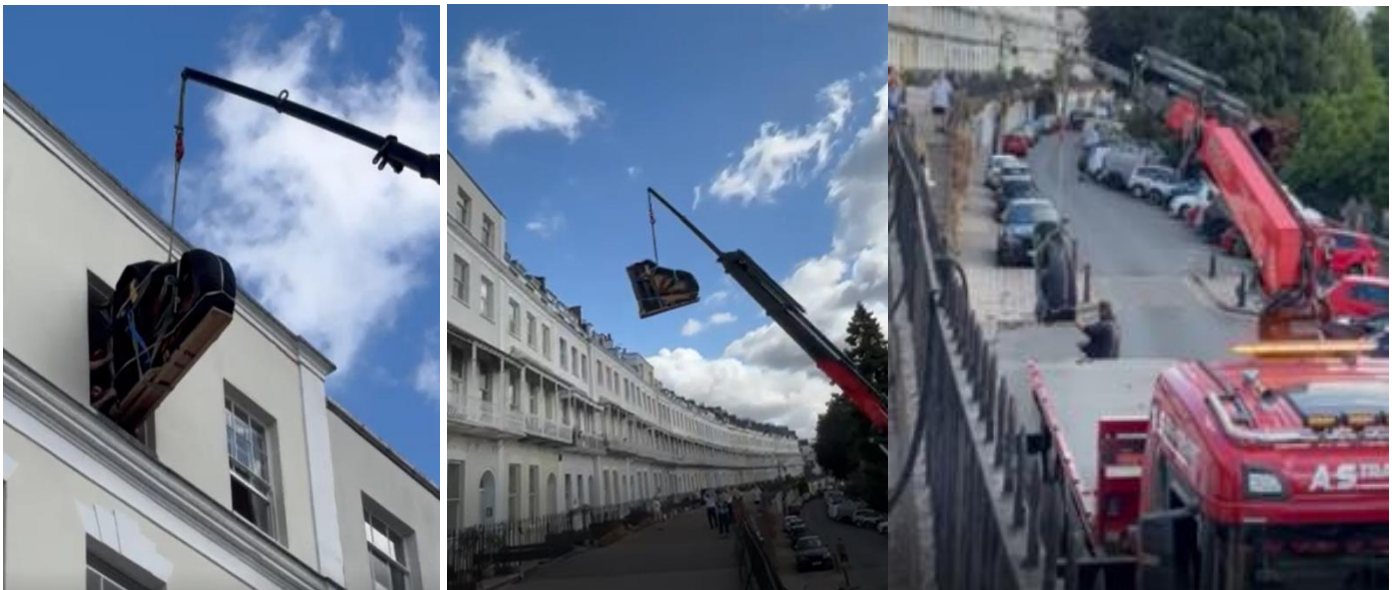


Finally, here is Polkinghorne the Anglican priest rather than the scientist: on the forgiveness of sins: "Humanity is alienated from God and condemned to live in a transitory world of fleeting pleasures, permeated by suffering: birth, ageing, sickness and death – the frustration of not achieving what we desire, and of having to endure what we fear. It is this primordial alienation that gives rise both to the urge towards redemption from sin: and to the quest for meaning."

Let the conclusion be to Anthony Kenny: "If there is no God – then belief in a creator is at the very least an immense achievement of the human imagination."

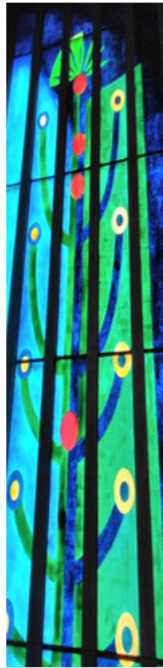
Fr. Paul Tiernan

A new piano for All Saints



Dianne Leitch has kindly donated this Yamaha C3 grand piano to All Saints in memory of her husband Mark. It is an extremely generous gift and we are very grateful.

The piano soared out of their 4th floor living room and was transported to All Saints without any problems. After it's adventures it will be tuned and ready to play very soon. Look out for a debut in a Saturday matinée coming soon.



All Saints and the Friends Together
Supporters are offering

Dementia Awareness Training

led by

Leanne Parkes

*Dementia and Older Persons
Mental Health Advisor
Diocese of Bristol*

24th September 2026

10 am until 12 noon

refreshments available

in the

Randall Room at All Saints.

Would you like to know more about
dementia and how to support people
living with dementia, please book a free
place by emailing

office@allsaintsclifton.org



An Invitation to visit the Julian Trust on Friday 11th September

Thank you all very much for your generous donations to the Julian Trust

A visit to the Julian Trust premises has been arranged for Friday 11th September. It will, of course, be in the daytime when our guests are not present.

If you would like to take part in the visit, please speak to me at church or call on 01275 814002 and please, please leave a message.

Vera Sanders



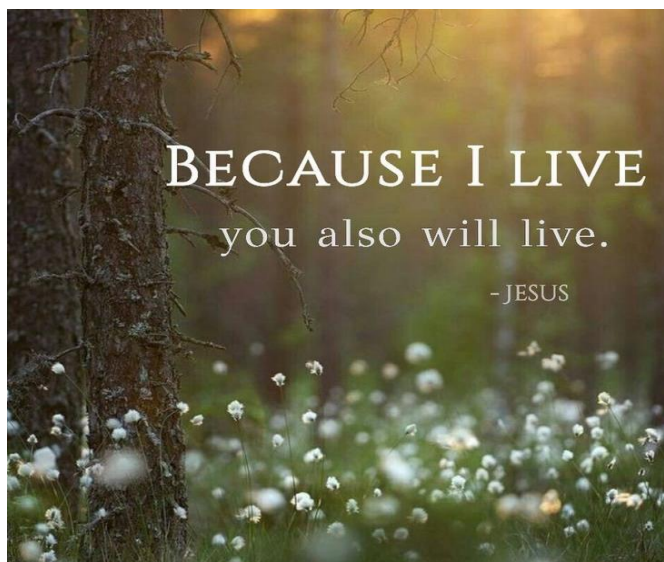
Father Paul Roberts is trying to re-home a cat - elderly, but in good health. (That's the cat, rather than Fr Paul, though he is also fine.) If you know of anyone who would like to adopt a cat, could you call him on 07941 968422.

Prayers Requests

'In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.'

(John 14: 19).

Please let Fr Charles know of anyone who would like to be remembered within the weekly prayer list or anyone who you would like to be remembered in prayer.



Those of the parish and our hearts whom we remember in our Prayers:

Sunday

Tabitha Clark, Ruth and Richard Harding, Katie Norman, Neal Gordon, Joyce Shepherd, Cynthia Ashford Nicky Epinay Sarah Jean Bradford Ossama & Clare Sader Debbie Gibbs Sara Maitland Jessica Smith Sue Gaylard-Hughes Georgina Harford

Monday

Tuesday.

Wednesday

Katrina and Katherine King, Philip Miles, Samantha Tucker, Maureen Mumford Jennie Williams

Thursday

Friday

Charlotte Hopkins, Caroline Semon, Nadine Benn The O'Sullivan family

Saturday

The Departed

Brian Davage Jean Payne Jeremy Younger (Pr) Judith Bramhall Andrew Densham

Years' Minds - this week we remember:

Anthony Wade Pr John Simpson Nesta Thomas David Machin Christopher Trelawney Ross Helen Reynolds Stanojko Milenković [pronounced: Stanoiko Milenkovich) Gill Cottell Kathleen Raikes

ALL SAINTS PRAYERS

Mon 24	Bartholomew the Apostle Almighty and everlasting God, who gave to your apostle Bartholomew grace truly to believe and to preach your Word: Grant that your Church may love what he believed and preach what he taught;
Tue 25	Pray for the work of thrift shops – organizations and people who sell used goods to positively recycle goods, especially when donations are made to charities. Pray for the charity shops in our parish – Oxfam, St Peter's Hospice, British Heart Foundation, Sue Ryder, Cancer Research, Heart Foundation, Save the Children, DEBRA and MIND.
Wed 26	Mass 10.00am Pray for those who continue to work for the equal treatment of women and for women's rights. Remembering in particular those parts of the world where women are subject to suppression, violence and discrimination. Recognising that no part of the world is completely free from discrimination and stereotyping.
Thurs 27	Some talk of the North-South divide in the UK, King Oswald of Northumbria reigned over a huge kingdom that encompassed much of Southern Scotland and all of the North of England. Pray for economic and political equity and for the avoidance of arguments of difference to score political points.
Fri 28	Mass 10.00am Augustine of Hippo, 387 "How can the past and future be, when the past no longer is, and the future is not yet? As for the present, if it were always present and never moved on to become the past, it would not be time, but eternity." Augustine 'Confessions'
Sat 29	Beheading of John the Baptist John the Baptist said: "One comes after me who is greater than I; and I must decrease, and He will increase." Help us to understand how we decrease so that the Kingdom might increase.
Sunday 30	13th Sunday after Trinity Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you Early Worship 9.00am Parish Mass 10.30am

If you would like to give regularly to the Church, please set up a standing order to the church account, details below

Parochial Church Council of All Saints

Account No. 65256747

sort code 08 92 99

Gift Aid forms are available from the office

office@allsaintsclifton.org

We are committed to safeguarding children, young people, victims of domestic abuse and vulnerable adults.

If you have any Safeguarding concerns please contact :

The Parish Safeguarding Officers - Caroline Davenport

& Janice Callow at safeguarding@allsaintsclifton.org