



## **SAVE OUR PARSONAGES**

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### **PRESS RELEASE FROM SAVE OUR PARSONAGES**

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Save Our Parsonages (SOP) celebrates its 25th anniversary with its prize essay competition on the subject of ‘The use of the parsonage for parish life today’. The winner is Sorrel Wood, a third-year ordinand at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, who receives £500. The joint runners-up are Ashleigh Askwith, who is based in Stockport and training with the All Saints Centre for Mission and Ministry in the North West, and Glen Ruffle, an ordinand at Ridley Hall, Cambridge; each of them receives £50.

Sorrel Wood’s winning entry, say the judges, ‘stresses the relevance and importance in the modern world of the traditional model of parsonage as community asset.’

Our first runner-up, Ashleigh Askwith, writes of the parsonage as ‘a home, a refuge, a place of discovery, a place to grieve’ – to which one judge would add ‘a place of joy, for in my 33 years of living in a parsonage this is one of the overall rewards.’

Glen Ruffle, also runner-up, writes a ‘reflective appreciation of the traditional central location of a parsonage, close to the church, and the impact of this not only upon local people but also on the priests who live there as stewards not owners. This gives both public witness and daily private reminder to its occupants that they are temporary whilst many have gone before. Today’s Church risks losing the heritage of tomorrow.’

Save Our Parsonages was founded in 1994 expressly to avoid ‘losing the heritage of tomorrow’. Its aim is to encourage the Church of England to retain, use and value its traditional parsonages, for the benefit of Church and community alike. It gives vital support to parishioners up and down the country who understand the importance of their parsonage to the life of the community. It strives to make central and diocesan Church institutions understand both the practical and symbolic role of the parsonage, and how the parsonage serves to enhance the ministry of the Church.

These essays from a younger generation show that the mission of Save Our Parsonages remains as relevant as ever today.

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***Patrons: Dr. Peter Burman MBE***

**The Rt. Revd. and Rt. Hon. The Lord Chartres KCVO ChStJ PC FSA**

**The Rt. Hon. Frank Field PC**

**The Very Revd. Dr. Michael Higgins OBE**

**Terry Waite CBE**

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High profile parsonages and their gardens provide vital resources to *all* members of their local communities (not only the church-goers among them): hosting important community and fund-raising events such as the annual Church Fete. Sales of parsonages have contributed to the decline both of congregations and of the quality of life in the communities to which they belong.

Our Parsonage Retention Principles recommend criteria to be used by diocesan officials when deciding whether to sell a parsonage, emphasising the importance of the parsonage to parish and community life.

‘It's absolutely essential that parsonages remain the beating heart of communities, fulfilling a valuable role that is unrealisable elsewhere,’ says Anthony Jennings, Director of Save Our Parsonages.

**NOTE FOR EDITORS:**

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