



## A tale of two years

**IN READING** the articles of past High Sheriffs published in this journal, I have been so humbled by their achievements that I can only reflect upon my experiences in the two years I have served in the West Midlands, pre-COVID-19 and peri-COVID-19. One's experiences in office are informed not only by one's profession but by events during the term of office.

Cardinal Newman's canonisation in 2019 was celebrated in ecumenical services around the city where he lived. At the Mass at the Oratory celebrating Saint John Newman's life, I met two brothers who worshipped and had recently been confirmed there. I had been privileged to cross their paths at the Children's Hospital. I celebrated the 550th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji with patients and colleagues from the Sikh community. 2020 also saw the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale and reading the story of Naaman and Elisha from 2 Kings V made the virtual evensong at Birmingham Cathedral a memorable experience for me.

In my engagements, I was constantly amazed by the achievements of the voluntary sector and the selfless contributions made. The achievements of the recipients of the High Sheriff's Inspiring Others Award proposed by the mayors in the West Midlands certainly reflected its name. Presenting the national volunteers awards at the West Midlands Fire Service Safeside experiential learning hub showed me how they continually improve safety for children and young adults in all domains in novel auditory, visual and kinaesthetic ways. The contributions of St John Ambulance have never been needed more than during the pandemic. The establishment of the High Sheriff's St John Ambulance cadetship with High Sheriff in nomination Wade Lynn, Diana Crabtree (County President, West Midlands) and -19 (County Priory Group Chairman, West Midlands) has seen the appointment of the first cadet



**Left:** At the 550th anniversary of birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji with Wade Lynn (R)  
**Above:** With Dr Ann Jaron, Mayor of Sandwell, and recipients James Bartlett and Nabilla Nasyilla at the Inspiring Others Awards

who would have worked with Wade but unfortunately COVID put an unexpected postponement to his shrieval service.

Wade made an excellent recovery and hopefully will serve his year in due course. My second year, effectively as *locum tenens* for Wade, could not have been more different. The role of the High Sheriff does not really lend itself easily to Zoom. With one year in office in conventional mode and one year in lockdown, the stark contrast has been evident to me and I can only applaud my fellow Sheriffs for the

way they have managed to innovate so nimbly to serve their county with the social-distancing requirements.

It was an unexpected honour to have been appointed the High Sheriff and a privilege to have served in that position. I wish Louise Bennett the very best for her shrieval year in Coventry's year as City of Culture and with the inaugural SJA cadet, Freya Pinnick at her side.

### ◆ Michael Kuo

*High Sheriff of the West Midlands 2019-21*

Two views of the operating theatre

