

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

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JULY 2016



VICAR'S VOICE

July is the only month in the church year that does not celebrate a festival. It is in the heart of summer, to which the vibrant beauty that fills our gardens, hedgerows and parks bears witness. So let's hope we can experience some warm, balmy days when we can take some rest and simply enjoy what God has made.

However, in doing so, it's perhaps important to think about the ways that climate change is impacting on our seasonal weather and, in turn, on ecosystems and the sustainability of many of the familiar animals, birds and insects that are native to our gardens.

Statistics inform us that gardens make up around 4% of land area in the UK and we do not have to be any kind of expert to appreciate the role these habitats provide for our native wildlife. Our own gardens, if we are lucky enough to have one, are the places that birds come to for food and shelter; where animals such as squirrels, hedgehogs, and foxes breed and hibernate; where varieties of insects, bees, moths and butterflies can be found pollinating plants, providing them with nectar and pollen.

Sadly, however, many of these species are now at risk. It has been reported that some varieties of butterfly have dropped by 77% in the last decade. In the 1950's there were an estimated 36 million hedgehogs, a figure that

dropped to just one million by 2013. In the UK Martin Harper, the RSPB's conservation director, said: "We know from the Big Garden Birdwatch every year that several of our familiar and best-loved species have been declining at alarming rates over the 34 years that the RSPB has been running the birdwatch".

It is clear that the value of wildlife is much more than just the pleasure it brings to us. It is our wildlife that provides us with clean air and clean water, it is our wildlife that stops erosion, pollinates crops and much more besides. So the decline of such familiar creatures is extremely worrying.

St. Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of ecology and, for me, he offers some insights and prayers that can help us to both enjoy the beauty that surrounds us and, at the same time, be mindful of our need to be good stewards of creation. Francis tried to live as lightly on the earth and as a brother to all creatures. He offered prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life and for the world we inhabit.

'Be praised, my Lord', St Francis prayed, 'for Sister Earth, our Mother, who nourishes us and sustains us'.

So, in the light of this I pray that July will be a fruitful month in every way.

FLORENCE CONNER 1926-2016

Our dear sister, Florrie Conner, passed away on 28th April after a short stay in hospital. She had contended peacefully against increasing disability and dementia for some time and had been cared for by her family at home.

Florrie was a jolly person who enjoyed the social life at Old Church. She played a leading role in establishing the Good Afternoon Club

that thrives as the most popular community activity at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre.

Florrie was also a person of deep insight and faith. Her prayers were a spontaneous appeal to the Lord and she was well aware of the awful happenings in the wider world.

Florrie loved her friends at Old Church and she will be sadly missed by them.



JULY

- 2nd 12 noon - 4.00 pm **The Summer Extravaganza** at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre and in the Vicarage Garden
- 5th 12.30 - 2.00 pm **Deanery Chapter Meeting** at Old Church
- 6th **The Annual General Meeting** of the Trustees to the Smethwick Chapelry
- 6th, 13th & 20th 7.00 pm - 8.30 pm **Faith Matters: Exploring Christianity** at the Vicarage
- 14th 10.00 am - 1.00 pm **Women First: Coffee Morning** at Victoria Park Skills Centre (see advert opposite)
- 16th **Parish Quiet Day** at St Catherine's Blackwell (details to follow)
- 24th 6.30 pm **Deanery Confirmation** at St Matthew's Church, Windmill Lane
- 27th 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm **Soul Space**
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in Old Church (see Rosemary for details)
- 31st 12.15 pm **Baptism** of Isabel Eve

Throughout the week the church was open for visitors to admire the flower displays; to view the art exhibition that was provided by local artists who meet regularly in the Dorothy Parkes' Centre and to enjoy the cream teas sitting outside in the warm sunshine. Our festivities were rounded off with a Barn Dance held at The Dorothy Parkes' Centre.

'Songs of Praise' on the second Sunday evening of June consisted of hymns and readings on the theme of the seasons of the year. Readers and those who introduced the hymns explained briefly why the chosen piece was special for them.

The Discoverers enjoyed their trip to the Halfpenny Green Vineyards in Bobbington where they had an excellent lunch.

Old Church marked the Queen's 'official' 90th birthday by singing the National Anthem at morning service and ringing out our bells at midday along with many other peals across the country.

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

The highlight of our church's activities in June was the Festival Week. The week's activities were initiated by the inspirational singing of a Gospel Choir and monies were raised for their charity 'HOPE'.

We welcomed Bishop Anne to preach and preside at our Festival service of Holy Communion. This was followed by a 'One World Cafe Lunch' offering a diverse range of delicious food.

On Monday and Tuesday we had a lunchtime cello duet and a flute recital respectively. Wednesday evening reflected the poetic and musical talents of those who took part in the 'Open Mic Evening'. The choir and musical groups from Uplands Manor School provided the entertainment on Thursday. On Friday evening we were privileged to have two Birmingham based poets reading some of their poems and a selection of their work was on sale. Finally on Saturday afternoon Mary Bodfish, from the Smethwick History Society, gave an interesting talk entitled 'Glimpses from the Graveyard'