

# THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 6 DECEMBER 2014



## VICAR'S VOICE

'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice'. (Isaiah 42: 1-3)

This short passage from Isaiah is one of the familiar passages we often reflect on during Advent, which is the season in the church year we have just moved into. This is the season in which we anticipate the coming of the Christ child, the one of whom Isaiah speaks.

Advent is the first season of the church year and its liturgical colour is purple, a colour that symbolises contemplative waiting, repentance and the joy of the coming Saviour. It is a rich and complex season which conceals a kind of 'tug-of-war' between what the church intends and what our culture expects of us.

The church provides the opportunity for us to enter into a time of 'watching' and 'waiting'; a time of quietly preparing ourselves to receive the Christ child into our lives afresh. It is a

time to give voice to our longings even if this is in the silence of our own hearts, and to discern what it is we need, in all of our human vulnerability, from that tiny baby who carries the promise to make all things new.

Our culture, on the other hand, dazzles us with all the noise, the lights and the activity we associate with the busyness of Christmas. Rather than a time of quiet reflection, many of us will be shopping, wrapping presents, writing cards and preparing to attend, or to organize, more social gatherings than usual. We will sing Christmas carols, attend carol services, with all the trimmings of Christmas, and all of this in the season we, as a church, call Advent.

This 'tug-of-war' between church and culture makes Advent, unlike Lent, a difficult season to keep. It is, therefore, all too easy to let Advent pass us by and to jump straight ahead to Christmas. But let us try, together, to hold this tension and to find the time and space, amidst all the busyness, to reflect and to prepare our hearts.

So, I wish you a fruitful Advent and a joyous and hope filled Christmas – when it comes!

## LAST MONTH'S NEWS

The afternoon and evening services for All Souls' were well attended and enabled the opportunity for all there to experience a peaceful time of reflection with candles lit to the memory of departed loved ones.

Second Sunday worship in November coincided with Remembrance Sunday, where the fallen in all conflicts were remembered, with particular emphasis upon the 100th anniversary of the First World War. This moving service began with Nico performing a poignant solo of "Bring him home" whilst an altar cloth made by Junior Church and

depicting a poppy field was reverently carried by the children to the altar. Martin Roberts followed the children by laying a wreath of poppies at the altar.

Later in the service red and white poppies, carrying prayers of the congregation, were gently scattered in front of the altar before the wreath of poppies was processed to the rear of the church as the congregation stood for the traditional two minutes silence.

The Discoverers celebrated Christmas a month early with a good attendance for an enjoyable meal at a Toby Carvery

## BISHOP'S LAY CONFERENCE

The conference was held at the University of Birmingham and about 700 people attended. The morning session was a combined session with clergy and laity together in the Great Hall, where we were treated to songs of worship, very gently lead by a worship group from London.

The Bishop sat at the front of the Great Hall and spoke with a few people as they shared amazing stories from their lives as believers. This was very personal and moving for all listening.

Also during the morning session we were treated to two exceptional speakers.

The first speaker, David Runcorn, lead a time of bible study on Food for the Hungry, based around the feeding of the 5000 from Luke ch 9. David gently expanded the story, looking closely at those that gathered, the responses of the disciples, the food shared in the miraculous way amongst so many, and the recognition of Jesus as the Son of God.

He spoke about Jesus taking time aside to pray and to refresh Himself for continuing His ministry, and then asked us to reflect on our quiet times, when are they, and where do we go to renew our own spirituality?

Following David a lady by the name of Loretta Minghella spoke on unconditional love and invitations, as well the time she became a Christian and then Chief Executive of Christian Aid. She challenged us with an invitation to be changed, and asked what does it mean to have enough? She spoke about being vulnerable but standing anyway, as well as considering an invitation to make ourselves vulnerable and to fight for every person. She then described her visit to Haiti after the earthquake, this was a very personal time of sharing, and was an extremely moving recollection of her time there.

During the afternoon session, the clergy had a reflective time with David Runcorn, while the laity were in cell groups where we had been asked to take our stories from our lives as believers. The times in the cell groups were special for all involved.

The day ran like clockwork. The place, the facilities, the food, the Great Hall (living up to its name), all who facilitated, took part, lead and prayed.

Like many others I came away having had a good day, reflecting on all that had taken place, and looking forward to the next one.

June O'Brien



## DECEMBER

- 8th 6.30pm - 8.30pm **DPC Board Meeting**  
at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre
- 9th 6.00 pm - 7.00 pm **Carol singing in ASDA Cape Hill** Come along and join in singing to raise money for charity
- 21st 5.00 pm **Nine Lessons and Carols**
- 24th **CHRISTMAS EVE**  
4.00 pm **Crib Service**  
11.30 pm **Midnight Mass**
- 25th **CHRISTMAS DAY**  
10.15 am **Holy Communion**
- 27th 2.00 pm **Marriage of Chris & Donna**

# Invitation

*You are invited for*

*Festive Drinks and Mince Pies*

*at the Vicarage*

*on 21st December*

*from 2.00 pm - 4.30 pm*

*All Welcome*

*Come and leave as you wish*