

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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VICAR'S VOICE

A few of us from Old Church have been joining others, from the churches that make up Smethwick Church Action Network, for our combined annual Lent course. This year we have been exploring the meaning of the Beatitudes for the people of Smethwick.

The Beatitudes are part of the sermon Jesus gave on the mountain or the grassy plain, depending on the Gospel writer's account. It is easy to misunderstand what is meant by this list of, so called, 'blessings'. No one should, for example, aim for poverty as some kind of blessing. What Jesus is really offering, in these twelve short verses, is the assurance that even in the most difficult times there is hope.

What we've discovered, on the course, is that the most important thing about this teaching, is the way it reverses our shared common understanding about the order of things.

Although, many of us may agree that this reversal is appealing, inspiring and even liberating, it's not hard to see that it is also challenging. If we are to be true to what Jesus presents, then we really need to act on it, not just look on it with admiration. And that's exactly what we've been doing during the Lent course. In, one way of another, we've been asking ourselves the question: What can we do to make the world, including

this small corner of it, more congruent with the vision Jesus offers? Perhaps this is a question we can all ask ourselves this Lent, along with the question: How brave can we afford to be and how revolutionary?

The following is a prayer we have used to help us to think about these things afresh.

Blessed are the poor in spirit for they can be real with you.

Blessed are those who mourn for they are thrown on your love.

Blessed are those who are gentle for they have nothing to prove.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right for their courageous hearts lead them to your love for the world.

Blessed are those who know my need of mercy for they must know their own.

Blessed are the pure in heart for with no guile they can see you.

Blessed are the peace makers who would rather play as children on the shared earth, than fight for your crown.

Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right for the ripples of their radicalism have brought heaven to many on earth.

Blessed One, be with those who do not know their need of you this night.

Amen

(From The Celtic Wheel of the Year by Tess Ward)

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

February saw the start of the penitential season of Lent. Ash Wednesday was marked by an evening service of Holy Communion that included the ritual imposition of ashes. These ashes are the residue of the burnt remains of last year's Palm crosses.

The imposition is accompanied by the words "Remember you are dust and unto dust you will return" - a stark reminder of the mortality of our earthly bodies. However, as Christians,

we have the hope of attaining everlasting life, given to us by our Lord's resurrection which we celebrate at Easter.

The Smethwick CAN Churches Together Lent Course this year is being hosted by Regent Street Baptist Church on each Thursday evening throughout Lent. This year we are exploring the meaning of the Beatitudes and their relevance for the people of Smethwick.

FAIR TRADE FORTNIGHT 29TH FEBRUARY - 13TH MARCH



Waking up to the Power of a Fair Trade Breakfast

There is enough food in the world for us all, even in many food insecure regions where Fair Trade operates.

But some farmers and workers are earning so little, they simply cannot afford to buy it.

.FAIRTRADE works to change this, by making sure companies pay a fairer price for what people grow, plus a little extra for farmers and workers to invest in their businesses or communities. When people get a fairer price, they can take more control over their lives when times are hard, and worry less about how they will feed their families. Whether it's the extra cash in their pockets or being able to improve their farms to grow more food to eat, Fair trade means many farmers and workers are able to do what we take for granted - put enough food on the table for the people they care about, all year round

Fairtrade is best known for providing producers with a minimum price for their product, one which aims to cover what it costs them to grow it, and an additional amount, The Fair trade premium to be invested by the producers as a group, however they see fit.

ONE WORLD CAFE EVENT

- at the Dorothy Parkes Centre

Here at Old Church we are joining the Fair Trade Foundation's challenge to provide a Fair Trade breakfast.

On March 13th between 8.30 and 9.45 and between 11.30 and 12.30 we are hosting a Fair Trade Breakfast so come along and join us.

There will be fair trade tea and ground coffee, juice, cereal, and fruit, locally produced bread providing toast with fair trade jam/marmalade / honey or chocolate spread and fair trade banana and chocolate muffins. In addition we will have fair trade food and crafts for sale

All donations to Fair Trade Charity

Don't miss the fun.



MARCH

- 1st, 8th, 15th & 22nd – 12 noon at Old Church – a service of **Holy Communion followed by a simple soup lunch**, the proceeds of which will go to Christian Aid.
- 3rd, 10th & 17th 7.30 pm at Regent St Baptist Church – **Smethwick CAN Churches Together Lent course**.
- 21st 22nd, & 23rd at 7.30 pm at Old Church – **Holy Week service of Compline with meditation**.
- 24th **MAUNDY THURSDAY**
8.00 pm at Old Church – **service of Holy Communion with foot washing, followed by prayer vigil**
- 25th **GOOD FRIDAY**
12noon – 3.00 pm at Old Church – **Good Friday service 'Darkness Falling'** (come for the full three hours or just for part of it).
- 26th **EASTER EVE**
8pm at Old Church – **Service of Light**.
- 27th **EASTER DAY**
10.15 am **Holy Communion with Baptism of Edina May**
- 30th 11.00 am – Service at **Penmakers' Court**.



ART BOX:

for children and families

Families of all faiths and none are welcome to join in with creative activities to explore the Easter story, enjoy a shared meal, plus a short service in Smethwick Old Church.

Come join us for this FREE event on Good Friday and let us do the cooking for you.

**FRIDAY 25TH MARCH 3.30PM - 5.30PM
STARTING IN THE
DOROTHY PARKES CENTRE**