

The Old Church News

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

VICAR'S VOICE

"The shepherds said, 'Let us go to Bethlehem, and see the things that the Lord has made known to us.'" (St Luke's Gospel chapter 2 verse 15) Do we have an idealized view, or even indifference, to Bethlehem (and the Middle East)? Carols and candles could "water down" the reality perhaps? During the year our news' services contains images of hostility and of tension there and numbers of Christian believers there are reported to have fallen in numbers.

We have a faith of hope and a festival that proclaims "unto us a child is born and a son is given: goodwill and peace to all." Our faith should not be separated from the realities of our world today. We approach Christmas with joy. Yet we too must be champions of the Gospel message and respond in love and prayer to the needs around us with Jesus' message of justice, liberation and inclusivity - no discrimination or prejudice or judgment of others, even when they are different from us.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas.



PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The last month was a time for remembrance which was shared by many who attended the All Souls' and Remembrance Day services.

It was also a time for fellowship when Thrifties enjoyed an evening at The Dog and more recently Champagne, Canapés and fine company in Jean's lovely home. The Discoverers also lunched together at a local Toby Carvery. Fellowship was continued with folk sharing light reading in the Sisters' house and also during the Prayer meeting in Church.

Poppy Cleaver, Donte Tyler and Taio Rennell were welcomed into the Church family during

their Baptism services.

Another Sunday afternoon ramble took place when walkers from the congregation squelched in the bracing wind over the Waseley Hills near Bromsgrove.

The end of November saw crowds descend on the Dorothy Parkes Centre to join in the festivities of Old Church's annual Christmas Fayre. The choir of Uplands Manor Primary School entertained and delighted those in attendance with a number of Christmas songs and Father Christmas treated the children with an early appearance

QI.... "Christmas"

- No date was given in the Bible.
- Speculation of the time of year as to Christ's birth arose in the early second century.
- Was suggested that it should be 2nd May!
- The feast was not celebrated until the late fourth century.
- The earliest mention of 25th December was suggested in the year 336 and was probably chosen to oppose the festival on that date dedicated to "the sun of Righteousness."
- The popular observance of Christmas has always been accompanied with joy and merry-making (in mid winter).
- It developed considerably in England during the nineteenth century, through the importation of German customs by the Prince Consort (Albert, husband of Queen Victoria) for example the Christmas tree: and also through the influence of the writer Charles Dickens (*A Christmas Carol*)
- "The Incarnation" = that the eternal Son of God took human flesh ("became man") from his human mother (Mary) and so Jesus was at once fully God and fully man.



These beautifully hand-knitted Nativity figures were crafted by Joyce during 'Open Church' on Tuesday afternoons.

December

DIARY DATES

- Tues 10.00 am Holy Communion in The Old Church followed by tea/coffee.
2.00 pm Open Church
- Thurs 10.00 am Holy Communion in St Matthews' followed by tea/coffee.
- 2nd 10.15 am Discoverers trip - Barnett Hill Garden Centre for Christmas shopping and lunch
- 5th 5.00 pm Hymns of Praise and Readings for Advent.
- 19th During the 10.15 am Eucharist "Big Fish" present their Nativity production
- 19th 3.00 pm Tea and carols in the Vicarage - all welcome around the Christmas tree!
- 19th 6.00 pm Carol Singing at St Matthews' church around their Christmas tree.
- 24th **Christmas Eve**
11.00 am Join the Vicar at Penmakers' Court for carol singing.
4.00 pm Crib service in church.
11.30 pm Midnight Mass begins with carols.
- 25th **Christmas Day** Services at 10.00 am in St Matthews and 10.15 am in The Old Church
- 26th **St Stephen's Day** Services at 10.00 am in St Matthews and 10.15 am in The Old Church

DID YOU KNOW?

The hidden Christian meaning of that silly song "The Twelve Days of Christmas". Here it is....

- One partridge** in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.
- Two turtle doves** - the Old and New Testaments.
- Three French hens** for faith, hope and love.
- Four calling birds** - the four gospels
- Five golden rings** - first five books of the Bible.
- Six geese a-laying** for the six days of creation.
- Seven swans a-swimming** the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophesy, serving, teaching, exhortation, contribution, leadership, and mercy.
- Eight maids a-milking** were the eight beatitudes.
- Nine ladies dancing** were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
- Ten lords a-leaping** the ten commandments.
- Eleven pipers piping** the eleven faithful disciples.
- Twelve drummers drumming** symbolised the twelve points of belief in the *Apostles' Creed*.

SPOTLIGHT ON ...

The light reading group meets monthly on a Wednesday afternoon at 2.30 pm in the Sisters' house on the High Street, Smethwick. This informal gathering shares recent readings that could be anything from recipes to Chaucer. It is a time for enjoying the company of others in a relaxed atmosphere whilst increasing literary knowledge.