

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 Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a competition to get young people to think about serious matters. One of the most energizing experiences of my ministry was working with teenagers in their school as their chaplain: their ideas, articulated and debated. The Archbishop has set up a writing prize under its title "Faith in the World." How does religion help or not help them think about, for example, science and society about the basis of decision-making, about the environment, family and money, about prisons, religious conflict, global justice? Three different age-groups (13-15, 16-17 and 18-21) may enter, and essay titles include:

Must you be religious to be good? God cares for the poor – how can people of faith demonstrate this care? Should politicians "do God?" How can one person improve the lives of the world's poorest? Is believing more important than belonging? Does God believe in the existence of society? What is "good news" for the poor and how can we part of this?

The Archbishop hopes for "freshness" and a lively public debate and says: "The kind of atmosphere that will make a 'Big Society' work is one that encourages careful, critical thinking

about the real gifts and the real challenges of being human." (the deadline date is 11th March!)

I wonder, if there was no age limitation, which essay I would wish to write – and what my thinking (and conclusions would be)? What would be yours too I wonder? Perhaps something of this might come out when we have the opportunity to share together with fellow Christians when we may meet on Thursdays in Lent (see Diary dates). No doubt young people do need to be heard – now, isn't that the case for every one of God's children.

Don't walk in front of me

Don't walk in front of me,
I may not follow.

Don't walk behind me,
I may not lead;

Walk beside me,
And just be my friend.

by Albert Camus

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Pen Museum in the Argent Centre, Birmingham was the focus for a visit of the Discoverers in February. The Grade II Listed Building, formerly a pen making factory, boasted that at the height of its trade three quarters of everything written down in the world was written with a Birmingham pen. The museum opened in April 2001 and is dedicated to preserving this unique legacy through displays, demonstrations and activities.

The Discoverers had the opportunity to explore the history of pens from quills to steel nibs and fountains pens.

Some enjoyed a reminder of school days whilst trying their hand with feather quills and steel pens. Others made their own nibs using original factory hand presses enabling them to experience working conditions that many women had to endure. The outing was rounded off with refreshments at The Rope Walk in St Paul's Square.

Thrifties met together to enjoy an evening of fellowship and fun whilst sharing craft ideas and swapping a variety of items including clothing, books, jewellery and household goods.

QI.... LENT

- 40 days to go to Easter!
- Purple is the colour of the altar and priest's vestments (no flowers in church to mark penitential solemnity of the season)
- Was a period of fasting decreed in the fourth century church.
- Associated with preparation for baptism at Easter.
- 40 day fasts were made by Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament and the Lord Jesus in the wilderness.
- Sundays were declared exempt from any fasting!
- During early days fasting was strict: one meal a day (meat, fish and in some places eggs were forbidden)
- Relax - rules and observances have changed!
- Now - custom of giving something up (OR) taking something on as a means of disciplining oneself during this season.
- Why? To prepare oneself for the central point of the Christian faith: the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Easter celebrations, this year on 24th April)

March **DIARY DATES**

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| 2nd | 7.30pm Pastoral Care Team meet in the Vicarage |
| 5th | 2.00pm Table top sale in Dorothy Parkes Centre. |
| 9th | Ash Wednesday communion services: 10.00am The Old Church, 6.00pm St Matthews - all welcome at either. |
| 12th | Pastoral Team conference day |
| 15th | 6.00pm Bible study hour in Old Church |
| 16th | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 17th | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 17th | 7.00pm Thrifties "Murder Mystery" see Jean for details |
| 17th | 7 for 7.30pm Lent ecumenical - all welcome at West Smethwick Methodist Church. "The Big Society and Christian responsibilities" |
| 22nd | 6.00pm Bible study hour in Old Church |
| 23rd | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 23rd | 7.30pm Old Church PCC in the Vicarage |
| 24th | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 24th | 7 for 7.30pm ecumenically in West Smethwick Methodist Church. "The Big Society and Christian responsibilities" |
| 27th | 11.30am Annual Parochial Church Meeting in the Dorothy Parkes Centre - election of warden, deanery synod and PCC representatives (and reports for the year) |
| 29th | 6.00pm Bible study hour in Old Church |
| 30th | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 31st | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 31st | 2.30pm Praying together in church |
| 31st | 7 for 7.30pm ecumenically in West Smethwick Methodist Church. "The Big Society and Christian responsibilities" |

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR APRIL

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| 3rd | Mothering Sunday |
| 5th | 6.00pm Bible study in Old Church |
| 6th | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 7th | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 7th | 7 for 7.30pm ecumenically in West Smethwick Methodist Church. "The Big Society and Christian responsibilities" |
| 12th | 6.00pm Bible study in Old Church |
| 13th | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 14th | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 14th | 7 for 7.30pm Our turn to contribute to "The Big Society and Christians" in West Smethwick Methodist Church. |
| 17th | Palm Sunday and beginning of Holy Week (details of services to follow); Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday - 24th April |

A MESSAGE FROM ROSEMARY

At 2.30pm until 3.00pm on the last Thursday of each month some of us meet informally to pray in Church. This is not the formal prayer of Sunday Eucharist Intercessions. It is for those of us who wish to pray silently or out loud or just to say amen to the prayers of others.

We pray for our ministers, (Nigel, Barbara & Michael), the lay pastoral team development and ministry plus any requests for prayer left on the prayer cushion and those brought by individuals themselves. We pray for our church's mission, parish and nation. Anyone is welcome to come and join in silent or vocal prayer. For more information please talk with Rosemary or Jeff Guest.