

# 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 Hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" is reputedly the second-most popular hymn. Is it yours? Songs of Praise in Church is one idea to bring others along with us and sing along and hear the stories (a) behind the hymn and (b) why and what it means to you, or I? There are well-known hymns and we may learn new ones. That is all to the good, provided each helps us individually towards devotion and in our path of faithful discipleship as we gather together for worship. "Dear Lord and Father" was written by a Quaker (John Greenleaf Whittier) and the Society of Friends, the Quakers, wait in prayerful silence for the Holy Spirit to move them to speak. There is a time for singing, as there must be times of silent waiting and praying. Are you and I finding both in our daily living?

## PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The season of Lent gave opportunities for reflection, prayer and Bible study with additional services including Compline after Sunday Evening Prayer, Holy Communion followed by Lenten lunch on Wednesdays in Church and Ecumenical meetings at West Smethwick Methodist Church. Those who took advantage of these extra events found them to be worthwhile, inspirational and a fitting preparation for Holy Week.

Palm Sunday saw over a hundred people processing from the Dorothy Parkes Centre, some waving palm branches, children playing musical instruments and all singing whilst carrying their palm crosses into Old Church.

Walking was the order of the day with a dozen energetic walkers (and Fliss the dog!) enjoying the open countryside in Leasowes Park. The walk included a visit to the ruins of St Mary's Abbey, founded in 1215 by monks of the Premonstratensian Order. The walkers were rewarded for their physical exertions with a drink in a local hostelry. (Fliss had water!!)

## THE DOROTHY PARKES CENTRE

In February this year I was very pleased to be offered the post of Centre Manager for the Dorothy Parkes Centre.

I have had a very warm welcome from people using the Dorothy Parkes



Centre, as well as from the staff and members of The Old Church, Smethwick.

It has been such a great feeling to find everyone so helpful and willing to pull together and I am very lucky to be working amongst you all.

I was previously working for Sandwell Council in the Supporting People Team who fund many services for vulnerable people across the borough, so I already know some of the people who use the centre and it is nice to see some familiar faces.

I have been surprised and delighted to see so many groups and people coming in to use the centre, people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds – how diverse and exciting!

I come out of my office and never know who I shall find and what they will be doing! Toward the end of last week a group of people came for 'Cookwell' and were busy peeling apples and mixing cakes ... it smelt lovely! Last night I could hardly get out of my office ... there was such a long queue for Weightwatchers!

So the Centre is well used and most days there are a number of different activities going on.

For the future I hope we shall have many more groups approaching us to use the facilities but also a programme of events.

Talking of events we would like to have a community pantomime in early spring 2012 so we shall be on the look out for all sorts of people and things. If you would like to be involved either as a performer or as a helper please contact me. Kindest regards and good wishes to everyone. Deb Harris

## QI.... "Hymns"

- A Greek word meaning "song of praise to gods or heroes."
- At first Christians used Jewish hymns, especially the psalms
- A hymn was sung at the Last Supper ( Mark's Gospel chapter 14 verse 26) - this was probably the Hallel (a name given by Jews to Psalms 113—118 and used during the Passover)
- What may be quotations from early Christian hymns may be found in the scripture of the New Testament (for example; Ephesians 5.14; Philippians 2.5-11; 1 Timothy 3.16 and 6.15; Revelation 15.3-4 and Revelation 22.17)
- The Magnificat, Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis all from St Luke's Gospel were also early Christian hymn compositions.
- The earliest Christian hymn that survives is a hymn to Christ called "Bridle of colts untamed" by Clement of Alexandria (late second, early third century)
- "Hail gladdening Light!" is also a third century early hymn.
- From the fourth century the use of hymns became more general, including the "Gloria in excelsis"
- Latin hymns appeared later than Greek. The most famous is the " Te Deum".
- St Ambrose encouraged hymn-singing in worship.
- In England, hymns first appeared with Caedmon and Aldhelm in the eight century and King Alfred in the ninth.
- By the middle ages hymns to Christ as Redeemer and the Blessed Virgin Mary became popular.
- Carols too became popular in England.
- The Reformation had a deep and varied effect on the development of hymnody – Lutherism (from the sixteenth century) was marked by an increase of hymns written, but Calvinism would only allow words of scripture to be used in services.
- Modern hymn writing and singing were mainly the creation of the eighteenth century (Isaac Watts, the Wesley brothers, Doddridge, Toplady, Newton and Cowper)
- Spirituals became popular in America, then mission songs of Moody and Sankey exerted considerable influence in America and England at the end of the nineteenth century.
- The Oxford movement stimulated writing (Hymns Ancient and Modern first appeared in 1861, the English Hymnal in 1906)
- Now hymns and hymn singing are most popular - but which hymns and why???

### The Race

We are racing through the morning dew dampened streets

Competing to be the first to see if the message is true  
Clattering past the homes and shops still closed and asleep

I want to be the first. To win this race as I leap  
Over the cobbles and bump past my friend  
To see if our dearest departed for whom I still weep  
Has vanished from his stone covered silent grave

I am almost out of breath as I race onward up the steeps  
And we burst into the quiet garden of the grave at last  
Where I pause for a moment as my companion leaps  
Past to go inside the place of death to gaze and look  
As I look in too,

and pant,  
and breathe,  
and believe.

*Thine be  
the glory,  
risen conquering  
Son,  
Endless is  
the vict'ry,  
thou o'er  
death  
hast won*

### ADVANCE NOTICE

Our Summer Fair  
is on  
Saturday 18th June



- 18th 7.30 pm PCC in the Vicarage
- 19th Installation of new Vicar at St Giles Rowley Regis.
- 26th 2.30pm Prayer in Church (please see Rosemary Guest for details)
- 29th 6.30pm Confirmation service at St Hilda's {Anyone who is not yet confirmed and is not therefore taking Holy Communion, please see Revd Nigel about this}

Jeffrey Guest who has written "The Race" would welcome your thoughts as to:  
*Who are the runners?*  
*Who is the author?* and  
*Where is this place?*