

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

At the beginning of February we celebrate the feast of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple, sometimes called Candlemas. We journey with Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus into the Temple and there we meet Simeon, who speaks the words we know as the Nunc Dimittis, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace...." It is a feast which marks a kind of turning-point in the Christian year as we move from the celebration of Christmas and begin to look towards Holy Week and Easter. It takes us from Bethlehem to Jerusalem; from the Old Covenant (between God and the chosen people of Israel), represented by Simeon, to the New Testament Covenant in Jesus; from the celebration of a birth towards the mourning of a death. Like plain chocolate, it is a bitter-sweet experience! We have just been celebrating a birth and already we are being asked to look towards the letting go of life – where, might one ask, is the justice in that?

Perhaps this is what atheists, who have no belief in a god, jump upon: that we are left with a cold reality that we cannot make sense of life on our own terms and without reference to what is beyond and outside us. We are complex individuals whose motives are hidden or at best elusive and we are unable to be entirely in control of our own lives. Therefore an argument might be: stop worrying and enjoy life!

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

People of all ages flocked to services over the Christmas period to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Young children helped to create the Nativity scene in front of the altar with the Wise Men 'arriving' at Epiphany.

New Year's Day saw a large number from the congregations of Old Church and St Matthews gather together in the vicarage to share mulled wine, tea and cakes. The sound of carols rang throughout the early afternoon to welcome in 2012 with many folk continuing fellowship during Evening Prayer in the Old Church.

But enjoying life in the fullness of my faith is what the Good News must include. Life is a complex mix, as with the bitter-sweet turn of Candlemas from a birth to a death. As long as we are still alive to the questions of faith then we may live life to its full, whatever experiences and changes we shall encounter. We may rage and shout at a God who may appear to be silent at times, but the answer does lie somewhere in the bitter-sweet feast of Candlemas and the tiny baby presented in the Temple: God's Son, Jesus, born into the world and dying to save you and I.

SMETHWICK FOODBANK

Today in Smethwick there are families struggling to put food on the table and parents are having to skip meals in order to feed their children. Smethwick Foodbank has been set up by local churches to meet this need. Food of a non perishable kind is donated by individuals, churches, schools and businesses. Food drives will also be held at supermarkets where volunteers give shoppers a foodbank shopping list and ask them to buy an extra item or two from the list. In a similar way church members are asked to buy items from the list when they do their weekly shop and bring them to church each Sunday. Smethwick Foodbank will be based at Holy Trinity Church, Church Hill Street and is open on Tuesday and Friday afternoons from 1.30 until 4.00 pm. For more information contact Liz Goss 0121 429 6022

Can you please help by buying some or all of the non-perishable food items below:

Tomatoes (Tinned), Soup (Tinned or Packet), Sugar, Orange Juice (Carton), Breakfast Cereal, Milk (UHT or Powdered), Tea Bags / Coffee, Vegetables(Tinned) (Carrots /Chick Peas /Beans), Tuna /Fish (Tinned), Biscuits, Chocolate, Pasta/Noodles/Rice/Lentils/Potato Powder(Dried) Rice Pudding /Sponge Pudding /Custard (Tinned) Pasta Sauce /Spaghetti Sauce (Jar)

Q.I...“LORD’S PRAYER”

- the prayer taught by Jesus to his disciples beginning with “Our Father”
- in the New Testament it is given in two slightly different versions (Matthew 6 verses 9-15 and Luke 11 verses 2-4)
- a concluding doxology was probably added in the early Church
- the prayer is divided into the address and seven petitions, the first three asking for God’s glorification, the latter four being requests for the chief physical and spiritual needs of ourselves
- the meaning of bread which is sought (translated as daily) is uncertain: past, present or future?
- an important part of our Christian devotion, but we should not be so familiar with it that we get to the “Amen” without knowing or sincerely addressing and asking God what we have just prayed for!

HANDY LITTLE CHART - GOD HAS A POSITIVE ANSWER

You say: 'It's impossible' **God says:** All things are possible (Luke 18:27)

You say: 'I'm too tired' **God says:** I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28-30)

You say: 'Nobody really loves me' **God says:** I love you (John 3:1 6 & John 3:34)

You say: 'I can't go on' **God says:** My grace is sufficient (II Corinthians 12:9 & Psalm 91:15)

You say: 'I can't figure things out' **God says:** I will direct your steps (Proverbs 3:5 - 6)

You say: 'I can't do it' **God says:** You can do all things (Philippians 4:13)

You say: 'I'm not able' **God says:** I am able (II Corinthians 9:8)

You say: 'It's not worth it' **God says:** It will be worth it (Roman 8:28)

You say: 'I can't forgive myself' **God says:** I Forgive you (I John 1:9 & Romans 8:1)

You say: 'I can't manage' **God says:** I will supply all your needs (Philippians 4:19)

You say: 'I'm afraid' **God says:** I have not given you a spirit of fear (II Timothy 1:7)

You say: 'I'm always worried and frustrated' **God says:** Cast all your cares on ME (I Peter 5:7)

You say: 'I'm not smart enough' **God says:** I give you wisdom (I Corinthians 1:30)

You say: 'I feel all alone' **God says:** I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5)



FEBRUARY

5th **Feast of the Presentation of our Lord** (Candlemas)

15th 2.30 pm Light Reading at the Sisters’ house - see Judy Eynon for details.

22nd **Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent:** 10.00 am Holy Communion in The Old Church and 6.00 pm Holy Communion at St Matthews (both with an invitation for the Imposition of Ashes).

23rd 2.30 pm **Praying** in The Old Church
7 pm **Evening service of Compline**

**Thursdays from 1st March
Lent gatherings in Holy Trinity
7pm for 7.30pm**

The next time you feel that God can’t use You. Just remember

Noah was a drunk
Abraham was too old
Isaac was a daydreamer
Jacob was a liar
Leah was ugly
Joseph was abused
Moses had a stuttering problem
Gideon was afraid
Samson had long hair and was a womanizer
Rahab was a prostitute
Jeremiah and Timothy were too young
David had an affair and was a murderer
Elijah was suicidal
Isaiah preached naked
Jonah ran from God
Naomi was a widow
Job went bankrupt
Peter denied Christ (3 times)
The disciples fell asleep while praying
Martha worried about everything
Mary Magdalene was promiscuous
The Samaritan woman was divorced, more than once
Zaccheus was too small
Paul was too religious
and
Timothy had an ulcer.....

So God can use all of us!!!