

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 late Robert Runcie, when Archbishop of Canterbury, closed the General Synod meeting of July 1980 by saying, "today it is all too easy to be critical of synodical government and to forget just how far it has allowed the Church of England to reshape its life." Some may see that as an implied criticism of course of where the Church now is, from where it was perceived to once have been. All those who attend a synod are representatives of ourselves as Christians belonging to the C. of E., be they bishop, clergy or elected members of the House of Laity (in other words, women and men who attend a church and sit, usually, amongst fellow members of their own congregation). There are of course divisions of opinion – and many such are accordingly reported in the national press – but if the debates are outward-looking and kindle consciences in a long-term view which are both true to the past as well as pioneering for a Christian society today and tomorrow, then so much the better. As the then archbishop, concluded: "Does not the cry 'divide' make us set our sights too low?"

"Issues" seem to dominate (as perhaps they may always have), although it must surely be right that a contemporary Church in our society should be able to speak forth, even with divided opinion. For in a society where the social influence of the Church has declined, a powerful

institution committed to the gospel message to speak for the vulnerable and for those who may be weak in bargaining power should be visible and articulate.

Anyone who represents us as Christians, in any form of church synodical governance, cannot undertake such a responsibility lightly. And criticism of the effectiveness of any such synodical body fundamentally comes down to ourselves. For unless an elected parochial church council communicates its views and resolutions, through the elected deanery members, then how may that synod, for example, be truly representative? Equally, of course, the communication channel ought to be reversed, so that we, the represented, may be fully informed of any deanery report or concern. And that two-way communicative duty must apply through and to all synods, so that any pronouncement is honestly what we as members of Christ's body would truly adhere to, or is one where we could join ourselves perhaps in public reaction. For are not all of us equal members, irrespective of our own opinion, and might not any of us speak out in the name of Christ for what is non-judgemental, inclusive and gospel-bound.

For each of us holds a mission to serve: it is to that in, and for which, each of us has been called.

UNsung HEROINES



Mavis and Florence are two members of our congregation who have been knitting for a charity called Angel Tree. This is a Christian based Prison Fellowship that buys Christmas presents for children who have fathers in Birmingham prisons. Our ladies have knitted almost a hundred items including Easter chicks and Christmas puddings, all filled with a Cadbury's cream egg and then sold by the members of the charity. With the help of Mavis and Florence, the charity has collected the amazing sum of £921 and at Christmas over thirty children were able to benefit from presents given by Angel Tree.

Florence and Mavis have also knitted blankets

and bonnets for the Premature Baby Unit at Walsall Manor Hospital. Subsequently, the head of the unit gave a very moving talk to all those who had helped, thanking the knitters and describing the use of their gifts to help with premature and still-born babies.

Alice Lyon, a community midwife in Redditch, received a parcel of bonnets from our ladies. She kept the parcel in the boot of her car. Alice was called out to deliver a premature baby; the young mother had nothing small enough to keep her baby's head warm. Out of the boot came the welcome parcel of knitting. Mavis and Florence's bonnets had saved the day!



MARCH

Season of LENT: penitential and six weeks of preparation for Easter Joy!

Wednesdays February 29, March 7, 14, 21 & 28
12 noon **Holy Communion for Lent** in The Old Church and soup at the Dorothy Parkes Centre (monies for charity) to follow: 12.30pm

1st 7pm for 7.30 pm **“I Am the Way” Lent meeting at Holy Trinity** between all our local churches, tonight lead by Church of England (“Thy Kingdom Come”)

2nd 2.30 pm **Women’s World Day of Prayer** service at Holy Trinity

4th 11.00 am **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** at St Matthews’

8th 7pm for 7.30 pm **second Lent meeting at Holy Trinity**, tonight lead by the Methodists (Accepting God the provider and our response)

11th 11.30 am **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** at The Old Church

15th 7pm for 7.30 pm **third Lent meeting at Holy Trinity**, tonight lead by the Baptists (Who is our neighbour?)

17th 2.00 pm **Smethwick Heritage Day** and **“Church-Growth Conference”** - Old Church representatives.

18th **Mothering Sunday**
6 pm **Taizé Service** in The Old Church

19th St Matthews’ PCC

22nd 7pm for 7.30 pm **fourth Lent meeting at Holy Trinity**, tonight lead by the United Reformed Church (How we spend, and upon whom?)

25th **Baptism** of Lily Jane Richardson - Please pray for Lily and her family.

29th 2.30 pm monthly prayer/praying together for the parish and particular needs, in church (see Rosemary Guest for details)
7.00 pm monthly service of Night-prayer **Compline** in The Old Church

7pm for 7.30 pm **fifth Lent meeting at Holy Trinity**, tonight lead by the Salvation Army (Am I my brother’s keeper?)

Q.I...“SYNOD”

- the system of government of the Church of England
- first introduced in 1969 (the Synodical Government Measure)
- designed to give a greater part to the laity / the congregation
- The General Synod (bishops, clergy, laity elected) met in February
- The Diocesan Synod (for us, Birmingham)
- The Deanery Synod (for us, Warley, with its area dean, currently Rev’d Anthony Perry, Vicar of St Mary’s Bearwood)
- The parochial church council includes elected members to the deanery synod

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR APRIL

1st **Palm Sunday** (services 10 am St Matthews’, 10.15 am The Old Church)

5th **Maundy Thursday** 8.00 pm The Old Church. Watch until Midnight

6th **Good Friday** (10.00 am **Walk of Witness** at Holy Trinity, 12 noon **Stations of the Cross** at The Old Church, 2.00 pm **Praise and Liturgy** at St Matthews’)

8th **Easter Day** (10 am St Matthews’, 10.15 am The Old Church. **Fellowship Lunch** in the Dorothy Parkes’ Centre)

LAST MONTH’S NEWS

February began with a quiet and reflective service of nine readings and hymns in the Old Church to celebrate the arrival of the Magi and also the presentation of Jesus in the temple. This service marked the end of the season of Epiphany and also saw the Christmas decorations packed away for another year.

Thrifties sampled the fare at the newly opened Court of Requests formerly the library, a police station and magistrates court in the centre of Oldbury. The decor within reflected the different usage of the building and revived memories of her time as a magistrate for Joyce.

The Discoverers’ trip to Webbs of Wychbold was feared to be a non-starter following problems with the minibus. Thankfully alternative transport was available that enabled the group to enjoy an afternoon where they explored the garden centre and shared fellowship over a pleasant lunch.