

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D
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VICAR'S VOICE

The debate over whether people of the same-sex may marry has occupied the media for a while, since the Government have proposed such legality. There have been views stated for and against, in and beyond the Christian Church and it is clear that there is a variety of opinion; it is equally clear that the Church has viewed marriage as a sharing in and of God's love, whoever we are.

Whilst matrimony is exhibited in the Bible as a wholly honourable estate, virginity was more highly commended (see for example Matthew chapter 19 verses 10-12, or 1 Corinthians 7) and celibacy was advocated in the early Church.

Marriage itself has been seen as a covenant where the couple try to live out God's faithfulness and St Paul compares the union between Christ and His Church.

Civil partnerships, between same-sex couples, is not marriage and a change of law will be required. However, whilst acknowledging the like of David Starkey (the historian who admits to being an atheist conservative who happens to be gay) that "gays need not be called Mr and Mrs" and

abhors the threat of the Established Church "dissolving," it is important to recognize that fidelity/faithfulness, commitment and mutual love are pledged between civil partners of the same-sex as well as between a man and woman. Moreover, the idea of procreation as a "primary end" is not born out in historical terms as marriage was at one time more especially concerned with property rights.

Those who are charged with responsibility to make any change to the statute law (in Parliament) have been given a free vote. No doubt their own conscience shall play an important part, as will the faith each may or may not hold. But it would be wrong if any vote was determined by prejudice and a narrow-mindedness. As a Christian Church, each of us, following in the Lord's steps, will welcome anyone as a loved brother and sister – and, whoever anyone is, all are equal in the sight of God – and thus, it must be for us. More so, then, when anyone pledges their faithful love and commitment to another cherished child of God's!

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord was celebrated by many in the vicarage garden when thankfully the dry evening allowed for fellowship to be shared outdoors during the service and the barbeque that followed later.

Another communion service held at 8pm on 15th August celebrated the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary where brothers and sisters came together to receive the Eucharist with the added aroma of

burning incense. This reflective evening came to a pleasant close with drinks at the Vicarage.

August Bank Holiday weekend sees our young people in "Big Fish" camping together and joining in the fun of the Greenbelt Festival, where they can experience workshops, music and artists exploring and celebrating the Christian Faith. We pray for them and their leaders whilst they are there and look forward to their safe return when they will share their adventurous highlights with the church family.

Q.I. "MATRIMONY"

- The Christian conception of marriage, though it claims to be based on natural law, differs sharply from earlier practice, whether Jewish or pagan, and also from modern secular usage, notably in the equality it gives to the woman and the indissolubility it ascribes to the marriage bond.
- The Preface to the Marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer sums up the "ends" of marriage, as the procreation of children, the avoidance of sin and mutual society.
- Marriage as a sacrament (see Ephesians chapter 5 verse 32) is peculiar in that the parties themselves are the ministers, the priest is the appointed witness.
- The claim of the Church to establish exclusive jurisdiction over matrimonial cases came in the eleventh century, but in 1753 Lord Harwicke's Marriage Act (and then in the 1836 Marriage Act) established civil marriage.
- The minimum age for marriage has varied over time but is now over the age of 16 years for both (Age of Marriage Act 1929)
- Practice varies among the Christian bodies concerning clerical marriage – the Orthodox Church says that ordinands (those training to be deacon or priest) must be either already married or elect to remain celibate; the Roman Catholic church enforces celibacy (although permits anyone from the Anglican communion who is already married); the Anglican (such as the Church of England) and Non-conformist bodies allow a free choice (although the matter of freedom has of course recently become debatable).



SEPTEMBER

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| 5th | 7.30 pm Old Church PCC meet at the Vicarage |
| 8th | Weddings - pray for Delroy & Sarah and Andrew & Sharon |
| 9th | Baptisms: pray for Bradley Alexander & Olivia Isabella |
| 9th | 3.00 pm Pimms Party in the Vicarage garden |
| 10th | 7.30 pm St Matthews PCC |
| 27th | 2.30 pm meet for Prayers in The Old church (see Rosemary Guest for further details) |
| 27th | 7.00 pm Compline in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details) |

Prayer from the Taizé Community

Christ Jesus, even if your presence remains invisible you are close to each person. You never give us up. And more still, you find your joy in each one of us. You give us a look of goodness for others.

