

# 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

May we wear a cross or a crucifix at work? It is an argument in the European Court of Human Rights that it is not an absolute right, nor a right without limits. The Court is hearing arguments on behalf of two people who claim that they have lost their jobs because they refused to remove a cross or crucifix, along with two others who were dismissed from their posts, they claim, because their own religious views were held to be contrary to what was asked of them in their counseling roles.

A British-government lawyer argued that, although everyone in a free and democratic society has a right to express and manifest their beliefs, Christians could not claim that they have suffered religious discrimination at work if they have the freedom to resign and look for another job; that there was no interference with Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Against this, the argument ran that there was nothing in Article 9 to justify that one's rights stopped the moment you crossed the threshold of work. The judgement is not expected for several months. But is it a sign of our times?

The chief executive of the British Humanist Association said that the cases were the result of an "increasingly strident Christian lobby". It was said in court that certain employers only permitted religious items being worn if they were a "mandatory scriptural requirement." Our faith of course has the Cross, the crucifix upon which Jesus died, as central to our Resurrection faith. The wearing of such may not be a formal requirement for Christians (although it certainly is a visible symbol of a held belief – If, that is, it isn't merely a piece of jewelry for someone to adorn themselves!) But to prohibit such (if it does not impede work or endanger anyone wearing such) would surely be a devaluing of a personal right.

It shall be interesting to see what and how the Court shall judge: as a principle, or confined to the particular facts of each case. Whether we wear a cross or crucifix of course might be said to be immaterial, set against our capacity to talk, to share and to act out the Good News of our Christian creed and our faith, whatever we choose to wear.

## LAST MONTH'S NEWS

Typical August Bank Holiday weekend weather forced an early end for "Big Fish" at the Greenbelt festival. Despite their name they did not appreciate living in such wet conditions and decamped a day earlier than expected. Despite their early departure the young people enjoyed many aspects of the camp particularly Sunday morning worship with 20,000 other communicants.

Sunday 9th September was a gloriously warm afternoon when the vicarage garden was decked in bunting for the annual Pimms party. Fellowship was shared by many with games, tasty treats and a raffle.

St Matthews and Old Church shared an outing to Twin Lakes in Melton Mowbray when young and the not so young enjoyed a beautiful sunny day and explored the grounds, petted and fed the animals and experimented on many of the adventurous rides. Due to the large numbers who attended, costs were less than expected and a surplus of £100 has been donated to the Foodbank who are desperately short of food items.

Yalana was presented with a Bible and monetary gift from "Big Fish" as she leaves to begin her studies at University. We pray for Yalana as she begins her new life at Uni.

## Q.I. "ST LUKE"

- Feast day in the Church (October 18th)
- A Gentile (not Jewish) almost certainly a Greek from Antioch in Syria
- A doctor (St Paul refers to him as "my beloved physician")
- The author of the third gospel at the end of the first-century
- A gifted story-teller
- Wrote to a certain Theophilus to give him "certainty"
- An historian, wrote of Jesus' story as biography
- But speaks of the Annunciation (to Mary) and of several miracles and parables which are not related elsewhere
- We know nothing of his conversion to Christianity, but he was probably a companion to St Paul (certainly he admires Paul)
- He tells the story of Paul in his Book of Acts
- He places particular emphasis on wealth and poverty and concerns for the "marginalized" in society (women, the poor, the ethnically marginalized Samaritans)

## APOLOGIES TO BELLY

In my last report on our favourite Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) I called Matt Bell, Matt Ball. He has forgiven me and I am now allowed to call him Belly. When I spoke to them recently, Belly and Julie Wright talked about their very valuable role in our neighbourhood of Smethwick. They are here to support us all, a highly visible team in their distinctive police uniforms, riding their bicycles around our streets.

Their role is to deal with local issues; disputes between neighbours, anti-social behaviour, visiting crime hot spots and giving crime prevention advice. Belly and Julie's main focus is to prevent crime by engaging with local groups.

They work alongside community centres, visit churches and other religious establishments, afternoon clubs and youth groups. They hold surgeries at the Dorothy Parkes Centre and details can be found on the West Midlands Police website for Sandwell. Last, but not least they raise money for local ventures, such as Big Fish's visit to Greenbelt. How lucky we are to have such a dedicated team.



## OCTOBER

- 6th 6.30 pm **Harvest Supper** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 7th **Harvest Festivals** -  
10.00 am in St Matthews  
10.15 am in The Old Church
- 10th 7.30 pm Dorothy Parkes Centre Trusteeship **AGM**
- 14th After church Sale of **Traidcraft** produce, Christmas cards and gifts
- 17th 7.30 pm The Old Church **PCC** meeting in the Vicarage
- 21st 6.00 pm **Taize** Service in The Old Church
- 25th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 25th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)
- 27th **Wedding** (in St Matthews) of Eliot and Nadine - please pray for them

**"Meet and Share"** beginning 3rd October. 10.30 am on Wednesday mornings for one hour at the Sisters' house, alternately bible-sharing and hymn-sharing. Speak to Victoria Barlow for further details and sign up on list at the back of church.

### **"Monthly Service of Healing"**

A service of healing takes place at St Matthews each month on the second Saturday of the month at 9 am. All are welcome, particularly those who are hurting and in pain or feeling a burden of anxiety and distress and in need of any kind. Future services will be held on 13th October, 10th November and 8th December.



**People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross**