

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

Six years as Vicar: doesn't time fly when one's enjoying oneself! And it has been fun and creative – And busy!!

A huge thank you to all who contribute in so many ways to the life and witness here and in the parish. But in the busy-ness and creativity and work of discipleship, it is always important to ask "What has God been doing here? What traces of grace can be discerned? What history of Love can I read in this group of Christians?"

It is vital that we all be people engaged in the spiritual life, that we understand ourselves (where ever we are) as a spiritual community – that is, a community that wants to draw near to Christ, that yearns to know Christ.

It is possible that none of us can live in a permanent state of spiritual renewal and fervour! I think the apostles – even after Pentecost - had times of tiredness with questions and concerns that the work of discipleship becomes at times a little (what?) challenging, perhaps even humdrum! But even at such times – and perhaps especially so then – we must be rooted and grounded in a prayerful openness to God in Word and Sacrament – and in our relationships with others.

So some questions, for me as well as for others; To what extent am I/are we able to say of ourselves that we are a people of prayer, that we are part of a praying community? To what extent

do we find our energy in the praying life of the church community? To what extent are we asking ourselves – what has God been doing here, what traces of His grace may be found, what Love of His can we see or feel in who we are, in what we do?

The Old Church is a good place to be – and much does occur. The singing is wonderful, the flowers look wonderful (and how they are missed during Lent!), the friendships delightful, the social life fun, the services full (almost) and the decorated building grand! But we come to church first and foremost to pray and to seek God, with hearts open to Him and to the presence of Christ in each other.

I move on – to other people equally in need of spiritual guidance and to priestly ministry. But with a challenged heart, in what I leave here that is so good and in what is daunting ahead.

But we know, don't we, that all of us do have the grace of God, His constant Love and the gift – His gift – of the Spirit to strengthen and to empower us all, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour to, just like Him, serve and bring others along with us. I wish each of you a holy time, in the forthcoming season of this Lent, to add to your prayerful life – and to commend to others our church: that is, ourselves: building upon the sure foundation of him who Loves!

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The end of Advent was signalled with the decorating of The Old Church ready for the season of Christmas. This was followed on the Sunday morning with Junior Church's inspiring interpretation of the Christmas Story which journeyed from the Garden of Eden through to the birth of Jesus, where they expounded the Word becoming Flesh.

The Nativity heralded the onset of Christmas where many came together at the Crib service on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. Young children helped to create the Nativity scene in front of the altar with the Wise Men 'arriving' at Epiphany. Later that evening the bells rang out for

Midnight Mass which began with carol - singing at 10.45 pm, followed by the first communion of Christmas. On Christmas morning another large congregation joined together to celebrate the birth of our Lord.

At the beginning of January David Fereday was congratulated on achieving 40 years as our organist.

Hamid Reza Nosrati and Shahryer Ghashghai were baptised and welcomed into the church family.

Paul Martin was licensed as a Lay Reader by the Bishop at a commissioning service held in the Cathedral on Saturday 19th January.

Q.I.. "SHROVE"

- the day before Ash Wednesday
- so named from the "shriving"
- the confession and absolution of the faithful on that day
- "shriven from one's sins!"
- "Carnival" = the feasting, rejoicing, the reveling; in German "the running round crazily" ("vasen" = Fasching / carnival)
- Having a good time before.....
- Lent: the 40 days' observance - giving up something (or taking something on!)

I TOOK YOUR PLACE !

One day, a man went to visit a church. He got there early, parked his car and got out. Another car pulled up nearby, the driver got out and said crossly, "I always park there! You took my place!" The visitor went inside for Sunday service, found an empty seat and sat down. A young woman church member approached him and snapped, "That's my seat! You took my place!" The visitor was somewhat distressed by this rude welcome, but said nothing.

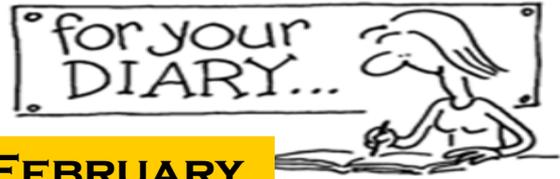
He moved to a different seat and sat down. Another member walked up to him and said, "That's where I always sit! You took my place!" The visitor was even more troubled by this treatment, but still he said nothing.

Later as the congregation was praying for Christ to dwell among them, the visitor stood up, and his appearance began to change. Horrible scars became visible on his hands and on his sandaled feet. Someone from the congregation noticed him and called out, "What happened to you?"

As a crown of thorns wreathed his head and a tear fell from his eye, he gently said "***I took your place!***"

Love bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things.
Love never ends.

1 Corinthians 13:7-8



FEBRUARY

- 3rd **Retirement** of Rev'd Brian Hall, who was the Vicar of The Old Church 1979—1993
- 6th Meeting of the **Directors of the Dorothy Parkes Centre**
- 9th 9.30 am "**Growing Churches**" Day at St Michael's CE Secondary School
- 10th **Baptism** of baby Joa Neil: pray for her, her parents and godparents
- 13th **ASH WEDNESDAY** 10.00 am The Old Church and 6.00 pm St Matthews (with Imposition of Ashes)
- 17th 10.15 am **Last service** of our current Vicar, Nigel before he leaves to commence duties as Hospice Chaplain in Devon
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 28th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)

Thursdays 21st, 28th and March 7th, 14th and 21st **Lent groups** with other churches at Holy Trinity 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm (lasting about one hour)

