

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3 SEPTEMBER 2013



THE RICHEST HARVEST

The days are visibly growing shorter and we stand at the threshold of autumn, 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.' The hay has already been gathered in and the other, later crops will soon be harvested.

With changing weather patterns the seasons have become somewhat blurred. Gone are the long hot summers and the bitterly cold winters with frost on the inside of the windows that older ones among us remember from our childhoods and now the contrast between the seasons is less marked and harvests are less predictable. The yield, as it always has been, is dependent upon God's good grace in sending rainfall and sunshine and we've seen plenty of both over the last few months and, although the asparagus harvest was a washout because weather conditions were not right, strawberries grew in abundance and predictions for cereal crops are favourable. The success of the harvest depends also upon the farmers' nurture and care of first the seeds and then the shoots.

So it is with the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control. We are dependent upon God's good grace to give us these fruits and upon ourselves and others

around us for their nurture and care that they may yield a bountiful harvest.

We can nurture these fruits within ourselves through prayer, through our reading of the Bible on a daily basis and then reflecting on what we have read, seeking a deeper understanding of what God is saying to us through the words of scripture, and by regular and robustly honest self-examination of the way in which we live our lives in relation to others, both those with whom we share our lives closely and those far away whom we may never meet but whose lives can be profoundly affected by the way in which we live ours.

If we cultivate the fruits of the Spirit and bring them to full ripeness it will be reflected in our relationships with others and act as a kind of cross-pollination encouraging their growth in others. John wrote in his first letter, 'We love because he [God] loved us first.' Love begets love; joy and peace are infectious; acts of kindness and goodness will encourage those qualities in others; fidelity generates faithfulness, and so on. May each of us bring forth an abundant crop of the fruits of the Spirit that we may encourage one another in living our lives as God would have us live them.

Barbara Fletcher

AN EASTERN EXPERIENCE

In July, I travelled to the Indian Himalayas. I was part of a group of 30 geologists and geographers, aged between 16 and 18, from King Edward VI College Stourbridge, all of whom I'd now consider good friends. We caught the plane from Heathrow to Delhi and from there worked our way north deep into the Himalayas. We stayed in accommodation ranging from hotels to tents. During the two weeks journey we travelled from the seriously intense heat and humidity of Delhi, to the cooler mountainous regions of Shimla, Manali and Keylong, through the bleak desert landscapes of Sarchu and Tso Kar, and finally to the chilly glacial environment of Leh.

The trip was a real cultural eye opener, showing

me some very different lifestyles. The culture and pleasantries even differed between different areas of India. I also saw amazing geographical phenomena, including some of the world's coolest rocks, and tried some of the spiciest curries. India is a country rich in religion and I experienced this firsthand, seeing both Buddhist and Hindu monuments. Some of the Buddhist temples and settlements were incredibly decorated and wonderfully detailed, depicting gods and scenes on every wall and surface. It was an amazing experience and truly humbling; it has opened my eyes to a new world and I'd like to thank all at Old Church for their support in the build up and during my journey.

Ben Conway-Jones

“IN THE QUIETNESS”

Lord, in the quietness, reach out and hold us and draw us gently into your peace. And in the loving silence of your heart, attune our ears to hear the sounds we never listen to: The harmony that lies in you, the discords in the world where you have placed us. The laughter and the tears in other people's lives. Make us more sensitive to other's needs.

Sometimes we hear the words that others speak, but fail to grasp their meaning. Help us to hear the worry hidden in a throw-away remark, the fear wrapped in a joke, the insecurity behind unbending dogmatism. Let us hear the cry for help so casually expressed.

Help us to listen more, and think, and think, before we speak, and then to think again. And, Lord, teach us to hear sincerity in those who see and say things in a different way. Give us the grace not to condemn or criticize but first to search for common ground and to grasp the things that draw us all together, and not to concentrate on what holds us apart.

Help us to take the richness of another's thought, and hold it, precious as our own. Above all, may we hear the gentle echoes of your love, reflected all around us. Give us the joy of listening to your voice, the quiet rustle as your arms enfold us. Amen

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

A service of Thanksgiving for the life of Sister Anna CSMV at the beginning of the month was well attended by members of Smethwick's Anglican congregations.

August saw the celebration of the Transfiguration of our Lord and the commemoration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The latter service took the form of Evening Prayer with a short homily given by our Reader, Paul Martin, who outlined the importance of the relationship between our Lord and his mother as recorded in the gospels. We were joined by friends from Holy Trinity for this service.



SEPTEMBER

- 8th 5.00 pm Service of hymns and readings to mark **Holy Cross Day**
- 19th **Discoverers' Outing** (see Christine Tanner for further details)
- 21st 2.00 pm **Jumble Sale** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 26th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 26th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)

TEABREAD

You may have tasted David and Judy's fabulous fruit cake one Sunday morning a few weeks ago - it was fat-free and delicious! David will tell you that it's a really easy cake to make. Why not have a go at making one or three for yourself !

Here is the recipe;-

- Soak half a pint of mixed fruit in one pint of black tea overnight.
- Next add one pound of flour, half a pound of sugar and half a teaspoonful of cinnamon, ground ginger and nutmeg. (You can experiment with what spices you use and the amount used depending on your preferences)
- Mix well and pour the mixture into well greased loaf tins.
- The above quantity will give you enough for three x one pound cakes.
- Bake in a moderate oven for about forty minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean
- Turn unto a cooling tray and allow to cool
- Enjoy a slice (spread with butter if you prefer) with a nice cup of tea.