

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

We now move into the month of March and, having experienced one of the wettest and gloomiest of winters, we can at last look forward to the spring. As we all know the weather in March continues to be unpredictable, but despite this the earth wakes up and the season turns. The vicarage garden bears witness to this, in its saturated lawn I have discovered an abundance of daffodils in tight, expectant bud.

But the turning of the seasons is not the only 'turn' to greet us as we move into this new month. March also brings with it the invitation to make our Lenten journey, a journey that calls us to 'turn' away from all that keeps us from God and towards Christ who calls us ever deeper into God's divine love.

Springtime and Lent are inextricably linked together and some of the oldest traditions of Lent are interwoven into ideas of spring. Indeed, some refer to Lent as 'springtime' for the soul and others as a time to 'spring-clean' the soul.

It is certainly a time to examine ourselves, to check out those corners we often neglect in our day-to-day lives and to

reflect deeply on what we find there. It's a time to ask ourselves those uncomfortable questions about what we rely on for our sense of self-worth and to prayerfully consider what it means to live by the grace of God.

Traditionally, one of the ways we are encouraged to do this is by giving things up. But whether we give up chocolate (a particular challenge for me!), biscuits, cake, alcohol or anything else – we do so to aid our inner 'spring clean'. Maggie Dawn in her book 'Giving it up', suggests that, we give things up '...to allow the light to be shed on those places where our idea of God is too harsh, too weak, too small, too fragile, too stern'. In other words, we give things up in order that we might see God more clearly

Spring will inevitably come, but the invitation to journey through Lent is just that, an invitation. It's an invitation for all of us and, if we're up for it, it's a journey we can make in the company of one another. I, for one, am very much looking forward to making my first Lenten journey with the faith community here and I pray that it will be a fruitful time for all.

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

February was a month of "Hellos" and "Goodbyes"

Sadly, we bade farewell to the Sisters of the BVM who have had to leave Smethwick after a presence of some twenty-two years.

On a brighter note we greeted the Rev'd Debra Buckley as our new Vicar at her Institution and Induction by the Bishop of Aston and the Archdeacon of Birmingham. A full church that included the Mayor of Sandwell, the Headmistress of Uplands Manor and the Chairman of the Dorothy Parkes' Trust, gave Deb a warm welcome. Representatives of the congregation

presented Deb with symbols of her new ministry. The service was followed by a reception in the Dorothy Parkes' Centre and included a superb buffet provided by many members of the local congregation.

A Conference 'Making Disciples in Mid Sized Churches' was held on 1st February at St Michael's Secondary School, Rowley Regis. This was thought provoking and challenged us to look at how we live our lives as Christians. A similar event for 'Small Sized Churches' will be held at the same venue on 29th March but is open to all. Please speak to Jeff Guest if you are interested in attending.

COMBINED CHURCHES LENT 2014

**We know the notes
but
Do we play the music?**

13 March Jesus and the Importance of Doubt

20 March The Icon of Certainty

27 March The Temptation of Tradition

03 April The Conflict of Brand

10 April My Church!

A five week exploration of faith in Smethwick in 2014 examining through conversation, worship and teaching how we move from knowing facts to following the way of Jesus. **Thursdays 7.30 pm at Holy Trinity B67 7BP**

BUILDING YOUR HOUSE

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer-contractor of his plans to leave the house building business to live a more leisurely life with his wife and enjoy his extended family. He would miss the pay cheque each week but he wanted to retire. They could get by.

The contractor was sorry to see the good worker go and asked if he could build just one more house as a personal favour. The carpenter said yes, but over time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end a dedicated career.

When the carpenter finished his work, his employer came to inspect the house. Then he handed the front door key to the carpenter and said, "This is your house.....my gift to you".

The carpenter was shocked!

What a shame! If he had only known he was building his own house he would have done it all so differently.



MARCH

- 5th **Ash Wednesday**
10.00 am & 7.00 pm Holy Communion Services (with Imposition of Ashes)
- 7th **Women's World Day of Prayer**
2.30 pm Holy Trinity: Praying for Egypt
- 12th 7.30 pm **Collation** of the Rev'd Douglas Machiridza as Vicar of St Andrew's Church, Handsworth
- 19th 7.30 pm **PCC meeting** in the Dorothy Parkes' Centre
- 20th **Discoverers' Trip** to Coventry (see Christine Tanner for details)
- 27th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary for details)
- 27th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy for further details)

ANOTHER CHANCE

How often we wish for yet another chance to make a fresh beginning.

A chance to blot out our mistakes and change failure into winning.

It does not take a special time to make a brand new start.

It only takes the deep desire to try with all our heart.

To live a little better, to always be forgiving.
To add a little sunshine in a world for which we're living.

Never give up in despair nor think you are through.

For there's always this new day, the prospect to start anew.

Author Unknown

What we call the beginning is often the end.
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

- T.S. Eliot