

# THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD  
VOLUME 4 ISSUE 10 APRIL 2014



## VICAR'S VOICE

On the morning I sat down to write this, I had looked through a newspaper in which three of the headlines read:

'Official documents show that the Department for Work and Pensions is advising job centres on how to send people to food banks, despite ministers claiming that charitable support forms no part of the welfare system'.

'Since the conflict in Syria began in March 2011, more than 130,000 people have been killed and millions displaced'.

'A 15-year-old boy is charged with murder, and two others arrested, after the shooting of a 15-year-old girl in east London'.

These headlines amongst others, which included the ongoing search for flight MH370 and the storming of a Ukrainian airbase by Russian troops, speak to us powerfully of a troubled world.

In addition to the news we read and listen to daily, we also carry within us our own personal news headlines of the struggles we face in our lives and in the lives of those we love and care for. These headlines, whether they are national or global, public or personal, can make life hard and can evoke a range of difficult questions for

us.

Struggles, such as these, can find a place in the season of Lent where our attention is focused on the suffering of Christ. But, in addition to continuing our Lenten journey, April beckons in the Easter season. Easter Sunday, which falls on April 20<sup>th</sup>, is the day on which our hard walk through Lent, and the dark days of Holy Week, give way to the light and joy of the resurrection. The church that began Lent by removing flowers, and will end stripped bare, will be filled once more with light and colour. Flowers will be gloriously displayed, the Pascal candle will be lit and we will joyously sing, 'Jesus Christ is risen today'.

The contrast is stark and of course it is meant to be. But how do we hold together pain and suffering with the joy of Easter? Maybe we start by realising that Easter day is the day that reminds us that we can face into our struggles, because what we will celebrate is the promise that the darkness of suffering has been penetrated and infused with God's light and hope.

On Easter day we will celebrate the endless creative power of God to generate new things. The tree of death, that becomes the tree of life, shows us once and for all that God's capacity to burst through the worst of suffering is eternal.

## PAST MONTH'S NEWS

Despite inclement weather, the Discoverers enjoyed their trip to the Wolverley Bridge Garden Centre. Lent began with the traditional Imposition of Ashes at two services of Holy Communion on Ash Wednesday. The annual Women's World Day of Prayer was celebrated at Holy Trinity where the focus of prayer was Egypt and its peoples.

Members of Old Church attended the Collation of the Rev'd Douglas Machiridza as Vicar of St Andrew's Church, Handsworth. It was a delight for those from Old Church to see a former brother worshipper Douglas with Alice and their family warmly welcomed into their new congregation.

Jesus and the Importance of Doubt was the first of a five week exploration of faith at Holy Trinity. Lieutenant Lydia of the Salvation Army led a thought provoking reflection on doubt. The evening ended with Compline and all were encouraged to leave the church in silence, which proved a challenge for some!

During Lent, the Tuesday service of Holy Communion has been moved to 12.00pm and is followed by a light lunch of homemade soup in the vestry. This has been well attended and the soup greatly enjoyed by all. Donations made in appreciation are to be given to Christian Aid.

## A POINT OF VIEW

Denial is a default human reaction to what we perceive to be an intractable problem, particularly if dealing with it demands effort on our part. This has been magnified nationally where poverty right here at home is concerned. We have only to read certain sections of the press or watch a superficially analysed television programme about food banks to realize that. Thankfully, the church has, at last, spoken out clearly, informed by its frontline workers across the UK. Despite the fact that a minority of people continue to abuse the welfare system, hunger and homelessness are running sores in an otherwise still affluent and comfortable society. Some of this is due to the government's latest round of benefit changes, such as the 'bedroom tax', the withdrawal of crisis loans, and the downgrading of disability benefits, which is driving the most vulnerable to despair.

Personally, I do not want to see food banks embedded in our society as they appear to be in the USA, thereby letting governments off the hook and prolonging the very dependency they say they want to eradicate. We should, however, continue to support our food banks either by regular, direct giving and/or by volunteering, as a proactive response to the hunger around us. At the same time, as individuals or as members of political parties, community and religious groups, we should also be challenging government to show 'bias to the poor' in its welfare reform programme rather than stigmatizing those least able to help themselves, and to restore a reasonable standard of living which promotes human dignity.

The Smethwick Food bank is very grateful to all of you who continue to support its work at this time.

**Liz Goss**

The Bishop of Durham has claimed that people on benefits who rely on food banks should receive 'sympathy and solidarity' from politicians and the public rather than becoming pawns in a political row.

According to *The Daily Telegraph*, the Right Reverend Paul Butler described the increasing use of food banks as a 'terrible reality'.



## APRIL

- 3rd 7.30 pm **Lent Groups** with other Churches at Holy Trinity **The Conflict of Brand** (3rd) **My Church!** (10th)
- 10th
- 13th **PALM SUNDAY**  
10.15 am **Holy Communion** with Procession from Dorothy Parkes' Centre. **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** after the service  
5.00 pm Service of **Readings and Hymns for Passiontide**
- 14th 7.00 pm **Compline with Meditation**
- 15th 12 noon **Holy Communion**  
7.00 pm **Compline with Meditation**
- 16th 7.00 pm **Compline with Meditation**
- 17th **MAUNDY THURSDAY**  
8.00 pm **Holy Communion** with foot washing followed by Vigil
- 18th **GOOD FRIDAY**  
10.00 am **Walk of Witness** at Holy Trinity  
12 noon **At the Foot of the Cross** in The Old Church
- 20th **EASTER DAY**  
6.00 am **Service of Light**  
10.15 am **Holy Communion with Baptism** of Logan Blu and Alannah Marie Nock
- 24th **Discoverers' Trip** to Coughton Court (see Christine Tanner for details)
- 24th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary for details)
- 24th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy for further details)

**Love does not rejoice at wrong-doing, but rejoices with the truth;**

**Love bears all things, believes all things,**

**hopes all things, endures all things,**

**Love never ends.**