

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD

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VICAR'S VOICE

We are all interconnected, bound together in a million ways. Part of one body: from the food we eat, to the clothes we wear, to the hopes and prayers we share as Christ's family. And we're all touched by the same things: love and loss; fear and hope; and the troubling changes to our precious, fragile planet. (©Christian Aid 2014)

This interconnectedness, this being part of one body, is a gift from God. It means that we are never alone; we can share each other's joys and burdens; we can pool our skills and resources; we can work together to make a world of difference.

Another precious gift that God has lavished on humanity is the fact that, although we are intricately connected, we are all different. God seems to rejoice in diversity. This is evident at a global level and is equally evident in the local communities to which we are attached, including our church community.

These gifts of uniqueness, difference and interconnectedness give us much to celebrate. Praise be to God!

However, these gifts bring with them a challenge. It is not easy to honour and celebrate our differences and, at the same time, to live as 'one body' in Christ. The debate on the issue of women

Bishops, amongst other debates, within the Church of England bears witness to this.

One of the ways we will be reflecting on this at Old Church will be in relation to discipleship; that is the ways in which we learn how to be the best followers of Christ we can be. In the Autumn, everyone will be invited to explore this issue together and, as we do so, we will need to acknowledge our differences.

We will need to acknowledge the different stages we may be at on our faith journeys. Some of us will have called ourselves people of faith for many years whereas others will be very new to faith. We will also need to acknowledge that we learn in different ways. Some of us will prefer to study the Biblical text in a systematic way; others will prefer to explore spirituality and prayer in an experiential or creative way; others still, may want the opportunity to respond to God through art and poetry. These differences are a real gift to our church and, as such, we should avoid taking a 'one model fits all' approach to discipleship.

So, please hold this important task in your prayers, that we might discern a discipleship programme that both honours our differences and draws us together, as one in Christ.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

Inclement weather saw Old Church's Summer fete held in the Dorothy Parkes Centre. Despite the change of venue and, due to unforeseen circumstance, the absence of Uplands Manor Primary School choir, the event was a triumphant success. Thanks to the dedication of so many helpers before, during and after the event a tremendous sum of £1111.59 was raised for church funds.

A large number from the congregations of St Matthews and Old Church joined together at Holy Trinity Church for a service to celebrate the work in Smethwick of the CSMV Sisters. Fellowship was shared afterwards with welcome

refreshments

St James' Church, Rounds Green hosted the Deanery Confirmation where six members from Old Church were confirmed along with others from churches within the Deanery. Bishop David also spectacularly baptised two members from Old Church, ensuring that they experienced a thorough soaking before being confirmed. The Smethwick CAN meeting held at St Hilda's discussed various matters including the issue of homelessness especially within the West Bromwich area. An idea that churches in the area might open up as night shelters throughout the winter was explored.

LAY PASTORAL TEAM

In September, the accredited Lay Pastoral Team at Old Church is due to be re-commissioned. This will happen at one of our Sunday services and will be cause for much celebration and thanksgiving.

Paul & Jean reflect.....

It seems only yesterday that many in the Old Church family were asked to think about starting a process of training, leading to being licensed as Lay Ministers. In the end, seven of us turned up for the first session.

In fact, training for the PCT was not the start of the process. A year before we had started the one-year 3D course. It was a steep learning curve as we realised how very certain some people were about their faith and how shallow was our own knowledge and commitment. Faith presents itself in so many ways and we had a feeling for what St Paul meant when he talked about knowing and understanding in parts. Old Church seems capable of coping with all of us in our quests for God.

So, with the 3D finished, the prospect of a further two years preparation for work with the Pastoral Care Team was exciting. The team from Old Church was joined by a group from Rowley Regis. Our first study period, led by Douglas – now the Reverend Douglas Machiridza, thought about listening. Speaking is easy but listening, real listening is difficult. There were activities including role play, listening to key speakers and joining in discussions. And later we looked at our own church and those who lived in the parish with their different hopes and needs.

In the second year, we often travelled to different parts of the Diocese to join specialist groups thinking about bereavement support, about hospital visiting and working with offenders. In some years, there would be an emphasis on working with children and young people although it never quite happened for us.

And so were the three years training and the five years of PCT activity worth it? Well, we enjoyed it then and continue to do so, but that is not the point. In truth, the question is whether the Pastoral Care Team has made a difference, however modest, to the life of Old Church. That is what we all need to consider as the PCT prepares for its second five years.

The PCT is not a 'closed' team and anyone would be welcome to join this work. So, if you have a sense of calling to pastoral and community ministry, then please have a chat with Deb or any member of the existing team about what is involved and the training that is required.



AUGUST

- 4th 11.00 am—11.00 pm At Holy Trinity
A Prayerful Commemoration of the start of World War 1
(Old Church, St Matthew with St Chad and Holy Trinity Group Ministry event)
- 4th 7.30 pm **Lay Pastoral Ministry** Team meet at the Vicarage
- 14th 7.00 pm Service of **Holy Communion** with hymns and poetry to celebrate the **Blessed Virgin Mary**.
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary for details)
- 28th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy for further details)

THE GUIDE

Picture a man stumbling along in a heavy fog, completely disoriented. Then, off in the distance, he sees the light of one small lamp. Its glow is sufficient neither to burn off the fog nor to illuminate the obstacles that might be on the ground between the man and that lamp. Still, it is a steadily burning lamp. Something within the man prompts him to believe that if he heads toward it, he will be going in the right direction. That “something” we can call “faith.”

While heading toward the lamp, he finds another lost man whose eyesight is so poor he can't see the lamp. The first man takes the second by the hand and helps him toward the lamp also. The act of reaching out to another we can call “love.” And the lamp that draws him? It's called “hope.”

3D COURSE

The 3D Course is the Birmingham Diocesan course for developing Disciples. It is a 10 month Bible based course designed to enable people to learn more about the Christian faith. It could be just right for you if you are:

- Confirmed in the Church of England
- Wanting to understand the Christian faith more deeply.
- Open to explore how to live out your faith more confidently.
- Open to working in a group with other Christians from various parishes.

If you would like to attend the course, or want more information, speak to Deb or pick up one of the leaflets at the back of church.