

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD
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VICAR'S VOICE

I don't know how many of you listen to Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day', I am an avid listener. One particular thought for the day has stayed with me. In it Iraka Murad spoke about how easy it is to become slaves to linear time. He contrasted linear time to, what he called, 'sacred time', the time where heaven and earth come close and where the light of hope shines. He alluded to the ways in which, in our fast track world, we get easily distracted from what is really important and, as he spoke these words, his mobile phone went off!

In that moment two of the contradictory realities we now live with were present; a message which represents the way the sacred presence of God runs through all of eternity and the mobile phone which, one might argue, represents something of the instant and materialistic world in which we find ourselves.

So pertinent was that moment, that it seemed to strike a chord with the broadcasters and, as a result, the story featured in the news that evening.

As I listened, I was reminded once more about how the meeting of heaven and earth and the mobile phone speak powerfully about the kind of tension, and apparent contradiction, that many of us live with daily in

this part of the world. It has to do with our search for meaning in the midst of the fast pace of life

In Luke's Gospel Jesus reminds us that, 'it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom' (Luke 12 v 32). This is not a future promise - 'it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom' right now. In this world with all its demands regarding the pace of life and the drive to own things, it pleases God to bless us with priceless treasure. But I guess the question for all of us is: How do we receive God's good gifts within the frenzy and fretting of the anxious world?

Perhaps all we can do is stand in the world, in all its glory and complexity and create the time and space to receive from God's abundant offerings. To stand in the world with what Saint Ignatius refers to as a 'generosity of spirit', in other words, a spirit open to receive. Saint Ignatius reminds us of the importance of growing our attentiveness to God in the world around us.

There's a challenge here, I think, to take some time 'out,' even if that means putting the mobile phone, or similar, away for a while, and to let God speak to us of heaven and earth through the rhythm of the season and the wonders of the created world as autumn unfolds.

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

Harvest festivities began with an evening of fellowship that included a "Bring and Share" buffet together with entertainment consisting of poetry, songs, stories, a sketch and a quiz - all provided by talented members of our congregation. The Harvest Thanksgiving service included a thought provoking presentation about Traidcraft with cakes made from fairly traded ingredients on sale after the

Sunday morning service Holy Cross Day was marked with a reflective evening service of readings and hymns. The "Big Conversation" was held on two separate well attended occasions where ideas to develop the spiritual life of Old Church outside the formal liturgical services were discussed. Tea, coffee and excellent home made cakes helped the conversations flow.

FAREWELL FROM GAIL



I write this as my time at Old Church is coming to a close. It has been an exciting, challenging and also an affirming three months here. My time here has been challenging but also very rich, for Old Church has been a place of welcome, encouragement, holding, affirmation and personal and public transformation for me. I would really like to thank Deb for all the opportunities she has given me and everyone for accepting me and my family as you have.

While at Old Church, there have been many firsts. This began with me publicly saying that I was putting myself into the hands of God and God's people in a public period of discerning ordained ministry. Although I have long felt a sense that God was calling me to ministry in the church, ordained ministry was something which I had denied for a long time. However, being open to God's calling, I began to explore the internal wrestling and persistent restlessness within me, remembering and frequently reminding myself that it is not by our own doing but through the grace of God that all things are brought into being and fruition. With God, anything is possible!

This placement has been about discerning two things. Firstly it has been about me embracing public ministry in a position of leadership. I have been able to realistically imagine what the expectations and demands of ordained ministry may be. I have had the opportunity to embody the role on a daily basis with its rich and diverse duties and responsibilities both within the church and in the wider community.

Secondly it has been about being tested and affirmed (or not) by the church. This is where you, the people of Old Church have been so important in taking this process forward. Your comments, support and prayers will be of great assurance in the preparation of my portfolio for presentation to a 'Bishops' Advisory Panel'. If they consider that I have met the set criteria then I may be selected for formal training.

One of many experiences which I will take away from Old Church and being in a position of leadership has been the 'holding'. To be a visible instrument of God's grace; a presence of nurture, love, and transformation for others while at the same time being held, nurtured and transformed by the lives and stories of others has been a holy privilege of transcendent encountering. Thanks be to God.

Gail Rogers



OCTOBER

- 12th **Recommissioning of the Lay Pastoral Ministry Team** during the 10.15 am service
- 21st 7.30 pm **Deanery Synod Meeting**
- 22nd **Smethwick CAN Launch Day** (see invitation below)
- 23rd 7.00 pm **Dorothy Parkes' Centre AGM** at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre
- 30th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary for details)
- 30th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy for further details)

AN INVITATION TO THE LAUNCH OF SMETHWICK CAN

Many of you will now know about Smethwick Church Action Network and I know that some of you have already become involved in its work. Over the past few months this exciting new project has been busy establishing itself and developing its four streams of activity which are headed 'Response', 'Support', 'Learning' and 'Work'.

The project will be officially launched and commissioned in October. This is an ecumenical project and all of the churches involved, which includes Old Church, are invited to come together at Holy Trinity Church for a launch and commissioning event. It takes place on October 22nd from 7.30pm - 9.30pm.

The evening will include:

- An account of the Smethwick CAN story so far
- The launch of the 'Good Society Conversation'
- Input on Prayer Spaces in Schools and the opportunity to take part
- A reflection by Reverend Kate Pearson
- An ecumenical Act of Worship with the commissioning of the project
- Refreshments