

# THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD  
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## VICAR'S VOICE

'Well here we are at the beginning of a new year. So may I begin by wishing you all a fruitful, peace-filled and blessed 2015.

Traditionally this month, above all the other months in the year, begins with a bang (quite literally if there are fireworks involved). The first day of this month marks the beginning of a new year. For some, January 1<sup>st</sup> arrives filled with expectation and the hope of new things to come and, for others, it is filled with disappointment and for others still, it is filled with fear and dread.

But however we approach it, whatever is happening in our lives, we cannot escape the fact that at the point when one year moves into another, even if we sleep through it, we enter into a kind of liminal moment, a transitional moment between the old and the new. It is a time of crossing boundaries and a time of journeying.

This idea of journeying across boundaries is reflected in the festival we celebrate in church as January unfolds; the feast of Epiphany. Epiphany falls on the twelfth day of Christmas and brings the Christmas season to an end. On this day we celebrate Jesus' brilliant

manifestation to the Magi, who journeyed far to welcome the Christ child and to offer him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But the manifestation of Christ was not just revealed to those mysterious and devoted Wise Men, but to the whole world.

Tess Ward, in her book *The Celtic Wheel of the year*, explores the impact that Epiphany continues to have on all of us today. In doing so, she speaks of the gifts of this season, 'This is a time of stars and dreams, and signs that hang between our prayerful perception and the reality of our daily lives' she writes, and continues, 'It is a season of reflection on the past and wise discerning for the future'. (*O books, 2007*)

So as we mark Epiphany 2015, and begin the New Year, let us take the opportunity to ponder a while and to ask some important questions about our journeying in light of Christ, both as individuals and also as a church family. Questions such as: 'Where are we on our path with God and one another?' 'What direction do we feel drawn to go in during the coming year?' 'What do we need to do in order to take the next step?'

## LAST MONTH'S NEWS

Our thanks to Uplands Manor Primary School for allowing us to host our Christmas Fayre in their halls. Also thanks to the school choir for entertaining those present with a collection of Christmas songs and carols. £1623 was raised for church funds thanks to the generosity of both those who supported us with their custom and those who gave of their time to help before, during and after the event.

A service of readings and hymns heralded the beginning of Advent. Compline was celebrated on Wednesdays with a meditation that gave opportunity for personal reflection.

Carol singing at ASDA and subsequent donations raised £150 for the Disasters Emergency Committee Fund for those suffering from the Ebola virus.

Christmas activities, making sheep puppets, jingle bells, Christmas cards, paper chains and donkey dung were enjoyed at Holy Trinity during their Messy Church Christmas event. A moving service was held when prayers were hung on a Christmas tree in remembrance of Messy Church helper Molly, who has recently died. A Christmas meal was then shared before a surprise visit from Father Christmas.

# AN EPIPHANY BLESSING

## For Those Who Have Far to Travel

If you could see the journey whole  
you might never undertake it;  
might never dare the first step  
that propels you from the place  
you have known  
toward the place you know not.

Call it  
one of the mercies of the road:  
that we see it only by stages  
as it opens before us,  
as it comes into our keeping  
step by single step.

There is nothing for it  
but to go  
and by our going  
take the vows the pilgrim takes:  
to be faithful to the next step;  
to rely on more than the map;  
to heed the signposts  
of intuition and dream;  
to follow the star  
that only you will recognize;  
to keep an open eye for the wonders  
that attend the path;  
to press on  
beyond distractions  
beyond fatigue  
beyond what would tempt you  
from the way.

There are vows  
that only you will know;  
the secret promises  
for your particular path  
and the new ones  
you will need to make  
when the road is revealed  
by turns you could not have foreseen.

Keep them,  
break them,  
make them again:  
each promise becomes  
part of the path;  
each choice creates the road  
that will take you  
to the place where at last  
you will kneel  
to offer the gift most needed—  
the gift that only you can give—  
before turning  
to go home  
by another way.



## JANUARY

- 12th 7.30 pm **Lay Pastoral Ministry** team meeting at the Vicarage
- 17th 10.00 am - 12.00 noon **Singing Workshop** in The Old Church
- 19th 6.30 pm **DPC Board meeting** at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre
- 21st 7.30 pm **PCC meeting** at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre
- 29th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary for details)
- 29th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy for further details)

## A YEAR OF TIME

As we look into 2015 we look at a block of time. We see 12 months, 52 weeks, 365 days, 8,760 hours, 525,600 minutes, 31,536,000 seconds. And all is a gift from God. We have done nothing to deserve it, earn it, or purchased it. Like the air we breathe, time comes to us as a part of life.

The gift of time is not ours alone. It is given equally to each person. Rich and poor, educated and ignorant, strong and weak—every man, woman and child has the same twenty-four hours every day.

Another important thing about time is that you cannot stop it. There is no way to slow it down, turn it off, or adjust it. Time marches on.

And you cannot bring back time. Once it is gone, it is gone. Yesterday is lost forever. If yesterday is lost, tomorrow is uncertain. We may look ahead at a full year's block of time, but we really have no guarantee that we will experience any of it.

Obviously, time is one of our most precious possessions. We can waste it. We can worry over it. We can spend it on ourselves. Or, as good stewards, we can invest it in the kingdom of God.

The new year is full of time. As the seconds tick away, will you be tossing time out the window, or will you make every minute count?