

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

The hectic turmoil of many of our lives makes it increasingly difficult to take time out for much needed reflection and spiritual regeneration. As we rush from one task to another, and one place to another, it is far too easy to lose sight of what is a really important human need; the need to listen, to reflect, to be silent and to pray, in order to draw closer to God.

Taking a 'Quiet Day' is one way of creating the time, in our busy lives, to do this in a deliberate and planned way. A Quiet Day is simply a day set apart for us to use for quiet prayer and reflection. There is no one set way of organising, or using, a quiet day, they probably work best when they are tailored to meet our personal needs.

For some this will mean going to a retreat house, possibly for a guided day, where there are other people to share with and to pray with. For others, it may mean creating the opportunity for a quiet day at home. For some it may involve reading the bible, or other spiritual or theological books; for some engaging in a creative activity; for others it may mean spending time in complete silence. Much of this has to do with the kind of people we are, our personal preferences and the

practicalities of our lives.

As well as individuals, many churches make a conscious effort to take a day out of the hurly-burly to hold a quiet day and that's what we're doing on July 18th. A group of us will be travelling to Wantage, in Oxfordshire, for a parish quiet day. We will be reflecting, in one way or another, on this short passage from scripture:

'I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert'. (*Isaiah 43 v19*)

If you are not able to join us on this day, I would really encourage you to consider taking some quiet time of your own, even if you can't manage a whole day. You might want to consider, along with those of us who are going to Wantage, to reflect on that passage from Isaiah, but in your own place and in your own way.

However we manage to create the time for quiet reflection amidst our busy lives let us trust, in the words of Thomas Merton, that, 'below the surface, our mind and will and heart are being drawn into a place where God is at work'

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

The beginning of June was the start of the meteorological summer and we were blessed with suitably seasonal weather for the feast of Corpus Christi. which was celebrated with a service of Holy Communion in the vicarage garden followed by a barbeque.

The Summer Fayre was held at the end of June in the Dorothy Parkes' Centre..As well as being a major fundraising event, this is an opportunity for the congregation to work together and also to meet with members of the local community who support our events.

Two study courses, "Exploring Christianity" and "Turning to Christ" have begun. Both of these courses are being well attended and are instigating lively discussion and debate. Hopefully, those attending, will gain a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and be better equipped to serve the Lord in their daily lives.

Holy Trinity's annual pilgrimage to the St Alban's Festival was joined by members of our congregation. They had a good and rewarding day which will be the subject of a future article.

MY DISCERNMENT JOURNEY... SO FAR

First I met with Deb as I believe I have a calling to ministry, and following a few meetings Deb wrote to Rev'd Canon Faith Claringbull, who is the Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Dean of Women's Ministry.

I met with Faith and then with a Vocations Advisor. During our meetings the advisor asked me searching questions, looking at my spiritual and life journeys. The meetings were very helpful in clearing my mind of some challenging questions.

The process of discernment is prayerfully reflective and purposefully slow. At first I found this frustrating, but as time passed I came to see the sense of not rushing into a ministry that has the potential to touch lives, and that to rush any point would be wrong. Crucially there are points where I or the Diocese can say 'I don't think it's for me/you yet'. If this should happen there are supportive networks in place for prayer and to talk things through.

Following the meetings with my vocations advisor he wrote his report to Faith on his findings, it's not his role to say yes or no to me being trained for ministry.

I met again with Faith, who is considering a placement. Meanwhile requests for references have gone to four referees who have to supply a detailed reference and discuss it with me.

I have been offered a place to study at The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham but I'm unsure if I will be sufficiently through the process to study this September as I have to be recommended by the Bishop following a weekend residential, called a Bishops' Advisory Panel before training.

Here at Old Church I am given opportunities to be involved with serving, leading the Ministry of the Word and preaching, together with helping deliver a 'Faith Matters' course, all of which I find very humbling.

I'm still early on in the process of discernment, but with God's love, guidance and buckets of patience, together with the prayers, love and support of close family and my friends at Old Church, I'll get there.

June O'Brien



JULY

- 1st The **Annual General Meeting** of the Trustees to the Smethwick Chapelry
- 1st 7.00 pm **Safe-guarding** sub-committee meeting at the Vicarage
- 2nd 2 pm **Ministry Team** meet at the Vicarage
- 2nd 6.30 pm **DPC Board Meeting** at the DPC
- 5th 12th, 19th & 26th at 12:15pm – Faith Matters: **Exploring Christianity** at the DPC.
- 6th & 18th 13th at 7pm – **Pilgrim Course** at Old Church
- 18th **Parish Quiet Day** at Wantage
- 19th 6:30 pm - **Deanery Confirmation** at St Paul's, Blackheath
- 20th 7.30 pm **PCC meeting** at the DPC
- 21st 2.00 pm **Art Box** at Old Church with a BBQ in the Vicarage Garden
- 27th 7.30 pm **Lay Pastoral Team** meet at Vicarage
- 29th 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm **Soul Space** at Old Church
- 30th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

I was recently asked by someone I know, what I thought the purpose of life to be. The question I shelved, but then started to think, Just what was life's purpose to me?

Is it to care for the planet, to care for this world, to care for each other and people I love? I've thought, and thought, but heavens above, I really don't know.

But then again, I think it's many things, to help other people, to be friendly and kind, to give and to take with a full peace of mind, Teach my children to live and to love with their heart. I think these things then become part of the purpose of life.

But when I look back all these things become one; to live and to love and enjoy and have fun. Be caring and happy and make someone laugh, and let people you meet see you smile. There are so many things that all go together, that I think I'll just sit here a while And ponder on the purpose of life.

Sheila Weston