

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD
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VICAR'S VOICE

Many of us welcome, and enjoy, the month of August with its promise of sunshine, summer fruits, colour filled gardens, festivals, periods of rest and trips away. But for young people August can be a pivotal month in their lives. This is the month in which exam results are expected, decisions regarding further education and employment are considered and when some children prepare to start school for the first time, or to move from one school to another.

I imagine you would all agree that the world in which these children, and young people, are growing up is one that is changing fast. New technologies and new ways of communicating are creating great new opportunities and, for those who are able to take advantage of these changes, making connections with others across the globe is possible, as is travelling and learning in ways many of us would have not have dreamed possible.

But all of this takes place alongside rapid economic and social change and because of this, amongst difficulties that can arise closer to home, a lot of children and young people face huge challenges in their lives. Indeed, sadly, for every child or young person in our community who will further realise his or her own potential this August there will be another

who will be facing some kind of crisis. And, as I guess we can all imagine, the effects of a crisis can be devastating on the lives of the young.

Fortunately, there are organisations that can provide help and support. One of the more recent additions in this area of provision is an organisation called 'Safe Families for Children'. This organisation provides help for families, who have little or no support around them, while the crisis is being resolved. This might involve a child or young person staying with a host family for a short period of time or having a volunteer who will visit them at their home in order to offer the practical and emotional support that's needed.

Safe families for Children works, in particular, with churches to recruit and train their volunteers. In the autumn, of this year, there will be opportunities for people, here at Old Church, to get involved. If this is something that interests you and you would like more information please visit the Safe Families for Children website, <https://www.safefamiliesforchildren.com>

In the meantime, as we move through August let us remember children and young people in our prayers.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

Our Summer Fayre was held on the last Saturday of June and raised £1,252.79 for church funds. Our thanks go to all who supported this event whether by donating merchandise and prizes, helping with the many tasks in running the event or, most importantly, giving us their valued custom.

Some members of our congregation visited the Community of St Mary the Virgin at Wantage. As part of the Parish "Away Day" they were able to reflect together through

scripture, meditation and prayer.

The Warley Deanery Confirmation Service and Baptisms with Bishop David was held at St Paul's Blackheath on Sunday 19th July. Old Church had ten candidates including one to be baptised and confirmed. A full church included sponsors and a good number of supporters from our own congregation.

The second Art Box session for younger people was held in church on Tuesday 21st July. This was followed by a barbeque.

SCHOOL SUMMER HOLIDAY FOODBANK APPEAL

During school holidays families with children who would normally have a free school meal at lunchtime struggle to provide their children with 30 extra lunchtime meals throughout the six weeks school summer holiday. In excess of 12,400 children are eligible for free school meals in Sandwell.

May we ask you all to try to help particularly at this time of extra demand on foodbank resources. Remember **every** can help.

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Thank you.

Julie Whittam-James, Team Manager,
Barnardo's Family Support Sandwell

PILGRIMAGE OF ST ALBAN

On Saturday 20th June some of our congregation joined with those from Holy Trinity on their annual pilgrimage to St Alban's where the saint's martyrdom is remembered.

Alban's martyrdom, when he took the place of a persecuted Christian priest was graphically re-enacted in a procession led by papier mâché puppets depicting the main characters in the story. These included Alban and the priest he rescued, the roman soldier who threw down his sword as he was not able to bring himself to perform the execution and the soldier who struck the blow that beheaded Alban. The latter was "rewarded" by his eyes falling out! Thus a "pair of eyes" featured prominently in the day's procession. A spring of water then emerged where Alban's head fell and a simple church was build on the spot. Over the years, following the founding of a Benedictine abbey in Saxon times and its later replacement by a larger Norman building, the present day cathedral remains to commemorate the historical events of the creation of England's first Christian Martyr.

Following the outdoor pageantry, which the rain failed to dampen there was a celebratory Eucharist at which the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, preached to a congregation of over 2,000. Later, at evensong, the saint's bones were blessed and replaced in a reliquary in his shrine.

The whole mood of the day was one of celebration and also consideration of the plight of those who are still persecuted for their faith and beliefs today. A joyous day - don't miss next year's pilgrimage!

Maggy Markworthy



AUGUST

- 1st 3.00 pm **Marriage** of Liam & Tracy
- 6th 7.00 pm Service of **Holy Communion** to celebrate the **Feast of the Transfiguration**
- 8th 12.30 pm **Marriage** of Darren & Samantha
- 16th 5.00 pm Service of **Holy Communion** to celebrate the **Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 24th **Romanian children's choir** performance at Old Church (time to be arranged)
- 26th 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm **Soul Space**
- 27th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary for details)



We celebrate with Martin who has recently been recognised as an 'Outstanding Adult Learner' and awarded a certificate for his computer skills. We offer him our congratulations.

PARISH AWAY DAY

On July 18th we visited the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage for our Quiet Day. Through words, visuals, worship and input from Ann, Sister Stella and Deb we quietly reflected, in beautiful surroundings, on this evocative passage: '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)

These comments were made as we prepared to leave:

- 'In a world of rush, this island of peace is rich'.
- 'This was a beautiful place to reflect'.
- 'An experience of tranquility'.
- 'I found peace, rest and refreshment'.
- 'I relaxed and enjoyed the flowers'.
- 'The grass lawns were full of little blue flowers called 'self-heal' – which somehow seemed appropriate'.
- 'Great peace and order made it possible to reclaim hope'.
- 'I wouldn't have missed it for the world'.