

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD
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VICAR'S VOICE

'But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In God's hand is the life of every living thing'. (Job 12: 7-10)

On September 1st churches, in many parts of the world, celebrate Creation Day. This marks the start of a season, known by some, as Creationtide, which stretches into October and takes in the feast of St Francis of Assisi. It is the period of time in which churches celebrate their harvest festivals, as we will on October 11th.

Whether we live in the country or in the city, this time of year provides an opportunity for us to, not only, give thanks for the abundance of God's good earth but to also reflect on our role as stewards of all that God has made.

St Francis is a guiding light for many of those who, not only rejoice in the wonder, beauty and generosity of creation, but who also deeply respects and honour its integrity. He is particularly influential because he lived his life out of a deep relationship with the rest of the natural world; a relationship that, for him, was so close that he experienced it as one would a

human family. So much so that, over time, St Francis began to speak of the natural world, and all its creatures, as his brothers and sisters. This familiar closeness is reflected in these words of praise he wrote:

'Praised be you, my Lord,
through Sister Earth our Mother
who sustains and governs us.

Praised be to you, my Lord
with all your creatures
especially Sir Brother sun.'

Being made in the image of God means that we are called to be co-creators, rejoicing and nurturing the diversity of God's earth rather than plundering its resources. And, of course, as the gentle balance of nature is disturbed by global warming, our need to treasure the earth rather than exploit its treasures gets ever more urgent. I cannot put it better than St Francis, who wrote:

'All creatures have the same source as we have. Like us, they derive the life of thought, love, and will from the Creator. Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them; but to stop there is a complete misapprehension of the intentions of Providence. We have a higher mission. God wishes that we should succour them whenever they require it'. (St Francis)

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

Mohsen was welcomed into the Christian family at his baptism which took place in one of our Sunday morning services of Holy Communion.

Some of the congregation enjoyed a gentle early autumn stroll round the RSPB nature reserve in Sandwell Valley. Whilst not many of us are knowledgeable ornithologists, it was a great opportunity to enjoy the sunshine and a chat in very pleasant surroundings. Most of the group then returned to Old Church for

Evening Prayer - a lovely way to thank and praise God for his blessings.

A service of Hymns and Readings for Holy Cross day replaced our normal service of Evening Prayer on the second Sunday of the month.

The first of five experimental sessions on the theme of "A Way into Prayer: finding God in all things" was held in church. These sessions are based on key ideas including the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius.



One World Week is a Development Education Charity. Each year 'The Week' is an opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to come together to learn about cultural differences, interdependence and global justice. People are invited to organise local events and to spread their learning in order to take action for justice. For more information visit the One World Week website www.oneworldweek.org

ONE WORLD CAFE EVENT

At Old Church a small group has gathered to organise a 'One World Cafe' luncheon event which will take place:

At: 12 Noon (following the Sunday service)

On: Sunday October 25th

At: The Dorothy Parkes Centre

If you wish, you are invited to bring some food, that you associate with your particular culture, to share with others. But, most importantly, you are invited to come along and share in eating the food, to enjoy conversation with others and to learn something about different cultures.



OCTOBER

- 4th 2.00 pm **Fellowship Walk** - for further details speak to Paul Martin
- 6th, 13th, 20th & 27th 7.00 pm at Old Church '**A way into Prayer: finding God in all things**'
- 10th **The Harvest Supper** at the DPC
- 11th 10.15 am at Old Church - **Our Annual Harvest Festival**
5.00 pm **Sung Compline**
- 12th 7.00 pm **The DPC Annual General Meeting** at the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 28th 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm **Soul Space**
- 29th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary for details)

Blessing of Hope

So may we know
the hope
that is not just
for someday
but for this day
here, now,
in this moment
that opens to us
hope not made of wishes
but of substance
hope made of sinew
and muscle and bone
hope that has breath
and a beating heart
hope that will not
keep quiet and be polite
hope that knows
how to holler
when it is called for
hope that knows
how to sing
when there seems little cause
hope that raises us from the dead
not someday but this day,
every day,
again and again and again.
– Jan Richardson