

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

Well here we are at the beginning of another new year. So may I begin by wishing you all a fruitful, peace-filled and blessed 2016.

Traditionally, as we move into a new year many of us reflect back over the past twelve months and make some resolutions about how we are going to approach the year ahead. Often these resolutions are very personal, for example to give up smoking, to lose weight or to exercise more.

This process of reflecting back, and making resolutions, can be really helpful, but if we locate them in our individual lives only, we easily miss something of the bigger picture. In asking ourselves the question 'How do I want to do things differently in my life?' we can forget to ask ourselves the question, 'How do we want the world in which we live to be different?'

In December 2015 there was a story in the news about Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg (the founder of facebook). It featured the letter that the couple wrote to their newborn daughter Max, in which they address this question for themselves. In it they state that they intend to give away 99% of their fortune to make the world a better place. They write:

"Your mother and I don't yet have the words to

describe the hope you give us for the future. Your new life is full of promise, and we hope you will be happy and healthy so you can explore it fully. You've already given us a reason to reflect on the world we hope you live in.

Like all parents, we want you to grow up in a world better than ours today... we will do our part to make this happen, not only because we love you, but also because we have a moral responsibility to all children in the next generation."

When we stop to reflect on world events, as they have unfolded in 2015, it's hard not to feel depressed and anxious. The migrant crisis, the impact of climate change, multiple wars, the growth in food poverty, the lack of financial stability for so many and the aftermath of terrorist attacks, to name but a few, have flooded the news headlines. But rather than let these events overwhelm us, perhaps there's an opportunity to let them be a catalyst. Just as having their firstborn child prompted the Zuckerbergs to reflect on the question: 'What kind of world do we want to leave to the next generation?' So, as we move into a new year, may we reflect on this question also and, like them, resolve to play our part in any way we can.

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

On the Tuesday and Wednesday before Christmas week, Old Church was filled with the sounds of Christmas as children from Uplands Manor Primary School sang Carols and Christmas songs to the delight of their families and accompanying school staff. All children and adults appreciated the mince pies and chocolates shared by Old Church.

On the Monday of Christmas week, children and families were once again welcomed into Old Church for Christmas Art Box; where they

took part in creative activities that explored the Christmas story. A short service was followed by a delicious Christmas meal shared by over fifty guests and an early visit by Father Christmas delighted all children present.

Several members of Old Church congregation assisted with a Christmas service at Penmakers' Court where a large number of residents, their children and grandchildren experienced the Christmas story through readings and carols.

2016

This New Year gives us the gift of more than 525,600 minutes. What we do with this gift determines the quality of our life, the level of our happiness, the value of the memories we create and the difference we can make in the world.

Therefore, here are some words to remember as you enter into the New Year

Spend time with people you love. Cherish family and friends.

If you're not having fun, go and do something that IS fun!!! Spend your time doing what you love and what brings joy into your life.

Let go of the past. Don't waste a good minute worrying about a bad one.

Be positive. Realise you do have a choice, and choose to be positive in your thoughts and your actions.

Take baby steps and don't give up! Keep moving in the right direction. Trust yourself and your abilities.

Embrace change. Resisting change is like trying to swim upstream. Instead, embrace it and go with the flow.

Connect with Nature. Watch sunsets. Talk to a tree. Listen to the wind. In all things, find your connection to something bigger than you.

Love life! Do what you love and love what you do.

Laugh! Relax, be playful and remember, life is meant to be fun!

Expand your world. Learn about other cultures, celebrate our differences and find common ground.

Dream BIG! Dream big dreams and trust that you're on the right path to make them happen. You deserve the very best in life- claim it!

Listen to your inner voice. Many times, wisdom comes to us in silence.

Spread kindness. Connect with one another. Share a smile.

Exercise your mind and your body. We only grow old when we're stagnant.

Pause. Breathe. Take time for yourself.

Pass it on. Give. Share. Give away things you don't need.

Be grateful. No matter where you are express gratitude.

Be conscious of your thoughts. Know that your thoughts hold the power to create tomorrow's reality. So think good thoughts.

Be YOU! You are so very beautiful; so let your light shine. You are an unlimited being with infinite potential. You have no limitations except those that you place on yourself.

Today, in this very moment, you have the chance to start anew. Embrace the moment, be grateful for the opportunities and truly celebrate the moments of your life.



JANUARY

- 10th 5.00 pm Service of **Holy Communion** with prayers for healing.
- 11th 7.30 pm Meeting of the **Lay Pastoral Ministry team** at the Vicarage
- 16th 10.00 am - 12 noon at Old Church **Singing Workshop**
- 17th 5.00 pm at Old Church **Ecumenical Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**
- 18th 7.30 pm at the DPC - **PCC Meeting**
- 27th 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm **Soul Space**
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in Old Church (see Rosemary for details)

SMETHWICK OLD CHURCH: 'WHAT'S ON 2016'

The 'What's On 2016' programme is now available in church. We have a lot to look forward to this year. There will be the opportunity to sing together, learn together and socialise with one another; there are activities for people of all ages and activities that reflect the season of the church year. We can continue to enjoy the things that worked well in 2015 and we can undertake some new, and exciting, events and activities including a series of presentations by Dr. Ann Conway-Jones entitled 'Visions of Heaven: the Jewish roots of Christian mysticism' and the 'Festival Week' which will celebrate the creativity of Old Church and the skills and talents of so many.

So, pick up your programme and put in your diaries the things that interest you!

The new year unfolds like pages in a book yet to be written, bringing hope and endless possibilities. Praying God's love shines bright in your new year, and His blessings overflow for you.