

# 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

There has, as many know, been an unfolding piece of artwork in front of the altar, throughout Lent and into Easter, which speaks about 'hope'. The piece was started just before Lent, when a number of us set about representing 'hope' in colours, shapes and textures. Colourful fabrics were cut up and collaged onto a hessian canvas. When it was finished it looked vibrant and full of energy.

The next stage was to weave dark knotted threads, that spoke of our struggles and doubts, on top of this colourful depiction. These threads were woven by people who attended the evening service for Lent, by those at Tuesday Communion, the residents of Penmakers' Court and members of the Sunday morning congregation. Each week as we thought about the burdens we, and others, carry the picture of hope became more obscured until on Good Friday, there was no visible sign of 'hope' left.

But, of course, the picture of hope was still intact, we just couldn't see it anymore. And this reflects the way things can be for us. When life becomes difficult; when we face loss, death or illness; when we look at scenes of refugees crossing dangerous waters in overloaded vessels or living in camps where there is no privacy, dignity or security; when we

hear the stories of historical sexual abuse and the ways that victims were so badly let down by institutions such as the BBC and the church; our sense of hope can be diminished or obscured. These struggles become woven into our experience of hope, like the dark knotted threads on the picture.

But the golden threads of hope are still there, they remain even when we can no longer see them in the way we once did. And this is what we celebrate at Easter, the season we have just moved into. To represent this, we cut through the dark threads on our picture as part of the service of Light on Easter Eve, just before we said the familiar words: *Christ is risen! He is risen indeed Alleluia!*

This symbolic act was dramatic and it made the point. But it's rarely that simple in our own lives. It is much more likely that we will need to carefully unpick the dark threads of despair to reveal the gold threads of hope, or even to get someone to help with the unpicking. Although it may well be a difficult and sometimes a long process, the Easter stories show us that God's hope is always present and the threads of that hope are woven into all that God has made.

This picture will remain in church throughout this glorious season. I hope it speaks to you, as it has to me!

## LAST MONTH'S NEWS

A service prepared by Christian Women in Cuba was held in Holy Trinity church to mark Women's World Day of Prayer.

The Discoverers began their year's activities with a trip to the Leather Museum in Walsall. Following a guided tour, they went on to have lunch at the Chestnut Tree near Wednesbury. Fair Trade Fortnight was marked at Old Church with a "One World Cafe" event where breakfasts were served both before and after our morning service of Holy Communion on

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March. Everyone was delighted and impressed with the quality of the food served and the Fair Trade items on sale.

Liturgically, March was dominated by the observance of Lent with a break to celebrate Mothering Sunday.

Some of our congregation have attended the Lent course held at Smethwick Baptist Church and explored the meaning of the Beatitudes and their relevance for the people of Smethwick.

## SHARED CONVERSATIONS



In its report published in November 2013, the House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality recommended that:

*“The subject of sexuality, with its history of deeply entrenched views, would be best addressed by facilitated conversations or a similar process to which the Church of England needs to commit itself at national and diocesan level.”*

As a result facilitated conversations have been taking place through out the country over the last year to create safe spaces in which questions of difference and disagreement can be explored in relation to scripture, mission and human sexuality.

The aim of the regional conversations has been that the diversity of views within the church will be expressed honestly and heard respectfully.

The church has needed to reflect on how they should respond given the significant changes in our culture in relation to human sexuality.

The Birmingham Changing Attitude Group provides a forum in which this, and other related issues, can be discussed. It also offers itself as a resource to parishes and Deaneries. The current programme is available at the back of church. For more information on Changing Attitude go to [www.changingattitude.org.uk](http://www.changingattitude.org.uk)

## THE PILGRIM COURSE

We are planning a further *Pilgrim Course*, starting on 20<sup>th</sup> April and continuing for six weeks. This is an opportunity to discuss our *Christian Journeys* using video, audio and printed materials but also the insights of those who attend. This year, we will be focussing on the Eucharist, that great sacrament of Christianity.

What does it mean to ‘eat the body and blood of Christ’, to be ‘the Body of Christ’? It is an opportunity to share our hopes and beliefs with others, and there are no right answers – probably. Everybody is welcome.



## APRIL

- 17th 12noon **The Annual Church Meeting** at the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 19th 7.00 pm at Old Church - Workshop: **Leading Prayers in Worship**
- 20th & 27th 7.30 pm at Old Church - **The Pilgrim Course**
- 21st **Discoverers outing to Hollybush Garden Centre.** For details speak to Christine Tanner
- 25th 7.00 pm **Junior Church Leaders** meeting at the Vicarage
- 27th 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm **Soul Space**
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in Old Church (see Rosemary for details)



## Fundraiser Fashion Show and Clothes sale

At: The Dorothy Parkes Centre  
On: April 16th 2016  
At: 7pm

This a great opportunity for women to enjoy a fun evening, that includes shopping for clothes from major High Street stores with up to 75% off.

Tickets are £5 each and can be purchased from  
Mandy Smith, Diane Meacham and Jean Martin (after church on Sundays).

All money raised from this event will go towards Church funds.