

# 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

This edition of the Newsletter will reach you on the threshold of Lent. Ash Wednesday, this year, falls on the first day of March and will mark the beginning of the inviting, puzzling and challenging season that takes us through to Easter Day.

This year, Lent comes at a time when our world seems to be particularly disturbing, chaotic and unpredictable. At home we face a crisis in the NHS and the provision of social care, uncertainty about how Brexit will unfold and the impact it is likely to have on our economy and way of life and an increase in hate crimes and division within our communities. Abroad we see the relentless and devastating impact of war and conflict, a growth in the threats of terrorist attacks, a swing politically to the far right and uncertainty about the impact the new president of the USA will have on the world. The sense of turbulence and fragmentation is inescapable and, as a consequence, it's hard to find and hold on to a sense of security and hope.

Lent, with its focus on what it means to go into the wilderness, offers the opportunity for us to pay attention to the hard places in our lives and our experiences of brokenness.

In preparation for this, a few of us met for a creativity workshop entitled 'Darkness and Light'. We explored this theme by tearing up paper and sticking the fragments onto pieces of card. For the world we tore up pages from an atlas; for the stories of pain, uncertainty and struggle we tore up pages from newspapers and for our personal experiences we tore up tissue paper. At the same time, we reflected on how the love of God casts a light over all the brokenness in our lives and the life of the world. We acknowledged that this light doesn't always result in the fragments being put back together again, not immediately anyhow, but that it permeates the brokenness with a sense of peace and hope.

Amongst other opportunities to explore this further, this work will continue in the Sunday services during Lent and will form the basis for our time of confession each week. I pray that you will find this helpful as we journey though this season together.

Entering into Lent is an option, not a requirement, of our faith. No one has to sign up for it. But, if we do, we can expect to grow deeper into the heart of God and ourselves.

## PAST MONTH'S NEWS

On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> February we welcomed The Oakville Singers on their second visit to Old Church. They performed a concert of both sacred and secular choral works, led by their conductor, Ivan Oliver and accompanied on the piano and organ by Victoria Barlow. Following a short break they led us in an inspiring service of Choral Evensong. Their visit concluded with a small reception where cakes and drinks were served.

The Discoverers' outing in February was to Lichfield. They visited Erasmus Darwin House, an independent museum that was once the home of Erasmus Darwin, who was one of the key thinkers of the Midlands Enlightenment and also a natural philosopher, physiologist and slave-trade abolitionist. The group also visited the Cathedral, with its three spires known as the "Ladies of the Vale". Lunch was traditional "pub fare" in a traditional "local".



## Fair Trade Fortnight

27th February - 12th March 2017

### It's time to put Fair Trade in your Break

There is enough food in the world for us all, even in many food insecure regions where Fair Trade operates. But some farmers and workers are earning so little, they simply cannot afford to buy it.

**FAIRTRADE** works to change this, by making sure companies pay a fairer price for what people grow, plus a little extra for farmers and workers to invest in their businesses or communities. When people get a fairer price, they can take more control over their lives when times are hard, and worry less about how they will feed their families. Whether it's the extra cash in their pockets or being able to improve their farms to grow more food to eat, Fair trade means many farmers and workers are able to do what we take for granted - put enough food on the table for the people they care about, all year round.

Fairtrade is best known for providing producers with a minimum price for their product, one which aims to cover what it costs them to grow it, and an additional amount, the Fair trade premium to be invested by the producers as a group, however they see fit.

### ONE WORLD CAFE EVENT – at the Dorothy Parkes Centre

Here at Old Church we are joining the Fair Trade Foundation's challenge to put **Fair Trade in your break** by providing a Fair Trade brunch

**On March 12th between 11.30 and 12.30** we are hosting a Fair Trade Brunch so come along and join us

There will be fair trade tea and ground coffee, juice, cereal, and fruit, locally produced bread providing toast with fair trade jam/marmalade/honey or chocolate spread and fair trade banana bread. In addition we will have fair trade food and crafts for sale

All donations to Fair Trade Charity

**Don't miss the fun.**

### Traidcraft Stall

Every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month Rosemary runs a Traidcraft Stall in the Dorothy Parkes Centre, after the Sunday Service, to provide us all with the opportunity to buy fairly traded goods and to support Traidcraft.



## MARCH

- 1st 7.00 pm **Ash Wednesday** service of Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes
- 7th 7.30 pm **Deanery Synod** meeting at St Mary's Church, Bearwood
- 11th **International Women's Day** Celebration for women of different faiths. From **11am – 3pm** at the Brasshouse Community Centre, Smethwick.
- 11th 7.30 pm **'Lip sync Battle'** - a fun Old Church fundraiser at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre. Bar and Nibbles. Tickets on sale at church.
- 12th **'One World Café'** Fairtrade Brunch at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre after church.
- 14th A meeting of the **Smethwick Interfaith Friends group** at the Abrahamic Centre from 2.00pm – 3:30pm.
- 16th **Discoverers' trip** to the Brewery Museum Burton (see Christine Tanner for details)
- 23rd **A service led by Old Church** for the residents of Penmakers Court.
- April 2nd The **Annual Parochial Church meeting** from 12 noon at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre.



## Lent and Easter



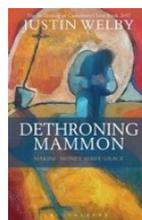
**Soup Lunches** will take place in Old Church following the Communion Service on the Tuesdays throughout Lent. Monies raised from donations will be given to Christian Aid. Please note that the time of the Tuesday service will change from 10.00 am to 12 noon for the duration of Lent.



### Smethwick CAN Churches Together Lent Course

This year we will be focusing on the meals that Jesus had. The course will provide the opportunity to gather together for a simple meal and to explore the meaning of the meals

Jesus shared in. It will take place at St Hilda's Church from 7pm - 9pm. If you need transport, please let Deb know.



**Lent Reading** In this study book for Lent, Justin Welby explores the subject of money and materialism. He reflects on the impact of our own attitudes towards the way we handle the power of money, which he refers to as Mammon.

In doing so, he discusses the tensions that arise in a society dominated by economics and finance. The overarching challenge of this book is for us to use Lent as a time of learning to place our trust in the abundance of God's grace.