

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

The Churches Together Lent Course this year has been based on some of the meals that Jesus shared. This year the course has been held at St Hilda's Church, which has been set out café style and, in the light of the overall theme, each meeting has begun with a meal. There has, as always, been plenty of opportunity for discussion. But I became acutely aware of how many people feel that their stories are somehow insignificant in the context of God's big picture.

This was particularly true in session two where we discussed the wedding at Cana in Galilee. One of the things we drew out of this rich and evocative story was the way it invites us to consider how God surprises us by taking hold of the familiar, ordinary, and everyday things of our lives and transforms them into something extraordinary and life giving; how God miraculously shows us the heavenly in the ordinary. People were invited to tell stories of when they had witnessed a kind of 'water being changed into wine' experience in their everyday lives.

Gradually, with a lot of encouragement, people did begin to tell their stories. We heard about the marriage last year of a couple in their 90's and how the husband, who has now got dementia, holds on to the memory of that day when he is visited by his new bride at the nursing home where he now lives. We heard about the quiet unassuming Iraqi man who had waited week after week at Regent Street Baptist

Church for his wife who was attending English classes and how, at the end of the course, he arrived with a banquet for everyone to share. We heard about a daffodil that was growing all alone in rough dry ground and how this had provided hope on a dark day. And we heard about a number of unexpected encounters between people that had brought great joy.

The potential to find the heavenly in the ordinary is there for us every day, all we need is the will and the openness to notice. This is the way the Easter story flows through the world like a golden thread and this is what we celebrate on April 16th.

But first we face the week that starts with a palm procession and ends with betrayal and violent death; the week that reveals all that is harsh and violent. Yet we know that this is also the week when we catch a glimpse of true beauty, love and light. It is during this bleak week that we learn, once again, that the parched wilderness of the cross becomes, for us, a flowing stream; a miracle in deed.

So as we move towards the Easter season, I pray that we will all know this more fully as we make the challenging, yet precious, journey together. And beyond Easter, may we all notice the way this big story of our Faith miraculously infuses our everyday, ordinary and often small stories and let us have the courage to share them with one another.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

March saw the start of the penitential season of Lent. Ash Wednesday was marked by an evening service of Holy Communion that included the ritual imposition of ashes. These ashes are the residue of the burnt remains of last year's Palm crosses.

The Tuesday morning service of Holy Communion moved to 12.00 noon so that attendees could partake of a simple lunch of soup and bread rolls. Donations for this lunch will be sent to Christian Aid.

The Smethwick CAN Churches Together Lent Course is being hosted by St Hilda's Church As well as trying to understand and discuss Jesus'

teaching where meals are part of the story, we indulged in foods relating to that evening's key readings.

Food was also a part of our event to raise awareness and funds for the charity Tradecraft Exchange. Various Fairtrade products were available for sampling after our Sunday morning service - a welcome late breakfast.

On a lighter note, Old Church hosted a Lip Sync battle. It was a very enjoyable and fun evening when the braver members of our congregation showed that the stars and celebs of today had better watch out - there is plenty of talent here at Old Church!



Soul Space

If you would like to take some time out of your busy lives for peace and quiet, to pray in the candle-lit beauty of Old Church or to share conversation and refreshments with others, then you might like to come to 'Soul Space'.

'Soul Space' takes place from 6pm - 8pm on the last Wednesday of each month and will include a simple service of night prayer at 7.45pm for those who wish to join in.

Come and go as you please!

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

April

- 10th **7.00 pm Holy Week Reflection** with Compline (Night prayer)
- 11th **7.00 pm Holy Week Reflection** with Compline (Night prayer)
- 12th **7.00 pm Holy Week Reflection** with Compline (Night prayer)
- 13th **Maundy Thursday**
7.30 pm Service of **Holy Communion**, with **Foot Washing**, followed by a **Prayer Vigil** until 10.00 pm
- 14th **Good Friday**
10.00 am Churches Together March of Witness beginning at Regent Street Baptist Church
12 noon - 3.00 pm Reflections on the Cross at Old Church. Come and go during the three hours, as you please
- 15th **8.00 pm Service of Light** with **Baptism**
- 16th **Easter Day**
10.15 am Service of Holy Communion
5.00 pm Evening Prayer



APRIL

- 2nd 12 noon **The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council** at the Dorothy Parkes' centre.
- 6th From 10am – 12.30pm **'Women First'** interfaith project **craft morning** at the Abrahamic Centre
- 9th 5.00pm A Service of **Readings and Hymns for Passiontide**
- 20th Discoverers' trip to **The Hop Pocket, Herefordshire**
- 20th 11.00am A Service at **Penmakers Court**
- 29th From 6pm – 8pm **'Soul Space'** ending with Night Prayer at 7.45pm
- 30th 2.30pm meet for **Prayers** in Old Church (see Rosemary for details)

"Why Should He Die For Such As I"

In everything both great and small
 We see the Hand of God in all,
 And in the miracles of Spring
 When everywhere in everything
 His handiwork is all around
 And every lovely sight and sound
 Proclaims the God of earth and sky
 I ask myself "Just Who Am I"
 That God should send His only Son
 That my salvation would be won
 Upon a cross by a sinless man
 To bring fulfillment to God's Plan-
 For Jesus suffered, bled and died
 That sinners might be sanctified,
 And to grant God's children such as I
 Eternal life in that Home on High.