

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D
V I C A R ' S V O I C E

I stand at the door of the year and I place my hand into the hand of God!

This isn't an exact translation of M Louise Haskins' poem "The Gate of the Year", but its sentiment is the same: a new year in the calendar and the unknown lies ahead and we, traveling on, need the assurance of things unseen but believed in.

On Advent Sunday, the beginning of the church's new year (back on 28th November) I preached on life as a circle of time: Just as we recall at a funeral service, from God our Creator we came and to God, our soul's destiny, we shall return. Thus, the question for us in life is not

where we are going (though undoubtedly we have plans and hopes) for we know that - in God's time, of course, we shall return to Him. No, rather, the question must be: How am I traveling?

Hope for every Christian is a future hope, and it isn't optimism: it's about making choices, deciding, upon the foundation of faith. We may make a resolution then (as any new year's eve closes and the new year begins) - although these might not be enduring! What should last, we pray, is the decision, and the choices made, in following Christ as disciples and travelling along in ways that lead to and pleases God.



P A S T M O N T H ' S N E W S

Snow, ice and freezing temperatures were the order of the day during the month of December. This led to many planned events being cancelled including the Discoverers trip to Barnett Hill Garden Centre and Carols around the Christmas tree in the Vicarage.

However a small number of the congregation braved the elements to sing carols in Asda, Cape Hill. The carollers were warmly welcomed by staff and customers alike with £133.72 raised and donated to the Help for Heroes charity. Having sung for an hour carollers were then treated to a much appreciated tippie in a local hostelry.

The service of Praise and Readings for Advent marked the start of our preparation for the celebration of Christmas. The varied services during this period gave the opportunity for individual and collective worship that centred on the coming of Jesus. Many were welcomed and rejoiced during the Nativity, Crib and Midnight Mass services with the bells calling all to worship.

New Year's Day saw bells pealing out again across the Diocese with a host of ringers travelling from Church to Church ringing for the New Year.

QI.... “Epiphany”

- On January 6th
- Originally celebrated the baptism of Jesus
- It became as important a festival as Easter (when Jesus rose from the dead) and Pentecost (when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples)
- But 300 years after Jesus’ death the date became associated with the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, that is, who this baby is - the Son of God
- Manifested - seen and believed in
- When? - at the coming of the Magi to the stable in Bethlehem
- “The Magi” - the Bible does not say these are Kings, nor that there were three of them
- Magi were probably astrologers, or stargazers
- But they did bring three gifts: gold, myrrh and frankincense (we just do not know how much of each!)
- Epiphany then means that Jesus the child born in the manger was seen and believed in as the promised Saviour of the world.
- (the tradition of the twelve days of Christmas - and the taking down of decorations is nice and tidy, but the Christmas tree with its lights might as well stay up in our churches - if the pines do not drop off! - until Candlemass on February 2nd when we celebrate Jesus the boy being presented as “The LIGHT” to the temple of Jerusalem, and his childhood ending and his adult ministry beginning).

HEAVEN ON EARTH

DIARY DATES

Why not? At The Old Church we may just have tasted it in our Communion wine!

The wine we use is an organic dessert, or ‘pudding’, wine produced in South Africa from grapes produced by a Cooperative vineyard and then processed in a Fairtrade winery both located near the village of Trawal, Namaqualand, which is about 275 kilometres north of Cape Town on the road to Namibia.

The wine is produced from 100% Muscat d’Alexandrie grapes that after they have been harvested are dried for several weeks on a bed of straw and rooibos tea leaves which gives an added flavour as well as intensity to the sweet wine. The vines are irrigated which has given rise to a problem with snails and bugs that enjoy eating the grapes. Rather than controlling these pests with chemicals an organic solution has been found - Indian runner ducks are used to eat them. In turn, this has led to a sideline enterprise of selling duck eggs and meat.

The Stellar Organics Winery was established in 2002 by the four Rossouw brothers. It became a joint venture between them and a local farmer’s group and was awarded Fairtrade certification in 2004; the workers now own 26% of the winery and 50% of the Stellar vineyards. A Community Trust was established to look after the interests of the farm and winery workers. The Trust serves as a forum for workers to identify their needs and manages the income derived from Fairtrade sales as well as overseeing development projects within the community. Projects include fencing for workers’ houses, free housing and electricity for permanent farm workers and a trained health care committee. All schooling and child-care facilities are subsidised and the workforce is encouraged to take advantage of further education courses. In our small way, therefore, our adoption of Heaven on Earth wine is supporting the development of a community in South Africa. And for those that ‘enjoy’ an oenophile’s description: A superb dessert wine, light gold colour. The nose is very fragrant and hints at roses, apricots and pine trees on a hot windless day. The delicate flavours of the roses and apricots come through on the taste and are held together by wisps of rooibos, ending with pine nuts. [Wine Spectator, 2009] Personally, I just enjoy the wine!

January

6th	Feast of the Epiphany
19th	PCC meet in the Vicarage
23rd	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and a service at 5.30 pm held in the Salvation Army citadel in Pound Road, with a preacher from the United Reform Church, Mr Peter Christie. Please make a special effort to support these shared prayers and worship.

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

Let's talk about LOVE!!

This month Saint Valentine is upon us - so, yes, let's talk about "Luve!!"

Although actually, let's get our facts straight first: Valentine, after all, was a Roman priest who was imprisoned during the reign of the Emperor Claudius II for assisting his fellow Christians throughout their persecution. He refused to renounce his faith, was beaten with clubs and was beheaded (in about the year 270 AD).

And the custom of sending cards? Well it's probably nothing to do with that Valentine - the name wasn't that unusual at that time. It could be, rather, that there was an old belief that February 14th was the day when birds chose their mates! Who knows!!

Anyway - Love!

*"Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
guilty of dust and sin. But quick-ey'd Love,
observing me grow slack, from my first entrance
in, Drew nearer to me "You must sit down,
'says Love, 'and taste my meat. 'So I did sit and
eat."*

Lines taken from the poem by George Herbert.
And LOVE? God is Love. Jesus showed Love.

And we? Surely as His disciples - learning from and following Him - we must Love: even those we might find difficult.

"Faith. Hope and Love - but the greatest of these is Love wrote St Paul to the Christians in the city of Corinth (see I Corinthians chapter 13).

How difficult is that? Really, as Christians! Called by the God of Love. Surely not - not with His grace to strengthen us.

After all: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.



P A S T M O N T H ' S N E W S

During January we celebrated the season of Epiphany which included a quiet and reflective service of hymns and readings.

Chloe Maureen Dwyer was welcomed into the church family during a service of Baptism. We continue to pray for Chloe, her parents and Godparents.

Later in the month Thrifties invited all to join them for an evening's entertainment at the Barlow Theatre in Langley. It was a first visit there for many of the group and everyone enjoyed the Oldbury Rep's excellent production of the pantomime Cinderella.

The Discoverers met in the Harvester on the Hagley Road and shared a pleasurable meal.

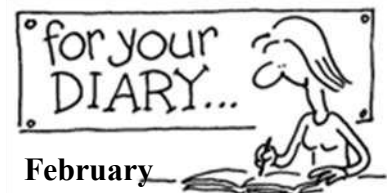
Towards the end of January Thrifties held a planning meeting over an evening meal at the Wernley on the Wolverhampton Road. Suggestions for the forthcoming year include an evening of Murder and Mystery; Come Dine With Me; Caribbean night; Craft evening and Swap Shop. Thrifties extend a warm welcome to women of all ages and their female friends to come along to any or all of our social events. For further information have a word with Wendy or Rosie.

QI.... "Apostle/Disciple"

- "Apostle" is a Greek word
- And is the title given to the twelve disciples of Jesus (see Matthew chapter 10 verse 2, Luke chapter 22 verse 14, and Acts chapter 1 verse 2)
- After the suicide of Judas Iscariot, his place was taken by Matthias and the title is applied to him (as well as to Paul and Barnabas in the Book of Acts)
- Apostolic succession - it is through the original twelve that grace and authority descends from Christ and from them to their lawfully appointed successors.
- "Disciple" - all who follow Jesus
- Included the apostles—Jesus' first disciples (Andrew, James, John)
- Oxford English Dictionary - "one who attends upon another for the purpose of learning from him; a pupil or scholar"
- A close relationship of learning
- Not discipline, for discipleship is freedom, laughter and joy (said Donald Coggan Archbishop of Canterbury 1974 - 1980)
- Bearing fruit, Love and mission and evangelism - Go make disciples, baptize and tell and share with them the Good News (the Gospel)

PLEASE NOTE

Ash Wednesday this year falls on 9th March and the season of Lent begins: What are you giving up for Lent? What should we be taking on (an extra) for Lent this year? Holy Week begins 17th April with Easter Day on Sunday 24th April.



Footprints in the Sand by Mary Stevenson

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord. When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life. This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, You said that once I decided to follow you, You'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me." The Lord replied, "My son, My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I Carried You."

- Tuesdays 10.00 am Holy Communion in The Old Church in The Uplands followed by tea and coffee and social fellowship: Come and see!
- Thursdays 10.00 am Holy Communion in St Matthews' Windmill Lane followed by tea and coffee and social fellowship: Come and see!
- 17th Discoverers visit the Pen Museum in Birmingham followed by lunch. Please see Christine or Judy
- 23rd 2.30 pm Light Reading at the Sisters' house - see Judy Eynon for details.
- 24th 2.15 pm Praying together in The Old Church - an invitation for us all (see Rosemary Guest for further details and prayer requests)

SPOTLIGHT ON LOVE ...

It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing.
It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving.

~ Mother Teresa ~

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O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a competition to get young people to think about serious matters. One of the most energizing experiences of my ministry was working with teenagers in their school as their chaplain: their ideas, articulated and debated. The Archbishop has set up a writing prize under its title "Faith in the World." How does religion help or not help them think about, for example, science and society about the basis of decision-making, about the environment, family and money, about prisons, religious conflict, global justice? Three different age-groups (13-15, 16-17 and 18-21) may enter, and essay titles include:

Must you be religious to be good? God cares for the poor – how can people of faith demonstrate this care? Should politicians "do God?" How can one person improve the lives of the world's poorest? Is believing more important than belonging? Does God believe in the existence of society? What is "good news" for the poor and how can we part of this?

The Archbishop hopes for "freshness" and a lively public debate and says: "The kind of atmosphere that will make a 'Big Society' work is one that encourages careful, critical thinking

about the real gifts and the real challenges of being human." (the deadline date is 11th March!)

I wonder, if there was no age limitation, which essay I would wish to write – and what my thinking (and conclusions would be)? What would be yours too I wonder? Perhaps something of this might come out when we have the opportunity to share together with fellow Christians when we may meet on Thursdays in Lent (see Diary dates). No doubt young people do need to be heard – now, isn't that the case for every one of God's children.

Don't walk in front of me

Don't walk in front of me,
I may not follow.

Don't walk behind me,
I may not lead;

Walk beside me,
And just be my friend.

by Albert Camus

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Pen Museum in the Argent Centre, Birmingham was the focus for a visit of the Discoverers in February. The Grade II Listed Building, formerly a pen making factory, boasted that at the height of its trade three quarters of everything written down in the world was written with a Birmingham pen. The museum opened in April 2001 and is dedicated to preserving this unique legacy through displays, demonstrations and activities.

The Discoverers had the opportunity to explore the history of pens from quills to steel nibs and fountains pens.

Some enjoyed a reminder of school days whilst trying their hand with feather quills and steel pens. Others made their own nibs using original factory hand presses enabling them to experience working conditions that many women had to endure. The outing was rounded off with refreshments at The Rope Walk in St Paul's Square.

Thrifties met together to enjoy an evening of fellowship and fun whilst sharing craft ideas and swapping a variety of items including clothing, books, jewellery and household goods.

QI.... LENT

- 40 days to go to Easter!
- Purple is the colour of the altar and priest's vestments (no flowers in church to mark penitential solemnity of the season)
- Was a period of fasting decreed in the fourth century church.
- Associated with preparation for baptism at Easter.
- 40 day fasts were made by Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament and the Lord Jesus in the wilderness.
- Sundays were declared exempt from any fasting!
- During early days fasting was strict: one meal a day (meat, fish and in some places eggs were forbidden)
- Relax - rules and observances have changed!
- Now - custom of giving something up (OR) taking something on as a means of disciplining oneself during this season.
- Why? To prepare oneself for the central point of the Christian faith: the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Easter celebrations, this year on 24th April)

March **DIARY DATES**

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| 2nd | 7.30pm Pastoral Care Team meet in the Vicarage |
| 5th | 2.00pm Table top sale in Dorothy Parkes Centre. |
| 9th | Ash Wednesday communion services: 10.00am The Old Church, 6.00pm St Matthews - all welcome at either. |
| 12th | Pastoral Team conference day |
| 15th | 6.00pm Bible study hour in Old Church |
| 16th | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 17th | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 17th | 7.00pm Thrifties "Murder Mystery" see Jean for details |
| 17th | 7 for 7.30pm Lent ecumenical - all welcome at West Smethwick Methodist Church. "The Big Society and Christian responsibilities" |
| 22nd | 6.00pm Bible study hour in Old Church |
| 23rd | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 23rd | 7.30pm Old Church PCC in the Vicarage |
| 24th | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 24th | 7 for 7.30pm ecumenically in West Smethwick Methodist Church. "The Big Society and Christian responsibilities" |
| 27th | 11.30am Annual Parochial Church Meeting in the Dorothy Parkes Centre - election of warden, deanery synod and PCC representatives (and reports for the year) |
| 29th | 6.00pm Bible study hour in Old Church |
| 30th | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 31st | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 31st | 2.30pm Praying together in church |
| 31st | 7 for 7.30pm ecumenically in West Smethwick Methodist Church. "The Big Society and Christian responsibilities" |

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR APRIL

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| 3rd | Mothering Sunday |
| 5th | 6.00pm Bible study in Old Church |
| 6th | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 7th | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 7th | 7 for 7.30pm ecumenically in West Smethwick Methodist Church. "The Big Society and Christian responsibilities" |
| 12th | 6.00pm Bible study in Old Church |
| 13th | 12.00 noon Holy Communion followed by Lent Lunch (supporting Sightsavers charity) |
| 14th | 11.00am Bible study in Old Church |
| 14th | 7 for 7.30pm Our turn to contribute to "The Big Society and Christians" in West Smethwick Methodist Church. |
| 17th | Palm Sunday and beginning of Holy Week (details of services to follow); Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday - 24th April |

A MESSAGE FROM ROSEMARY

At 2.30pm until 3.00pm on the last Thursday of each month some of us meet informally to pray in Church.

This is not the formal prayer of Sunday Eucharist Intercessions. It is for those of us who wish to pray silently or out loud or just to say amen to the prayers of others.

We pray for our ministers, (Nigel, Barbara & Michael), the lay pastoral team development and ministry plus any requests for prayer left on the prayer cushion and those brought by individuals themselves. We pray for our church's mission, parish and nation. Anyone is welcome to come and join in silent or vocal prayer.

For more information please talk with Rosemary or Jeff Guest.

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O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

There has been a lot recently about the King James Bible hasn't there. As it is 400 years since its publication there is every reason to mark such an anniversary. It has had a great impact upon the English speaking world and familiar phrases such as "Am I my brother's keeper?" "A multitude of sins!" "Let there be light!" and "hiding his light under a bushel" are all from it. Its beginnings were fraught: James VI of Scotland succeeded Queen Elizabeth 1 as King of England, which was still subject to the tremors of Reformation. To settle differences the King convened a conference in 1604 at Hampton Court and Puritans (protestant reformers challenging Catholic traditionalists) requested a new translation of the Bible. Seven years later, after much work by six committees of scholarly expertise meeting in six different locations, this Authorised bible was printed. Bishop Miles Smith of Gloucester wrote the text's long and beautiful preface: "Translation it is, that openeth the window, to let in the light." It became universally familiar both in Britain and the American colonies (as they then were) after the Restoration in 1660 (ending the English Civil War) and remained so until the Revised

Standard Version of 1881-1885. The result in 1611 was a masterpiece of English prose and now in 2011 we may celebrate an extraordinary achievement, not solely religious, but also literary, cultural and international. Here in Smethwick we shall mark this in October (and more later upon that). Of course we have a flood of translations these days to help us "let in the light" and that must be all to the good – the Word of God is alive and speaks to us as each of us may receive it. But the Authorised version of 1611 has provided an imaginative space in which it is good to walk. On the flyleaf of a small copy of the Geneva Bible now held in the Bodleian library in Oxford, this note was written in Queen Elizabeth I's own italic hand: "I walke many times into the pleasant fieldes of the holie scriptures. Where I plucke up the goodlie greene herbes of sentences by pruning: Eate them by reading. Chawe them by musing: And laie them up at length in the hie seat of memorie by gathering them together: that so having tasted thy sweetness I may the lesse persue the bitterness of this miserable life." Poor Queen - but a few years on a translation was printed which enabled many, like us, to walk on in life

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

March has been a very busy month with the onset of Lent introducing many extra opportunities for reflection and prayer. Our young people in "Big Fish" have entered into the spirit of Lent by beginning their challenge to visit 40 places of worship in 40 days.

The Discoverers enjoyed a visit to Bilston Craft Gallery where they viewed displays including works of art created from blown glass. Following this they shared refreshments at a local hostelry.

The Brie, The Bullet & The Black Cat was a night of murder, mystery and suspense for The

Thrifties. The evening was hosted by Monsieur Le Grande Butte in the era of 1940s Casablanca with the ladies partaking of French cuisine whilst attempting to solve the murder of mime artiste The Black Cat. Taking part in a murder, mystery was a new experience for many who would highly recommend it to others.

The Thrifties' next adventure is on 28th April when they will be joining in karaoke at The Tap and Spile, Gas Street, Birmingham. Ladies who would like to come along can obtain details from Wendy or Rosie.

QI... “Maundy Thursday”

- The fifth day of Holy week, the day before Good Friday
- Derived through ‘middle English’ and ‘old French’ *mande* and from the Latin *mandatum* (the first word of the phrase “mandatum novum - a new commandment I give you: that you love one another as I have loved you” John chapter 13 verse 34)
- Known in English as Maundy Thursday – also known as Holy Thursday by the United Methodist church, Covenant Thursday by the Coptic Orthodox church, Great and Holy Thursday by the Eastern Orthodox church and Thursday of Mysteries by the Syriac Orthodox church
- Most Christian churches recall the moment Jesus washed his disciples’ feet
- This is usually celebrated in the evening
- There is a medieval custom during the day when English royalty handed out ‘maundy baskets’ of alms for the poor before they attended Mass for the day; now Queen Elizabeth II offers ‘alms’ to deserving senior citizens (one man and one woman for each year of the sovereign’s age): these coins known as Maundy money, or Royal Maundy, are distributed in red purses (containing currency) and white purses (one penny for each year of the sovereign’s age)



DIARY DATES

Please see sheets of dates at the back of the church for details of mid week services, bible study and ecumenical meetings.



THE CROSS IN MY POCKET

I carry the cross in my pocket
A simple reminder to me
Of the fact that I am a Christian
No matter where I may be.

This little cross is not magic
Nor is it a good luck charm
It isn't meant to protect me
From every physical harm.

It's not for identification
For all the world to see
It's simply an understanding
Between my saviour and me.

When I put my hand in my pocket
To bring out a coin or key
The cross is there to remind me
Of the price He paid for me.

It reminds me, too, to be thankful
For my blessings day by day
And to strive to serve Him better
In all that I do and say.

It's also a daily reminder
Of the peace and comfort I share
With all who know my Master
And give themselves to his care.

So, I carry a cross in my pocket
Reminding no one but me
That Jesus Christ is Lord of my life
If only I'll let Him be.

- April HOLY WEEK**
- 16th Come together for churchyard working morning !!
- 17th **Palm Sunday** 10.00 am St Matthews' 10.15 am The Old Church
- 18th 19th 6.00 pm in The Old Church quiet service of Compline/Night Prayer
- 20th
- 21st **Maundy Thursday** 8.00 pm service in The Old Church (washing of feet/hands and Holy Communion), followed by Watch until midnight (“Could you not watch with me for one hour?” asks Jesus)
- 22nd **Good Friday** 10.00 am Walk of Witness for one hour at Holy Trinity church; 12 noon Stations of the Cross in The Old Church (with hymns) 2.00 pm Walk of witness/Songs of Praise and prayers at St Matthews (ending 3pm)
- 24th **Easter Sunday** 10.00 am St Matthews 10.15 am at The Old Church Easter Vigil and Holy Communion services; Easter Lunch in the Dorothy Parkes Centre

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O P E N T O A L L . O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

The Hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" is reputedly the second-most popular hymn. Is it yours? Songs of Praise in Church is one idea to bring others along with us and sing along and hear the stories (a) behind the hymn and (b) why and what it means to you, or I? There are well-known hymns and we may learn new ones. That is all to the good, provided each helps us individually towards devotion and in our path of faithful discipleship as we gather together for worship. "Dear Lord and Father" was written by a Quaker (John Greenleaf Whittier) and the Society of Friends, the Quakers, wait in prayerful silence for the Holy Spirit to move them to speak. There is a time for singing, as there must be times of silent waiting and praying. Are you and I finding both in our daily living?

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The season of Lent gave opportunities for reflection, prayer and Bible study with additional services including Compline after Sunday Evening Prayer, Holy Communion followed by Lenten lunch on Wednesdays in Church and Ecumenical meetings at West Smethwick Methodist Church. Those who took advantage of these extra events found them to be worthwhile, inspirational and a fitting preparation for Holy Week.

Palm Sunday saw over a hundred people processing from the Dorothy Parkes Centre, some waving palm branches, children playing musical instruments and all singing whilst carrying their palm crosses into Old Church.

Walking was the order of the day with a dozen energetic walkers (and Fliss the dog!) enjoying the open countryside in Leasowes Park. The walk included a visit to the ruins of St Mary's Abbey, founded in 1215 by monks of the Premonstratensian Order. The walkers were rewarded for their physical exertions with a drink in a local hostelry. (Fliss had water!!)

THE DOROTHY PARKES CENTRE

In February this year I was very pleased to be offered the post of Centre Manager for the Dorothy Parkes Centre.

I have had a very warm welcome from people using the Dorothy Parkes



Centre, as well as from the staff and members of The Old Church, Smethwick.

It has been such a great feeling to find everyone so helpful and willing to pull together and I am very lucky to be working amongst you all.

I was previously working for Sandwell Council in the Supporting People Team who fund many services for vulnerable people across the borough, so I already know some of the people who use the centre and it is nice to see some familiar faces.

I have been surprised and delighted to see so many groups and people coming in to use the centre, people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds – how diverse and exciting!

I come out of my office and never know who I shall find and what they will be doing! Toward the end of last week a group of people came for 'Cookwell' and were busy peeling apples and mixing cakes ... it smelt lovely! Last night I could hardly get out of my office ... there was such a long queue for Weightwatchers!

So the Centre is well used and most days there are a number of different activities going on.

For the future I hope we shall have many more groups approaching us to use the facilities but also a programme of events.

Talking of events we would like to have a community pantomime in early spring 2012 so we shall be on the look out for all sorts of people and things. If you would like to be involved either as a performer or as a helper please contact me. Kindest regards and good wishes to everyone. Deb Harris

QI.... "Hymns"

- A Greek word meaning "song of praise to gods or heroes."
- At first Christians used Jewish hymns, especially the psalms
- A hymn was sung at the Last Supper (Mark's Gospel chapter 14 verse 26) - this was probably the Hallel (a name given by Jews to Psalms 113—118 and used during the Passover)
- What may be quotations from early Christian hymns may be found in the scripture of the New Testament (for example; Ephesians 5.14; Philippians 2.5-11; 1 Timothy 3.16 and 6.15; Revelation 15.3-4 and Revelation 22.17)
- The Magnificat, Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis all from St Luke's Gospel were also early Christian hymn compositions.
- The earliest Christian hymn that survives is a hymn to Christ called "Bridle of colts untamed" by Clement of Alexandria (late second, early third century)
- "Hail gladdening Light!" is also a third century early hymn.
- From the fourth century the use of hymns became more general, including the "Gloria in excelsis"
- Latin hymns appeared later than Greek. The most famous is the " Te Deum".
- St Ambrose encouraged hymn-singing in worship.
- In England, hymns first appeared with Caedmon and Aldhelm in the eight century and King Alfred in the ninth.
- By the middle ages hymns to Christ as Redeemer and the Blessed Virgin Mary became popular.
- Carols too became popular in England.
- The Reformation had a deep and varied effect on the development of hymnody – Lutherism (from the sixteenth century) was marked by an increase of hymns written, but Calvinism would only allow words of scripture to be used in services.
- Modern hymn writing and singing were mainly the creation of the eighteenth century (Isaac Watts, the Wesley brothers, Doddridge, Toplady, Newton and Cowper)
- Spirituals became popular in America, then mission songs of Moody and Sankey exerted considerable influence in America and England at the end of the nineteenth century.
- The Oxford movement stimulated writing (Hymns Ancient and Modern first appeared in 1861, the English Hymnal in 1906)
- Now hymns and hymn singing are most popular - but which hymns and why???

The Race

We are racing through the morning dew dampened streets

Competing to be the first to see if the message is true
Clattering past the homes and shops still closed and asleep

I want to be the first. To win this race as I leap
Over the cobbles and bump past my friend
To see if our dearest departed for whom I still weep
Has vanished from his stone covered silent grave

I am almost out of breath as I race onward up the steeps
And we burst into the quiet garden of the grave at last
Where I pause for a moment as my companion leaps
Past to go inside the place of death to gaze and look
As I look in too,

and pant,
and breathe,
and believe.

*Thine be
the glory,
risen conquering
Son,
Endless is
the vict'ry,
thou o'er
death
hast won*

ADVANCE NOTICE

Our Summer Fair
is on
Saturday 18th June



- 18th 7.30 pm PCC in the Vicarage
- 19th Installation of new Vicar at St Giles Rowley Regis.
- 26th 2.30pm Prayer in Church (please see Rosemary Guest for details)
- 29th 6.30pm Confirmation service at St Hilda's {Anyone who is not yet confirmed and is not therefore taking Holy Communion, please see Revd Nigel about this}

Jeffrey Guest who has written "The Race" would welcome your thoughts as to:
Who are the runners?
Who is the author? and
Where is this place?

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

“The Lamb of God is broken and distributed,
Which being broken yet is not divided,
Being ever eaten never is consumed,
But sanctifies those that partake.”

Those are words from the Liturgy of St John Chryostomus written in the fourth century to remind us that when we take the bread and the wine at communion we do so to strengthen us, to renew us and because Jesus told us to. But it also reminds us that we are united as fellow Christians – brothers and sisters across the world who do what we attempt to do: Praise God, Pray and intercede for others, follow in Christ's footsteps and receive (“partake”) in the sacraments of holy communion (as well as others such as baptism into the universal Church).

This month we have another special celebration of communion (we also reminded ourselves of this on Maundy Thursday before Easter Day when we commemorated the Lord's Supper). On Corpus Christi we celebrate being united with Christ and with each other as we “partake” of holy communion – truly, as the word Eucharist means, we give Thanksgiving for it. And pray that each time we receive we are duly prepared and strengthened by it. (If you currently do not take communion have a word with the Vicar about being Confirmed in the faith and so then able to take consecrated bread and wine before the altar).

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

At the beginning of the month Thrifties travelled back in time and to the Manor House in West Bromwich to celebrate in 1940's style. Dressed in their wartime best they enjoyed a 1940's buffet, a speech from 'Winston Churchill' and a jive or two. Much fun was had by all whilst raising funds for the current restoration of the Manor House. Ladies watch out for Thrifties' next exciting event in June!

GREETINGS FROM WAYNE

Hi Brothers and Sisters of The Old Church, just a quick insight as to my presence with you in recent weeks. I am a training Ordinand studying at Queens Ecumenical College, part-time for three years. I am in year one and this is my very first placement that will last 10 weeks.



Whilst on placement, I am to continue my journey of encountering Christ through every opportunity. My time with Revd Nigel, Revd Barbara, Revd Michael and members of the congregation, will help to formulate how I look at the ministry of Christ and how it is in operation at The Old Church in Smethwick.

Thank you for the warm and genuine welcome I have experienced from the first day that I arrived and also thank you in advance to the kind and generous people who have shared or who are going to share their contact details with me and have made or are going to make themselves available, to talk with me about their journey in Christ and their time in the Smethwick community or at Old Church. God Bless you all and thank you.

Later the Discoverers rambled through the beautiful rhododendron gardens at Whitley Court. They explored the remains of the house, viewed the magnificent fountain spouting water one hundred feet up into the air and were amazed by the splendour of Great Whitley Church. Sarah Slater and baby Archie Brian Adkins were welcomed into the church family during a service of Baptism.

Q.I.... WHIT SUNDAY

- Seven weeks after Easter
- Before Jesus ascended into heaven he told his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to them
- It was on the Jewish festival of Pentecost that the disciples were gathered together.
- Pentecost means fiftieth in Greek – so, 50 days after Passover (the Christian’s first Easter day)
- “God the holy Spirit came upon them” –see the Book of Acts chapter 2
- This moment marked the beginning of the universal church (we use the word “catholic” in the Creed in our service to mean world-wide!)
- It also marked a change in the lives of those disciples who were there – they were converted, or changed from one sort of life to another (so in baptism we are said to be “born again” and made holy by God’s Spirit)
- the word “Whit Sunday” is said to come from the white robes worn by those who were newly baptized on that day.
- the liturgical colour (the vestments worn by the priest and the altar cloth) is red.



JUNE

- 1st 2.30 pm **Light Reading** at the Sisters’ house – see Judy Eynon for details.
- 2nd 7.00 am **Ascension Day** Communion
- 5th 5.00 pm Nine Readings and Hymns for **Ascensiontide**
- 8th 7.30 pm **PCC** meeting in the Vicarage
- 16th **Discoverers** visit Barnett's Hill Garden Centre
- 18th 2.00 pm **Summer Fair** in the Vicarage Garden (if dry)
- 18th 10.00 am - 3.30 pm **Words are Living Powers** - (see separate notice)
- 19th 6.00 pm **Taize** evening in Old Church
- 23rd 6.30 pm **Corpus Christi** Communion service in Vicarage garden followed by Barbecue
- 30th 2.30 pm **Praying** together in The Old Church - an invitation for us all (see Rosemary Guest for details and praying requests)

What God Has Promised

God has not promised
skies ever blue,
Flower strewn pathways
all our lives through;
God hath not promised
sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow,
peace without pain.

But God has promised
strength for each day,
Rest after labour,
Light for our way,
Grace for all trials,
Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy,
Undying love.

Poet - Annie Johnson Flint

WORDS ARE LIVING POWERS

As part of the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible, the Birmingham Branch of the Prayer Book Society will be hosting a day of reflection and study in St George’s Church, Edgbaston. It is open to all and the suggested donation for the day is £15.

The day will include: David Crystal on the King James Bible, Ewan Fernie on the possibilities for ‘Common Prayer’ today, 17th century music, Space for informal discussion and a book stall. For more information or to reserve a place speak to David Tanner.

There was a very gracious lady who was posting an old family Bible to her brother in another part of the country.

“Is there anything breakable in here?” asked the postal clerk.

“Only the Ten Commandments,” answered the lady.

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

Did you see, "The Da Vinci Code?" the film of Dan Brown's novel. And how did you feel about the portrayal of Mary Magdalene? For those who believe the Christian story, Mary Magdalene was the first person to see the risen Christ. And yet for many she was also another figure: the repentant prostitute forgiven by Christ (a scarlet-clad figure in paintings). The Gospels speak of her as a follower of Jesus (out of whom he is said to have cast out 'seven demons' and who then ministered to him in Galilee, see Luke 8.2); later, she stood by his cross at his crucifixion (Mark 15.40), then with two other women discovered the empty tomb and heard the angelic announcement of His Resurrection (Mark 16.1) and was granted an appearance of the Risen Christ early on the same day (Matthew 28.9 and John 20.11). But tradition has identified her with "the woman who was a sinner" who anointed the feet of Jesus in Simon's house (Luke 7.37). Does it help us to think of her as a sinner, a fallen woman, reminding the sinner that it was his or her sins, as well as her own, that had put Christ upon the Cross? Or may we remember that, although it is hard to find evidence that she was any form of leader, or a teacher, she was, as the Gospels tell us, one among other faithful female disciples of Jesus. We celebrate her feast day on July 22nd. One date, like so many others in the Christian year, which points towards those who have gone before us, setting us an example of believing and who was called by Jesus by her own name. Like you or I!

P A S T M O N T H ' S N E W S

The bells heralded an early morning communion service for Ascension Day and the theme of Ascensiontide was thoughtfully explored on the following Sunday evening during a reflective service of Nine Readings and Hymns.

Due to an uncertain forecast the Summer Fair was held in the Dorothy Parkes Centre and not in the Vicarage garden as planned. The event was opened by Sandwell Mayor Councillor Joyce Underhill and despite the changeable weather

crowds flocked to enjoy the many stalls, games, refreshments and a lively performance from the choir of Uplands Manor Primary School.

An inspiring evening of prayers and songs from Taize was appreciated by regular and visiting members of the congregation. The unique style of the service gave people an opportunity to experience a small element of monastic worship. The Old Church bid a fond farewell to Wayne as he completed his placement of ten weeks.

PRAYERS AND SONGS FROM TAIZE

The Prayers and Songs from Taize services originate from a monastic community in the Burgundy region of France. Brother Roger founded the community in August 1940 and there are now approximately 100 Brothers from both Catholic and Protestant denominations reflecting the ecumenicalism of the community. Thousands of young people make a pilgrimage to the community each year to seek space with God, commune with Him and share fellowship with people from all over the world.

The style of singing from Taize uses a line from the bible or a theological saying which is sung repetitively for a few minutes. This gives time for the words to move from the head down to the heart.

Within each service there is a period of silence, usually for about ten minutes, giving individuals the opportunity to be alone with God whilst alongside others.

**A short blessing from 'the celtic vision'
edited by Esther De Waal**

**May the King shield you in the
valleys,
May Christ aid you on the
mountains,
May Spirit bathe you on the
slopes,
In hollow, on hill, on plain,
Mountain, valley and plain.**

Q.I.... "ORDINATION"

- The ministry of the church traces its beginnings to the Lord's commissioning of the twelve disciples (Matthew chapter 10 verses 1-5; Mark chapter 3 verses 13 - 19 and Luke chapter 6 verses 12 - 16) and the seventy (see Luke chapter 10 verse 1).
- The Book of Acts speaks of "elders" or presbyters and chapter 20 verse 28 talks of bishops and deacons (priests came later in church history).
- According to traditional Catholic theology the gift of Order is a sacrament instituted by Christ and as conveying the Holy Spirit.
- Like baptism "Order" is held to impart an indelible character (a cleric if degraded does not lose the gift of Order and on restoration is not "re-ordained")
- Traditional theology holds that the sacrament of Orders can be validly conferred only by a consecrated bishop, acting as the minister of Christ.
- The purpose of Ordination is to qualify a person for office in the Church (bishop, priest or deacon).



JULY

Saints' Days in July include: 3rd (St Thomas), 11th (St Benedict), 15th (St Swithin), 19th (St Gregory and his sister Macrina a deacon), 22nd (Mary Magdalen), 25th (the apostle St James), and 26th (Anne and Joachim, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

- 9th 4.00 pm **Wedding** between Shirley Durkin and Edward Wynn: we pray for their day and their marriage.
- 11th 11.00 am **Songs of Praise** at Penmakers' Court
- 14th Smethwick Chapelry Trustees **AGM**
- 18th St Matthews' **PCC** meeting
- 18th 4.00 pm **Wedding** between Rosie and Iman. We pray for their day and their marriage
- 19th **Deanery Synod** meet at St James'
- 22nd End of **School Year**: we pray for all teachers, staff and children for their summer holiday.
- 28th 2.30 pm **Praying** together in The Old Church.
- 30th **Joint parish bus trip** to Shugborough Hall, National Trust.

BAPTISMS AND CONFIRMATION

During the past month Isabella Marie Caulder-Terry and Iman Azizi Gandomkari were welcomed into the church family through baptism. Iman was later confirmed by Bishop Andrew at St Hilda's Church which enabled him to receive communion for the first time. If you have any questions concerning the sacraments of baptism or confirmation please have a word with the Vicar.

Walk with me, oh my Lord

Through the darkest night
and brightest day.

Be at my side, oh Lord

Hold my hand and guide
me on my way.

EXTEND AT THE DOROTHY PARKES CENTRE

EXTEND classes provide recreational movement to music for men and women over fifty and for less able people of all ages. The aim is to promote health, increase mobility and independence, improve strength, co-ordination and balance and is a great way to meet people and make new friends, thereby enhancing the Quality of Life.

The class held at the Dorothy Parkes Centre meets each Thursday at 1.30 pm for one hour and is led by Sonya, who is a member of the Sandwell Health Authority. New members are always welcome. More details from Judith Eynon

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

In the reading group of priests and readers which I host, the book we are currently sharing is "Atheistic Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies" by David Bentley Hart (pub by Yale University Press). It won this year's Archbishop's Literary prize and, to quote its review, "represents a blistering assault on the crass ignorance of the New Atheists when it comes to matters religious and theological." Such atheists (against belief) include Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Dan Brown, and Hart concentrates on mercilessly exposing their abuse of historical record. Religion, he argues, did not cause the Dark Ages, oppose the Enlightenment or actively obstruct what is so often promoted as the entirely benign and positive progress of reason and science. In reading this book we are reminded that it is not enough to debunk Dawkins, Hitchens and the like, for in the name of Religion men (and women) have (and do) killed, have been blind, have been prejudiced and created much hardship and been non-christian in the gospel terms of the God of Love. But the truths remain that a loyalty to Christ is a personal vision arising from, as Hart writes, "at a particular moment in history, something happened to Western humanity that challenged it at the deepest levels of consciousness and at the highest levels of culture."

Such a vision needs to be shared with others and we must attempt to draw others into the world that vision has. And meet and face the challenge in which new atheism might be leading our society.

CHINA CALLING

China is large in so many ways. There is a population of 1.3 billion and rising, albeit slowly. The land mass is huge and the climate varies from the bitter winters of the north to the tropical forests of the south. Train journeys can take 36 hours and you still have not arrived. Pollution through dust from the never-ending redevelopments, from the output of the increasing numbers of power stations and from the heavy industry generally is frightening. The economic growth is beyond anything known anywhere. All that said, China. is as any country, simply those people you know and whose company you enjoy. So, it is good to return to China, year after year, ostensibly to talk to students who might wish to study in the UK but really to meet old friends and to make new ones.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

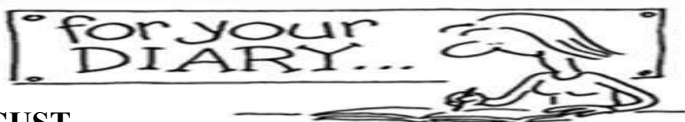
Wedding bells rang out to welcome all to witness the marriage between Rosemary Jane Eynon and Iman Azizi Gandomkari. The Old Church was packed with well-wishers who joined the happy couple afterwards in the Dorothy Parkes Centre for tea and cakes.

Later in the month The Old Church was filled to capacity as the congregation welcomed Elissa Jade Holland and Evelyn Sarah McKenzie as children of God through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.



Q.I.... "MARY"

- Mother of Christ.
- In the New Testament she figures prominently in the birth stories of the Gospels of Matthew (chapters 1-2) and Luke (chapters 1-2).
- Though mentioned several times during Christ's public ministry, she remains mainly in the background: she is at the foot of the Cross (John 19. 25), in the upper room she witnessed the growth of the early Church (Acts 1.14).
- Her virginity (she conceived and gave birth to Jesus without losing her virginity Matthew 1.20, Luke 1. 31 -34) was held by Athanasius (the influential Bishop of Alexandria in the third century) and was accepted by the Church from the fifth century on.
- "Theotokos" ("Mother of God") was also accepted in Christian doctrine (The Council of Ephesus in 431 for example) and Feast of her Assumption accepted from the sixth century Church.
- The Reformers, especially Martin Luther, stressed the humility of Mary but attacked her glorification, and there is strong reaction amongst some Protestants against excessive devotion to her.
- On 15th August her Assumption is a Feast Day in the Roman Catholic calendar (and in the Church of England it is declared to be a holy day - although not a public holiday as it is in the rest of Europe).
- Although with no scriptural foundation, it is important to recall Elijah and Elisha (in the Old Testament) both being taken up to heaven as a sign of special divine favour - when the Church formed its Doctrine, it may have been the attempt to bring to expression truths about the nature and destiny of the human being placed in a Christian context (into heavenly glory).
- St John's Gospel (17.22 and 24) reveals such, as Jesus spoke: "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them.....Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given to me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundations of the world."



AUGUST

6th 6.30 pm Holy Communion in the Vicarage garden (weather permitting) for the Feast of the Transfiguration, followed by barbecue.

11th Thrifties 'Caribbean Evening'

25th 2.30 pm Praying together in The Old Church - an invitation for us all. (please see Rosemary Guest for details and prayer requests)



M A G N I F I C A T

Sometimes

Sometimes, when the sun goes down,
It seems it will never rise again..... but it will!

Sometimes, when you feel alone,
It seems your heart will break in two..... but it won't.

And sometimes, it seems it's hardly worth carrying on...
But it is.

For sometimes, when the sun goes down,
It seems it will never rise again,
But it does.

Frank Brown

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

Cardinal Basil Hume (in his book *The Mystery of the Cross* pub by D.L.T. in 1998) wrote: "There must be in everybody's life an attempt to find some space in the day for prayer, however brief. It is normally in prayer that our awareness of God and our desire are awakened" (page 49). Our Christian faith and witness is based on prayer and praying. We do this individually (as part of the "orchestra") but we do so corporately – together. In the communion service, after hearing the Word (readings from the Bible and declaring the Creed of Christian Faith), then we are lead by intercession: prayers for others, for the world and for the named and unnamed (as lead and as placed upon the prayer cushion in *The Old Church*). But there is another time for praying together – as in a group. Every last Thursday of each month at 2.30pm (convened by Rosemary Guest) in the church we gather and pray together (lead, shared or silent sharing). As praying is the rock of our relationship with God and He with us might we not be able to develop this more as a congregation? There are plenty of opportunities in *each* week to come together to pray: Could you put yourself forward to convene a time and enable others (from our church and others, or none) to share, just for a brief time together in prayer, in communion with God and He with us. The heartbeat of all we do as Christians

here is prayers for the world (and for those in need, remembering to give thanks as well). Let that heartbeat be the shared rhythm of our week, every month. Tell the Vicar you would like to give it a try!

MESSAGE FROM BARBARA

It is with great sadness that I have relinquished my role as Honorary Assistant Priest at Smethwick Old Church and I would like you all to know how much I have appreciated your support and encouragement in my ministry over the last fifteen years. I especially remember your kindness as I took my first faltering steps as an ordained deacon and then priest.

It has been a privilege and a joy to have been able to serve you through what has been for me an incredibly fulfilling ministry and to have watched the church family grow and develop in so many ways over the years to become the vibrant, worshipping community we now are. I hope to remain at Old Church as a member of the congregation and to continue to participate in the life of the church. My thanks and love to you all.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

It was a glorious sunny day when folk from *The Old Church* and *St Matthew's* enjoyed an outing to Shugborough Hall, the ancestral home to the Earls of Lichfield.

A step back to a bygone age allowed all to experience the upstairs and downstairs of the 18th century Mansion House and to enjoy stories of what life was like at this only complete working historic estate. The group were fortunate to be able to explore the Shugborough Country Show also taking place that weekend.

The threat of rain did not deter the celebration of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Feast Day where fellowship was shared during communion and afterwards with a barbeque in the Vicarage garden.

Following her holiday to Grenada, Theresa hosted a Caribbean evening for Thrifties. The sun shone down on aptly dressed ladies as they sipped tropical cocktails, feasted on jerk chicken and rice whilst the strains of Bob Marley wafted gently on the evening air.

Q.I... "CHRISTIAN PRAYER"

- Rests on two foundations: belief in God both transcendent and personal as revealed in the Bible as Lord of History and creator of the World; and the acceptance of the intimate relation of God and us disclosed by Christ
- Prayers express the relationship God has given us to himself in Christ
- Adoration, thanksgiving, penitence and petition are therefore acts directed by us as Christians to God through Jesus Christ our Lord – or “made in the Spirit” (see the Letter of Jude 20).
- It is personal (“I”) and corporate (“we”).
- It is intercourse - our communion with God and His with us!
- Jesus dared to speak of God in terms of fatherhood and kingship; that is to say, of love and authority.
- When we pray, it may be an individual voice but one joining in an orchestra (the whole Church of God)
- When we approach God, we do so in a waiting attitude of expectation; as with Christian faith, we have a forward-looking hope!
- A notice outside a room should not state “Quiet! Christian at prayer” but “Look out! *God* at work!” (per Donald Coggan in his book *The Heart of the Christian Faith* pub by Collins 1986)

O God, lead us from death to life,
 from falsehood to truth.
 Lead us from despair to hope,
 from fear to trust.
 Lead us from hate to love,
 from war to peace.
 Let peace fill our hearts,
 our world, our universe.
 Amen

Satish Kumar

CHRISTIAN BOOKSHOP

A local Christian bookshop “Angels and Angles” formerly located in Blackheath can now be found in Paul and Barny’s Place which is a church sponsored cafe and community outreach centre based at 151 Castle Road West, Oldbury.
 Opening times: Monday - Friday
 10.30 am - 1.00 pm.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Saturday 8th October
 Harvest Festival Supper and Talent Show in the Dorothy Parkes Centre

Sunday 9th October 10.15 am Joint Harvest Festival in Old Church with food offerings donated to “Brushstrokes”.

Sunday 9th October 6.00 pm
 Celebration in this 400th year of the King James Bible Sung (1662) Holy Communion service with an opportunity for those who wish to practise an anthem at 5.00 pm and the responses for the service at 5.30 pm



SEPTEMBER

- | | |
|------|--|
| 4th | 3.00 pm Pimms' Party in the Vicarage garden |
| 5th | School term begins |
| 7th | 2.30 pm Light Reading group at the Sisters' house. Newcomers welcome. |
| 10th | 3.00 pm Wedding of Lee Ogilby and Kelly Sutherland (at St Matthews) |
| 11th | 5.00 pm Nine Readings and Hymns to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible |
| 12th | Clergy from Warley Deanery Residential Conference |
| 14th | 11.00 am Songs of Praise at Penmakers' Court. All are welcome. |
| 15th | Reader's Training Induction Day |
| 15th | Discoverers' trip to Ruskin Glass Centre. |
| 16th | 1.00 pm Wedding of Roger Scriven and Pollet Smith |
| 17th | 2.00 pm Table Top Sale in the Dorothy Parkes Community Centre |
| 18th | 10.00 am St Matthew the Apostle : all attend St Matthews (NO communion service at Old Church) |
| 29th | 2.30 pm Intercessionary Praying in church |

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

I want to reflect for a moment upon "Transforming Church." Now what do we really think that this title means? And do we think that our Church (that is, of course, Us) needs or requires "Transforming"? The Oxford Dictionary defines "transform" as 1. to make a great change in the appearance or character of (as a caterpillar for example is transformed into a butterfly); 2. to change the voltage of (electric current); 3. to become transformed! I am not sure I wish to become electric voltage! But surely the Diocesan initiative of recent years does wish us to explore and seek transforming ourselves as Christian disciples and where we are in our places of worship. In other words, neither ourselves nor our church buildings and what we practice ought to be static, unchanging.

There is a saying isn't there that "familiarity breeds contempt" but then conquering familiarity surely is a conquest for ensuring commitment and stability in relationships. Couples know each other but there is always a place for being surprised by one another! Such encourages growth and permanence: a good marriage! Born out of Love of course. So, what of us in our place of worship? Where should we be transformed? Every parish is encouraged each year to focus upon three goals (and review them at the close of

each year).

In St Matthews these currently are nurturing our Christian faith by study (the Emmaus course), connecting with the community and increasing lay leadership in intercessory prayer, whilst at The Old Church they are opening the building more, updating the website, improving communications and re-organising the west end (including library). The Pastoral Care team here are working hard with baptism, wedding and funeral preparation and administration as well as be-friending and welcoming. All of which has gone on before. Perhaps nothing is as ever new.

However, none of us remains the same – Life's experiences form/transform. For each of us as followers of Jesus Christ, the guiding model on how we live and worship is How would God want us to be? and What would Jesus do in our place? Transforming, then, is in the here and now, with a sense of where we would wish ourselves (and our places of worship) to be: a resurrection people! Sharing that Good News beyond our brick walls, but welcoming others into those buildings! Provided, of course, we are courageous enough to recognize that what we are familiar with may not be meaningful to others. Are we then being Called to be courageous enough to change and transform ourselves?

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

September began with a bring and share Pimms party in the Vicarage garden. Fellowship and games were enjoyed by folk from Old Church, St Matthews and Holy Trinity. Brothers and sisters from the three parishes came together again to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible in a service of Nine Readings and Hymns at The Old Church.

Discoverers journeyed to Amblecote in Stourbridge where they browsed traditional and contemporary glassware, handmade furniture

and soaps in the Ruskin Glass Centre.

The Table Top sale held in the Dorothy Parkes Centre attracted a large number of the community who purchased bargains from a variety of stalls and enjoyed the refreshments available.

The patronal festival of St Matthews saw Old Church sharing Sunday morning worship with the congregation at St Matthews. Following the service many of the congregation enjoyed a bring and share lunch.

Q.I.... "HARVEST"

- in Great Britain an unofficial religious festival
- of thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth
- after the ingathering of the harvest
- customary to decorate the church building with fruits, flowers and vegetables
- special hymns sung
- in medieval times, Lammas Day (August 1st) given for this thanksgiving and bread was made with the new wheat
- new bread blessed and distributed for communion
- this was revived by the Reverend Hawker at Morwenstow in Cornwall in 1843
- in the USA a prayer of thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth was made in the American Prayer Book of 1789 for Thanksgiving Day (observed on the fourth Thursday in November)

There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared is doubled. If you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have that money can't buy. "Today is a gift, that's why it is called the present."



OCTOBER

- 2nd 10.00 am **Harvest Festival** at St Matthews with produce for Help the Aged
- 5th 2.30 pm **Light Reading** at the Sisters' house.
- 8th 6.30 pm **Harvest Supper and Talent Show** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 9th 10.15 am **Harvest Festival** in The Old Church with non-perishable donations and goods for Brushstrokes' work with asylum seekers, refugees and others in need
- 9th 6.00 pm **Choral Holy Communion** at The Old Church (1662 service and celebration of the 1611 King James Bible) - singing rehearsal at 5.00 pm and service at 6.00 pm
- 12th **Annual General Meeting** for the Board of Directors at the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 27th 2.30 pm **Praying** together in The Old Church
7.00 pm **Evening service of Compline**
- 30th **All Souls' services** in The Old Church at 3.00 pm and at 5.00 pm (candles lit for those who have died and for those bereaved)

ADVANCE NOTICE

Saturday 26th November
2.00 pm

Christmas Fair in the Dorothy Parkes Centre

Nature Notes - Points to Ponder

Plant three rows of peas
Peace of mind
Peace of heart
Peace of soul

Plant four rows of squash
Squash gossip
Squash indifference
Squash gambling
Squash selfishness

Plant four rows of lettuce
Lettuce be faithful
Lettuce be kind
Lettuce be patient
Lettuce love one another

Completing the garden
we must have thyme
Thyme for each other
Thyme for family
Thyme for friends

Water the garden and cultivate with love.
There is much fruit in your garden because
You reap what you sow.

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

“O God our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come, Our shelter from the stormy blast/ be thou our guard while troubles last, And our eternal home.”

The first and last verse of the hymn we shall probably sing on Remembrance Sunday – and which pledges God’s depth of Love for us and His act of salvation, both here and in the future: a new earth and a new heaven. Embedded in remembrance is remembering people, some of them close to us, who have lost lives for their country and for values of freedom, democracy, peace; it also contains respect, honour, thankfulness to God for deliverance in dangerous times in our histories. But it is further an opportunity to reflect on how it is that in a world which we believe to be governed and directed by the rule of God, wars have (and are) possible; it is an expression of our deepest longings for peace and safety.

The questions raised on Remembrance Day may be deeply personal. When we confront the reality of war, and express our longings for peace, we connect with the things that deflect ourselves from experiencing peace: the violence we may have experienced, or the acknowledgment of the capacity for violence within myself, the wrong suffered and the capacity to wrong and create suffering in

another, the hurt in our lives which can cloud judgement and quell our capacity to love.

Remembrance Day is a moment for naming painful things. But not to increase feelings of guilt or inadequacy; rather, we believe that it is around the Lord’s table, in fellowship with one another, in the presence of a loving God, we shall find strength to change things which need changing, and so thus be transformed and to be healed. A personal journey but one we pray too for God’s created world. A poppy for Remembrance Day is merely the symbol for such a prayer.

“Before the hills in order stood, or earth received her frame, From everlasting thou art God, To endless years the same.” (verse 3 of that same hymn)

COMMUNITY CHOIR

A few members of Old Church have recently joined the community choir “Singwell in Sandwell” that practises on Thursdays between 4.30 and 6.00 pm at the Dorothy Parkes Centre. We are rehearsing Christmas songs and have three performances booked. The choir covers a wide age range (from 17 to 80 years) and would welcome new members who enjoy singing for pleasure. For further details contact the Dorothy Parkes’ Centre. (Telephone 0121 558 2998)

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

At the beginning of October the Harvest Supper and Talent Show was an evening of fellowship and fun for brothers and sisters from The Old Church, St Matthews and Holy Trinity. A variety of talent included storytelling, poetry, comedy and musical items that were superbly compered by Hope and Jack.

The Harvest celebrations continued on Sunday morning in The Old Church which was suitably adorned with autumnal floral displays. The generous donations of food created a grand

display in front of the altar and were gratefully received by Brushstrokes to support their work with asylum seekers, refugees and others in need.

Later in the day a choir formed to rehearse an anthem and responses for a Choral Holy Communion using the 1662 service. The Rev’d David Gould preached and readings were taken from the 1611 Kings James Bible.

A new opportunity for quiet prayer was introduced during a 7.00 pm Evening service of Compline on the last Thursday of the month.

Q.I.... "SALVATION"

- "I serve a risen saviour, He's in the world today" - Jesus our Saviour!
- The letters of St Paul speak of salvation being a future event when God will judge the world, destroy the wicked and establish his final kingdom on earth - it is the object of Hope!
- This seems to be a continuation of Jewish apocalyptic expectation: the new earth and the new heaven.
- St Mark's Gospel speaks of being saved meaning entry into the kingdom.
- There is a shift of meaning in other biblical writings; in Ephesians "the helmet of salvation" for it has been "by grace you have been saved."
- 1 Corinthians 15.2 speaks the same, although adds: "if you hold fast!"
- When salvation is then spoken of as in the present, "believers" are saved (see 1 Timothy 4.10) or "souls" (1 Peter 1.9)
- The term "Saviour" is applied to Jesus only twice in the four Gospels (Luke 2.11, John 4.42), but the idea is far more frequent, for example St Matthew: the name Jesus means the one who saves his people from their sins (Matthew 1.21); the healing miracles are signs of salvation ("your faith has saved you")
- To understand salvation it is necessary to recognize that something needs to be done to put a situation right (a sinking ship, people trapped in a blazing building require saving!) - for an individual the situation may be as a sinner or we live in the face of death; for the whole creation, of which we are a part and without which we cannot exist.
- Jesus as Saviour saves - through the Cross, through his presence with us now, through the future: All reveal the Love of God the Father for His world and His intimate relationship with it. God will be all in all!
- Through and by grace, Christ saved/ Christ saves/ Christ shall save.

MESSAGE FROM DEB

I have been at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre for nearly six months and I cannot believe that the time has gone so quickly! I want to tell you about some new activities at the centre - "Singwell in Sandwell", the community choir and "Playwell in Sandwell" - is producing a pantomime in February 2012 - both are open to everyone.

The choir is going well and is supported by some members of the congregation. However, we need help with the Pantomime - particularly make-up artists, seamstresses to help with costumes, tea makers and ushers etc to help during performances. If you can help please ring me on 0121 558 2998 or come and see me. If, on the other hand, you fancy "treading the boards" come along to the Centre on Wednesday evenings (7.00 - 8.15 pm).

ADVANCE NOTICE

Christmas Eve in The Old Church

4.00 pm Carols by the crib

11.30 pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day: 10am St Matthews

10.15 am The Old Church



OCTOBER

- 30th 10.00 am **All Saints' Service** at St Matthews; 10.15 am The Old Church
- 30th 3.00 pm and 5.00 pm **All Souls' Services** at The Old Church (Candles lit for our Loved ones departed)
- 31st 7.30 pm **Licensing** of Rev'd Mike Sermon as priest in charge and the Reader, Mrs Jill MacDonald as Authorised minister in charge at St James' Round Green - All welcome.

NOVEMBER

- 5th 2.00 pm **Table Top Sale** in the Dorothy Parkes' Centre
- 7th 7.30 pm **PCC of St Matthews** meet
- 9th 7.30 pm **PCC of The Old Church** meet **in church!**
- 9th **Unity Day** hosted at Holy Trinity to explore locally available resources
- 13th **Remembrance Day Services**
10.00 am St Matthews,
10.15 am The Old Church
- 22nd 7.30 pm **Deanery Synod** meet at St Mary's Bearwood
- 24th 2.30 pm **Praying** in The Old Church
7.00 pm **Evening service of Compline**
- 26th **2.00 pm Christmas Fair** in the Dorothy Parkes' Centre
- 27th **Advent Sunday**

**The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?**

**The LORD is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?**

Psalm 27:1

The Old Church News



O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

VICAR'S VOICE

At the time of writing, the protesters sit still on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral in London, the Dean and Chancellor have both resigned from their posts and the Bishop of London has just declared that "Christians are used to near-death experiences: St Paul's itself once burnt down; but that resurrection experiences come too: the phoenix rising is a symbol."

So is the Cross of course: of salvation and of God's grace working amongst us through the risen Lord Jesus Christ (whose "coming" we wait for this Advent both at Christmas-birth and at the end of Time, his second-coming). The media, and others, have voiced, in the current situation, but "what would Jesus do?" Yet Jesus often wrong-footed his followers and critics: some who call me 'Lord, Lord' will not enter the Kingdom of heaven; many are called, but few are chosen; why do you call me 'good'?

There is little doubt that the Church (and so, us) should look at what we do, with true integrity, in the name of Jesus Christ. Important matters, such as, how we view the society in which we live, is our country fair and just for all, are we inclusive, really, and have we a personal integrity as we dare to call ourselves friends of Jesus, "in Christ" (as St Paul will have us called, to merit the term "christian")?

Each of us ought to take space (and time) to reflect upon such a true character of our Christianity and our calling. The season of Advent in its "waiting" may provide just that – for us as "Church" and for others, who may not believe but who, similarly, are concerned with such (and more) important matters of living with our neighbour and with ourself.

YOUR CHURCH NEEDS YOU

A new rota of duties is being prepared for the first quarter of 2012. Illness, incapacity and other responsibilities have resulted in a number of roles being undertaken by fewer and fewer people.

We need people who are willing to arrive at church by 9.45 am to act as sidespeople. We need someone to set up the kitchen and foyer in the Dorothy Parkes' Centre for coffee after the service and to take responsibility for the supplies. We need people to serve the refreshments. We need people to clean the Church and at least four more flower arrangers.

Please consider what you can do to help; the more people that volunteer the less frequently will you have to fulfil your commitment. Whatever you can do, will be valued. Please talk to the churchwardens or David Ingram about what is required.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

A variety of merchandise was on offer to all who attended the Table Top Sale at the beginning of the month. The proceeds from this event helped boost church funds.

Two minutes silence was a poignant feature of a reflective service on Remembrance Sunday when a new wreath was blessed and placed beneath the Roll of Honour.

A day conference designed to renew and encourage relationships across all sectors of the community was held in Holy Trinity. Speakers

included the Bishop of Birmingham as well as representatives from statutory and voluntary organisations. Those who attended found it to be an informative and uplifting experience.

Father Christmas made an early appearance this month when he opened The Old Church's annual Christmas Fayre in the Dorothy Parkes' Centre. The choir of Uplands Manor Primary School performed a variety of Christmas songs and carols that entertained and delighted the assembled crowd.

Q.I.... "ADVENT"

- Re-sets the calendars of Christian worship
- So it is the beginning of a new year of scripture readings and a new annual cycle of prayer and liturgy
- Calls for a new beginning
- We wait
- As we live in the "in-between" two comings: the first was when Christ came to Bethlehem giving us the opportunity to receive Him; the second will be when Christ comes again to take his "Bride" (the Church) at the end of time (we say or acclaim this in every communion service: "*Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!*")
- We wait with Joy and with Expectation!
- Four Sundays of the Advent season: 1. Stay awake and watch! 2. Prepare a way for the Lord! 3. Rejoice, the Lord is coming soon! 4. God-is-with-us!
- Advent, then, is dedicated to the last things: death and hope, judgement, heaven and hell, but above all, to Jesus' glorious coming.
- Colour is purple and there are no flowers in church: a solemn season (but wait for the gold and flowers of Christmas!)



DECEMBER

- 1st Discoverers are going out for **lunch** - speak to Christine Tanner if you would like to join them
- 4th During the 10.15 Eucharist at The Old Church Paul Martin, our Reader in training, gives his **first sermon** (please pray with him)
- 18th Junior Church/'Big Fish' and their "**Nativity**" **production** during the 10.15 am Old Church service
- 24th 11.00 am **Carol-singing** at Penmakers' Court (All welcome)
- 24th 4.00 pm **Crib service**
- 24th 11.30pm **Midnight Mass** at The Old Church
- 25th **Christmas Day** 10.00 am at St Matthews',
10.15 am The Old Church
- 29th 2.30 pm **Praying** in The Old Church
7.00 pm **Evening service of Compline**

During December, the season of Advent, we at The Old Church are collecting **food**: non perishable items (tins, rice, pasta, tea, etc) for the work of the charities 'Brushstrokes' and 'Food Bank' who provide for those locally in need. Please support.

A CHRISTMAS ALPHABET

- A** is for **Angels**, appearing so bright,
Telling of Jesus that great blessed night.
- B** is for **Bethlehem**, crowded and old,
Birthplace of Jesus by prophet foretold.
- C** is for **Cattle**, their manger His bed,
There in the stable where He laid His head.
- D** is for **David** and his ancient throne
Promised forever to Jesus alone.
- E** is for **East**, where shone the bright star
Which Magi on camels followed afar.
- F** is for **Frankincense**, with myrrh and gold,
Brought by the Wise Men as Matthew has told.
- G** is for **God**, who from heaven above
Sent down to mankind the Son of His love.
- H** is for **Herod**, whose murderous scheme
Was told to Joseph in a nocturnal dream.
- I** is for **Immanuel**, "God with us,"
For Christ shows us the way to the Father's house.
- J** is for **Joseph** so noble and just,
Obeying God's word with absolute trust.
- K** is for **King**. A true king He will be,
Coming in power and authority.
- L** is for **Love** that God showed the earth
That night in the stable in lowly birth.
- M** is for **Mary**, His mother so brave,
Counting God faithful and mighty to save.
- N** is for **Night**, when the Saviour was born
For nations of earth and people forlorn.
- O** is for **Omega**, meaning "the last;"
God is eternal: present, future and past.
- P** is for **Prophets**, when living on earth
Foretold His redemption and blessed birth.
- Q** is for **Quickly**, as shepherds who heard
Hastened to act on that heavenly word.
- R** is for **Rejoice**. The sorrow of sin is
Banished forever when Jesus comes in.
- S** is for **Saviour**. To be this He came;
The angel of God assigned Him His name.
- T** is for **Tidings** related to all,
Telling of Him who was born in a stall.
- U** is for **Us**, to whom Jesus was given
To show us the way and by love be driven.
- V** is for **Virgin**, foretold by the sage,
God's revelation on prophecy's page.
- W** is for **Wonderful**, His works and His words,
The King of all Kings, the Lord of all Lords.
- X** is for **Christ**. It's X in the Greek,
Anointed, Messiah, mighty, yet meek.
- Y** is for **Yes**, called God's Yes in His Word;
God's answer to all is Jesus the Lord.
- Z** is for **Zeal** as it burned in Christ's heart.
Lord, by thy Word to us zeal impart.

Have a blessed day!