

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

January 1st, a new year with twelve calendar months (and four seasons to enjoy). But the Church's Calendar is already one month old and we are about to enter the third "season." It began back on November 27th with Advent Sunday (and the time of expectation, hope and waiting for the Lord), then Christmas (which lasts until January 6th!) – the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ: the Incarnation – and then Epiphany (manifestation of who Jesus is: a King – which is why Magi, or Wise Men brought three gifts, gold, myrrh and frankincense to the son of God and worshipped Him).

But is it necessary to have a calendar at all in the church? After all, the post-resurrection groups of disciples didn't (it took nearly 400 years for the calendar to become: the Church can move at its own pace!) I think the answer is "yes," partly because we have so much to enjoy and mark in the Christian faith – it can't be put in one form of celebration on one day! But also because the Christian calendar reflects our own experiences of life as a whole (in the same way that our lives are a reflection of our faith). We celebrate birthdays, Christmas and other significant events; we prepare for important occasions (like job interviews, the birth of a child, rehearsing for a concert); and there are

long periods in life where life goes on well, pretty much as normal.

The calendar of the Church has the same pattern. While each Sunday is Easter Day and the celebration of a risen Lord Jesus, we do have "special" moments: Easter Day itself, Christmas, Pentecost (the gift of the holy Spirit and the birth of the Church), Ascension of Our Lord. We spend time preparing for those special moments (Advent and Lent especially) and whilst there are many festivals to celebrate, a lot of the year, designated as "ordinary time" is when we come, again and again, together to hear God's Word, to sing His Praise and to Worship Him, to pray and to intercede upon and for others and to be renewed and strengthened by communion, consecrated bread and wine.

And then there are all the moments when the Church building is open for anyone – and requests are made to baptise (to become Church), to marry, to be blessed, and to mark the end of life, to mourn, celebrate a person's life, to remember and to commend that person unto God.

The calendar rings the changes and its many traditions are a rich tapestry – like life itself – giving us the opportunity to explore the rich treasure-house of Christian faith.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

Singing seemed to be the order of the day during the month of December. The community choir Singwell visited several sheltered homes for the elderly where residents joined in singing a mixture of traditional carols and Christmas songs.

Later in the month a good number of the congregation received a warm welcome from customers and staff in the Asda store at Cape Hill. They spent an hour singing carols which everyone enjoyed and their sterling effort raised £158 for the Compton Hospice.

The prelude to Christmas continued in

Old Church on a Sunday morning when Junior Church and Big Fish entertained the congregation with their Nativity production. That afternoon St Matthews extended hospitality to many with shared fellowship and seasonal refreshments followed by carols and readings.

During their December meeting the Discoverers enjoyed an afternoon of festivity with a traditional three course meal at a local hostelry. Shared festivities were also enjoyed by Thrifties with mulled wine and a tantalizing takeaway in Charlotte's charming home.

Q.I.... "FAITH"

- the body of truth, as found in the Creed, the teachings of the doctors and saints of the Church, and revelation contained in the Bible
- to follow the teaching of Christ
- a "subjective" as St Paul says, the first of three theological virtues, along with hope and love
- the human response to God (like Mary's "Yes" in her Magnificat)
- as indicated in the Gospels, a trusting acceptance of the kingdom of God
- but a journey: "Now we see in a mirror dimly, then we shall see face to face" (St Paul once more)
- an individual path, of acceptance, exploration and discovery, from the heart and intellectually: an act of the will
- of deepening one's faith as we continue our lives

God can make all things new, even you.
Jesus adds life to your years and years to your life.
The perfect "resolution" for the year 2012:
To know God and Jesus better.



JANUARY

- 1st 3.00 pm **New Year together** in the Vicarage! Tea and shared cakes (bring a plate and let's share and face the New Year 2012 together)
- 11th 7.30 pm **The Old Church PCC** meet in the Vicarage
- 16th 7.30 pm **St Matthews PCC** meet in the church
- 22nd 6.00 pm **Churches Together:** We are all meeting at the Baptist Church, Regent Street for this year's service with the preacher from the Methodist Circuit (Please try and come together as fellow workers of the Lord!)
- 26th 2.30 pm **Praying** in The Old Church
7 pm **Evening service of Compline**

The First Invitation

The Chalice Outpoured

Sweet joy and light and fullness be to you this day
For he who was coming is come and will be with us always
But what means this light?
What is this sound?
These praises and songs?
Why is the darkness of night?
Fled away as before the day?
What means this once empty sky?
Now filled with all these joyful throngs?
Come.

Look and see for your own eyes to behold he who will forever be your friend
He who will love and honour you and give you blessings and life without end.
But how can just one child, an unknown son of unknown parents so poor.
Born in a nowhere building in an insignificant town and a land obscure
Be such a blessing and show power to cure?
For the rich and powerful can easily buy and sell such as him and us
Where will the power come from to raise such as he from the dust?
Fear not for such sweet joy will fill your heart, soul and mind
As his life unravels and weaves his love into our lives combined
Come, leave your fields and sheep and bring your friends to the event
Come greet the new life of promise that you will see is heaven sent
Sweet joy and light and fullness be to you this greatest of days
For he who was coming is come and will be with us always.

By Jeff Guest

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 beginning of February we celebrate the feast of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple, sometimes called Candlemas. We journey with Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus into the Temple and there we meet Simeon, who speaks the words we know as the Nunc Dimittis, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace...." It is a feast which marks a kind of turning-point in the Christian year as we move from the celebration of Christmas and begin to look towards Holy Week and Easter. It takes us from Bethlehem to Jerusalem; from the Old Covenant (between God and the chosen people of Israel), represented by Simeon, to the New Testament Covenant in Jesus; from the celebration of a birth towards the mourning of a death. Like plain chocolate, it is a bitter-sweet experience! We have just been celebrating a birth and already we are being asked to look towards the letting go of life – where, might one ask, is the justice in that?

Perhaps this is what atheists, who have no belief in a god, jump upon: that we are left with a cold reality that we cannot make sense of life on our own terms and without reference to what is beyond and outside us. We are complex individuals whose motives are hidden or at best elusive and we are unable to be entirely in control of our own lives. Therefore an argument might be: stop worrying and enjoy life!

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

People of all ages flocked to services over the Christmas period to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Young children helped to create the Nativity scene in front of the altar with the Wise Men 'arriving' at Epiphany.

New Year's Day saw a large number from the congregations of Old Church and St Matthews gather together in the vicarage to share mulled wine, tea and cakes. The sound of carols rang throughout the early afternoon to welcome in 2012 with many folk continuing fellowship during Evening Prayer in the Old Church.

But enjoying life in the fullness of my faith is what the Good News must include. Life is a complex mix, as with the bitter-sweet turn of Candlemas from a birth to a death. As long as we are still alive to the questions of faith then we may live life to its full, whatever experiences and changes we shall encounter. We may rage and shout at a God who may appear to be silent at times, but the answer does lie somewhere in the bitter-sweet feast of Candlemas and the tiny baby presented in the Temple: God's Son, Jesus, born into the world and dying to save you and I.

SMETHWICK FOODBANK

Today in Smethwick there are families struggling to put food on the table and parents are having to skip meals in order to feed their children. Smethwick Foodbank has been set up by local churches to meet this need. Food of a non perishable kind is donated by individuals, churches, schools and businesses. Food drives will also be held at supermarkets where volunteers give shoppers a foodbank shopping list and ask them to buy an extra item or two from the list. In a similar way church members are asked to buy items from the list when they do their weekly shop and bring them to church each Sunday. Smethwick Foodbank will be based at Holy Trinity Church, Church Hill Street and is open on Tuesday and Friday afternoons from 1.30 until 4.00 pm. For more information contact Liz Goss 0121 429 6022

Can you please help by buying some or all of the non-perishable food items below:

Tomatoes (Tinned), Soup (Tinned or Packet), Sugar, Orange Juice (Carton), Breakfast Cereal, Milk (UHT or Powdered), Tea Bags / Coffee, Vegetables(Tinned) (Carrots /Chick Peas /Beans), Tuna /Fish (Tinned), Biscuits, Chocolate, Pasta/Noodles/Rice/Lentils/Potato Powder(Dried) Rice Pudding /Sponge Pudding /Custard (Tinned) Pasta Sauce /Spaghetti Sauce (Jar)

Q.I...“LORD’S PRAYER”

- the prayer taught by Jesus to his disciples beginning with “Our Father”
- in the New Testament it is given in two slightly different versions (Matthew 6 verses 9-15 and Luke 11 verses 2-4)
- a concluding doxology was probably added in the early Church
- the prayer is divided into the address and seven petitions, the first three asking for God’s glorification, the latter four being requests for the chief physical and spiritual needs of ourselves
- the meaning of bread which is sought (translated as daily) is uncertain: past, present or future?
- an important part of our Christian devotion, but we should not be so familiar with it that we get to the “Amen” without knowing or sincerely addressing and asking God what we have just prayed for!

HANDY LITTLE CHART - GOD HAS A POSITIVE ANSWER

You say: 'It's impossible' **God says:** All things are possible (Luke 18:27)

You say: 'I'm too tired' **God says:** I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28-30)

You say: 'Nobody really loves me' **God says:** I love you (John 3:16 & John 3:34)

You say: 'I can't go on' **God says:** My grace is sufficient (II Corinthians 12:9 & Psalm 91:15)

You say: 'I can't figure things out' **God says:** I will direct your steps (Proverbs 3:5 - 6)

You say: 'I can't do it' **God says:** You can do all things (Philippians 4:13)

You say: 'I'm not able' **God says:** I am able (II Corinthians 9:8)

You say: 'It's not worth it' **God says:** It will be worth it (Roman 8:28)

You say: 'I can't forgive myself' **God says:** I Forgive you (I John 1:9 & Romans 8:1)

You say: 'I can't manage' **God says:** I will supply all your needs (Philippians 4:19)

You say: 'I'm afraid' **God says:** I have not given you a spirit of fear (II Timothy 1:7)

You say: 'I'm always worried and frustrated' **God says:** Cast all your cares on ME (I Peter 5:7)

You say: 'I'm not smart enough' **God says:** I give you wisdom (I Corinthians 1:30)

You say: 'I feel all alone' **God says:** I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5)



FEBRUARY

5th **Feast of the Presentation of our Lord** (Candlemas)

15th 2.30 pm Light Reading at the Sisters’ house - see Judy Eynon for details.

22nd **Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent:** 10.00 am Holy Communion in The Old Church and 6.00 pm Holy Communion at St Matthews (both with an invitation for the Imposition of Ashes).

23rd 2.30 pm **Praying** in The Old Church
7 pm **Evening service of Compline**

**Thursdays from 1st March
Lent gatherings in Holy Trinity
7pm for 7.30pm**

The next time you feel that God can’t use You. Just remember

Noah was a drunk
Abraham was too old
Isaac was a daydreamer
Jacob was a liar
Leah was ugly
Joseph was abused
Moses had a stuttering problem
Gideon was afraid
Samson had long hair and was a womanizer
Rahab was a prostitute
Jeremiah and Timothy were too young
David had an affair and was a murderer
Elijah was suicidal
Isaiah preached naked
Jonah ran from God
Naomi was a widow
Job went bankrupt
Peter denied Christ (3 times)
The disciples fell asleep while praying
Martha worried about everything
Mary Magdalene was promiscuous
The Samaritan woman was divorced, more than once
Zaccheus was too small
Paul was too religious
and
Timothy had an ulcer.....

So God can use all of us!!!

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 late Robert Runcie, when Archbishop of Canterbury, closed the General Synod meeting of July 1980 by saying, "today it is all too easy to be critical of synodical government and to forget just how far it has allowed the Church of England to reshape its life." Some may see that as an implied criticism of course of where the Church now is, from where it was perceived to once have been. All those who attend a synod are representatives of ourselves as Christians belonging to the C. of E., be they bishop, clergy or elected members of the House of Laity (in other words, women and men who attend a church and sit, usually, amongst fellow members of their own congregation). There are of course divisions of opinion – and many such are accordingly reported in the national press – but if the debates are outward-looking and kindle consciences in a long-term view which are both true to the past as well as pioneering for a Christian society today and tomorrow, then so much the better. As the then archbishop, concluded: "Does not the cry 'divide' make us set our sights too low?"

"Issues" seem to dominate (as perhaps they may always have), although it must surely be right that a contemporary Church in our society should be able to speak forth, even with divided opinion. For in a society where the social influence of the Church has declined, a powerful

institution committed to the gospel message to speak for the vulnerable and for those who may be weak in bargaining power should be visible and articulate.

Anyone who represents us as Christians, in any form of church synodical governance, cannot undertake such a responsibility lightly. And criticism of the effectiveness of any such synodical body fundamentally comes down to ourselves. For unless an elected parochial church council communicates its views and resolutions, through the elected deanery members, then how may that synod, for example, be truly representative? Equally, of course, the communication channel ought to be reversed, so that we, the represented, may be fully informed of any deanery report or concern. And that two-way communicative duty must apply through and to all synods, so that any pronouncement is honestly what we as members of Christ's body would truly adhere to, or is one where we could join ourselves perhaps in public reaction. For are not all of us equal members, irrespective of our own opinion, and might not any of us speak out in the name of Christ for what is non-judgemental, inclusive and gospel-bound.

For each of us holds a mission to serve: it is to that in, and for which, each of us has been called.

UNsung HEROINES



Mavis and Florence are two members of our congregation who have been knitting for a charity called Angel Tree. This is a Christian based Prison Fellowship that buys Christmas presents for children who have fathers in Birmingham prisons. Our ladies have knitted almost a hundred items including Easter chicks and Christmas puddings, all filled with a Cadbury's cream egg and then sold by the members of the charity. With the help of Mavis and Florence, the charity has collected the amazing sum of £921 and at Christmas over thirty children were able to benefit from presents given by Angel Tree.

Florence and Mavis have also knitted blankets

and bonnets for the Premature Baby Unit at Walsall Manor Hospital. Subsequently, the head of the unit gave a very moving talk to all those who had helped, thanking the knitters and describing the use of their gifts to help with premature and still-born babies.

Alice Lyon, a community midwife in Redditch, received a parcel of bonnets from our ladies. She kept the parcel in the boot of her car. Alice was called out to deliver a premature baby; the young mother had nothing small enough to keep her baby's head warm. Out of the boot came the welcome parcel of knitting. Mavis and Florence's bonnets had saved the day!



MARCH

Season of LENT: penitential and six weeks of preparation for Easter Joy!

Wednesdays February 29, March 7, 14, 21 & 28
12 noon **Holy Communion for Lent** in The Old Church and soup at the Dorothy Parkes Centre (monies for charity) to follow: 12.30pm

1st 7pm for 7.30 pm **“I Am the Way” Lent meeting at Holy Trinity** between all our local churches, tonight lead by Church of England (“Thy Kingdom Come”)

2nd 2.30 pm **Women’s World Day of Prayer** service at Holy Trinity

4th 11.00 am **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** at St Matthews’

8th 7pm for 7.30 pm **second Lent meeting at Holy Trinity**, tonight lead by the Methodists (Accepting God the provider and our response)

11th 11.30 am **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** at The Old Church

15th 7pm for 7.30 pm **third Lent meeting at Holy Trinity**, tonight lead by the Baptists (Who is our neighbour?)

17th 2.00 pm **Smethwick Heritage Day** and **“Church-Growth Conference”** - Old Church representatives.

18th **Mothering Sunday**
6 pm **Taizé Service** in The Old Church

19th St Matthews’ PCC

22nd 7pm for 7.30 pm **fourth Lent meeting at Holy Trinity**, tonight lead by the United Reformed Church (How we spend, and upon whom?)

25th **Baptism** of Lily Jane Richardson - Please pray for Lily and her family.

29th 2.30 pm monthly prayer/praying together for the parish and particular needs, in church (see Rosemary Guest for details)
7.00 pm monthly service of Night-prayer **Compline** in The Old Church

7pm for 7.30 pm **fifth Lent meeting at Holy Trinity**, tonight lead by the Salvation Army (Am I my brother’s keeper?)

Q.I...“SYNOD”

- the system of government of the Church of England
- first introduced in 1969 (the Synodical Government Measure)
- designed to give a greater part to the laity / the congregation
- The General Synod (bishops, clergy, laity elected) met in February
- The Diocesan Synod (for us, Birmingham)
- The Deanery Synod (for us, Warley, with its area dean, currently Rev’d Anthony Perry, Vicar of St Mary’s Bearwood)
- The parochial church council includes elected members to the deanery synod

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR APRIL

1st **Palm Sunday** (services 10 am St Matthews’, 10.15 am The Old Church)

5th **Maundy Thursday** 8.00 pm The Old Church. Watch until Midnight

6th **Good Friday** (10.00 am **Walk of Witness** at Holy Trinity, 12 noon **Stations of the Cross** at The Old Church, 2.00 pm **Praise and Liturgy** at St Matthews’)

8th **Easter Day** (10 am St Matthews’, 10.15 am The Old Church. **Fellowship Lunch** in the Dorothy Parkes’ Centre)

LAST MONTH’S NEWS

February began with a quiet and reflective service of nine readings and hymns in the Old Church to celebrate the arrival of the Magi and also the presentation of Jesus in the temple. This service marked the end of the season of Epiphany and also saw the Christmas decorations packed away for another year.

Thrifties sampled the fare at the newly opened Court of Requests formerly the library, a police station and magistrates court in the centre of Oldbury. The decor within reflected the different usage of the building and revived memories of her time as a magistrate for Joyce.

The Discoverers’ trip to Webbs of Wychbold was feared to be a non-starter following problems with the minibus. Thankfully alternative transport was available that enabled the group to enjoy an afternoon where they explored the garden centre and shared fellowship over a pleasant lunch.

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

“Children are growing up ignorant of one of the most inspiring stories I know – the history of the United Kingdom,” said Michael Gove, the Education Minister, at last year’s Conservative Party Conference.

Whatever one’s view educationally on the matter of history teaching, such a debate mirrors that within the church about our approach to the teaching of the faith. Traditionalists argue for a coherent narrative of faith, whilst many others are disaffected by the promotion of a rather narrow and exclusive version of what it means to be a Christian (a particular story that requires obedience, explaining everything to us as long as we are willing to listen hard enough).

But of course the idea of narrative is only one way of speaking about faith. We have to allow religious texts to speak to us. The story of the death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection speaks of liberation and the victory of non-violent love. We do not need to speak of it as “the turning point” or “the key chapter in the book,” for the death and resurrection of Christ is something to be lived. It is a life intimately concerned with trust and love, a life which is characterized by both vulnerability and compassion.

We do not need to condemn those who have heard a different story or dance to the tune of a different narrative; rather, we need to rejoice and

nurture our own faith on the basis of a personal encounter but in the fellowship and company of others, allowing God to speak to us and use us as He would will. We have “Good News” to proclaim, and to challenge and be challenged by the culture we live in: “Open to God, open to all” as our mission statement summarises.

PILGRIMAGE TO ST ALBANS

This is the oldest site of continuous Christian worship in Britain. It stands over the place where Alban, the first martyr, was buried after giving his life for his faith over 1700 years ago. The building's amazing mixture of architectural styles bears witness to the many centuries of its life, first as a monastic Abbey and now as a Cathedral.

23rd June: Coach departing from Holy Trinity at 8.00 am, returning 8.45 pm approx.

12.00 noon Eucharist Preacher Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York.

4.00 pm Evensong Preacher The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster.

Cost: Adults £15.00, Under 16s £10.00

Contact Nigel to reserve seats before 30th April

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

March gave lots of opportunities to discuss and learn together: a good way of deepening both faith and friendship.

The Rt Rev'd Andrew Watson, Bishop of Aston was the guest speaker at a conference “Growing with God” for children’s leaders. Various workshops were available on the day giving practical and spiritual ideas to help children walk with God. Top tips suggested to **HANDLE** children well..... **H**onour them! **A**dvice them! **N**urture them! **D**isciple them! **L**isten to them! **E**ncourage them!

The ecumenical meetings at Holy Trinity on the theme of “I am the way” were a useful source of reflection for Lent.

A small group gathered in the Sisters’ house for a day of Bible Study and fellowship. The day included study of Galatians and Hebrews giving a deeper insight into the background and content of these books.

The Discoverers shared lunch together and Thrifties enjoyed an evening of fashion and fundraising in aid of Worth Unlimited (a local Youth Work Charity).

Q.I...“EASTER”

- the feast of the Resurrection of Christ raised from the dead
- emphasized by the preparation period of Lent, Passiontide and Holy Week
- “Alleluia” (Hebrew: “Praise ye Yah”) for Easter Joy!
- Resurrection appearances of Jesus: after the empty tomb (John 20:1-10) to Mary Magdalene in the garden (John 2:11-18), to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35), to the disciples in a room (John 20:19-21), to Thomas (John 20:24-29), on the shore of Galilee (John 21:1-14), on the mountain (Matthew 28:16-20) and to St Paul by light and voice (Acts 9)
- the derivation of the word “Easter” is uncertain: according to Bede, it is connected with an Anglo-Saxon spring goddess ‘Eostre’
- the date of the Christian feast of Easter has superseded an old pagan festival (as with Christmas)
- The date of Easter is determined by the Paschal Full Moon, its extreme limits being 21st March and 25th April
- the custom of exchanging “Easter eggs” is of ancient origin (empty because of the tomb and Jesus is not there - He is with us!)



APRIL

- 1st **Palm Sunday**, with procession at St Matthews 10 am & Old Church 10.15 am
- 5th **Maundy Thursday** 8.00 pm **Holy Communion with washing of feet/hands** in Old Church, followed by **Watch** (open until midnight)
- 6th **Good Friday** 10.00 am **Witness Walk** round Holy Trinity, for one hour; 12.00 noon **Stations of the Cross** in Old Church (for one hour); 2 pm **Praise and Liturgy of the Cross** at St Matthews, ending at 3.00 pm
- 8th **Easter Sunday** 10.00 am St Matthews 10.15 am The Old Church
- 15th 10.15 am **Baptism of Sofia Taylor** during the service at Old Church - please pray for Sofia, her family and godparents
- 21st **Weddings**: Keven and Kim (1.00 pm) Stephen and Karen (2.30 pm) and Stephen and Melissa (4.00 pm) - please pray for their day and marriage
- 26th 2.30 pm **Prayers** in Old Church 7.00 pm **Compline service** in Old Church

ADVANCE NOTICES

A Celebration of Arts and Crafts in Smethwick

at Holy Trinity Smethwick

with funds raised going to Christian Aid.

11/12/13 May 2012

11th May Church open for exhibitors to set up.

12th May Church open for viewing of exhibition

13th May at 10am special service with Christian Aid theme

See web site for details of how you can join in or call Mel King on 0121 558 3427 if you, your church, school, community group or individuals wish to exhibit their special skills or interests as part of this celebration of so much that is good in Smethwick.

3rd June **A special event to mark the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee** with all churches and faiths invited to share in its creation. Lunchtime onwards with a short ceremony on the grass facing the High Street outside Holy Trinity followed by a party! More details to follow!

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 Supreme Governor of the Church of England is a title held by the British monarch which signifies their titular leadership over the C. of E., although the monarch's authority is not strong. Even so the position is still very relevant to the church and is mostly observed in a symbolic capacity. The Supreme Governor formally appoints archbishops and bishops on the advice of the Prime Minister of the united Kingdom who in turn s advised by church leaders.

In 1536 Henry VIII broke with Rome, seized the church's assets and declared the Church of England as the established church with himself as its head. The Oath of Supremacy under his daughter (Elizabeth I) gave the monarch's title as Supreme Governor of the church (so avoiding the charge that the monarchy was claiming divinity or usurping Jesus Christ whom the Bible identifies as head of the church) and also the title "Defender of the Faith." Both titles are in the Preface to the Thirty Nine Articles of 1562, to which every priest and deacon must still affirm. Parish priests must also take an oath of allegiance to the Queen, whilst at his or her Coronation the Sovereign, who currently has to be a fully confirmed member of the Church of England, promises to maintain the Church.

The Queen has a proven record of such a promise over these last sixty years and the

Established Church with her as its Supreme Governor and Defender of the Faith celebrates her Jubilee with joy and with prayers, as this written on the commemoration of her accession to the throne: *"God of time and eternity, whose Son reigns as servant, not master; we give you thanks and praise that you have blessed this Nation, the Realms and Territories with ELIZABETH, our beloved and glorious Queen. In this year of Jubilee, grant her your gifts of love and joy and peace as she continues in faithful obedience to you, her Lord and God and in devoted service to her lands and peoples, and those of the Commonwealth, now and all the days of her life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

A Psalm for giving thanks.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!
Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!
Know that the LORD, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts
with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!
For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures
forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 100

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

Palm Sunday heralded the start of April with processions at both St Matthews and Old Church to echo Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Services continued throughout Holy Week with many gathering together to share in the sorrows and joy of the Easter story.

The Social Events Group met together to organise forthcoming events including the successful Jumble Sale which raised £119 for church funds. Unfortunately the Quiz night planned for 11th May has been cancelled due to numbers at the planning meeting dropping significantly. For events to continue more help is needed - please speak to Nigel to offer support in

any way you can.

Last month also celebrated the baptism of Sophia Taylor and weddings of Keven and Kim, Stephen and Karen and Stephen and Melissa. We remember all of them in our prayers.

The Discoverers braved the British weather enjoying an outing to Wolverley where they shared lunch together at the Queens Head. To join them at Chasewater Railway see Christine or David.

Thrifties met for an evening of fun, food and chat at the Wernley Pub. They invite any females who would like to take part in a Murder Mystery Night to see Wendy.



APRIL

29th 5.00 pm Invitation to the Salvation Army Citadel to bid **farewell** with prayers for Major Amaro Pereira going to Burma for Christian Ministry

MAY

6th **Baptisms of Harrison Steele-Bird and Dollie Branigan**; please pray for them and for their parents and godparents

9th **Admission of Churchwardens** (Hector, Bob, Yvonne and Paul) at St Luke's Colmore Road by Archdeacon Hayward (please pray for him and them in their responsibilities)

11th **Quiz Night** at the Dorothy Parkes Centre

16th 7.30 pm The Old Church **PCC meeting**

17th **ASCENSION OF OUR LORD**: Holy Communion at **7.00 am** in The Old Church (with bells) followed by breakfast at the Vicarage

21st- **Week of Prayers together** as Christians

26th locally: **Monday** 7.30 am at The Old Church (breakfast in the Vicarage at 8am), **Tuesday** 2.00 pm at the Baptist church Regent street; **Wednesday** 10.00 am Holy Communion at Holy Trinity; **Thursday** 10.00 am Songs of Praise at St Matthews; **Friday** 7.00 pm in the United Reformed Church Langley; **Saturday** at 10.30 am with West Smethwick Methodists

JUNE

2.00 pm **Wedding** in The Old Church of Matthew and Sarah (Please pray for them at the beginning of their marriage)

3rd **Trinity Sunday** Shared Lunch at Holy Trinity for The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

5th Afternoon **Garden Party** at the Vicarage for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

ADVANCE NOTICE

Summer Fayre in the Vicarage Garden
Saturday 14th July at 2.00 pm

Q.I... "JUBILEE"

- a special anniversary; a time of rejoicing
- "Jubilate" - "O be joyful!" the first words of Psalm 100
- which is an alternative to the Benedictus at Morning prayer in the Book of Common prayer every day
- Jubilate Sunday is the third after Easter Day because the first words in the Latin mass then are taken from Psalm 66 verse 1 ("Jubilate Deo, annis terra")
- "Year of Jubilee," according to Jewish law (as in the Book of Leviticus chapter 25) is a year occurring every fifty years when Jewish slaves regained their freedom
- "Book of Jubilees" is an apocryphal Jewish work (also called "the Little Book of Genesis") purporting to have been given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai and probably written about 140 - 100 B.C.—the Law, with its prescriptions about feasts, the Sabbath, offerings and abstinence, all dated from the patriarchs such as Abraham.
- Jubilant—showing joy, rejoicing
- The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, sixty years since her accession to the throne of Great Britain. "God save the Queen"

ON THE WINGS OF PRAYER

**Just close your eyes and open your heart,
And feel your worries and cares depart.
Just yield yourself to the Father above,
And let Him hold you secure in His love.**

**For life on earth grows more involved,
With endless problems that can't be solved,
But God only asks us to do our best,
Then he will "Take Over" and finish the rest...**

**So when you are tired, discouraged and blue,
There is always one door that is open to you,
And that is the door to "The House of Prayer",
And you'll find God waiting to meet you there.
And "The House of Prayer" is no further away,
than the quiet spot where you kneel and pray.**

**For the heart is a temple when God is there
As we place ourselves in His loving care.
And He hears every prayer and answers each one
When we pray in His name - "Thy will be done".
And the burdens that seemed too heavy to bear
Are lifted away on "The Wings of Prayer".**

by: Helen Steiner Rice

The Old Church News

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

VIEW FROM THE GALLERY

Sunday morning and the church is crammed full and there is a lot of cheerful chatter. The extended family and friends of a family who have brought a baby for baptism are here in large numbers representing several generations. The infant is the centre of attention. The church pews are great for confining children but not over comfortable.

From the gallery I'm able to watch the inner workings of the church organ as they disperse air to create musical notes. I also have a bird's eye view of the people in church. For many present this is not a common experience as the church service may well seem utterly confusing. However there is a lot of good will and there are moments of real quiet and a sense of celebration.

Nowadays fewer babies are baptised. Gone is the time when Sunday afternoons saw churches packed for the baptisms of six or even a dozen infants without any regular members of the congregation present. Gone also is the time when parents were mostly married. We cannot roll back to that time but different opportunities are emerging when parents ask for baptism. We are blessed with members who are willing to work with children within the church which also makes it easier for families to be in church. There is also the opportunity to discuss marriage and the Christian understanding of this. For many families

this is a very stressful time with high levels of unemployment and encouragement and support are vital.

On the Sunday mornings when baptisms take place we become a shop window for the church. The participation of those who lead in the service by providing music, leading the prayers, reading lessons and making people welcome all help to create an act of worship which people who are new will remember. Yes, we may all prefer our own undisturbed routines on a Sunday morning and our own time for spiritual reflection but the Christian message is one of God's love for everyone proclaimed in baptism. *Michael Goss*

Nigel writes: When my mother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer one of my nephews (aged 25) took it upon himself to create a sponsorship idea (and "roped" in the boyfriends of his two younger sisters) - together all three of them walked the "two Tors walk" (from north Devon to Dorset, a distance of 117 miles) in 5 days for the charity raising over £1000. We of course are proud of them. But what adds to this is the reaction they encountered from perfect strangers. Every night they were offered, in pubs and others' homes, hospitality and food once their story had been shared. It is a "good news" story indeed and warms the heart. Bless the goodness that does exist in our world today.

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

Our journey through Easter continued as we celebrated the Baptism of Harrison Steele-Bird during a Sunday morning service followed at 12 noon by the Baptism of Dollie Brannigan. We remember Harrison, Dollie and their families in our prayers.

Archdeacon Hayward Osborne admitted Yvonne and Paul from Old Church; Hector and Bob of St Matthews, together with many others into the Office of Churchwarden at a service in St Luke's, Colmore Row. We pray for the Archdeacon and all Churchwardens in their responsibilities.

Ascension Day dawned with a 7.00 am service heralded by the bells. This was followed by breakfast at the Vicarage. Later that day the Discoverers were transported to the age of steam as they journeyed around the Chasewater Railway Museum. After fortifying themselves with lunch in a Toby Carvery in Cannock they continued their explorations with an interesting expedition to Chasewater Coalmine. The day concluded with a reflective tour around the German War Cemetery. Please contact Christine should you wish to join the Discoverers on June 21st for their next adventure to Halfpenny Green Winery.

Q.I... "ASCENSION"

- the withdrawal of Christ into Heaven as witnessed by the apostles
- St Luke deliberately combines two traditions current at the time he wrote (about 60 years after Jesus' death): Jesus ascended on the evening of Easter Day (Luke chapter 24 verses 50-51) and Jesus ascended at the end of a 40 day period, during which he appeared frequently to his disciples
- the Ascension marks the close of Eastertide and the exultation of Christ to the heavenly life
- Thus we are able to say "Jesus is Lord!"
- Jesus exercises power, he points to an ultimate transformation
- But he promised his Spirit (we celebrate this Gift at Pentecost)
- Christ, sitting at God's right hand, ruling as head over all things for the Church (and we responding to the Lord as witnessing disciples)
- One of the chief feasts of the Christian Calendar (a pity perhaps it is "hidden" away in the week-day!!)

Encouraging Words

Thou shalt not worry, for worry is the most unproductive of all human activities.

Thou shalt not be fearful, for most of the things we fear never come to pass.

Thou shalt not cross bridges before you get to them, for no one yet has succeeded in accomplishing this.

Thou shalt face each problem as it comes. You can handle only one at a time anyway.

Thou shalt not take problems to bed with you, for they make a poor bedfellow.

Thou shalt not borrow other people's problems. They can take better care of them than you can.

Thou shalt not try to relive yesterday; for good or ill, it is gone. Concentrate on what is happening in your life today.

Thou shalt count thy blessings, never overlooking the small ones, for a lot of small blessings add up to a big one.

Thou shalt be a good listener, for only when you listen do you hear ideas different from your own.

Thou shalt not become bogged down by frustration, for 90 percent of it is rooted in self-pity and will only interfere with positive action.



JUNE

- 2.00 pm **Wedding** in The Old Church of
2nd Matthew and Sarah (Please pray for them at the beginning of their marriage)
- 3rd **Trinity Sunday: Baptisms** of nine members of the Grice/Tipping families
- 3rd 3.00 pm **Garden Party** at the Vicarage for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee
- 5th 12 noon **Singers** join ASDA Cape Hill Celebrations for Queen's Diamond Jubilee
- 12th **Deanery Synod** meeting at Holy Trinity
- 17th **Baptisms** of Holly Marie Maddocks and Gary Elms
- 21st **Discoverers Trip** to Halfpenny Green Winery (see Christine Tanner for details)
- 28th 2.30 pm **Prayers** in Old Church
7.00 pm **Compline service** in Old Church

ADVANCE NOTICE

Sunday 8th July 6pm **Confirmation** at Christchurch Oldbury - Please pray for all those seeking and preparing to be confirmed.

Summer Fayre in the Vicarage Garden
Saturday 14th July at 2.00 pm

A Prayer for the Healing of Memories

O God of healing,
we bring to you our memories:
our memories of joyous and happy times,
but also our memories of painful times,
of wrongs done to us, and of wrongs we
have committed,
actions in need of forgiveness.
Send your Spirit
to dissolve the hurts we cling on to
and to transform us day by day
into the people you created us to be.
Through Jesus Christ,
who died and rose again,

Amen.

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1

JULY 2012



VICAR'S VOICE

In 1720 Dorothy Parkes made her Last Will and Testament (she died in 1728). By her Will she left monies sufficient for her charitable trust to be set up, managed by trustees for a chapel to be built for services and prayers, a clergyman to be appointed to administer such and a school for girls to be established. In 1732 the chapel was built and consecrated (the pub next door built at the same time - but not provided for by her legacy – then called “The Hand in Providence”). About one hundred years later, through a private members’ bill in Parliament, the parish was created and the chapel became known as The Old Church (the pub changing names subsequently to take on The Old Chapel) and the school eventually becoming at the end of the twentieth-century, the Dorothy Parkes Community Centre. The Trustees, all volunteers, meet annually but administer the trust funds for the benefit of the building and fabric of the church, with the Vicar as an ex-officio member.

The church of St Matthews was built in 1855 as the population of Smethwick grew and the area changed from the village and rural (with Holy Trinity church having just been built on the High street) to the industrial upon the canal and railway networks.

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

June began with a joyous occasion when nine members of the Grice/Tipping families were baptised and welcomed into the church family during the Sunday morning service. Later that day rain forced the Old Church Garden party indoors where home-made sandwiches, savouries and cakes were shared as all celebrated the 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

On Bank Holiday Tuesday a number of

The then Vicar of The Old Church, the Rev'd Edward Addenbrook, oversaw the work and its vision with the local Uniett family (meeting in the Blue Gates public house to plan it all!) and the building was built for £2,260.

In 2001 the three parochial church councils agreed to a Group ministry of the three distinct parishes with the hope that all three would meet regularly and share a vision for the area. Today we attempt to do so with occasional meeting together for worship (such as the Women's World Day of Prayer, the ecumenical Good Friday Walk of Witness and the Vigil of Easter Day dawn) as well as working together for projects such as the Food Bank.

We are not the first Christians on these sites. Each of the parishes in the Group have a history of prayer, worship, the sacraments and of mission and evangelism. But we, like our forbears, have a Christian faith to witness to and for which each of us are Called to share. None of us know our own futures but each of us have responded to God's Call and pray for His will to be done. Indeed we read and sing to the tune of “Here I am, send me!” There is a reason we meet in fellowship, wherever that may be, but that is because and only because we follow Christ.

the church family accepted the invitation to join in ASDA's celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee by singing hymns and patriotic songs in the Cape Hill store. Donations of cash and groceries for the Smethwick Food Bank were also collected.

Despite the inclement weather the Corpus Christi service and barbeque went ahead being hosted in the vicarage rather than the garden. Brothers and sisters from Holy Trinity, St Matthews and The Old Church gathered together and enjoyed an evening of food and fellowship.

Q.I..“CONFIRMATION”

- The rite by which the grace of the Holy Spirit is conveyed in a new or fuller way to those who have already received it in Baptism.
- It can convey a “character” upon the individual so that that person can only be confirmed the once.
- And by it, that person is then able to receive holy communion of bread and wine.
- An early example is when the apostles laid their hands upon the heads of those kneeling before them: see for example, Peter and John on the converts of Samaria (Book of Acts chapter 8 verses 14-17), or Paul on the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19: 1-7).
- In the New Testament the “sealing with the spirit” occurs in 2 Corinthians 1.20 and Ephesians 1. 13 and 4.30).
- Washing with water, anointing with oil and the laying on of hands are all associated with initiation into the fullness of Christian life. Confirmation has become distinct from baptism (although as an adult it can be seen immediately afterwards). The Bishop confirms, extending his hands towards those to be confirmed and asks us to pray with him; “Almighty and ever-living God, you have given these your servants new birth in baptism by water and the Spirit, and have forgiven them all their sins. Let you Holy Spirit rest upon them: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and inward strength; the Spirit of knowledge and true godliness; and let their delight be in the fear of the Lord. Amen.”
- The Bishop shall then confirm, by laying his hand upon each and saying; “Confirm O Lord your servant with your Holy Spirit. Amen.”
- And everyone then present as Christian witnesses prays for the newly-confirmed by saying “Defend O Lord these your servants with your heavenly grace, that they may continue yours for ever, and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more until they come to your everlasting Kingdom. Amen.”
- That of course is a continued prayer for each of us!
- (The next Confirmation service is to be held by Bishop Andrew at Christ Church in Oldbury on Sunday July 8th at 6pm. Please pray for all those preparing to be confirmed)



JULY

- 2nd **PCC** of and at St Matthews
- 4th 7.30 pm **PCC** of The Old Church meet at the Vicarage
- 5th **Annual meeting** of the Smethwick Chapelry trustees set up by Dorothy Parkes
- 7th **2pm Summer Fair** in the Vicarage garden **CANCELLED** (weather permitting)
- 8th 6.00 pm **Confirmation** service with first communions at Christ Church, Oldbury with Bishop Andrew
- 15th 12 noon **Baptism** of Tyler-Joe Harrington: pray for him, his parents and god-parents
- 21st 2.00 pm **Wedding** of Scott and Clare: please pray for them
- 22nd 3.00 pm Bishop David presides at **Thanks-giving Songs of Praise** at St Matthews at 3pm – everyone invited.
- 26th 2.30 pm **Prayers** in the Old Church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 26th 7.00 pm **Compline**/Night prayer
- 28th 4.00 pm **Wedding** of Mark and Jenny: please pray for them



THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD
VOLUME 3 ISSUE 2 AUGUST 2012



NOT THE VICAR'S VOICE!

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us ..." (Hebrews 12:1)



As many of you know, I have been working for six years towards a PhD in theology. In July I went to Manchester for the graduation ceremony. Luckily the sun shone, and we were able to take photographs of me in my robes! I would like to thank you all for the support and encouragement you have given me. There were certainly times when I needed perseverance. And one of the things which kept me going was the regular Sunday

by Sunday worship at The Old Church.

As I write we are in the final build-up towards the Olympics. St Paul remarks in 1 Corinthians 9:24, "in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize". There will be athletes who return from London 2012 clutching a medal, having achieved a lifetime's ambition. But let us spare a thought for those who will finish bitterly disappointed, years of training seemingly unfulfilled.

We all have times when we fail: when we run out of breath, trip up, lose our stride ... And that is when we need to be there for each other, and remind each other that as Christians our values are not all about success. St Paul tells us that he had a 'thorn in the flesh', something which harassed him, and kept him back.

He prayed fervently that it might be removed; but instead he received this message: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (1 Corinthians 12:9). I pray that in your times of weakness you may know the grace of God.

Ann Conway-Jones

BEN'S MATHS WEBSITE

Six months ago, with the help of my maths teacher and the school's ICT team, I created www.furtheryourmaths.co.uk. This maths revision website is run by students for other students. We started with revision for GCSE Further Maths, and have now branched out to GCSE Statistics and KS3 Maths. Over the last few weeks a new team of ten year 8 kids have learnt how to expand, manage and successfully run the website.

They will take over when I leave for college in September. This team will hopefully teach and inspire students for years to come. The website has been a huge success, with almost 1000 views from 29 countries in every continent except South America. It has also had encouragement and support from Lord Jim Knight and Alan November, a leading American expert in using ICT in education.

Ben Conway-Jones

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

In July four candidates from the Old Church congregation along with twenty-seven others from the Warley Deanery met at St Mark's Church to be confirmed by Bishop Andrew. Prior to the service three of the proposed candidates from the same family spoke of how they had rediscovered their faith following the death in February 2012 of Gordon, their beloved husband and father. The three began attending Sunday morning services at Old Church as well as social events and described the wonderful pastoral care they received from the Vicar and congregation. This led them to realise what was missing spiritually in their lives. As the newly confirmed were welcomed into the wider church family at St Mark's, the joy of the occasion was mirrored on their faces and our four candidates explained how they were touched by the support of Nigel, the church family and Bishop Andrew.

A most Marvellous, Majestic, Magnificent and Moving evening of music hall Extravaganza was enjoyed when the Tremendously Talented and Terrific Thrifties embarked on an Enchanting evening of Entertainment at the Barlow theatre in Langley. The Awed and Ahhed audience of "A Little of What you Fancy" were Tantalizingly Transported throughout the Music Hall era with a Sparkling and Splendicious array of stories and songs depicting the life and times of vaudeville, burlesque and stage.

A Fantastic night of Fanciful Fun!!

Severn Valley Railway was the destination for Discoverers as they all came on board for a day exploring the bygone era of steam. They began with a mid-morning cuppa in the tea rooms on Kidderminster Station before embarking on the journey to Bridgnorth. Lunch was enjoyed at the quaint and hospitable Shakespeare Inn. A short tour of the town followed and the day was rounded off by the relaxing train journey back to Kidderminster.



AUGUST

- 6th 6.30pm **Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord**—Holy Communion in the Vicarage (garden, weather permitting) followed by barbecue party
- 12th 10.15 am **Sister Phoebe preaches** at The Old Church
- 15th 8.00 pm **Eucharist** to celebrate the **Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (followed by drinks in the Vicarage)
- 24th Younger members of The Old Church to "Big Fish" attend the **Greenbelt Festival**
- 27th **Festival**
- 25th **Wedding** (in St Matthews) of Tanya and Melvin, please pray for them and their guests
- 30th 2.30pm **Shared Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 30th 7.00 pm **Compline**/Night prayer

GETTING TO KNOW YOU...

Have you ever talked to someone at church but have never got round to asking their name? Well I have! Two uniformed officers come regularly to Old Church, stay for coffee and are ready to talk to and help everyone. I have only ever asked them for advice. Last Sunday I tried putting a name to the uniform. Our two Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are Matt Ball and Julie Wright.

Matt, a family man, has three beautiful daughters and likes watching boxing and football. Julie looks too young to be expecting twin grandchildren. She enjoys gardening, growing her own fruit and vegetables and watching football.

Before joining up Matt was a scaffolder, but had family members in the police force. Julie was a data inputter; a chance meeting with a fellow PCSO set her on the road to community policing. How fortunate for us. After some months training Matt and Julie worked in Bearwood, then moved to Smethwick, and have been supporting us for four and five years respectively.

Two years ago Julie and Matt obtained £500 for Big Fish and have applied for new funding for this year. How lucky we are to have such wonderful PCSOs even if they are Aston Villa supporters.

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D
VOLUME 3 ISSUE 3 SEPTEMBER 2012



VICAR'S VOICE

The debate over whether people of the same-sex may marry has occupied the media for a while, since the Government have proposed such legality. There have been views stated for and against, in and beyond the Christian Church and it is clear that there is a variety of opinion; it is equally clear that the Church has viewed marriage as a sharing in and of God's love, whoever we are.

Whilst matrimony is exhibited in the Bible as a wholly honourable estate, virginity was more highly commended (see for example Matthew chapter 19 verses 10-12, or 1 Corinthians 7) and celibacy was advocated in the early Church.

Marriage itself has been seen as a covenant where the couple try to live out God's faithfulness and St Paul compares the union between Christ and His Church.

Civil partnerships, between same-sex couples, is not marriage and a change of law will be required. However, whilst acknowledging the like of David Starkey (the historian who admits to being an atheist conservative who happens to be gay) that "gays need not be called Mr and Mrs" and

abhors the threat of the Established Church "dissolving," it is important to recognize that fidelity/faithfulness, commitment and mutual love are pledged between civil partners of the same-sex as well as between a man and woman. Moreover, the idea of procreation as a "primary end" is not born out in historical terms as marriage was at one time more especially concerned with property rights.

Those who are charged with responsibility to make any change to the statute law (in Parliament) have been given a free vote. No doubt their own conscience shall play an important part, as will the faith each may or may not hold. But it would be wrong if any vote was determined by prejudice and a narrow-mindedness. As a Christian Church, each of us, following in the Lord's steps, will welcome anyone as a loved brother and sister – and, whoever anyone is, all are equal in the sight of God – and thus, it must be for us. More so, then, when anyone pledges their faithful love and commitment to another cherished child of God's!

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord was celebrated by many in the vicarage garden when thankfully the dry evening allowed for fellowship to be shared outdoors during the service and the barbeque that followed later.

Another communion service held at 8pm on 15th August celebrated the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary where brothers and sisters came together to receive the Eucharist with the added aroma of

burning incense. This reflective evening came to a pleasant close with drinks at the Vicarage.

August Bank Holiday weekend sees our young people in "Big Fish" camping together and joining in the fun of the Greenbelt Festival, where they can experience workshops, music and artists exploring and celebrating the Christian Faith. We pray for them and their leaders whilst they are there and look forward to their safe return when they will share their adventurous highlights with the church family.

Q.I. "MATRIMONY"

- The Christian conception of marriage, though it claims to be based on natural law, differs sharply from earlier practice, whether Jewish or pagan, and also from modern secular usage, notably in the equality it gives to the woman and the indissolubility it ascribes to the marriage bond.
- The Preface to the Marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer sums up the "ends" of marriage, as the procreation of children, the avoidance of sin and mutual society.
- Marriage as a sacrament (see Ephesians chapter 5 verse 32) is peculiar in that the parties themselves are the ministers, the priest is the appointed witness.
- The claim of the Church to establish exclusive jurisdiction over matrimonial cases came in the eleventh century, but in 1753 Lord Harwicke's Marriage Act (and then in the 1836 Marriage Act) established civil marriage.
- The minimum age for marriage has varied over time but is now over the age of 16 years for both (Age of Marriage Act 1929)
- Practice varies among the Christian bodies concerning clerical marriage – the Orthodox Church says that ordinands (those training to be deacon or priest) must be either already married or elect to remain celibate; the Roman Catholic church enforces celibacy (although permits anyone from the Anglican communion who is already married); the Anglican (such as the Church of England) and Non-conformist bodies allow a free choice (although the matter of freedom has of course recently become debatable).



SEPTEMBER

- 5th 7.30 pm **Old Church PCC** meet at the Vicarage
- 8th **Weddings** - pray for Delroy & Sarah and Andrew & Sharon
- 9th **Baptisms:** pray for Bradley Alexander & Olivia Isabella
- 9th 3.00 pm **Pimms Party** in the Vicarage garden
- 10th 7.30 pm **St Matthews PCC**
- 27th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 27th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)

Prayer from the Taizé Community

Christ Jesus, even if your presence remains invisible you are close to each person. You never give us up. And more still, you find your joy in each one of us. You give us a look of goodness for others.



THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D
VOLUME 3 ISSUE 4 OCTOBER 2012



VICAR'S VOICE

May we wear a cross or a crucifix at work? It is an argument in the European Court of Human Rights that it is not an absolute right, nor a right without limits. The Court is hearing arguments on behalf of two people who claim that they have lost their jobs because they refused to remove a cross or crucifix, along with two others who were dismissed from their posts, they claim, because their own religious views were held to be contrary to what was asked of them in their counseling roles.

A British-government lawyer argued that, although everyone in a free and democratic society has a right to express and manifest their beliefs, Christians could not claim that they have suffered religious discrimination at work if they have the freedom to resign and look for another job; that there was no interference with Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Against this, the argument ran that there was nothing in Article 9 to justify that one's rights stopped the moment you crossed the threshold of work. The judgement is not expected for several months. But is it a sign of our times?

The chief executive of the British Humanist Association said that the cases were the result of an "increasingly strident Christian lobby". It was said in court that certain employers only permitted religious items being worn if they were a "mandatory scriptural requirement." Our faith of course has the Cross, the crucifix upon which Jesus died, as central to our Resurrection faith. The wearing of such may not be a formal requirement for Christians (although it certainly is a visible symbol of a held belief – If, that is, it isn't merely a piece of jewelry for someone to adorn themselves!) But to prohibit such (if it does not impede work or endanger anyone wearing such) would surely be a devaluing of a personal right.

It shall be interesting to see what and how the Court shall judge: as a principle, or confined to the particular facts of each case. Whether we wear a cross or crucifix of course might be said to be immaterial, set against our capacity to talk, to share and to act out the Good News of our Christian creed and our faith, whatever we choose to wear.

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

Typical August Bank Holiday weekend weather forced an early end for "Big Fish" at the Greenbelt festival. Despite their name they did not appreciate living in such wet conditions and decamped a day earlier than expected. Despite their early departure the young people enjoyed many aspects of the camp particularly Sunday morning worship with 20,000 other communicants.

Sunday 9th September was a gloriously warm afternoon when the vicarage garden was decked in bunting for the annual Pimms party. Fellowship was shared by many with games, tasty treats and a raffle.

St Matthews and Old Church shared an outing to Twin Lakes in Melton Mowbray when young and the not so young enjoyed a beautiful sunny day and explored the grounds, petted and fed the animals and experimented on many of the adventurous rides. Due to the large numbers who attended, costs were less than expected and a surplus of £100 has been donated to the Foodbank who are desperately short of food items.

Yalana was presented with a Bible and monetary gift from "Big Fish" as she leaves to begin her studies at University. We pray for Yalana as she begins her new life at Uni.

Q.I. "ST LUKE"

- Feast day in the Church (October 18th)
- A Gentile (not Jewish) almost certainly a Greek from Antioch in Syria
- A doctor (St Paul refers to him as "my beloved physician")
- The author of the third gospel at the end of the first-century
- A gifted story-teller
- Wrote to a certain Theophilus to give him "certainty"
- An historian, wrote of Jesus' story as biography
- But speaks of the Annunciation (to Mary) and of several miracles and parables which are not related elsewhere
- We know nothing of his conversion to Christianity, but he was probably a companion to St Paul (certainly he admires Paul)
- He tells the story of Paul in his Book of Acts
- He places particular emphasis on wealth and poverty and concerns for the "marginalized" in society (women, the poor, the ethnically marginalized Samaritans)

APOLOGIES TO BELLY

In my last report on our favourite Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) I called Matt Bell, Matt Ball. He has forgiven me and I am now allowed to call him Belly. When I spoke to them recently, Belly and Julie Wright talked about their very valuable role in our neighbourhood of Smethwick. They are here to support us all, a highly visible team in their distinctive police uniforms, riding their bicycles around our streets.

Their role is to deal with local issues; disputes between neighbours, anti-social behaviour, visiting crime hot spots and giving crime prevention advice. Belly and Julie's main focus is to prevent crime by engaging with local groups.

They work alongside community centres, visit churches and other religious establishments, afternoon clubs and youth groups. They hold surgeries at the Dorothy Parkes Centre and details can be found on the West Midlands Police website for Sandwell. Last, but not least they raise money for local ventures, such as Big Fish's visit to Greenbelt. How lucky we are to have such a dedicated team.



OCTOBER

- 6th 6.30 pm **Harvest Supper** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 7th **Harvest Festivals** -
10.00 am in St Matthews
10.15 am in The Old Church
- 10th 7.30 pm Dorothy Parkes Centre Trusteeship **AGM**
- 14th After church Sale of **Traidcraft** produce, Christmas cards and gifts
- 17th 7.30 pm The Old Church **PCC** meeting in the Vicarage
- 21st 6.00 pm **Taize** Service in The Old Church
- 25th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 25th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)
- 27th **Wedding** (in St Matthews) of Eliot and Nadine - please pray for them

"Meet and Share" beginning 3rd October. 10.30 am on Wednesday mornings for one hour at the Sisters' house, alternately bible-sharing and hymn-sharing. Speak to Victoria Barlow for further details and sign up on list at the back of church.

"Monthly Service of Healing"

A service of healing takes place at St Matthews each month on the second Saturday of the month at 9 am. All are welcome, particularly those who are hurting and in pain or feeling a burden of anxiety and distress and in need of any kind. Future services will be held on 13th October, 10th November and 8th December.



People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 5 NOVEMBER 2012



FROM THE ASSISTANT PRIEST

My neighbour has asked me to fix her wardrobe door. I hesitate as the last time I attempted this it was not successful and the door fell off! Chipboard is not easy to repair. I promise to try again, but my motivation is not strong. The “can do factor” is lacking!

Recently in Ghana I visited a church project which cares for about twenty-five orphaned babies whose mothers died in childbirth because of a lack of maternity care. I'm overwhelmed by a scrum of infants and toddlers who demand to be picked up and played with. They are full of joyful life and unaware of their real situation. The plan is to return them at the age of four to other family members. I'm no practical use, unlike their loving foster carers.

Later I visit another project with the same purpose. This time the infants are being cared for by their grandmothers but there is a sense of gloom and sadness; the grandmothers look tired and in need of care themselves. In both situations it would be easy to weep at the plight of these children but that is of no practical use. Motivation can ebb and flow when it needs to be constant.

Seeing something through and finishing the task is essential however hard that may be.

The church gives all of us the chance to be decisive in small as in big things. Unfortunately we can all fall into the trap of too much procrastination which leads to inaction. Dare I cite the example of the committee given the task of choosing the next archbishop of Canterbury. Three days and no white smoke! I thought the Roman system of choosing a pope was bad enough but this is even worse. Perhaps by the time you read this a decision will have been made. *Michael Goss*

Sometimes it doesn't matter on which side of the fence you get off.

What matters most is getting off the fence. You cannot make progress without making decisions.

Jim Rohn

I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot
Would that you were either cold or hot!

Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Revelation 3

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

Harvest supper was enjoyed during an evening of fellowship at the Dorothy Parkes Centre. Many came together from the three parishes to enjoy fish and chips and puzzle over baffling quiz questions! A team from Holy Trinity were the winners and received a tin of Roses to reward their success. The evening was rounded off with a raffle and a rousing sing - a - long with many of the old familiar songs. The generous sum of £170 was raised and it was agreed to hand this amount to Holy Trinity for the Foodbank.

Harvest Festival celebrations continued the following morning during Sunday worship

where generosity was again displayed by the bounteous food gifts donated by members of the congregation. The produce was later shared between Brushstrokes and Foodbank.

An exciting and challenging conference ‘The Big Splash!’ was held in the Birmingham Diocese to help churches make the most of the opportunities arising before, during and after baptisms. The baptism team from The Old Church attended and benefited from the chance to look creatively at this important part of the life of the church. They came away feeling refreshed and full of ideas to share with the PCC and church family.

Q.I “DEVOTIONS TO THE SAINTS”

- The practice of venerating and invoking the saints has long been a regular element in Catholic devotion
- Its justification rests on the beliefs that the saints are both close to God because of their holiness and accessible to us
- and because intercessory prayer is effective
- A Jewish anticipation is found in 2 Maccabees where Judas Maccabaeus sees Onias and Jeremiah in a dream with outstretched hands invoking blessings on the whole of the Jews
- in the New Testament the gift of special privileges by certain persons in the next world is held to be indicated in Christ's promises to the apostles (Matthew chapter 19 verse 28)
- support for the idea that the dead may intercede on behalf of the living may be found in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31)
- “a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12.11) to whom Christians are “called to imitate” (Hebrews 13.7); the “martyrs before the throne of God” (Revelation 6.9); “we are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God” says St Paul to the Ephesians (chapter 2 verse 19)

OPEN CHURCH

Every Tuesday afternoon from 2.00 pm until 4.00 pm the church building is open to all. Anyone can come into our beautiful church to look around, sit and pray or just be still, have a cup of tea and a biscuit or join in the craft making. “Open Church”, as these afternoons are called, has been happening for almost three years and has provided an opportunity for many visitors to come into church.

In addition, many crafts have been created during this time and later sold at various fetes thus raising considerable funds. Those who regularly enjoy fellowship at “Open Church” on Tuesday afternoons would dearly love to see the church open more often.

If anyone is available and willing to facilitate a couple of hours on a different day please speak to Nigel or have a word with Christine Tanner, Joyce or Irene.



NOVEMBER

- 4th **ALL SAINTS' Sunday Services**
10.00 am St Matthews
10.15 am The Old Church
- 4th 3.00 pm & 5.00 pm **ALL SOULS' Services** in The Old Church to pray and remember our loved ones with candles being lit
- 11th **REMEMBRANCE DAY Services**
10.00 am St Matthews
10.15 am The Old Church
- 24th 2.00 pm **CHRISTMAS FAYRE** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 29th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 29th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE OLD CHURCH?

Six years ago my daughter Felicity decided to get married in The Old Church. Paul and I attended one morning service to hear the Banns of Marriage read. The congregation was welcoming, warm and most importantly non-judgemental. Joyce organised and Barbara conducted the ceremony; that family and friends agreed was the best wedding ever. There was fabulous music, beautiful flowers and an incredible venue. We were hooked!

We did not disappear, with the champagne bubbles; we returned to The Old Church after the wedding. Nigel arrived as the new vicar and the rest, as the saying goes is history. It was almost as if The Old Church had enveloped us. Nigel, Barbara, Michael and the whole congregation received us with love and grace.

We were encouraged to join in all aspects of church life:- helping with jumble sales, junior church, attending the 3D course and becoming members of the Pastoral Care Team. Paul became a Church Warden and is now training to be a Reader. Nigel and the church family facilitated our return to worship after forty years on the outside. The Old Church is a place of warmth and a place where people are accepted no matter where they are on their spiritual journey.

Why is Old Church special to you? Do you love the windows, the friendship, the jokes some people tell, the great mix of cultures and talents? Is our vicar the best thing since sliced bread? We would love to hear of your experiences and impressions since joining the church.

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

A woodman went into a forest. The great trees surrounded him. They were tall and thick and strong. Most of them had been in the forest for hundreds of years. "I am sorry to disturb you," said the woodcutter politely, "but I can see that you great trees are the kings of the forest. I have a request to make. I need wood to make a new handle for my axe. I wonder if I could cut down a tree for this purpose. I don't mean one of you of course, just a small tree somewhere." The great trees were flattered at being spoken to in this manner and nodded their heads graciously. "You do not ask for much," they said. "Yes, you may take just one small tree. You may cut down that young sapling over there." The older trees nodded at a young ash tree which had not had time to grow very tall or thick. The woodman thanked them for their kindness. He walked over to the ash tree before the older trees could change their mind and with a few swift strokes cut it down. Then he sat down and made a fine new handle for his axe from the fallen tree. But as soon as his axe had been repaired, the woodman showed the old trees the real reason for his arrival. Wielding his strong, new axe, he cut down every tree that that stood in his path. He went right

through the forest, hacking and cutting at all the trees he could find, big and small alike. Before long most of the forest had been cut down. "It is our own fault," the few remaining trees cried in despair. "We have brought our deaths upon ourselves. We should not have stood by and let the woodman cut down that first tree. If we had protected that sapling we would have been guarding ourselves."

We of course need to protect the environment (the recent news of the danger for the ash tree is one particular cause). But what of the Church? Are we in danger of being "cut down" in this secular age, reduced to the sideline? As we prepare for Christmas, what does the Christian message really mean to those around us? Is the message of Advent (waiting and judgement) relevant to the world? It is our task as Christians to inform and to share. But what are we doing with divisions amongst the Church (and publicized as such), are we in danger of cutting ourselves down? And are we really nurturing the new in faith, as well as letting our own faith flourish? The woodman is about. And as we, once more, prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, do we guard the "forest" of our Faith?

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

An opportunity for remembering began during the Sunday morning service on All Saints' Day when the congregation was guided through a moving meditation during the sermon by Dr Ann Conway-Jones. The All Souls' services that afternoon and evening were well attended, enabling a peaceful time of reflection where candles were lit to the memory of departed loved ones.

Sunday 11th November saw the service of Remembrance commemorating the fallen in all conflicts. Don Sanders carried a wreath of poppies to the altar as the congregation stood

for the two minutes' silence and then Jean Hayes recited "At the going down of the sun..."

The Discoverers would like to extend a big thank you to our local PCSO's Julie and Matt who nominated them to receive a donation of £400 towards events and outings.

The Discoverers recently visited The Cone in Dudley. The day was spent with a tour around the glass museums where the young-at-heart Discoverers were treated to a demonstration of glass blowing alongside a group of somewhat younger school children. The day was rounded off nicely with a meal.

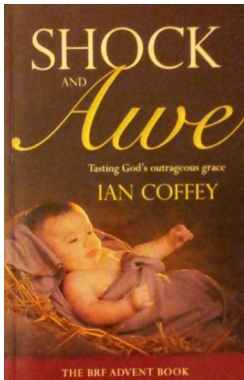
Q.I. "ADVENT"

"The bells of waiting Advent ring" wrote John Betjeman in his Poem called "Christmas" for it ends with this verse:

"No love that in a family dwells,
No caroling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this Single Truth compare –
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine."

THE OLD CHURCH LIBRARY

You are welcome to borrow these new books for Advent from the library. If you prefer to purchase your own copy (£7.99 each) please speak to Jeff Guest



In these daily Advent and Christmas readings, starting on December 1st, Ian Coffey explores how God reaches out to us.

Starting with Abraham and concluding with the book of Revelation he sees how God chooses unlikely people and works in unusual ways.

Reflecting on what it means to a person of faith, trusting God's

promises and how some of the gifts of grace bring our encounters with Him into our life.

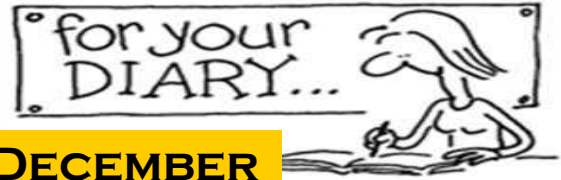
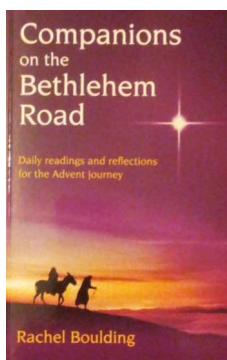
The Rev'd Ian Coffey is the director of leadership and training at Moorlands College.

It includes a section of optional material for group discussion over five sessions

In these daily Bible readings and reflections for Advent and Christmas based around spiritual insights gleaned from some of the best loved poets including Eliot, Herbert, Tennyson and Auden leads in a quest to discover how they wrestled with the same questions as us about God, Love, Hope and Suffering.

Rachel Boulding is deputy editor of the Church Times. Previously she worked at Church House where she helped to produce the Common Worship materials.

It includes a section of optional material for group discussion over five sessions



DECEMBER

- 2nd **ADVENT SUNDAY** - Communion services 10.00 am in St Matthews' 10.15am in The Old Church each to include lighting the first candle of the Advent Wreath
- 12th **6.00 - 7.00 pm Carol Singing** at ASDA Cape Hill. All welcome to join in singing to raise money for charity.
- 23rd 10.15 am **Children's Nativity Play** at The Old Church
- 24th 4.00 pm **Crib Service** - All are welcome
- 24th 11.30 pm **Midnight Mass** (with carol singing before)
- 25th **CHRISTMAS DAY** - Communion services 10.00 am in St Matthews' 10.15am in The Old Church

Advent Calendar

by *Dr Rowan Williams*

He will come like last fall's leaf fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.