

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 7 JANUARY 2013



GREETINGS FOR A NEW YEAR

On 1st January we celebrate the start of new year and I will continue to write '2012' on my cheques until around Easter time. That's how long it takes me to realise that we have moved on a year. Of course, the church year is already one month old by 1st January, with the period of Advent, the time of remembering Christ's birth and looking forward to His coming again, leading to the great festival of Christmas. And, I hope that you did indeed have an excellent Christmas. But, by January, the church year has moved on once more, past Christmas and towards the 6th January, the feast of the Epiphany.

Epiphany is the time for recalling the story told by Matthew, and only by him, of the visit of the Magi, sometime called Kings, or Kings from the East, or simply Wise Men, bringing gifts to Jesus. I remember asking as a somewhat insufferable child how was it that the Kings could travel from 'the East' – even from '*Persian lands afar*', take a detour to ask Herod the way, and still arrive on Christmas night at the stable to join the shepherds round the crib. I knew that was the case because every year my primary school played out the story, and there they were, Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, together with shepherds, kings, angels and the odd sheep and goat, depending on how many children were in the class that year. In fact, Matthew makes no mention of the shepherds, which come from Luke's gospel and Luke says nothing of the visiting Magi.

It is perhaps one of the most interesting yet demanding aspect of the bible stories that the gospel writers are not simply recalling the life of Jesus, but at the same time are recognising Jesus

as the one who could satisfy the ancient Jewish longing for an agent anointed by God who would restore the Jewish kingdom. Matthew's writing is as much theology as history.

In fact, the story of the Magi is particularly elusive. The derivation of that word seems to suggest them to be priests from Babylon, having a reputation for astrology and star observation. The description 'Kings' probably links with Isaiah, and the prophecy that the Messiah would be worshipped by kings, but that also has difficulties. Matthew's Gospel story seems to one of a conflict between God and earthly powers, not a situation where kings would be paying homage. Perhaps, we are currently happier with the description, 'Wise Men', but that also is questioned.

If the nature of the visitors to Jesus and their number remain uncertain, we can be more confident about the gifts that were brought – gold as a sign of earthly kingship, frankincense to recognise priesthood, and myrrh in anticipation of death. I am sure that it is more useful for our faith as Christians to reflect on the gifts that were bought, in the light of what we know about the death and resurrection of Jesus, than to struggle too much with the mysteries of the Wise Men and where they came from.

So, at Epiphany, we take time to give thanks for the birth of Christ, thanks that God took human form and lived in the world that he had created. In that one, amazing truth we come to realise the everyday nature of God and His love for us, His everyday people.

I wish you all an excellent new year, even if it is already one month old.

Paul Martin

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

At the end of November the annual Christmas Fayre was held in the Dorothy Parkes Centre where a festive note was sounded by the choir of Uplands Manor Primary School. The Fayre was a resounding success when a large number of the community enjoyed the wide variety of stalls and children enjoyed an early visit to Father Christmas. The grand sum of £1200 was raised for general church funds. A huge THANK YOU to all who helped with this event.

December saw the Discoverers last outing for 2012 when they met at the Toby Carvery, Quinton for a traditional Christmas dinner and to reminisce over the year's activities.

The season of Advent began with the traditional lighting of the first Advent candle during the morning service on 2nd December. Later that evening a service of Nine Readings and Hymns gave the opportunity to reflectively enter upon the period of waiting for the coming of Jesus.

The coming of Christmas was further heralded by a host of voices joined in harmony, singing carols at ASDA, Cape Hill. The generosity of shoppers and staff saw £176.10 raised for Sandwell Women's Aid Christmas Appeal. The evening was rounded off by a number of the carollers enjoying fine fellowship and food at The George, Warley.

Q.I.. “RESOLUTION”

- a promise, a resolve, a pledge to.....
- individual and corporate
- What God Wills - and How do I/We Respond?

“The Gate of the Year” *by M. Louise Haskins:*

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night
And He led me toward the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

So, heart, be still!
What need our little life.
Our human life, to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife
Of things both high and low
God hideth his intention.



JANUARY

- 6th **Feast of the Epiphany** (the Magi, “Wise Men” visit the Manger)
- 19th 11.00 am Cathedral - the **Licensing** by the Bishop of Paul Martin as Reader - All welcome to attend
- 20th 6.00 pm **Unity of Christians** locally for Week of Christian Unity at Holy Trinity with the Salvation Army band
- 21st 7.30 pm **St Matthews PCC**
- 23rd 7.30 pm **The Old Church PCC** meet in the Vicarage
- 31st 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 31st 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)

The U3A (**University of the Third Age**) are trying to set-up a new branch in our area to be called the Edgbaston North Branch. The first meeting will be held on Thursday 10th January at 2.00p.m. at the Portland Pavilion, Portland Road, B17 8LS.

WHY WE CAME TO OLD CHURCH & STAYED...

One Sunday there was a knock at the door. I opened it and a lady asked if I was a Christian and did I want to go to Old Church? My sister came and I followed some time later. It was such a welcoming atmosphere. It felt like home and after many years I am still here.

My brother had died. I was angry with God and was desolate and depressed. I promised God that if I got through this sad time I would come back to Him. I planned to try different churches with Old Church first on my list. When I arrived I felt as if the church had put its arms around me and embraced me and after many years I am still here.

I was lodging with a lady who worshipped at Old Church. One Sunday morning I came along with her to the service. I felt that I belonged and after many years I am still here.

After my husband died I felt completely lost and on my own. I had been to Old Church before so I decided to return. I felt welcome, made lots of friends and after many years I am still here.

It was Sunday morning. I woke up and felt the need to go to church. I decided to visit my local place of worship. You guessed! It was The Old Church. I came inside and felt comfortable and many years later I am still here.

I used to attend another local church. I came to Old Church to see what it was like. I felt welcome and after many years I am still here.

Many people feel that The Old Church exudes love and warmth. What is your opinion?

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VICAR'S VOICE

Six years as Vicar: doesn't time fly when one's enjoying oneself! And it has been fun and creative – And busy!!

A huge thank you to all who contribute in so many ways to the life and witness here and in the parish. But in the busy-ness and creativity and work of discipleship, it is always important to ask "What has God been doing here? What traces of grace can be discerned? What history of Love can I read in this group of Christians?"

It is vital that we all be people engaged in the spiritual life, that we understand ourselves (where ever we are) as a spiritual community – that is, a community that wants to draw near to Christ, that yearns to know Christ.

It is possible that none of us can live in a permanent state of spiritual renewal and fervour! I think the apostles – even after Pentecost - had times of tiredness with questions and concerns that the work of discipleship becomes at times a little (what?) challenging, perhaps even humdrum! But even at such times – and perhaps especially so then – we must be rooted and grounded in a prayerful openness to God in Word and Sacrament – and in our relationships with others.

So some questions, for me as well as for others; To what extent am I/are we able to say of ourselves that we are a people of prayer, that we are part of a praying community? To what extent

do we find our energy in the praying life of the church community? To what extent are we asking ourselves – what has God been doing here, what traces of His grace may be found, what Love of His can we see or feel in who we are, in what we do?

The Old Church is a good place to be – and much does occur. The singing is wonderful, the flowers look wonderful (and how they are missed during Lent!), the friendships delightful, the social life fun, the services full (almost) and the decorated building grand! But we come to church first and foremost to pray and to seek God, with hearts open to Him and to the presence of Christ in each other.

I move on – to other people equally in need of spiritual guidance and to priestly ministry. But with a challenged heart, in what I leave here that is so good and in what is daunting ahead.

But we know, don't we, that all of us do have the grace of God, His constant Love and the gift – His gift – of the Spirit to strengthen and to empower us all, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour to, just like Him, serve and bring others along with us. I wish each of you a holy time, in the forthcoming season of this Lent, to add to your prayerful life – and to commend to others our church: that is, ourselves: building upon the sure foundation of him who Loves!

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The end of Advent was signalled with the decorating of The Old Church ready for the season of Christmas. This was followed on the Sunday morning with Junior Church's inspiring interpretation of the Christmas Story which journeyed from the Garden of Eden through to the birth of Jesus, where they expounded the Word becoming Flesh.

The Nativity heralded the onset of Christmas where many came together at the Crib service on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. Young children helped to create the Nativity scene in front of the altar with the Wise Men 'arriving' at Epiphany. Later that evening the bells rang out for

Midnight Mass which began with carol - singing at 10.45 pm, followed by the first communion of Christmas. On Christmas morning another large congregation joined together to celebrate the birth of our Lord.

At the beginning of January David Fereday was congratulated on achieving 40 years as our organist.

Hamid Reza Nosrati and Shahryer Ghashghai were baptised and welcomed into the church family.

Paul Martin was licensed as a Lay Reader by the Bishop at a commissioning service held in the Cathedral on Saturday 19th January.

Q.I.. "SHROVE"

- the day before Ash Wednesday
- so named from the "shriving"
- the confession and absolution of the faithful on that day
- "shriven from one's sins!"
- "Carnival" = the feasting, rejoicing, the reveling; in German "the running round crazily" ("vasen" = Fasching / carnival)
- Having a good time before.....
- Lent: the 40 days' observance - giving up something (or taking something on!)

I TOOK YOUR PLACE !

One day, a man went to visit a church. He got there early, parked his car and got out. Another car pulled up nearby, the driver got out and said crossly, "I always park there! You took my place!" The visitor went inside for Sunday service, found an empty seat and sat down. A young woman church member approached him and snapped, "That's my seat! You took my place!" The visitor was somewhat distressed by this rude welcome, but said nothing.

He moved to a different seat and sat down. Another member walked up to him and said, "That's where I always sit! You took my place!" The visitor was even more troubled by this treatment, but still he said nothing.

Later as the congregation was praying for Christ to dwell among them, the visitor stood up, and his appearance began to change. Horrible scars became visible on his hands and on his sandaled feet. Someone from the congregation noticed him and called out, "What happened to you?"

As a crown of thorns wreathed his head and a tear fell from his eye, he gently said "***I took your place!***"

Love bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things.
Love never ends.

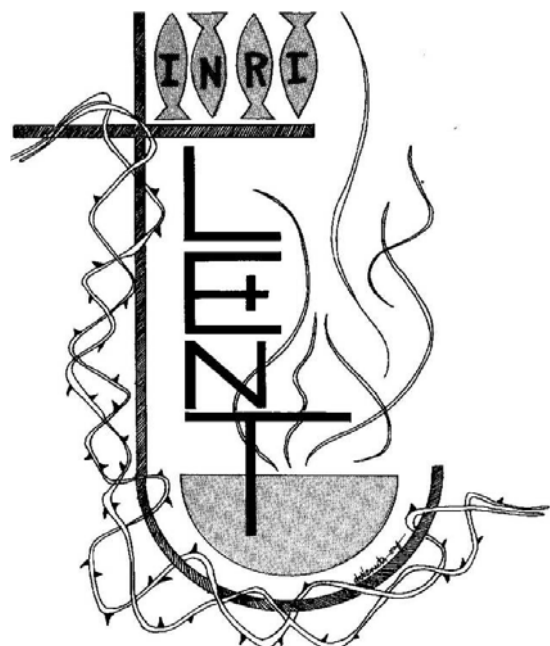
1 Corinthians 13:7-8



FEBRUARY

- 3rd **Retirement** of Rev'd Brian Hall, who was the Vicar of The Old Church 1979—1993
- 6th Meeting of the **Directors of the Dorothy Parkes Centre**
- 9th 9.30 am "**Growing Churches**" Day at St Michael's CE Secondary School
- 10th **Baptism** of baby Joa Neil: pray for her, her parents and godparents
- 13th **ASH WEDNESDAY** 10.00 am The Old Church and 6.00 pm St Matthews (with Imposition of Ashes)
- 17th 10.15 am **Last service** of our current Vicar, Nigel before he leaves to commence duties as Hospice Chaplain in Devon
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 28th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)

Thursdays 21st, 28th and March 7th, 14th and 21st **Lent groups** with other churches at Holy Trinity 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm (lasting about one hour)



THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

OPEN TO ALL - OPEN TO GOD
VOLUME 3 ISSUE 9 MARCH 2013



JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

We are now in the season of Lent, when we remember Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. At his baptism Jesus discovered his vocation, but was immediately driven out into the wilderness by the Spirit (Mark 1:12). Seems quite a violent action for the Spirit, who has only just descended like a dove! In the wilderness Jesus faced all the uncertainties of his new-found mission. He was tempted to make dramatic gestures, rather than patiently follow through the will of God. His forty days there echo the forty days the people of Israel spent in the wilderness following their escape from Egypt. They had walked through the Red Sea unharmed, but now faced an uncertain future. Hunger and thirst loomed.

In February we said goodbye to Nigel, our vicar. He has followed his call to move on, and it may feel as though the rest of us are left behind in the wilderness. We will be living with uncertainty for a while. No longer can the response to any problem be, 'Ask the Vicar'. Different people will be leading the service each week. We don't know how long the interregnum will last, or who our new vicar will be. In this 'wilderness', the best resource we have is each other. We will journey together. Each person has their part to play. Simply by continuing to come to church each Sunday you

are contributing to the ongoing life of The Old Church. Be patient when visiting priests don't do things quite as we expect. And if you notice some little thing that needs doing, don't assume that someone else will take care of it – maybe you can. The people on whom much of the burden falls are the churchwardens, so be nice to them! Ask whether you can help. It's not just practicalities which are important, pastoral responsibilities need shouldering too, so let's take care of each other, and provide emotional support to those who need it.

'Wilderness' is not only about uncertainty. It is also about opportunity, even revelation. It was in the wilderness that God appeared to the people of Israel on Mt Sinai, with guidance on how to live as a community. We may discover more about ourselves, each other, and our life as a community; it may even be a revelation. This is a time to give thanks for all that Nigel gave us, and then open ourselves to new possibilities. Think of it as an adventure!

According to Matthew's Gospel, after Jesus had resisted the devil's temptations, 'behold, angels came and ministered to him' (Matthew 3:11). Let us resist the temptation to grumble, panic or despair, and instead act as angels for each other.

Ann Conway-Jones

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

February began with a service of Candlemas as we remembered the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Baby Joa Victory Neil and her family were welcomed for her baptism when Joa's great-aunt, Rev'd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, gave a reflective and glowing sermon.

The period of reflection continued as Ash Wednesday heralded the beginning of Lent with a service offering the Imposition of Ashes.

Saturday 16th February saw over one hundred well-wishers from St Matthews, Holy Trinity and Old Church come together to thank and bid a fond and loving farewell to Reverend Nigel Mason. Tributes to Nigel flowed as he leaves Smethwick after six years of ministry, to

take up a Hospice Chaplaincy in Devon. The party began with a tremendous feast, prepared by many from the congregations. This was followed by Big Fish and Junior Church paying their tribute to Nigel with an amusing mime sketch. The evening culminated with speeches and presentations from representatives of the churches and the Dorothy Parkes Centre, ending with Nigel thanking everyone for a wonderful evening and for the fellowship he had received during his life in Smethwick.

The following morning was Nigel's final service at Old Church when he presided and preached to a full church. The service concluded with thanks to Nigel from Reader Paul Martin and Rev'd Michael Goss and loud applause, cheers and singing of "For he's a jolly good fellow."

FEATURED AUTHOR - JOYCE MEYER

The Old Church's library has three new titles by the New York Times best-selling author, Joyce Meyer.

Joyce leads Christian conferences and heads up a foundation operating in various poor countries providing the building and running of schools plus delivering food relief programmes.



'Do Yourself a Favour . . . FORGIVE' reflects on the unfairness of life and the damaging effects on the emotions this may create. She shares a number of effective strategies that anyone may use to untie the knots and snarls that life sometimes ties us in.

'The Power of Simple Prayer' shows how we may talk with God about anything and everything. Joyce answers basic questions such as *'what is prayer and how do we do it?'* She discusses hindrances to prayer and how to overcome them. Through an artless but agreeable approach Joyce opens the way for anyone to enter into simple prayer.

In **'Power Thoughts'** Joyce shows that where the mind goes, the person follows. She reveals 12 Biblical strategies that may be utilised to manage those unwelcome thoughts that impinge on and sometimes sour our everyday life. She aims to help people to help themselves to win the battle of their mind and encounter peaceful outcomes.

These books will be on display at the back of Church for anyone to borrow.



MARCH

- 1st 2.30 pm **Women's World Day of Prayer** service at Holy Trinity
- 7th, 14th & 21st **Lent Groups** with other churches at Holy Trinity 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm (lasting about one hour)
- 18th 7.30 pm St Philip's Cathedral, B'ham **Ecumenical prayer with Brother Paolo from the Taize Community**
- 21st **Discoverers' Outing** to Greyfriars House and Garden
- 24th **10.15 am Palm Sunday Eucharist** (with procession from Dorothy Parkes Centre)
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church
- 28th **Maundy Thursday** 8.00 pm **Holy Communion with washing of feet/hands** followed by **Watch**
- 29th **Good Friday** 10.00 am **Walk of Witness** at Holy Trinity; 12 noon **Stations of the Cross** in The Old Church; 2.00 pm **Songs of Praise and Liturgy of the Cross** at St Matthews' (ending at 3.00 pm)
- 31st **10.15 am Easter Sunday Eucharist**

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Matthew 6: 28-30

And life is worth the living, just because He Lives!

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O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D
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TREASURE IN THE CHURCHYARD

On a recent litter pick in the churchyard hundreds of empty beer cans were bagged, along with empty bottles, plastic bags and other rubbish. I suppose we could reflect on the downside of drinking beer in the churchyard and concealing full cans for the next occasion. Squirrels are often seen concealing food in the same area, so 'God's acre' is a place of refuge in diverse ways! There are not many open spaces in the immediate area and it does also provide a habitat for nesting birds and other creatures. Finding free space is not easy in our built-up area. There is the need to be alone in every living creature.

We are fortunate in having the Dorothy Parkes Centre for a wide range of community activities and the church with its various endeavours is supportive of many friendships. During Lent we think of Jesus being alone in a wilderness and then in Holy Week as a leader of a large crowd going into Jerusalem for the events leading up to his death and resurrection. The rhythms of life are different and varies for many people. We all need time to be alone and also the company and encouragement of others. In our fellowship in

the middle of 'God's acre' we need constantly to find ways of reaching out to those who are yet to become our friends while nurturing the friendships we have.

Michael Goss

Let's have a few more smiles.....

According to a new survey, the average Briton smiles just seven times a day.....

A smile costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. None is so rich or mighty that he cannot get along without it and none is so poor that he cannot be made rich by it. Yet a smile cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or stolen, for it is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away. Some people are too tired to give you a smile. Give them one of yours, as none needs a smile so much as he who has no more to give.

Life is like a mirror, we get the best results when we smile at it.

Everyone smiles in the same language.

Wear a smile and have friends; wear a frown and have wrinkles.

A smile can brighten the darkest day.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

Towards the end of February, the Discoverers visited the Leather Museum in Walsall. They explored leather making throughout the ages and had the opportunity to create their own leather key fobs. Afterwards they enjoyed a superb lunch in the Blackcountry Man's Arms.

On the Women's World Day of Prayer, the first day of March, a thoughtful service with the theme 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' prepared by the women of France was hosted at Holy Trinity Church.

The period of Lent continued through March with well attended holy communion services on Tuesdays at 12 noon in The Old Church. Rev'd Michael Goss shared a variety of different images of the cross together with some interesting stories, gathered throughout journeys he has made. Following the services warming and tasty homemade soup was shared in the vestry with donations collected for Christian Aid. The ecumenical Lent groups on Thursday evenings at Holy Trinity gave further opportunity for reflection and debate.

APRIL FOOL'S DAY

- First day of April
- Celebrated in United States, Great Britain, France, Sweden, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Norway
- **Aphrilophobia** is the fear of April Fool's Day. Many of the phobias associated with this day are termed social phobias because they pertain to being embarrassed in public or worse.
- **Katagelophobia**—fear of ridicule or embarrassment.
- **Neophobia**—fear of something new
- **Scopophobia**—fear of being stared at
- **Ereuthophobia**—fear of blushing
- **Mythophobia**—fear of making a false statement
- **Traumatophobia**—fear of being emotionally wounded or injured

FRIENDS

Friends are the chocolate topping in the milk shake of life.

Friendship is like cheese; it gets better as it grows older.

A faithful friend is the milk of life.

Friends are chocolate drops that never melt

Friends are the cheese cubes in the salad bowl of life.

Don't go for looks; they can deceive.

Don't go for wealth; even that fades away.

Go for someone who makes you smile,

Because it takes only a smile

To make a dark day seem bright.

Find the one that makes your heart smile.

For this new morning and its light,

For rest and shelter of the night,

For health and food, for love and friends,

For every gift His goodness sends

We thank you, gracious Lord.

Amen

Give thanks to the Father,

who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Colossians 1:12



APRIL

- 17th 7.30 pm **PCC meeting** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 18th **Discoverers** Outing to Cheadle
- 21st **Annual Church Meeting** - after the morning service in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 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)

“More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of”.

Alfred Lord Tennyson.

God

**is the best listener,
you don't have to shout
nor cry out loud
because He hears even
the silent prayer of
a sincere heart**

E X T E N D

Extend is a programme of light exercise led by a lady called Saba. It is held at the Dorothy Parkes Centre every Thursday from 1.00 pm until 2.00 pm. Most of the exercises are accompanied by music and many can be done from a seated position.

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.

After each session refreshments are available with time for a chat.

There is a weekly class fee of £1.20. New members, both men and women will be sure of a warm welcome. Further details from Judy Eynon

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IS IT STILL EASTER?

Although the supermarkets have put away their foil-covered Easter eggs for another year, it is still Eastertide in the Christian calendar, the period of fifty days starting on Easter Sunday and ending at Pentecost. *'Christ has risen – hallelujah'*.

The days of Eastertide include a number of celebrations that are key to Christian belief. On 9th May, Christians celebrate the Feast of the Ascension, the commemoration of Jesus' bodily ascension into heaven. Traditionally on the fortieth day of Easter, the feast is one of the earliest in church history. St Augustine, living in the fourth century, speaks of the Feast as if it were a universal observance before his time and probably an event of Apostolic origin.

By 19th May, we are on the fiftieth day of Easter, hence the name, Pentecost, also called Whit Sunday. That name seems to be an abbreviation of White Sunday and there are a number of different and conflicting explanations for calling the Sunday 'White'. One is that it brings to mind the white clothes worn by those to be baptised on that day. However, an alternative explanation is that Whit derives from the Early English word 'wyt' or 'wytte', because that is the day when God sent His Holy Spirit to bring (wit and) wisdom. Whichever explanation you prefer, it is said that the first Pentecost took place in the Upper Room, the same room where Christ ate with his disciples prior to His crucifixion. Jesus' followers would have been

celebrating the Jewish feast of Shavuot, marking the giving of the Law on Sinai. There are, of course, other explanations. However, what is clear and central to Christian belief, is that the prayer of the Apostles, of Mary – Jesus' mother, and of the other women, was interrupted by a *'sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind'*. That mighty rushing wind marked the arrival of the Holy Spirit which is one reason why Pentecost is called the Church Birthday and so bringing Eastertide to a climactic ending.

However, this year and before the end of May, we celebrate Trinity Sunday, the great festival that recalls a key aspect of Christian belief. That doctrine defines God as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each distinct yet comprising a unity – co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial. Although the doctrine of the Trinity was not formulated until early in the 4th century, nor does the New Testament ever use the word, 'Trinity', the idea derives from New Testament writing. Matthew records Jesus' instructions to the disciples, *'Go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'* (Matt. 28:19). Paul's second letter to the Church in Corinth ends with the blessing that we still use, *'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen'* (2 Cor. 13:13) Amen indeed! And a Happy Eastertide to you all! **Paul Martin**

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Discoverers enjoyed an unexpected outing to the Hop Pocket Craft & Farm Centre near Hereford because their planned excursion was closed. All enjoyed a pleasant day browsing the well-stocked craft shop together with a fine luncheon in the farm restaurant.

During Holy Week various services were held at Old Church, St Matthews' and Holy Trinity enabling all to reflect upon the final days of Jesus' earthly life. The Archdeacon of Birmingham, the Venerable Hayward Osborne, led the worship at Old Church on Palm Sunday and again on Maundy Thursday where Jesus' washing of His disciples' feet was commemorated. Good Friday

followed with a Walk of Witness at Holy Trinity, Stations of the Cross at Old Church and the Veneration of the Cross at St Matthews'. The Easter vigil began in darkness on Easter Eve when the Paschal candle was lit and the light of Christ welcomed into the church. Easter Day dawned with the Eucharist led by the Archdeacon who also preached during this most important festival where the resurrection of Christ was celebrated.

The second Sunday in April saw Amin and Hossin welcomed into the church family during their Baptism service. During the morning service they spoke movingly about their faith and their reasons for coming for Baptism.

SPECIAL NUMBERS

Thinking about the forty days of Lent and the fifty days of Eastertide, it struck me how important numbers have been to religious beliefs. Numbers had deep, fascinating meanings in ways that we have probably forgotten. Here are some numbers to start with; there are many more and many more explanations.

- 1 One Church, one faith, one God
- 2 Christ's divine and human nature
- 3 The Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- 4 The four evangelists
- 5 The wounds of Christ crucified
- 6 The days of creation
Perfection – the day God rested. Paul's gifts of the Spirit. Jesus' utterances from the cross. And much used in the Book of Revelation.
- 7 Resurrection or regeneration – perhaps because of circumcision on the eighth day, or that this was the day that Thomas met the risen Christ
- 8 Mystery or angels – there are nine choirs of angels
- 9 Completion – there are Ten Commandments
- 10 The whole church – there were twelve tribes of Israel and twelve Apostles
- 12 Betrayal – there were thirteen people at the Last Supper including Judas
- 13 Trial or testing – Noah's flood, the wandering of Israel in the wilderness, Moses' stay on Mount Sinai, and Jesus' days of temptation in the wilderness
- 40 Completeness – ten times ten
- 1000 A very large number – infinity or eternity

A new priest was visiting the homes of his parishioners but at one house, though it was obvious someone was at home, there was no answer. So he took out a card, wrote 'Revelation 3:20' on the back of it and pushed it through the letterbox. The next Sunday, he found that his card had been returned with the added cryptic message 'Genesis 3:10'. Checking his bible, he broke into gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins "Behold I stand at the door and knock" Genesis 3:10 reads "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked"



MAY

- 4th **Thriffies** outing to 'Fusion' at Quinborne Community Centre. Tickets (£7.00) from Rosie Eynon
- 5th **Baptism:** baby Aiden and his brother Ethan, also baby Amelia-Jayde
- 9th **Ascension Day** 7.00 pm Eucharist
- 16th **Discoverers** outing to Brockhampton
- 16h 12 noon **Wedding** of Nicholas and Ashton
- 18th 3.30 pm **Wedding** of Trevor and Paula
- 19th 5.00 pm Service of readings and hymns for **Pentecost/Whitsunday**
- 26th **Trinity Sunday: Baptism** of baby Zacharia
- 30th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rose Guest for details)
- 30th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (further details from Wendy Fullerton)

THE ABUNDANT WAY

God's way is the abundant way! There's no rationing in heaven, no skimping from the throne, no shortage of supply from the treasures of His mercies. His life gushes forth from the well of salvation; His spiritual refreshing flows from rivers of living water; His constant and consistent goodness is poured out through downpours of blessings.

He is the God of

- abundant mercy Numbers 14:18
- abundant kindness Nehemiah 9:17
- abundant justice Job 37:23
- abundant truth Psalms 86:15
- abundant redemption Psalms 130:7
- abundant loving kindness Jonah 4:2
- abundant grace 1 Timothy 1:14
- abundant satisfaction Psalms 36:8
- abundant blessing Psalms 132:15
- abundant pardon Isaiah 55:7
- abundant life John 10:10
- abundant joy 2 Corinthians 8:2
- abundant power Ephesians 3:20
- abundant outpouring Titus 3:6
- abundant revelation Hebrews 6:17
- abundant provision Psalms 65:11
- abundant peace Psalms 37:11

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 12 JUNE 2013



ORDINARY TIME

What does 'June' conjure up for you? Sunshine and time in the garden? Or hay fever and exams? In the church's calendar we have left behind the great festivals of Easter, Ascension and Pentecost, and have moved into 'Ordinary Time'. At Pentecost we prayed for the Holy Spirit to inspire and encourage us, and now, though our weekday routines, and our Sunday by Sunday Eucharistic worship, the Spirit's transforming activity is at work. What are your weekday routines? Are you under pressure in a demanding job, with targets to meet? Or do your days stretch out somewhat empty? Are you busy entertaining young children, or caring for a relative? Or are you coping with pain and physical frailty?

Each of us has our own particular challenges and opportunities. And many of us are tempted to fantasise that life would be so much easier if our situation were different. But this is where we are, and it is from here that the Spirit will move us forward. For most of us, most of the time, discipleship will not consist of dramatic gestures, but of how we approach our daily tasks. I lived for a time in one of the l'Arche communities, half of whose members have learning disabilities. The founder of l'Arche, Jean Vanier, writes, 'Love doesn't mean doing extraordinary or heroic things. It means knowing how to do

ordinary things with tenderness.' What are the ordinary things you hope to do with tenderness?

On June 15th, the Church of England remembers Evelyn Underhill. She was an Anglican laywoman, born in Wolverhampton, who lived from 1875 to 1941. She gave talks, led retreats, and wrote books on mysticism and the spiritual life.

Here are some of her words:

If we desire a simple test of the quality of our spiritual life, a consideration of the tranquillity, gentleness and strength with which we deal with the circumstances of our outward life will serve us better than anything that is based on the loftiness of our religious notions, or fervour of our religious feelings. It is a test that can be applied anywhere and at any time. Tranquillity, gentleness and strength, carrying us through the changes of weather, the ups and downs of the route, the varied surface of the road; the inequalities of family life, emotional and professional disappointments, the sudden intervention of bad fortune or bad health, the rising and falling of our religious temperature. This is the threefold imprint of the Spirit on the souls surrendered to his great action.

May the Spirit imprint tranquillity, gentleness and strength in your life.

Ann Conway-Jones

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Discoverers visited St Giles Roman Catholic church at Cheadle. It was built through the generosity of John, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury in 1846 and Augustus Welby Pugin was commissioned to design and build a church that would have no rival. It is certainly an impressive place of worship.

A wonderfully moving confirmation service was led by Bishop Peter Hall when he confirmed Hamid, Neda, Liliya Shahryar,

Shahrokh, Amin, Hossin, Charlotte, Thomas, Anna, Reza and Lotoya. Later that day, baby Amelia-Jayde, together with brothers Aiden and Ethan were baptised with their respective Parents and Godparents making vows on their behalf.

On Ascension Day an evening Eucharist service was held when all present recalled the past forty days of Easter and celebrated the Ascension of our Lord.

IMMANENCE *by Evelyn Underhill*

I come in the little things,
Saith the Lord:
Not borne on morning wings
Of majesty, but I have set My Feet
Amidst the delicate and bladed wheat
That springs triumphant in the furrowed sod
There do I dwell, in weakness and in power:
Not broken or divided, saith our God!
In your straight garden plot I come to flower:
About your porch My Vine
Meek, fruitful, doth entwine;
Waits, at the threshold, Love's appointed hour.

I come in little things,
Saith the Lord:
Yea! on the glancing wings
Of eager birds, the softly pattering feet
Of furred and gentle beasts. I come to meet
Your hard and wayward heart. In brown eyes
That peep from out the brake, I stand confest
On every nest
Where feathery Patience is content to brood
And leaves her pleasure for the high emprise
Of motherhood -
There doth My Godhead rest.

I come in little things,
Saith the Lord:
My starry wings
I do forsake,
Love's highway of humility to take.
Meekly I fit My stature to your need.
In beggar's part
About your gates I shall not cease to plead -
As man, to speak with man -
Till by such art
I shall achieve My Immemorial Plan.
Pass the low lintel of the human heart.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS contd.....

The second Sunday worship saw the young people of Big Fish contributing in many aspects of the service. This began with them joining Claire to teach the congregation to sing "Oh Happy Day" and then reading the lessons. During the sermon they shared their own personal statements of faith and invited the congregation to take part in holding ribbons to demonstrate the church's unity as depicted in the Gospel reading from John chapter 17 verses 20-26.



JUNE

- 2nd **60th Anniversary** of the Queen's Coronation
- 9th 12.15 pm **Baptism** of baby Lewis James & baby Tillie-Mae Jayne
- 16th 6.00 pm **Taize** service in Old Church
- 20th **Discoverers** Trip to Halfpenny Green
- 27th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rose Guest for details)
- 27th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for details)
- 29th 2.00pm **Summer Fete**

On 16th June the Church of England remembers St Richard, who was Bishop of Chichester for eight years in the mid-13th century, and was well acquainted with both hard work and suffering. Though a gifted scholar and lawyer, he did not flinch from physical labour; and as Bishop he found himself a homeless outcast in his own diocese, until King Henry III finally accepted his appointment by the Pope. His prayer reflects the commitment and 'stickability' needed by anyone who seeks to be a true follower of Jesus.

**Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits which you have given us,
for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us.
Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
may we know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly,
day by day.
Amen.**

The prayer acknowledges that Christians don't become saints overnight! Instead, there is a gradual (and sometimes uncomfortable) re-orientation of our lives into God's way. Why not use this prayer (or your own words) to ask Jesus to help you take just one small step forward in the Christian life?

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D
VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1 JULY 2013



TOUCHING DOWN IN HEAVEN

I wonder if there are those who have been close to you and have died and whom you still talk to. For some of us it can be a comfort and support. I believe that life beyond death in the fullness of God is not static. In creating each of us God, I feel sure, wants us to grow into wholeness and holiness and wants that process to continue beyond our mortal life. So, we also need, perhaps, to let our departed loved ones become free, though we still hold them in our heart.

The Church's Saints are also, I suggest, changing and growing into God's likeness. In this month of July we encounter two of them: St. Thomas on Wednesday 3rd and St. Mary Magdalene on Monday 22nd. Thomas was the doubter who, understandably, couldn't believe that Jesus had been raised from death and had appeared to some of the disciples when he, Thomas, hadn't been able to be there and see with his own eyes. Maybe you might tell Thomas about some of your doubts as well as your longings. I feel he would listen with sensitivity and wisdom, gained from his personal experience. And in sharing some of your feelings I believe that God would respond and deepen your faith.

Then Mary Magdalene: she was so grieved at Jesus' death and so distressed to find his body was no longer in the tomb that

she could not recognise the one she loved so much when he appeared to her on Easter morning – until he called her by her name. Perhaps we all from time to time have feelings of loneliness and lostness, in spite of close family and friends. I imagine that Mary Magdalene would quickly understand if you were to tell her some of your troubles and worries. Jesus would be close by, I believe, wanting to fill you with his peace and stability.

This month we continue each Sunday to celebrate the Trinity: the three persons of God, Creator, Son and Holy Spirit, who are so close to each other that they are one God. Perhaps you might ponder on what's helped to make you the person you are, and to ponder on the parenting you received as child and adult. Perhaps if you have children or grandchildren who are close to you, you could reflect on how to respond to them in ways that will help them to grow and flourish and have fun. Jesus was a friend and helper to many in his ministry and can, if we ask him, show us how to become like him. And what of the Holy Spirit? Well, I trust that the Spirit is in each one of us, in heart and mind and body, as the Life-Giver, wanting us to be fully alive to God's gifts to us in the world, and to be thankful.

Sister Stella CSMV

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The church family welcomed baby Zacharia George during his baptism in Sunday morning worship. Later that day Harry Edward was also brought by his parents and godparents to be baptised. Harry was welcomed by the Old Church family during the following Sunday morning service when he received his Baptism certificate.

Two weeks later the baptisms of baby Tillie-Mae Jayne and baby Lewis James were

celebrated at a 12.15pm service.

Old Church hosted a beautiful service of Taize prayers and songs when members of the Taize community led those attending in sung responses. The style of singing from Taize uses a phrase 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. These songs originate from a monastic community.

THE GOOD AFTERNOON CLUB

If you are over 55 years of age and free on Friday afternoons between 1.00 pm and 3.00pm then why not join the Good Afternoon Club? It is held at the Dorothy Parkes Centre on Church Road Smethwick. A weekly subscription of £2 entitles you to tea and biscuits every week, a ploughman's lunch or fish and chips every two months, a Christmas meal and a visit to the pantomime. There are quizzes, bingo, dancing and singing, outings to a variety of venues and good company. What more could you ask?

The club was founded by Elizabeth Windsor in 2004. She was approached by the late Anne Marie, who was manager of the Dorothy Parkes Centre at that time and asked to set up a club for mature fun loving ladies and gentlemen, offering entertainment and good company. Elizabeth has done this and more, ably supported by her committee, Francis Bagnall, John Wilcox, and Maureen Baker.

Several members of The Old Church belong to the club so why not ask at church or at the Dorothy Parkes Centre?

I nearly forgot to mention members will receive flowers and a card for their birthday. You can have fun, food, friendship and feel valued at the Good Afternoon Club.

So why not join me when you are next free on a Friday afternoon, for a good time?

THE OLD CHURCH WEBSITE

Have you looked at our super new website? www.smethwickoldchurch.org.uk is the web address.

You'll find a host of interesting and useful information including the history of the church, a diary of events, current as well as previous issues of the newsletter and links to sites that you might find helpful in your faith journey.

If you don't have your own internet connected computer then you could ask someone who does to show you or you'll be welcome to use a computer free of charge at any public library.



JULY

- 3rd **St. Thomas the Apostle**
- 14th 1 pm - 6 pm **Picnic in the Park**
Bring your friends and a picnic along to Warley Woods
- 17th 7.30 pm **P.C.C meeting** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 18th Discoverers' **Outing to Sunnycroft** - an Edwardian Villa in Shropshire
- 22nd **St. Mary Magdalene**
- 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)
- 28th **Baptism** of baby Trianna. Pray for her, her parents and godparents.

A Prayer When Challenged

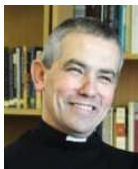
**God of wisdom and love,
help me and all others who
are struggling with difficult
circumstances find direction
and strength to face our
challenges. Give us assurance
that underneath us are your
everlasting arms, that will
sustain us through everything
we face day and night.
In Jesus' name.**

Amen.

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 2 AUGUST 2013



CHAPLAINCY - COMING TO A PLACE NEAR YOU!

Firstly I suppose I should introduce myself. I live in Smethwick and I am the Chaplain at the University of Wolverhampton. I was previously a Chaplain in the Royal Air Force and I have also worked in the NHS.

Chaplaincy can trace its roots back to St Martin of Tours, a fourth Century monk and Bishop who cut his cloak in half to share with a beggar. It can also be traced to words of Jesus himself, from Chapter 25 of St Matthew's Gospel, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me.....I was sick and you took care of me, I was in Prison and you visited me." Chaplaincy today is found caring for individuals of all faiths or no faith in prisons, hospitals, schools, universities, agriculture, the armed forces, among seafarers, in industry, airports, the retail trade and even the night time economy.

It is not only the domain of clergy, like myself, representatives from all faiths and lay people are called to this role.

Why do we do it? Well the role is certainly different from Parish work, but no less important. We work among those who are often on the margins of Church life looking in, maybe interested in issues of faith or spirituality, or just needing the support that we

can offer. Some of the first sentences I often hear is 'I haven't got a faith but....' And then the problem spills out.

In our modern world many do not recognise the need for belonging to a Church, or even the need for faith, but they are longing for something, there is a Gap in their lives. Chaplains help people fill that Gap, and maybe open the door a little to God.

Life is hectic and stressful and so one of the biggest issues for modern society is the lack of space, of peace and quiet. The Bible speaks highly of the idea of Sabbath, and although we may have lost the traditional quiet of Sunday maybe as we approach summer and many are thinking about holidays, we should all take time to reflect and give ourselves space. It might be that you are too busy for a holiday, or indeed it is an expensive dream, but all of us can make space, for others, for ourselves and for God.

This summer consider taking a small amount of time to be by yourself with God, maybe in the sun if we have any, in the Garden, in the Park, or take time to relax with family, or even in Church, and please say a prayer for those called to work in another area of Church life as Chaplains. *Eddie Wynn*

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Discoverers' June monthly outing saw them visiting Halfpenny Green Vineyards located on a beautiful hillside in South Staffordshire. This adventurous day saw a number of the group exploring the paths of the Vineyard Trail where they looked at various types of grape. They were well rewarded at the end of a warm and sunny day with a complimentary glass of wine with their lunch. Time was later spent in the craft and gift shop

before it was time to return home. On the homeward journey the Discoverers enjoyed a wonderful opportunity to view a lovely scene where fields of rapeseed were ablaze with red poppies.

A beautiful and moving service of prayer for healing and wholeness followed Evening Prayer at the end of June. It was a delight to see increased numbers attending on that Sunday evening and taking part in the service.

THE WISE WOMAN'S STONE

A wise woman who was travelling in the mountains found a precious stone in a stream. The next day she met another traveller who was hungry, and the wise woman opened her bag to share her food. The hungry traveller saw the precious stone in the wise woman's bag, admired it and asked the wise woman to give it to him. The wise woman did so without hesitation.

The traveller left rejoicing in his good fortune. He knew the jewel was worth enough to give him security for the rest of his life.

But a few days later he came back, searching for the wise woman. When he found her, he returned the stone and said, "I have been thinking. I know how valuable this stone is, but I give it back to you in the hope that you can give me something much more precious. If you can, give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me the stone."

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PAST MONTH'S NEWS contd.....

This year warm sunny weather heralded The Old Church's Summer Fete. It was held in the Dorothy Parkes Centre and the grand sum of £953 was raised. These monies are a welcome contribution towards the general running costs of The Old Church. A huge THANK YOU to everyone who helped make this a superb and successful day.



AUGUST

- 4th 5.00 pm **Thanksgiving** for Sister Anna CSMV. Everyone is welcome.
- 6th **Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord**
- 8th **Thrifties 60's Party** All ladies are welcome. (See Wendy for details)
- 10th 3.00 pm **Wedding** of Richard & Sarah – please pray for them and their guests
- 15th **Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 25th **Baptism** of baby Joshua - please pray for him, his parents and godparents.
- 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 (speak to Wendy Fullerton for further details)

WHERE IS GOD?

GOES BEFORE US:

Isaiah 45:2 "I will go before you and make the crooked places straight..."

BEHIND US:

Isaiah 52:12 "But you will not leave in haste or go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rearguard."

UNDERNEATH US:

Deut. 33:27 "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

WHEREVER YOU GO:

Joshua 1:9 "Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

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THE RICHEST HARVEST

The days are visibly growing shorter and we stand at the threshold of autumn, 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.' The hay has already been gathered in and the other, later crops will soon be harvested.

With changing weather patterns the seasons have become somewhat blurred. Gone are the long hot summers and the bitterly cold winters with frost on the inside of the windows that older ones among us remember from our childhoods and now the contrast between the seasons is less marked and harvests are less predictable. The yield, as it always has been, is dependent upon God's good grace in sending rainfall and sunshine and we've seen plenty of both over the last few months and, although the asparagus harvest was a washout because weather conditions were not right, strawberries grew in abundance and predictions for cereal crops are favourable. The success of the harvest depends also upon the farmers' nurture and care of first the seeds and then the shoots.

So it is with the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control. We are dependent upon God's good grace to give us these fruits and upon ourselves and others

around us for their nurture and care that they may yield a bountiful harvest.

We can nurture these fruits within ourselves through prayer, through our reading of the Bible on a daily basis and then reflecting on what we have read, seeking a deeper understanding of what God is saying to us through the words of scripture, and by regular and robustly honest self-examination of the way in which we live our lives in relation to others, both those with whom we share our lives closely and those far away whom we may never meet but whose lives can be profoundly affected by the way in which we live ours.

If we cultivate the fruits of the Spirit and bring them to full ripeness it will be reflected in our relationships with others and act as a kind of cross-pollination encouraging their growth in others. John wrote in his first letter, 'We love because he [God] loved us first.' Love begets love; joy and peace are infectious; acts of kindness and goodness will encourage those qualities in others; fidelity generates faithfulness, and so on. May each of us bring forth an abundant crop of the fruits of the Spirit that we may encourage one another in living our lives as God would have us live them.

Barbara Fletcher

AN EASTERN EXPERIENCE

In July, I travelled to the Indian Himalayas. I was part of a group of 30 geologists and geographers, aged between 16 and 18, from King Edward VI College Stourbridge, all of whom I'd now consider good friends. We caught the plane from Heathrow to Delhi and from there worked our way north deep into the Himalayas. We stayed in accommodation ranging from hotels to tents. During the two weeks journey we travelled from the seriously intense heat and humidity of Delhi, to the cooler mountainous regions of Shimla, Manali and Keylong, through the bleak desert landscapes of Sarchu and Tso Kar, and finally to the chilly glacial environment of Leh.

The trip was a real cultural eye opener, showing

me some very different lifestyles. The culture and pleasantries even differed between different areas of India. I also saw amazing geographical phenomena, including some of the world's coolest rocks, and tried some of the spiciest curries. India is a country rich in religion and I experienced this firsthand, seeing both Buddhist and Hindu monuments. Some of the Buddhist temples and settlements were incredibly decorated and wonderfully detailed, depicting gods and scenes on every wall and surface. It was an amazing experience and truly humbling; it has opened my eyes to a new world and I'd like to thank all at Old Church for their support in the build up and during my journey.

Ben Conway-Jones

“IN THE QUIETNESS”

Lord, in the quietness, reach out and hold us and draw us gently into your peace. And in the loving silence of your heart, attune our ears to hear the sounds we never listen to: The harmony that lies in you, the discords in the world where you have placed us. The laughter and the tears in other people's lives. Make us more sensitive to other's needs.

Sometimes we hear the words that others speak, but fail to grasp their meaning. Help us to hear the worry hidden in a throw-away remark, the fear wrapped in a joke, the insecurity behind unbending dogmatism. Let us hear the cry for help so casually expressed.

Help us to listen more, and think, and think, before we speak, and then to think again. And, Lord, teach us to hear sincerity in those who see and say things in a different way. Give us the grace not to condemn or criticize but first to search for common ground and to grasp the things that draw us all together, and not to concentrate on what holds us apart.

Help us to take the richness of another's thought, and hold it, precious as our own. Above all, may we hear the gentle echoes of your love, reflected all around us. Give us the joy of listening to your voice, the quiet rustle as your arms enfold us. Amen

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

A service of Thanksgiving for the life of Sister Anna CSMV at the beginning of the month was well attended by members of Smethwick's Anglican congregations.

August saw the celebration of the Transfiguration of our Lord and the commemoration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The latter service took the form of Evening Prayer with a short homily given by our Reader, Paul Martin, who outlined the importance of the relationship between our Lord and his mother as recorded in the gospels. We were joined by friends from Holy Trinity for this service.



SEPTEMBER

- 8th 5.00 pm Service of hymns and readings to mark **Holy Cross Day**
- 19th **Discoverers' Outing** (see Christine Tanner for further details)
- 21st 2.00 pm **Jumble Sale** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 26th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary Guest for further details)
- 26th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)

TEABREAD

You may have tasted David and Judy's fabulous fruit cake one Sunday morning a few weeks ago - it was fat-free and delicious! David will tell you that it's a really easy cake to make. Why not have a go at making one or three for yourself !

Here is the recipe;-

- Soak half a pint of mixed fruit in one pint of black tea overnight.
- Next add one pound of flour, half a pound of sugar and half a teaspoonful of cinnamon, ground ginger and nutmeg. (You can experiment with what spices you use and the amount used depending on your preferences)
- Mix well and pour the mixture into well greased loaf tins.
- The above quantity will give you enough for three x one pound cakes.
- Bake in a moderate oven for about forty minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean
- Turn unto a cooling tray and allow to cool
- Enjoy a slice (spread with butter if you prefer) with a nice cup of tea.

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IMITATION IS NOT ENOUGH

In his book "Modern man in search of a Soul" written nearly a century ago the psychiatrist, C G Jung, writes about the difficulty for the Christian in following the example of Christ. He writes, "It is no easy matter to live a life that is modeled on Christ's but it is unspeakably harder to live one's own life as truly as Christ lived his." Jesus, the man born of Mary, lived his own life as a human being unique as every human being must be. We are called to be first of all ourselves, with all the unpleasant selfishness that our limited free will brings. The constant battle with the ego of self and wanting things to be in our own image is far from the self giving of Christ. Very easily we fall into the trap of being defensive when our way of seeing things is challenged. The flow of love from Jesus in the gospel stories is gracious and seems effortless and easy but it came at great cost. The result of this openness was that people took advantage of this when they wanted something from him, but finally rejected him and tortured him to death. This pattern of self giving is hard to follow. The inner workings of the human mind defeat varied kinds of examination. Personal

motivation is often a mixture of the selfish alongside self giving. The inner self is often guarded from the pain of too much awareness of the needs of others. We can easily become absorbed with our own survival at all costs. Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem before entering it. Clearly the conflicts of human beings then and now are enough to cause great sorrow or anger in any human being. The idea that his death has redeemed the world will, to many, seem merely a pious hope and contemplating his suffering a useless exercise.

How do we, like Jesus, take on our small part of the world and challenge? The sheer weight of human cruelty across the world can seem unbearable. Did the death of Jesus really take away the sins of the world? Cruelty still piles up and forgiveness is constantly needed. Jesus still inspires his followers to forgive and demands we try again, often against terrible odds or else with weary resignation. The joy of life can easily be lacking in our burden of care. The sense of our being set against all the odds brings us most profoundly to know the Jesus of real, earthly experience and authentic life.

Michael Goss

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

A moving and thoughtful evening service of hymns and readings, to mark Holy Cross Day, was held in Old Church at the beginning of September. The service was well attended and included friends from Holy Trinity.

Members of our congregation attended Holy Trinity's 175th celebration of their dedication. Their hospitality was much appreciated and the exhibition of the history of the Smethwick parishes that make up the current parish of The Resurrection brought back memories for some.

During a Tuesday morning communion

service, Mehran and Sasan were baptised and members of the congregation that were present, welcomed them into the church family. We continue to pray for them both.

Smethwick Foodbank is experiencing a huge increase of people needing food. On a recent Friday 76 households were fed, the most they have ever done in one session. At that one session they gave out 411 kg of food. They need donations of tinned meats, tinned fish, tins of spaghetti, tins of tomatoes, tinned vegetables, tinned fruit, pasta sauce, sugar, jars of coffee, rice and cartons of fruit juice.

THE WOLVES WITHIN

A Grandfather, whose grandson came to him angry that a schoolmate had done him an injustice, said "Let me tell you a story. I too, at times, have felt hatred for those that have tricked and mistreated me with no sorrow for what they have done. But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times."

He continued, "It is as if there are two wolves inside me, one is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offence when no offence was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way."

"But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit."

The boy looked intently into his Grandfather's eyes and asked, "Which one wins, Grandfather?"

The Grandfather solemnly said, "The one I feed."

Which wolf do you feed?



OCTOBER

- 5th 12.30 pm **Wedding** of Carl and Laura
- 5th 6.30 pm **Harvest Supper** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 6th 10.15 am **Holy Communion** and **Harvest Thanksgiving Service**
- 17th **Discoverers' Outing** - venue to be confirmed
- 19th 2.00 pm **Table Top Sale** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre
- 19th 4.00 pm **Wedding** of Adrian and Alison
- 27th 12.15 pm **Baptism** of Barry and Tracy followed by the baptism of baby Kelsey
- 31st 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rose Guest for details)
- 31st 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for further details)

Sing praise to the LORD, You saints of His,
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

For His anger is but for a moment, His favour is for life;

*Weeping may endure for a night,
But joy comes in the morning.*

Psalms 30:4-5

Butterfly Struggles

Before a butterfly can emerge out of its chrysalis it has to go through a lot of struggling. Yes, struggling.

Each time it lunges out to escape, acids are being removed from its wings. If someone were to come along and break the chrysalis open for it then the butterfly would die from those acids. In essence the struggle is necessary for the butterfly to survive.

**Then in the stillness, when the struggle is over,
the butterfly can come out and share its beauty with the world.**

We as humans are not any different. **There are times that we need to struggle,** to rid ourselves of the acids that make up sadness, fear, and anger. It is only at this time when we are exhausted and still, **that we begin to hear God whisper to us.**

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D
VOLUME 4 ISSUE 5 NOVEMBER 2013



TO AUTUMN

The temperatures are falling and Autumn has certainly arrived. John Keats saw Autumn as the season of '*mists and mellow fruitfulness*'. Sadly, in our city lives, the fruits we see are packaged in the supermarket and the mists often replaced by the cold damp of early morning rain. In the 21st century, in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, many in our community will be wondering whether they can afford to turn on the heating or whether to trade a meal for another hour of gas or electricity. One thing is certain and that is that the demands on *Foodbank* will increase over the winter months and that its only source of food is through the kindness and generosity of church families and individuals who support the work at Holy Trinity. As for energy prices and the increasing poverty in a wealthy world, then perhaps we all can find ways of influencing our government of millionaires to be aware of the needs of those who don't have the advantages of wealth and power. Take time to write to your Council and to your MP about what is happening.

On the first Sunday in November we mark All Souls Day and then, a week later, it is Remembrance Sunday. Old Church will

again be holding its services of Thanksgiving and Remembrance, one at 3.00 pm and then again at 5.00 pm on 3rd November. We come to The Old Church, that place of prayer and thanksgiving, to remember those who have died, to give thanks for their lives, and to be sorrowful at their departing. A week later, we think of those men and women who have died, fighting in the wars of this and the last century as well as that much larger number who died as a consequence of the fighting, through persecution and all manner of brutalities. We will bring our own personal memories of those we miss to these services.

It is a part of our faith and hope as Christians that we all are summoned by God, that He finds us, and that God's boundless love for His creation offers us all the prospect of eternal life in heaven. However hard it can be for us on occasions, as our faith falters and our personal problems as well as the disasters of the world become just overwhelming, it is our prayer that with Job, we can confidently claim that 'my Redeemer lives'.

I wish you all a restful and thoughtful season of mists.

Paul Martin

FAREWELL FROM BARBARA

As you will know, it is now more than two years since I was part of the ministry team at Old Church. Since then I have exercised a peripatetic ministry and I have been most fortunate in the invitations I've received to officiate elsewhere. Although I've enjoyed it, I have found it to be an isolated and lonely ministry and I've missed the fellowship and support that come with being part of a ministry team.

That being so, I have, after much prayer, thought and discussion with those who have a responsibility for my spiritual well-

being, accepted the offer of a new ministry where I will have a particular responsibility for the pastoral care of older people.

As I say farewell to you all, I would like to say how grateful I have been for the welcome I was given as a newly ordained deacon and for the love and support I've received over the last 17 years. Please pray for me in my new role as I continue to pray for all of you, especially as you look forward to the arrival of a new vicar in what I hope will be the not too distant future.

Barbara.

THE FINAL FLIGHT

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free,
I'm following the path God laid for me
I took his hand when I heard him call
I turned my back and left it all

I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work or play
Tasks left undone must stay that way
I found my peace... at close of day

And if my parting left a void
Then fill it with remembered joy
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss
Ah yes, these things I too will miss.

Be not burdened... with times of sorrow
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow
My life's been full I've savoured much
Good friends, good times, a loved one's
touch.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief
Lift up your hearts and share with me,
God wanted me now... He has set me free.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

Towards the end of September a Jumble Sale was held in the Dorothy Parkes Centre raising £160 for church funds.

An adult Baptism was celebrated during late September when Lee was joined and supported by close family members at a 12.15pm service.

Harvest festivities began with a Bring and Share Supper at the Dorothy Parkes Centre with entertainment provided by the energetic dance group Jem 'n' Us. The proceeds of the raffle were donated to the young dancers in appreciation of and to support the further development of their talents.

The Harvest festivities continued in church the following morning with a service that included some favourite seasonal hymns. Members of the congregation donated produce which was presented at the altar and later taken to the Foodbank at Holy Trinity church.



NOVEMBER

- 3rd **Commemoration of All Souls**
Services at 3.00 pm & 5.00 pm to remember departed loved ones
- 7th **Thrifties Night Out** at The George, Warley - see Wendy for details
- 10th 10.15 am **Remembrance Day** Holy Communion & Act of Remembrance
- 24th 12.15 pm **Baptisms** of Jack, Tommy-Lee and Kimberley
- 24th 3.00pm **Concert & Choral Evensong** given by The Oakville Singers
- 28th **Discoverers' Christmas Lunch** at The Toby Carvery, Hagley Road
- 28th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rose Guest for details)
- 28th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (see Wendy Fullerton for details)
- 30th 2.00 pm **Christmas Fayre** in the Dorothy Parkes Centre

ITEMS and HELP NEEDED for the CHRISTMAS FAYRE on 30th NOVEMBER 2013!!

It's that time of the year again when folk at The Old Church are preparing for the Christmas Fayre. This is a major fund raising event to provide income to meet the running costs of the church and your help would be very much appreciated.

Items urgently required include Christmas Decorations and unwanted gifts, together with prizes for the Treasure Island and Bottle Tombola. Suitable items for the Fancy Goods and Home Produce stalls would also be welcome.

Assistance on the day in setting-up (from 9:30am), serving on the stalls and clearing up afterwards is essential in ensuring the success of the event.

Christine Tanner would be pleased to receive your donations and offers of help.

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G O D W I T H U S

This time of year is a great time to look back and look forward, I feel it is something to do with the changing season as the summer sun becomes a distant memory, I hear the rain against the window and the thermostat gets turned up ready for the cold winter nights. We look back and remember with sadness, loved ones or others lost at the commemoration of All Souls, the celebration of All Saints and the sombre pageantry of Remembrance Sunday. For me this is part of the rhythm of my life and evokes many a childhood and adult memory. While we rejoice in the heroic example of the saints, we feel the loss of those we know and love.

But also this is a season of promise of looking forward to a new Church year in Advent, the season of watching and waiting, as we prepare for the coming of Jesus at Christmas, born amongst us, in all the vulnerability and fragility of a homeless young life. Not simply 'preparing for Christmas', but also something more deeply resonant and challenging of the second coming of Jesus as king. We look forward to the whole festive season, sometimes with dread, ending in New

Year's resolutions, so often earnestly promised, but so quickly broken!

The reality of this season is the incarnation of Christ, that of Emmanuel, 'God with us'. In the humanity of Jesus, God uniquely invades history and is now truly with us here and now. There is no evidence that Jesus received this as a personal name, but the very meaning of the word should bring comfort and hope to us all.

So no more should we look back with regret or guilt, no more should we look forward with dread or fear. God is with us here and now, today, in this very moment, and so maybe we should spend our time with God now. This takes away fear or guilt, allows us to live in the present moment and embrace the future whatever it may hold. We can look around and become more effective, free to love, give and serve without worry. So in all the remembering the past, the preparing for the future, and the ultimate feasting and celebration with family or friends, remember God is with you in Jesus, Emmanuel, here and now.

Eddie Wynn

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

At the beginning of November All Souls' day was commemorated at Old Church with two services when loved ones that are no longer with us were named and remembered during periods of reflection and prayer. Both services were well attended and those present had the opportunity to light a candle in memory of their loved ones at this time.

The theme of remembering continued during the morning service on Remembrance Sunday. The traditional two minutes silence was observed and those men and women who were killed during the two World Wars and other conflicts were held in our thoughts.

The Baptism of Suzi-Lin and baby Sonia was held during the morning service on 24th November. At 12.15pm Kim, Jack and Tommy -Lee were also presented for Baptism. We pray for all those Baptised and their families.

Later that day we were treated to a concert of choral music given by the Oakville Singers. Their programme included music ranging from the shows to psalm settings. The choir then led us in a service of Choral Evensong to celebrate the feast of Christ the King. Those attending really appreciated the very high standard of the singing and accompaniment.

CHRISTINGLE

Christingle means 'Christ's Light' and it is a symbol of the Christian faith. Lots of churches hold Christingle services around Christmas time. The custom of giving out lighted candles in these services began in Germany in 1747 but it wasn't introduced to the Anglican Church in England until 1968.



A Christingle is an orange, representing the world, with a candle placed in the top of it to symbolize Christ the light of the world. A red ribbon encircles the orange, symbolizing the blood of Jesus. Four cocktail sticks with dried fruits or sweets are placed into the sides of the

orange. The cocktail sticks represent the four seasons or the four corners of the world and the sweets or dried fruit remind Christians of God's gifts to the world including kindness and love.

This simple visual aid vividly represents the purpose behind Christ's coming - to bring light into the darkness and to redeem a broken world by shedding His blood.

THE SECRET OF CHRISTMAS

It's not the glow you feel when snow
appears,
It's not the Christmas card you've sent
for years,
Not the joyful sound when church bells
ring,
Or the merry songs that children sing.

The little things you do on Christmas
Day
Will not bring back the friend you've
turned away.
So may I suggest the secret of
Christmas
Is not the things you do at Christmas
time
But the little things you do all year
through.



DECEMBER

- 1st **ADVENT SUNDAY** Holy Communion service to include lighting the first candle of the Advent Wreath
- 2nd 7.30 pm **Fashion Show** in aid of 'Paul & Barneys' at George Rd Church Hall. Entrance ticket £1.00 from Judy Eynon
- 8th 5.00 pm **Hymns of Praise and Readings for Advent.** All welcome
- 10th 6.00 pm - 7.00 pm **Carol Singing** at ASDA Cape Hill. Come along and join in singing to raise money for charity.
- 22nd 10.15 am **Holy Communion and Junior Church Nativity Play**
- 24th **CHRISTMAS EVE**
4.00 pm **Crib Service**
- 24th 11.30 pm **Midnight Mass**
- 25th **CHRISTMAS DAY**
10.15 **Holy Communion**

ADVANCE NOTICE

Jack and the Beanstalk *by Alan Wood*



Dame Trott has fallen on hard times and to pay her taxes to the odious Giant she sends her son, Jack, to sell the family cow. Jack stupidly sells the cow for a bag of beans. But these are no ordinary beans and this is just the beginning of his adventures up the Beanstalk as he

battles the giant and his nasty allies to save the village from destruction, rescue the princess and find the goose that lays the golden egg. A giant of a family Panto with just a few unusual twists on the way.

A trip to an evening performance of the family pantomime 'Jack and the Beanstalk' at Oldbury Rep is being organised to take place in January 2014. **Please see Christine Tanner by 8th December if you wish to book a place. Tickets are £10.00 each to be paid at the time of booking.**