

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 7

JANUARY 2017



VICAR'S VOICE

I would like to begin by wishing you a content and peaceful 2017.

The first month of the new year is an interesting one. There is so much that might lead us to want to be quiet and still; to find some calm following the end of the often frenzied month of December; to stay in the warm and to do as little as possible. Yet, statistics tell us that January is the month where people attempt to make more changes in their lives than at any other time of the year.

As one year ends and another begins, many of us set ourselves New Year's resolutions. In doing so, we make a promise to take on something that will improve our lives. The most popular themes for these promises relate to education, weight, money and relationships. But if we struggle to make a decision about what kind of resolution to make, there are a number of websites to help us, for example: '50 new Year's Resolutions and how to achieve them', 'Top ten healthiest New Year's resolutions' and '100 New Year's resolutions and how to stick with them'.

However, despite all the help available our success at keeping our resolutions is not great. A recent piece of research revealed that 39% of people in the 20's and only 14% of people over 50 keep to the promises they have made.

But the desire for new beginnings remains a strong driver within the human spirit. St. Benedict in his Rule for monasteries wrote "always we begin again." I guess this desire is at the centre of what puts us in touch with our deep longings for a more authentic and fulfilling way of life. And the approach of the first day of January seems to sharpen our awareness of this.

There is nothing at all wrong with attempting to fulfil this desire through making, and attempting to keep, New Year's resolutions. However, we need to take care that our resolutions are not merely a knee jerk reaction to what has gone before, for example, if we've eaten too much in December we resolve to go on a diet in January in order to rectify the situation.

It's important, instead, that we create the space to prayerfully listen to our deeper longings for renewal, new beginnings and, as yet, unexplored possibilities for our futures in, and through, the one who makes all things new. So, rather than working from a list of December's shortcomings, perhaps at the turning of this year we might seize the opportunity to really listen to our deeper selves and to allow what emerges to shape our futures, through the holiness and goodness that God sees in us and promises to us.

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Christmas Craft Fayre held at the end of November raised over £1100 for Church funds. The start of Advent was marked by a reflective candle lit service.

The Discoverers enjoyed a trip to a local carvery for a "Christmas" meal. Some of our young people enjoyed an outing to the Dovehouse Theatre in Solihull to see Youth On Stage's performance of Aladdin.

A small group of singers from Old Church spent an hour singing carols at ASDA Cape Hill and raised over £50 to be donated to Brushstrokes and Smethwick CAN.

A service of nine lessons and carols was held on the Sunday before Christmas. This was preceded by festive drinks and mince pies at the vicarage and a successful quarter peal of Grandsire doubles.

KNITTING FOR ADVENT



Knitting for Advent

A huge thank you to all of you who knitted baby blankets during Advent. These have now been parcelled up and are ready to go to three charities: Birmingham SANDS (still birth and neonatal death charity), Brushstrokes and Hand in Hand for Syria.



Knitting baby blankets at the vicarage



JANUARY

- 8th 5.00 pm **Service of readings and hymns for Epiphany**
- 23rd 7.00 pm **Lay Pastoral Ministry** team meeting at the vicarage
- 25th 135 **Children from Mary Webb School**, Shrewsbury will be visiting Old Church as part of their programme of visits to places of worship.
- 31st 7.30 pm **PCC meeting** at the DPC



Carol singing at ASDA Cape Hill

PEOPLE OR THINGS

People were created to be loved.
Things were created to be used.
The reason why the world is in chaos
is because things are being loved
and people are being used.

The Dalai Lama

Happy New Year
2017

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 8 FEBRUARY 2017



VICAR'S VOICE

We spend the majority of our holidays visiting the beautiful Gower Peninsula of south Wales and that's where we went for our most recent trip away. But the week we chose turned out to be bleak, grey and wet.

Crofty, the village where we stay, is on the North Gower and sits on the edge of marsh land which stretches the length of the estuary. The marsh is filled with wildlife including a large population of wild horse. Every day, when we're there, we walk the dog along marsh road and for the past four years we've watched a gorgeous tan and white horse grow from a tiny foal. This horse is not a wild horse, or so we thought, it lives in a paddock.

We knew this horse was lucky because it didn't have to sleep out in all weathers and he didn't have to forage for food. But we didn't know how lucky he was until, one day, we met Pam, the owner of the paddock, and she told us their story. Pam described the day, four years ago, when she looked across the marsh and saw a wild horse struggling to give birth and decided to go to help. When the foal had been delivered she led him and his mother into her paddock so that she could keep watch for a couple of days. When Pam felt sure they had both recovered from the trauma she released them back onto to the marsh.

But a couple of days later Pam found the foal lay in a stream fighting for his life surrounded

by cobs from further up the marsh who had, more than likely, separated him from his mother and kicked him into the water. So Pam rescued the foal again and decided she should keep him in the paddock with her other three horses. Not surprisingly she gave the foal the name Lucky.

This story revealed a light that the sun had failed to provide during that dreary week in Wales. It reminded us that the imprint of God can be seen running through our stories like a bright, golden thread, even when all around us is dark and cold. This story spoke to us, in a very powerful way, about Epiphany and the importance of seeking the light of God at the heart of the stories we hear and the stories we tell.

An Epiphany prayer:

Bright Mystery,
Your signs and clues are strewn across the
Universe,
Gleaming in the warp and weft of the
ordinary.
When I perceive and follow the wavering
glints
Lead me to find your manifest presence
And glimpse you purpose and mine own.
Keep me pointing to the shining of your love
As I search for your handwriting in the stars.

(from the Celtic Wheel of the Year by Tess Ward)

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

Old Church celebrated the mystery of the Incarnation with the traditional Christmas services including a well attended Crib service on Christmas Eve. This was followed later by Midnight Mass and a service of Holy Communion on Christmas morning.

In the new year the beginning of the season of Epiphany was marked by a special Sunday evening service of hymns and readings.

Old Church marked the passing of 2016 and greeted 2017 with a New Year's Eve party. We were entertained by a DJ who inspired the young and not so young to believe they were performing as contestants on "Strictly Come Dancing". We were energised by a super buffet supper. The evening was a great success and £530 was raised for church funds.

SMETHWICK LENT COURSE



Meals with Jesus renewing our place at God's table

Smethwick Lent Course 2017: 9th March to 6th April

You are warmly invited to join us for the Smethwick Lent Course 2017, which is going to be held on Thursday evenings from the 9th March to the 6th April at St. Hilda's Church, Smethwick. We will start with a light supper at 7.00pm and the session will finish by 9.00pm.

- Week 1: **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner!**
- Week 2: **A Wedding Feast**
- Week 3: **Fish on The Beach**
- Week 4: **Call to Action - Feeding the 5000**
- Week 5: **The Theology of Leftovers.**



FEBRUARY

- 1st From 12noon - 2.00pm at Holy Trinity Church - **Charity breakfast** to raise funds for the 'Women First' interfaith project at Holy Trinity Church.
- 11th From 10.00 am - 12noon at Old Church - **Light and Darkness**: A creative and reflective workshop exploring the rich themes of Lent.
- 12th 4.00pm Concert performed by **The Oakville Singers** followed by Evensong at 5.00pm
- 15th from 10.00am – 1.00pm at Holy Trinity Church – **'Women First'** interfaith event involving talking with women of different faiths, craft activities and refreshments.
- 16th Discoverers' trip to **Lichfield Cathedral** (see Christine Tanner for details)
- 19th 12.15pm at Old Church - **Baptism** of baby Logan Peter
- 22nd From 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm **Soul Space** in Old Church
- 23rd 2.30pm meet for **Prayers** in Old Church (see Rosemary for details)

WOMEN FIRST

NEAR NEIGHBOURS Smethwick Church of England Smethwick CAN

An opportunity for women from different faith and cultural backgrounds to come together for craft, chat and a cuppa!

Wednesday 15th February 10am-12:30pm
Holy Trinity, South Rd, Smethwick
(Just off Smethwick High Street)

Contact Ruth Burgess 07530 741923
ruth.burgess@tctogether.org.uk

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 9 MARCH 2017



VICAR'S VOICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

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

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



Fair Trade Fortnight

27th February - 12th March 2017

It's time to put Fair Trade in your Break

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

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

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

ONE WORLD CAFE EVENT – at the Dorothy Parkes Centre

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

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

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

All donations to Fair Trade Charity

Don't miss the fun.

Traidcraft Stall

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



MARCH

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



Lent and Easter



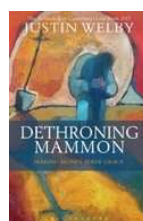
Soup Lunches will take place in Old Church following the Communion Service on the Tuesdays throughout Lent. Monies raised from donations will be given to Christian Aid. Please note that the time of the Tuesday service will change from 10.00 am to 12 noon for the duration of Lent.



Smethwick CAN Churches Together Lent Course

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

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



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

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

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 10 APRIL 2017



VICAR'S VOICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

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

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

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

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

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

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



Soul Space

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

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

Come and go as you please!

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

April

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



APRIL

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

"Why Should He Die For Such As I"

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

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 11 MAY 2017



VICAR'S VOICE

We celebrated Easter Sunday, just two weeks ago, with the words;
Alleluia, Christ is risen
He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

It's easy to think, as our lives move on, that the familiar Easter acclamation marks the end of the story. It's a happy ending, after all, so it's a good place to draw things to a close. But Easter, just like Lent, is a season. At Old Church we marked our forty day journey of Lent with special liturgies and times of prayer. There were ashes at the beginning and palms near the end. We celebrated the Last Supper of Jesus on Maundy Thursday and reflected together on the crucifixion on Good Friday. All of Lent embodies the way of the cross. But, once Lent is over, as soon as the Easter Vigil and the festivities of Easter Sunday are finished, the meaning of the events surrounding the resurrection can fade as quickly, and as easily, as the Easter lilies that decorate the church.

Despite this, however, the Easter season officially lasts for fifty days. It stretches all the way from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. But I would suggest that, even if we mark this period in the church year, we are still in danger of limiting the impact of the resurrection and its call on our lives. To rewrite a well known saying, Easter is for life not just for Easter.

We are called to be Easter people, in the

world in which we live and move, every day of our lives. As Pope John Paul puts it, 'We are always the Easter people and alleluia is our song'.

The Easter readings speak of the repaired relationship between Jesus and Peter, who denied knowing him in the lead up to the crucifixion, demonstrating the nature of the repaired relationship between God and humanity; they tell of the peace that Jesus offered to his disciples as he entered the house where they had gathered in fear for their lives; they remind us once more of how the marginalised in society are at the centre of things and they speak of how Jesus overcame death and, in doing so, brought hope to all who experience darkness and despair.

The story reveals so powerfully the love of God. What we read about, and what we celebrate, at Easter is for all of us and, the reconciliation, hope and peace that is revealed, through it, is needed just as much in our threatened and turbulent world today, as it was then. The Easter story provides the blueprint for how we should be as a church, a community and how we should live in the world – not just for one day – not even for fifty days - but every day.

Alleluia, Christ is risen
He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held on the first Sunday of April. We received an annual report covering the church's activities and organisations. Rosie and Matthew were re-elected as churchwardens and Gill Gould, Wendy Sorby and Marjan Zirak joined the PCC in place of Diane Meacham, Terry Breen, Gracie Gastini and June O'Brien who retired after their three year's valuable service.

The Discoverers enjoyed a day trip to The Hop

Pocket Shopping Village in Herefordshire.

On Easter morning we bade farewell to Andrew Burling who stepped in for David, our regular organist, while he was recovering from an operation. Andrew played us out with a fine performance of the Finale from Widor's 5th Symphony a suitably joyful piece to celebrate the triumph of the resurrection. We are very grateful and delighted to welcome David back to his usual place at the organ.

WOMEN FIRST

An opportunity for women from different faith and cultural backgrounds to come together for craft, chat and a cuppa!

Wednesday 17th May 10am-12:30pm
Abrahamic Foundation
215 High St, Smethwick B66 3AH

Contact Ruth Burgess 07530 741923
ruth.burgess@tctogether.org.uk



NEAR
NEIGHBOURS



MAY

- 14th 5.00 pm Service of **Holy Communion with Prayers for Healing**
- 17th From 10am – 12.30pm **'Women First' Craft morning** at the Abrahamic Centre, Smethwick
- 18th 11.00 am A Service at **Penmakers Court**
- 18th Discoverers' trip to **Witleng Gardens, Hartlebury**
- 24th From 6pm – 8pm **'Soul Space'** ending with Night Prayer at 7.45pm
- 25th **Ascension Day**
7.00 pm **Joint Service at Holy Trinity**
- 25th 2.00pm **Bible Study** in Old Church (see advert for more information or speak to Jeff Guest)
- 27th **Vintage and Nearly New** sale at the Dorothy Parkes Centre (for more information see advert below)

AFTER EASTER - WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

For 8 Thursdays from 2 pm until 3.30 pm beginning on Thursday 27th April.

Come and find out at Old Church where we will be reading and studying the Acts of the Apostles at the fellowship Detectives Bible Study. *Plus Refreshments*

The church began with a few frightened people hiding upstairs and then? and then? and then?

Come on Thursday afternoons to find out.
Let Jeff Guest know that you are coming.

Acts of the Apostles

A Bible Study of the beginning of the church

What do I Bring? - A Bible, A notebook, A pen and an enquiring mind

What is the cost? £Free. - Time only.

Where? Smethwick Old Church

A group study where we share what we find



Vintage and Nearly New Sale

At: The Dorothy Parkes Centre

On: Saturday May 27th 2017

From: 2pm – 4pm



There will be cream teas available throughout.

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

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

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 12 JUNE 2017



VICAR'S VOICE

In June last year we put on the 'Old Church Festival'. I, amongst others, received some really positive and encouraging comments from many of the people who attended. But these comments weren't restricted to June last year, I've heard a lot of great feedback since and have recently been asked by a number of people, who came last year, whether we are having a festival again this year. It was great to be able to say 'Yes'.

In the light of the success of the 'Old Church Festival' in 2016, we decided we would put on a range of 'Festival Events' this year. These will include lunch time recitals, an open-mic night, performances by choirs and a local singer, an art exhibition and all of this with homemade cream teas being served throughout. If all of this isn't enough to plan, put on and enjoy, on Saturday July 1st we are also including in the festival activities, our annual 'Summer Extravaganza'.

This should be a great time of celebration and enjoyment for the Old Church family and for the community of which we are an integral part. But, of course, it will also demand a lot of hard work and commitment from many people. Whether it's designing and co-ordinating the programme, setting up for the events, greeting people when they come along to join us, cooking scones, serving refreshments, moving furniture or running

stalls (the list goes on...), many of us will be giving of our time and our energy to ensure the festival events run smoothly and that those who come along will have a great time.

But, as we learned last year, the 'Festival Events' will involve much more than undertaking all the physical demands required when putting on activities such as these. We need to also honour and keep in mind the primary aim that underpins what we are doing. The idea to have a festival in the first place was in response to the long held desire, of the people of Old Church, to open up the space for others to enjoy and to celebrate the rich community of which we are part. This too takes energy – it is all too easy to get caught up in the practical dimensions and miss the extraordinary moments of connection.

So June this year will, yet again, be a busy month but hopefully a rich and exciting one in the life of our church. If it's anything like last year, and we're not trying to duplicate it but to build on its success, it will be a time of blessing in ways we cannot yet imagine.

If any of us need a bit of rest and refreshment in the run up to the 'Festival Events', there's always the coach trip to Chester on June 10th!

PAST MONTH'S NEWS



← Nesa and Ahmad who had their marriage blessed at Old Church on May 13th

A small group of our intrepid hikers held their first Sunday afternoon walk of the year. It was a gentle stroll in beautiful sunshine around Sandwell

Valley Country Park through woods, farmland and by pools and streams. This was followed by Evening Prayer back in church at 5.00 pm. There are more walks planned for the year and it is hoped that a few more folk from our congregation might like to come along for a little light exercise and a chat about any subject under the sun.



Faithful Friends: White Poppy Project

In 1933 the Women's Co-operative Guild, whose motto is 'War is a crime against humanity', introduced the white poppy to symbolise a lasting commitment to peace.

As we approached Remembrance Sunday 2016, some of the women who attended the interfaith 'Women First' craft mornings expressed the desire to promote peace at a time of tension and conflict in the world and in our communities.

So in 2017, as a group of women crafters of different faiths, we are working together in the spirit of the Women's Co-operative Guild; we are making white poppies to promote peace'.

We need white knitted squares (approximately 12inches x 12inches) to make into felt for these poppies. If you are able to help us with this, please bring your knitted squares into church. For more information, about how to get involved, speak to Deb.

The Very Rev'd Jeffrey John (The Dean of St Albans)

is visiting Holy Trinity Church, Smethwick on Sunday June 11th. He will be presiding and preaching at the 10.00am service and then, following lunch, at 1.30pm he will be inaugurating a series of annual lectures. He will be speaking on 'Death and the Afterlife in the Bible and Church teaching'. You are welcome to attend any, or all, of this. If you wish to go to the lunch can you ring Jenny Cannings on 0121 565 5318.



JUNE

- 10th **Day Trip to Chester** - departing from Old Church at 8.00 am and from Chester at 5.00 pm for the return journey
- 11th 5.00 pm Service of **Hymns and Readings for Trinity**
- 15th Discoverers' outing to **Ludlow** (see Christine Tanner for details)
- 22nd 11.00 am Service at **Penmakers Court**
- 27th 7.30 pm **Deanery Synod** meeting
- 28th - 2nd July **Old Church Festival Events** (see publicity for details)



Join 'LoveYourNeighbour' for
The Great Get Together

inspired by Jo Cox

When: Saturday 17th June 11am - 12 noon

Where: Sandwell Valley County Park
(at the paddock near Sandwell Valley
Park Farm)

What: Free art activities and Special
Guests

If you'd like to, please stay on for a
bring-your-own picnic from 12noon.