

Online version of
St Mary's Church
Old Swinford
Parish Magazine
December 2011



ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD



Parish Church Magazine



RECTOR: Interregnum in process
All enquiries to the Parish Office

CURATE: The Revd Ruth Atkinson, 58 Arlington Court,
Old Swinford, Stourbridge, DY8 1NN Tel: 01384 373286
E-mail: home@riatkinson.plus.com

DECEMBER 2011

50p

SUNDAYS AT ST MARY'S

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Parish Communion and Children Together
6.30 pm	Evensong
10.00 am	(second Sunday) Worship Together

WEEKDAYS AT ST MARY'S

Daily:	9.00 am - Morning Prayer (except Fridays and Saturdays) Morning Prayer on Thursdays will alternate between St Mary's and St Thomas'
Daily:	5.00 pm - Evening Prayer (except Fridays)
Wednesday:	1.30 pm - Noah's Ark at St Mary's (term time) parents & toddlers
Thursday:	10.30 am - Holy Communion in Lady Chapel
Thursday:	7.30 pm - Bell Ringing Practice
Friday:	Choir Practice and Youth Groups (in term time)
Saturday:	10.00 - 12.00 am - Open Church –refreshments available
Curate's Day Off: Friday	

OTHER REGULAR EVENTS

First Tuesday Fellowship:	First Tuesday in month	(Tel:441003)
Bible Study Group:	Monday, first in month at 2.30 pm	(Tel: 379972)
Mothers' Union:	Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm	(Tel: 422677)
Outreach Group:	Occasional meetings	(Tel: 01562 851491)
Music Group Practice:	Second Saturday at 10.00 am	(Tel: 375167)
St Mary's Walking Group:	Last Saturday of the month. Depart 9.30 am	

Reader Emeritus:	Mr Roy Peacock	379972
Reader:	Mrs Kanthi Ariaraj	395115
Church Wardens:	Mr Edward Haden	378104
	Mrs Marjorie Ferguson	393454
Organist / Choirmaster:	Mr Robin Walker	01905 353939
Treasurer:	Mr Richard Harris	395760
PCC Secretary:	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
Magazine Editors:	Miss Gemma Sutton	07968 586285
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661

Church Hall and		
Coach House: - Bookings	Parish Office	441003
Parish Administrator and		
Publicity Officer:	Mr John Sutton	441003
Parish Office:	Open 9.00 am -12.00 noon Monday to Friday	441003
Church website address:	www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk	
	E-mail: st.mary.os@btconnect.com	
Magazine e-mail address:	stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk	

ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS.

Please come to the Church on Saturday morning between 10.00 and 11.00 for Vestry Hour. You will be warmly welcomed. Tea and coffee will be available.

DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2011

Thursday 1	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 3	10.00 am Christmas Market 4.30 pm Mary Stevens Hospice Tree of Light Service
SUNDAY 4	THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Thursday 8	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 9	2.30 pm Old Swinford Hospital School Carol service
Saturday 10	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour Copy Date for January Magazine
SUNDAY 11	THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Tuesday 13	10.00 am Worship Together and Toy Service
Wednesday 14	11.30 am Communion at Hollycroft Nursing Home 1.30 pm Noah's Ark Toddler Group Carol service 7.00 pm Old Swinford Primary School Carol Service
Thursday 15	10.30 am Holy Communion 2.00 pm Coach House Carol Service
Saturday 17	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 18	THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
	3.00 pm Christingle 6.30 pm Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
Tuesday 20	2.00 pm Anchor Bereavement Care Group
Wednesday 21	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Thursday 22	10.30 am Mothers' Union Corporate Communion
Saturday 24	CHRISTMAS EVE 10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 6.00 pm Crib Service 10.00 pm "The Midnight" First Communion of Christmas
SUNDAY 25	CHRISTMAS DAY
	8.00 am Holy Communion 10.00 am Family Communion with Carols
Thursday 29	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 31	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour



CHRISTMAS FLOWER GUILD

The Flower Guild will be decorating the church for Christmas on Saturday 17 December 2011 from 9.00 am.

If anyone has foliage they can donate please bring it along at the same time: evergreens, holly and ivy will all be useful. Any help you can offer will be gratefully received.

As this is a week before Christmas we will also check the flowers on Thursday 22nd December at 11.30 am to make sure they look good over the festive weekend.

Thank you.

Sally Frost
Tel. 01384 377146

LETTER FROM THE WARDENS



Dear Friends,

We recently enjoyed a wonderful Remembrance Service organised by Ruth and Roy; thank you to them. The service was a Worship Together one, with Holy Communion at the request of your Wardens.

It seems to us, with Christmas fast approaching and the shops taking the religion and romance out of Christmas, it is a time for us to remember other things as well. This last year, we have much to remember. Greville and Pauline, so much loved by us all who have moved to pastures new and our friends and loved ones who have passed away.

We also remember the extra work of many people and are thankful for it. St Mary's is indeed blessed with lots of caring and willing helpers, who either volunteer or are willing to be volunteered! Our new Parish Administrator and three new Vergers are all helping to keep St Mary's running smoothly.

Possibly, the most important thing to remember at this festive time is for us to help and support our people who are recently bereaved or acting as a carer.

Thank you all for your support during this year, rest assured that we are doing our best to help find a new minister. However, he or she must be right for St Mary's.

By the time you read this, the necessary electrical work required on the rectory will be completed.

We look forward and wish you the happiest of Christmases. Just remember, because there is a wonderful show of holly berries does not mean a hard winter to come.

Finally remember that Jesus wants us to be happy and fulfilled.

Edward and Marjorie

NARTHEX TABLES

Thanks have already been expressed to those who have made it possible to complete the provision of lightweight, easy to clean, folding tables in the narthex. St Mary's Mission Committee and a specific donation by one of the committee members has ensured the plan to provide a total of ten tables has been achieved.

The tables are stored under the stairs that lead to the balcony and will alleviate the need for heavy furniture to be carried from the church hall. They will enable us all to use the facility of the narthex in greater comfort and with greater ease of access. Please enjoy and look after these tables in appreciation of the generous gift provided by others.

SERVICES IN DECEMBER 2011

4 December Second Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 40. 1-11	2 Peter 3. 8 –15a	Mark 1. 1-8
	6.30 pm Evensong	1 Kings 22. 1-28	Romans 15. 4-13	
11 December Third Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am	Worship Together—Toy Service		
	6.30 pm Evensong	Malachi 3. 1-4	Philippians 4. 4-7	
18 December Fourth Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	2 Samuel 7. 1-11	Romans 16. 25-end	Luke 1. 26-38
	3.00 pm	Christingle Service		
	6.30 pm Evensong	Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols		
24 December Christmas Eve	6.00 pm	Crib Service		
	10.00 pm The First Communion of Christmas	2 Samuel 7. 1-5, 8-11, 16	Acts 13, 16-26	Luke 1, 67-79
25 December Christmas Day	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Family Communion with Carols	Isaiah 9. 2-7	Titus 2. 11-14	Luke 2. 1-14

TOY SERVICE

At the 10.00 am Worship Together service on 11 December we will be pleased to receive gifts of toys which will be forwarded to provide some Christmas cheer for needy children at the Dudley Women's Refuge.

If you are able, please send or bring your unwrapped gift to the service, when Father Christmas will be there to help to ensure they reach their destination

Thank you on behalf of all those who value and are grateful for your generosity and kindness.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Members of the Magazine Committee extend thanks and appreciation to all our readers, contributors and advertisers for the support given during the past year. We hope the magazine has contributed in a positive way to your experience of St Mary's community and mission and you will continue to find enjoyment and information amongst the pages each month. As always, ideas or contributions for future editions are welcome via the email address or a member of the committee.

May you all enjoy a joyful and peaceful Christmas.

CHRISTINGLE 2011

**St Mary's Christingle Service will be held on
Sunday 18 December at 3.00 pm.**

Loved by children and adults alike, this candlelit celebration is a meaningful way to share the key messages of the Christian faith while raising vital funds to help vulnerable children across the country.

Christingle celebrations often include songs, prayers, performances and a collection in aid of The Children's Society. The main element that is universal to all Christingle celebrations is the lighting of Christingle candles, candles that are symbolic in a way that is easily appreciated by all.



The orange – represents the world
The red ribbon – indicates the love and blood of Christ
The dried fruits and sweets – symbols of God's creations
The lit candle – symbolises Jesus, the light of the world

The Children's Society relies on the vital funds raised through Christingle celebrations to fund its' work with vulnerable children and young people in communities across the country.

As Christingle approaches let us share the joy with even more people this year.

Wendy Tranter

CHRISTMAS MARKET

SATURDAY 3 DECEMBER
10.00 am - 12.00 Noon

Come and join us at this year's market.
Great variety of stalls selling all sorts such as Plants, Cakes, Groceries,
Books, Jewellery, Gifts, and surprises on the White Elephant Stall.
Lots of Games, Christmas Hamper Raffle and a big Tombola.
Father Christmas will be visiting his Oldswinford Grotto.
When you need to catch your breath, do so with
Coffee /Tea and a Homemade Mince Pie

All help and contributions towards making this a successful Market
are very welcome

Groceries, Home Made Preserves and Homemade Cakes -
please bring to the Church Hall
either Friday evening or early on Saturday morning
so that stall holders have time to price them sensibly.

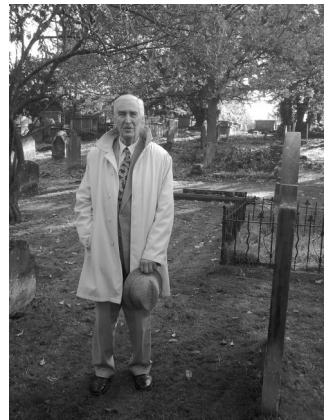
Katey Fletcher
01384 378182

HAVE YOU SEEN THE CHURCHYARD?



In case you have not yet been able to view the progress for yourself we have included 'before and after' photographs to show the success to date of this substantial tidying task.

Did you know that St Mary's has probably the largest churchyard in the Diocese? No wonder it takes some looking after. Thank you to those who do such a good job with such good grace.





CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

Complete the following task and bring it in to church (you can leave it in the basket at the back of church) by the end of the Crib Service on Christmas Eve or post it to Reverend Ruth Atkinson at the address on the front of the magazine. There will be prizes for different age groups.

You have to imagine that you are somebody or something that was at the stable in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Write about or draw a picture of what you would see. You could imagine you are the Inn Keepers wife or somebody sat watching in a window or a child who has just been playing in the stable. Or you could pretend that you are an animal, creature or insect in the stable. If you're not too good at writing then ask an adult to write it for you but it must be your words that they write. You will really have to use your imagination and describe in as much detail as possible what you see.



Don't forget to include your name, age, school and a phone number on the back of your entry. We hope to publish some of the winning entries in a future edition of the magazine.

FOOD BANK SUPPORT

Although formal written confirmation has not yet been received we are pleased to be able to share details of the contributions made via St Mary's to the Black Country Food Bank. The Harvest Festival Appeal resulted in delivery of an amazing 253.8 kilograms of goods to the Food Bank depot, to which was added 28 kilograms from the Mothers' Union Coach House collection and a cash contribution of £25.

Through many small, regular weekly contributions, 371.2 kilograms had been donated by supporters during earlier months of the year leading to a total gift of 653 kilograms of food (that's over half a ton) to this very important and worthwhile charity.

A deep debt of gratitude is due to all supporters of this cause. Thank you on behalf of the Food Bank organisers and those who benefit from much needed food resources during times of difficulty and need.

Please maintain your support through future donations as you are able to do so.....the need continues.

MAGAZINE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Dorothy Gibson

Last month the Magazine Committee was sorry to receive an announcement of resignation from Dorothy Gibson due to her failing eyesight. Dorothy has been the longest serving member of the Committee and her knowledge and skills have been a major factor in the quality and continuity of our publication.

Her most visible input has been through the monthly editorial meetings where her thoroughness in proof-reading and grammatical expertise have given the magazine its professional style and accuracy enjoyed by our extensive readership. We have always relied on Dorothy for correcting spelling errors, misplaced apostrophes and omitted accents – we even learned what a diaeresis is! (an English equivalent of an umlaut as in Brontë). She has applied her editorial skills very sensitively in occasional reconstruction of sentences to enhance composition with minimal change.

Dorothy has also been a regular contributor of articles and stories to the magazine, usually humorous and under thinly-veiled pseudonyms, and her humour was enjoyed in our discussions during our meetings. When 'new' editors presented proof copies for the Committee's preview the editorial meetings would be approached with some trepidation, much as a school pupil would wait for corrections to an English essay, but we soon came to appreciate the skills and friendly banter in her editorial duties.

Behind the scenes Dorothy's commitment has been even more impressive. After the editorial meetings the magazines are printed in the Parish Office. Before we had a colour copier the magazines had to be folded and stapled by hand and Dorothy was a regular volunteer. Until recently the Diocesan News had to be collected from the Robin Woods library to be included with the magazine. The four hundred copies have then to be sorted and delivered to about 20 distributors and posted to the 'more distant' subscribers. The effort, coordination and logistics of this work are so underestimated and Dorothy has performed this work on her own, ensuring that all subscribers receive their copies before the start of the month.

The Committee expresses its gratitude to Dorothy for her valuable services over many years and hope that we can preserve her heritage in the magazine's quality in our continuing publication.

The Magazine Committee

QUOTE FOR THE MONTH

It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you... yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand.

Mother Teresa

FOR ALL GOD’S CHILDREN

**CHRISTMAS:
GOD KEEPS A PROMISE**

A PROMISE THROUGH HISTORY

Throughout the Old Testament God tells his Chosen People that he will never stop loving them. Can you work out what the prophet Isaiah said?



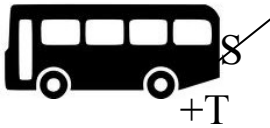
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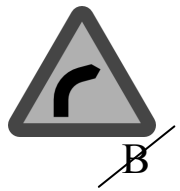
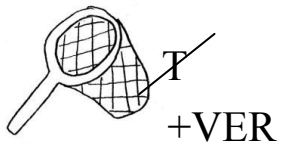
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JESUS THE PROMISED ONE

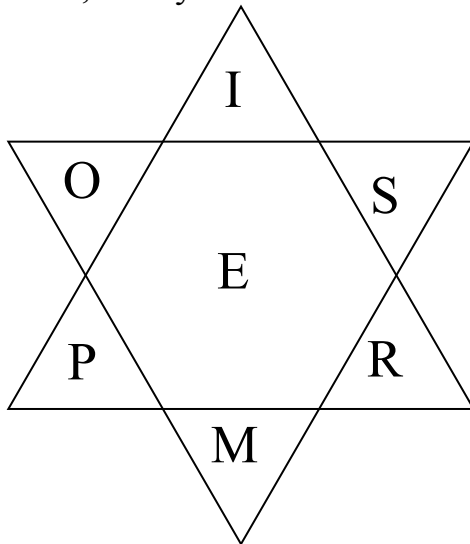
Make your own crib figures from folded stiff card. Draw, colour and cut out but DO NOT CUT THE FOLD. Use a shoe box for the stable and stand your figures in it.



STAR OF DAVID

Using the letters once, in any order, can you find...?

- 5 three lettered words
- 4 four lettered words
- 3 five lettered words
- 2 six lettered words
- 1 seven lettered word?



Phoenix Mobile Toy Library

Charity Number : 503046



PLEASE HELP

Our Charity was established in 1973 and we provide books, toys, sensory equipment and play advice for families, carers and play schemes who have children with disabilities and additional needs in the South of the Dudley Borough.

Until recently the council funded a part time play advisor/volunteer coordinator to work alongside the library. Cutbacks have meant that all funding has been withdrawn and the Library is now solely run by volunteers in the evenings as daytime visits have now stopped.

This means that we urgently need new volunteers who can give about 3 hours of their time per month. We need drivers and round assistants, can you help? Do you know of anyone who may be interested in helping us to maintain this valuable service? You need to be caring with a good sense of humour and a desire to improve and contribute to the well-being of the children that we visit.

Our Volunteers make a valuable difference in children's lives. Can you spare a few hours per month for this rewarding and fulfilling role?

There are many families in the area to whom, at present, we are unable to provide a service and we would really appreciate you letting people know that help is needed.

We are also looking for enthusiastic Committee Members who would be interested in working together to improve and to continue this unique service. Committee Meetings take place every two months.

Could you help with Fund Raising ideas? Any help would be appreciated.

Jan at phoenixtoylibrary@hotmail.co.uk
or Barbara 01384 374354

ST MARTIN'S IN THE BULLRING'S CAFÉ

Will you be shopping in Birmingham this Christmas? Is it difficult to find a peaceful place to get drinks and light refreshments at reasonable prices? Do you want Fairtrade food and your money to go to a good cause but not a multinational?

The Tea Lounge at St Martin's is a peaceful and spaciouly informal place to sit quietly or meet up with friends; a complete contrast to coffee shop chains. It is open from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm, Tuesday to Saturday. With a location convenient for the BullRing shopping centre and Moor Street Station, its professional staff give you a warm welcome, not only at Christmas but all year round.



NOBODY ASKED

By Patricia Westwood

"NOBODY asked me!" said the Donkey
"Whether I wanted to travel this way
And leave my home in Nazareth-
Nor plod for miles each day!
Joseph walked alongside me
Every long step on the road,
Sharing that arduous journey
And helping to carry my load.
My burden was often heavy,
For I carried my mistress dear
As the time of the birth of her baby
Was rapidly drawing near.
Joseph explained, as we travelled
That to Bethlehem we had to go
I thought it a load of nonsense
And I brayed to tell him so!
Caesar didn't ask me either
When he made his royal decree
That all must go to be counted
No! Nobody asked me!

"NOBODY asked us!" said the cattle
"If we minded sharing our shed,
And giving up our manger
To make that baby's bed!
Mind you, they did look weary
When the innkeeper brought them
inside,
And put fresh, clean straw in OUR
corner
Then moved us to the other side!
It's not that we mind the intrusion,
And we're happy to share our shed
We don't mind draughts and the breezes
But – Nobody asked us!" they said.

"NOBODY asked me!" said the lamb
As he settled himself in the hay,
"Whether I wanted to be a present –
I'd like to have had my say!

But the shepherds were rather excited
By the sight of the Angel on high,
And they set off straight'way to the village
But nobody told me why.
One said, "We can't go empty-handed;
We must take a gift on this quest."
So they looked at the lambs all around
them
And chose ME, 'cos I was the best!"

"NOBODY asked me!" said the camel
"I've plodded my weary way
Over desert sands and mountains
Walking by night and by day.
I've faithfully carried my master,
A Magi of wond'rous renown -
All of the distance the star led,
And finished in this little town.
I thought when I got to the palace
Over Jerusalem way
That that was the end of our journey,
But, oh, no! Not there did we stay!
The Magi just didn't trust Herod
'Cos he hadn't heard of the king
Foretold by that star in the heavens
That led us here with gifts to bring.
So we finally reached this stable
And found a new baby inside,
With his mum, dad and various
shepherds,
While ox, ass and sheep lay beside.
Nobody asked me to travel
But I wouldn't have missed it for nought;
I know that this baby is special
And deserves the gifts we brought
But why was he born in a stable?
Was it by chance, or a whim?
I doubt if I'll find the answer
But I bet that nobody asked Him!"

With thanks to Kanthi Ariaraj

NEWS FROM THE CHURCH HALL



We are planning a Quiz Night for 25 February 2012. It will be a quiz for all, with a wide range of questions for teams of up to 6. So keep the date free as there will be more details later.

We have started small alterations in the kitchen to try and make it more user-friendly. It would be lovely if we could rebuild the kitchen but finance is unlikely to reach that level!

The 'loop' system is not yet working and we are waiting for a price on a new unit from the recommended sound engineers.

Ian Ferguson

NEWS AND NOTES

Thank you to all those members of St Mary's Church who support the work of the Children's Society, formerly known as the Church of England Children Society. Due to your generous support in filling the Children's Society collection boxes we were able to send a handsome donation to the above charity.

I thought it might be of interest to include the message below:-

16-year-old Emma has disabilities that make walking difficult for her, she would like to tell you what a difference your support has made to her life:

"Other children say I'm different. They call me names. They think that because I can't walk properly I don't understand. The Children's Society helps me feel better about myself. They talk to me about what I want to do. They helped me find work in a pet shop. I love it! I feel happy about the future."

My thanks to Sue Wilcox who helps me to collect, sort and bank the money collected and thank you again dear friends for your generosity.

Anne Davies

ST MARY'S WITH ST JOHN'S MOTHERS' UNION

Our November meeting was held in the Coach House as usual; but our planned speaker was unable to attend. Pat Whalley opened the meeting and gave out the notices.

The service was led by Doreen Ryan who spoke about the preparations we make for Christmas; about the food we make or buy; the decorations we put up. She suggested that the world is too rich; there are too many luxury goods and we have lost the simplicity of Jesus' birth in the manger.

Doreen suggested that we should all send real Christmas cards which express the real meaning of Christmas and compare a real Christmas with the world around us.

Our speaker for the meeting was Anna Murphy, a qualified chiropodist and podiatrist, who spoke to us about the health and care of our feet. It was a very interesting and informative talk which provided useful guidance on foot care.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, December 13 in the Coach House.

STOURBRIDGE STREET PASTORS

Stourbridge Street Pastors was launched in 2009 with volunteers of all ages from local churches as part of Churches together in Stourbridge. We patrol Stourbridge town centre each Saturday and some Thursdays between 10.00 pm and 3.00 am providing practical, emotional and spiritual help from a Christian perspective but in a non-judgmental way.

The patrol team is supported by a prayer team at our base at New Road Methodist Church, who pray for the town, for us and for all the people we will be meeting that night.

Street Pastors operate in partnership with the police, the local authority and other key agencies. Wherever the projects have been introduced throughout the country, there have been tangible benefits by way of reduced crime and improved community safety.

We are looking to recruit more people for our prayer and patrol teams because we believe more patrols are needed. A new round of training is about to start.

You might ask whether sporadic acts of kindness and practical help really do make a difference. Is this really a good use of your time? We believe the benefits go far beyond those that occur during a patrol because the Street Pastors' initiative is proving to be a great way to change people's perceptions. Here are some examples;

Amongst Christians; getting to know and working alongside Christians from many different churches is a great source of blessing and is helping to make the vision behind Churches Together in Stourbridge a reality because we are acting together.

With the authorities; this initiative has helped to raise the profile of the Church in Stourbridge with both the local council and the Police because we are making a positive contribution to our community. We are no longer a faith-community who can be politely ignored but a force to be reckoned with.

With the people we meet; although we only help a few, the vast majority who come down to the town centre at night know why we are there and are grateful for our presence. For many this demonstration of the love of Jesus maybe the only one they experience and because it is directly relevant to them, it changes their perceptions of Christians, Christianity, the Church and Jesus. It is a lot harder to dismiss a faith when you've seen it in action. Although we may not see the fruit directly as Street Pastors, our expectation is that a generation of young people in Stourbridge will be more open to Jesus because their perceptions have been changed.

If you want to get involved, find out more about who we are, what we do and why we do it then contact our co-ordinator, Alice Grennan, for more information or to arrange for you to accompany a patrol as an observer or to join with the prayer team. Her contact details are; email: stourbridge@streetpastors.org.uk or telephone: 07910 641833. You can also visit the Street Pastors' website: www.streetpastors.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you.

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE PARSNIP PUREE WITH PINE NUTS

This is an old favourite updated. If you decide against the traditional Christmas dishes you could add a packet of rocket, (stalks trimmed and leaves chopped) to the parsnip mixture. Taste before adding pepper as the rocket has a peppery flavour.

700g (1 ½ lbs) parsnips peeled cored and sliced.
1 clove crushed garlic
250 ml (9fl oz) whipping cream
25g (1oz) butter
50g pine nuts toasted
salt and pepper

Boil the parsnips and garlic until tender. (20-30 mins). Drain and puree with the butter and cream in the food processor until smooth . Season.

Spoon the puree into a hot dish and top with the pine nuts.

TO PREPARE AHEAD

Make and chill the day before. Reheat in a pan for 10 mins. or microwave for 5-8 mins stirring once or twice. Top with the pine nuts. Not suitable for freezing.

CRANBERRY COMPOTE

Last year I was lucky to win a master class with Raymond Blanc at his cookery school in Oxford. This is one of the dishes he prepared. Fresh cranberries are readily available and the compote can be cooked a week in advance and kept in the fridge.

400g fresh cranberries
150g caster sugar
50ml ruby port
zest of ½ an orange

In a medium sized pan bring the ingredients to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 15 mins. Allow to cool. Keep in the fridge in a sterilised jar.

To keep stress levels down a bit of planning helps. Lists, dates, quantities, getting ahead, making use of the freezer and avoiding that last minute dash to the shops may all sound like hard work, but it will be worth it and will free you up to enjoy time with your family and friends. Happy Christmas, have a lovely time.

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE.....

Parsnips, pine nuts, cranberry compote: as we prepare to celebrate the Christmas festival with all kinds of special foods, we may well be raiding the cellar to find that prized bottle....or perhaps opening up a bottle of bubbly. Yes, let's celebrate and put some sparklers through their paces. Outside champagne there are now a great many types of fizz available. Prosecco, Cava and Sekt are well-established names—the latter producing freshly-fruited off-dry apple and grapefruit flavours.

In every country where the principal Champagne grapes are grown (Pinot Noir and Chardonnay) good quality fizz is emerging. However, for complexity and quality Champagne remains on top of the podium.....but which one to choose? Moët et Chandon leads sales by millions - safe, approachable, made for mass consumption is one view; remarkable consistency of quality is another. Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label has many admirers. Made with a high proportion of Pinot Noir it has extra weight of fruit and bigger structure, but needs to be kept (even the non-vintage) for the Pinot Noir fruit to shine through. Lanson Black Label needs to be kept for a different reason: to allow its sharp acidity to abate. For richness, the barrel fermented style of Bollinger and Roederer takes some beating. Chardonnay gives a lighter elegance to Champagne and the quality of the fruit in Perrier-Jouët really sings. Heidsieck, Mumm, Taittinger - the names trip off but if I could pick a favourite it would be Laurent-Perrier; 45% of the blend is Chardonnay - pure, fine and classy.....sip and celebrate!

Richard W.B. Ryan

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP A DEVIL OF A WALK

The walking group's October walk was from the Blackstone car park at Bewdley around the Devil's Spittleful and Rifle Range Reserve, belonging to the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.

We started off past the now famous poppy fields, where WWT are working to convert farmland to lowland heath. The poppy crop came about after deep ploughing, to bring subsoil to the surface, thereby reducing the level of nutrients in the soil. After passing under an abandoned railway line, and then the Severn Valley Railway, we entered the reserve proper.

The sun was shining, and the day bright and clear with autumn colours in their early phases. The soil in the reserve is generally sandy, with large areas of heather and other heathland plants. We made a short detour to view the Devil's Spittleful, a large tree-clad hump of rock. The story goes that the devil was most displeased with the piety of the people of Bewdley, and was determined to do something about it. The devil was a real giant of a person, and before setting off he loaded his spittle (spade) with rock, and set off to block the River Severn, and flood Bewdley, as a punishment for the piety of the residents. On the way he met a cobbler who had dozens of worn out shoes on his back. The devil stopped and asked the cobbler how far it was to Bewdley. The cobbler replied that he had worn out all the shoes he was carrying in coming from there. At this the devil dropped his spittleful of rock and went back home.

We had good views from Burlish Top, out over the safari park, to the Clee Hills further west. We were not at all envious of the queues of cars we could see in the safari park. It did cloud up before we had finished the walk, and we suffered some light rain, before calling at "Toll House Cottage" where we chatted to the woodcarver, Joan Roberts, and admired some of her work.

On our return journey to Old Swinford we stopped at "The Park Gate" for some very good 'two for one' lunches. Our six walkers were joined by another member of our congregation.

We always walk on the last Saturday of the month, except in December and August, leaving St Mary's at 9.30 am. The programme is displayed on the notice board in church; why not join us on a future walk?

Mike Blaxland

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

16 October	Reagan Matthew Douch Joshua Charles John Palmer Sharon Louise Palmer Lauren Amber Kennedy
6 November	Dominic James William Ross Freya Elizabeth Grace Dorsett Poppy-May Westwood

Weddings

12 November	Dean Jeffries and Toni Wilkes
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Funerals

19 October	Sharon Lewis	Aged 51
31 October	Barbara Henn	Aged 92
3 November	Victor Griffiths	Aged 85

DIOCESAN CHOIRS' FESTIVAL

Once again members of the choir from St Mary's were delighted to take part in the Annual Diocesan Choirs' Festival at Worcester Cathedral. The anticipation for the remainder of the evening, it being bonfire night, could not be avoided but it was good that some members of the St Mary's choir had a vested interest in attending!

By way of an experiment this year, the RSCM Worcester area awards took place in two sessions. We had candidates in both classes of examinations and all those who entered passed successfully.

The festival was themed under the banner, "The Word Revealed". The music and readings were all engineered to celebrate four hundred years of the King James Bible and some of the readings were read (by those who know how to!) in Greek and a "sort of" Middle English. Bishop David gave the address. There were some new anthems amongst the selection too. We thank Christopher Allsop for directing us and George Castle for playing the organ(s).

Towards the end of the service came the presentations. For St Mary's Olivia Berwick and Martha Gaytten earned their Dean's Award and Beth Holman and Peter Thomson their Bishop's award. Congratulations to them all.

Robin Walker

CHILDRENS PAGE ANSWERS

A PROMISE THROUGH HISTORY

THE MOUNTAINS AND HILLS MAY CRUMBLE BUT MY LOVE FOR YOU WILL NEVER END

The seven-letter word is PROMISE

A LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON

Some years ago, high above the heaving pavements of London's Oxford Street and surrounded by dazzling Christmas lights (sponsored by Disney) was the message 'Have an Enchanted Christmas'. I wondered what it might mean for someone to have an 'enchanted Christmas.'

Enchantment takes us beyond the physical. It's about the heart and about the soul. It's about realising that the ground on which we are standing is holy. It's about heaven in the ordinary. It's about God being with us.

There are three things that might make this Christmas an enchanted one. The first is play. Play takes us beyond the physical. It's about the heart and the soul. Sometimes play can help us to imagine a future that is radically different from the present. Christmas 1914 saw British and German soldiers sing carols before leaving their trenches to play football in no-man's land near Armentieres in France. Of course, hostilities resumed shortly afterwards, but that playful encounter helped those soldiers to imagine a time when wars would cease and peace would reign. (Incidentally, Germany won 3-2 - though I don't know if that was after penalties). It really is important to play together; to laugh, to joke, to imagine, to dream, to explore - and to do it together

Love is another ingredient of an enchanted Christmas. To love and to be loved is perhaps the most enchanting thing of all. We show our love in the exchanging of presents or simply cards but, as Betjeman said, 'the only cards that really count are that extremely small amount from real friends who keep in touch and are not rich but love us much'.

The final ingredient of an enchanted Christmas is worship. On that first Christmas, angels sang of God's glory, the shepherds glorified and praised God for all that they had heard and seen, and wise men from the east knelt down and paid homage to Jesus. But if Christmas is to be an enchanted Christmas then worship must mean more than coming to church. The whole of our festivities must be punctuated with times of thanksgiving and praise. A moment's reflection in the morning, grace before meals, and maybe even a song or two - anything that focuses and refocuses our attention on Jesus. Have an Enchanted Christmas - all of you.

The Venerable Roger Morris
Archdeacon of Worcester



My family and I would like to thank all our dear friends in St Mary's for the messages of love and support received in our bereavement. Your thoughts and prayers have given us strength at this sad time.

God bless you all.

Pauline Pettet, Richard and Rosemary

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