

Welcome to the March
2012 edition of
St Mary's
Parish Magazine



ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD



Parish Church Magazine



RECTOR: Interregnum in process
All enquiries to the Parish Office

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MARCH 2012

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	423021
	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
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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 MARCH 2012

Thursday 1	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 3	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 4	THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
Monday 5	7.30pm Flower Guild AGM in Narthex
	3.00 pm Baptisms
Tuesday 6	9.30 am Standing Committee
	11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft Nursing Home
Thursday 8	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 10	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
	Copy date for April Magazine
SUNDAY 11	THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
Thursday 15	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 17	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 18	THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
	Mothering Sunday, 10.00 am Worship Together
Tuesday 20	2.00pm Anchor Bereavement Care Group
	7.30 pm Parochial Church Council in the Narthex
Wednesday 21	11.30 am Holly Lodge Holy Communion
Thursday 22	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 24	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 25	FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT
	British Summer time begins
Thursday 29	10.30 am Holy Communion
	2.00pm Coach House Easter Service
Friday 30	2.30 pm old Swinford Hospital Easter service
Saturday 31	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
	4.30 pm Visiting bellringers.

Advance notice

Sunday 22 April 7.45 pm, after Evensong, PCC Annual Meeting



The Coach House

Arts and Crafts Centre

Coffee Morning

at The Coach House, Rectory Road, Oldswinford

Saturday 24 March 10.00-12.00 noon

Cakes, Jams and Marmalade

Gift Stall, Raffle, Books

Coffee and Biscuits with Ticket £1.50

The Annual General Meeting of the St Mary's Church Coach House will be held on Thursday 29 March in the upper room of the Coach House at 7.30pm.

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

This year the Church of England is celebrating the 350th anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer. This is the book we use for the Sunday services at 8.00am and 6.30pm. It was approved by King and Parliament in 1662 and for each reign it is re-issued with a new prayer for the monarch as 'Supreme Governor of the Church'. How amazing, then, that St. Mary's should be given a prayer book with the date of 1756! It turned up in a second-hand bookshop in Canada and it has been given by Mrs Barbara Brennan of Vancouver. She did not find it easy but with the help of 'This England' and Mr Bernard Shaw of St. Thomas's who read her request for help it is now here.

The book is virtually identical to what we use today, except that the monarch was George II and that it contains a portrait of the King and a dozen pictures concerning events in the life of Christ. Inside the fly-leaf it has the name of the owner: Mary Hill of Foxcote. Her home, now a farm house, can still be seen in the fields from Oldnall Road on the way to Cradley. Even more amazing is that her brother was Thomas Hill who is commemorated on the north wall of the church and who was a great benefactor to Lye by the building of its church and its first school. He made his fortune in glass, banking and iron and, in particular, set up the Blaenavon ironworks in Monmouthshire, now a World Heritage site.

Although the book is small, its significance is huge. It stands for the constancy of the Church over the centuries: we use the same prayers as our distant forbears, we hear the same Collects and Sunday readings, we sing the same Psalms and say the same Creed. Now we appreciate the love and kindness of Barbara Brennan and the efforts of 'This England' for a gift that comes half way round the world to us. We do not need reminding of our monarch, of course. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee year has just started and among all the great events we need to celebrate 'Our beloved and glorious Queen', as the Church's new prayer describes her. So let us in this year of Jubilee give thanks for her gifts of love, joy and peace.

With my prayers and best wishes,

Roy

SERVICES IN MARCH 2012

4 March 2nd Sunday of Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Genesis 17. 1 - 7, 15-16	Romans 4. 13-25	Mark 8. 31-38
	6.30 pm Evensong	Genesis 12. 1-9	Hebrews 11. 1- 3, 8-16	
11 March 3rd Sunday of Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Exodus 20. 1-17	Corinthians 1. 18-25	John 2. 13-22
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	Exodus 5.1 - 6:1	Philippians 3. 4b - 14	
18 March 4th Sunday of Lent Mothering Sunday	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am	Worship Together		
	6.30 pm Evensong	Exodus 6. 2 - 13	Romans 5. 1 - 11	
25 March 5th Sunday of Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 pm Parish Communion	Jeremiah 31. 31 - 34	Hebrews 5. 5 - 10	John 12. 20-33
	6.30 pm Evensong	Exodus 7. 8 - 24	Romans 5. 12 - 21	

QUOTE FOR THE MONTH

God in heaven, you have helped me to grow like a tree. Now something has happened. Satan, like a bird, has carried in one twig of his own choosing after another. Before I knew it he had built a dwelling place and was living in it. Tonight, my father, I am throwing out both the bird and the nest.

Prayer of a Nigerian Christian

For the past few years the annual resources presentation, to the congregation, has concentrated on how we use our buildings and how our members reach out into the wider community.

As with many of our congregation, the past year has been a difficult one for St Mary's as the departure of Greville has been compounded by several key members of the parish team suffering from poor health. Many have given most generously of their time and money but for most of the year regular income has failed to keep pace with regular expenditure. These issues are matters of resources, the need for more people to be directly involved in the running of the parish and the need for increased regular income to achieve our goals.

In 2011 our regular church expenditure was £109,846 or to put it another way £2,112 per week. We really do need to increase our regular income if we are to maintain a vibrant parish church serving our community. You will no doubt be familiar with the biblical concept of tithing, giving 10% of what we receive, back to God. The Church of England has long asked us to give 5% for the work of the church leaving 5% for us to give to other good causes, of our own choosing. The recent Diocesan giving presentations "First to the Lord" and "Giving for Life" stressed this ideal. Unless our giving to church means giving up something else we are effectively only giving the church our small change.

Undoubtedly incomes vary widely amongst our congregation but it is a matter of fact, that in the year ended 30 November 2011, 210 members of our congregation gave a total of £57,567 through numbered envelopes, gift aid envelopes and standing orders (our regular reliable giving). This equates to £1,107 per week.

With the season of Lent upon us, we do ask that everyone reviews their giving of time and money with the objective of increasing our income, and spreading the work load of running the parish more equitably between the members of our congregation.

There are many different ways in which you can help, please try.

Mike Blaxland
Chairman of PCC Resources Committee

ST MARY'S FLOWER GUILD

The annual meeting of St Mary's Flower Guild will be held at 7.30 pm on Monday 5 March in the Narthex. All current members and anyone with an interest in helping with flower arrangements and decorating the church for festivals and special events will be very welcome. You don't need to be an expert - an interest and desire to help in practice or in contributing to the cost of the flowers will assure you of a warm welcome.

Sally Frost

NEWS AND NOTES

THE PCC

Having been a member of our Parochial Church Council for some time it never ceases to amaze me as to the richness of talents represented on this committee. Also, I wonder at the willingness of so many to get involved in whatever needs to be done.

It seems to me that the talents displayed include expertise in many differing aspects of work. Looking after the financial side of Church Life for example, paying our 'quota' and at the same time seeing to other calls on our financial resources – a big task indeed! Seeing that the fabric of the church is kept in good order – another huge challenge. The church grounds – Are they kept in an acceptable condition? Do the trees need lopping or the grass mowing? Lighting, both inside and outside of the building is another area of challenge, as is the maintenance of the stonework. The list could go on and on as many other areas of need come to mind- not least the preparation and organisation of services, not just our regular services of worship but each of those specially personal and important services of baptism, weddings and funerals.

I just wish to say how thankful one feels to know our Church is in safe hands today, as it has been for a long period of time. Indeed the word 'centuries' is the word that springs to mind. I fear I may have omitted to mention what you do to help - please excuse me and accept my thank you to all who are involved in every aspect of life at St Mary's.

Anne Davies

EASTER LILIES



Please send or give your donations for Easter flowers to Sally Frost or pass them to a member of the church team. Please include the names of those in whose memory you are making the donation so names may be included in the memorial.



CHURCH DECORATION

Any help you can offer with the preparation of church and floral decorations for Easter will be welcomed on Saturday 7 April from 9.00 am.

Please sign the list at the back of church.

Sally Frost

RECOGNITION WELL DESERVED

On Sunday 29 January the speaker at the 10.00 am service was Susan Price, Diocesan Coordinator for the Children's Society. Susan came to speak about the work of this Christian charity which aims to create a society in which children and young people are valued, respected and happy. The Children's Society helps children of all faiths and none. It works to influence child protection policy so young people have a better chance in life.

Susan presented many examples to illustrate the enormous need of the children for whom this service exists and she spoke of the many children who, for one reason or another, find themselves leaving their family home to face almost unimaginable challenges of survival on the streets of our cities. Faced with the many dangers that exist to lure such young people into lives of poverty, crime, alcohol and drug dependence and physical abuse, the Children's Society seeks to assist and support these youngsters as they make positive choices to turn their lives around.

Additionally, the Children's Society provides support for disadvantaged children, a voice to disabled children, help to young refugees to rebuild their lives and relief for young carers.

Such work inevitably places huge demands on financial resources. The society needs to raise over £40 million each year in order to meet the demand for its work – to provide appropriate support to nearly 50,000 children. Susan encouraged those who could to join other long-standing supporters of the Children's Society by using a simple plastic box into which to place loose change and donations. Such boxes contribute over £2,000,000 each year to Children's Society funds whilst annual Christingle Services throughout the country provide a further £2,000,000. Contributions can be made in a variety of ways – more information is available on www.childrenssociety.org.uk

One well-kept secret aspect of Susan's visit was to pay tribute to the contributions made to the Children's Society, over more than 49 years, by Wendy Tranter. Wendy has been a very committed supporter and promoter of the work of this organisation, notably being the driving force behind the Christingle Service she helps to organise at St Mary's every year. Wendy braved the recognition of her work with her natural modesty and reluctance to be placed in the spotlight, an occasion much enjoyed by others in the congregation who welcomed the opportunity to say thank you to this generous lady. On behalf of the Society, Susan made the presentation of an award, the



first in the country, which recognised Wendy's valued contributions over such a long time. Anne Davies then presented Wendy with a bouquet of flowers.

On behalf of everyone present, those unable to be there on the day and all the children who have benefited from Wendy's care and compassion, "Thank you Wendy and well done."

LENT COURSE 2012

ST MARY'S, ST THOMAS', HOLY TRINITY, STOURBRIDGE



“Jubilee”



A series of talks and acts of worship
based on the theme of Jubilee, intended as a stimulus
for our study and
reflection during Lent.

The dates and venues of the meetings are as follows:

29 February at St Mary's Old Swinford
7 March at Holy Trinity Amblecote
14 March at St Thomas's Stourbridge
21 March at Holy Trinity Amblecote
28 March at St Mary's Old Swinford

Speakers will include The Dean of Worcester The
Very Reverend Peter Atkinson ,
Revd Ian Spencer and Hugh Williams and will
include the subjects of business, restorative
justice and looking after our world.

Wednesday evenings beginning at 7.30pm

WE HOPE YOU CAN JOIN US

FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

LENT A TIME TO SPRING CLEAN

Lent is the six weeks before Easter. It is the time when we look at ourselves to see if we are doing enough to deserve God's love. This year, Lent begins 22 February. There will be a service when the ashes of last year's palm crosses are put on our foreheads to show that we are aware of our sins and promise to try to do better.

TRACK SQUARE

Track from one square to the next, up, down, sideways or diagonally. Do not jump a square or use the same square twice. How many words of three letters or more can you find?

What is the nine lettered word?

25 words is good. 40 words is excellent

W	S	E
D	E	N
Y	A	D

DO SOMETHING DIFFICULT

Do something difficult to strengthen your determination. Try to stop eating something you like. Give the money you save to your favourite charity.



OR - do a job you do not like doing like tidying your bedroom or washing up!!!



MAKE A CLEAN SWEEP

Throw out the rubbish!

Rearrange the letters to find what you have to stop being.

1. ZAYL _ _ _ _
2. HIFLESS _ _ _ _ _
3. ADB DEPERMET _ _ _ _ _
4. REDYGE _ _ _ _ _
5. NIKDUN _ _ _ _ _

HAVE A GOOD WASH BIBLE QUIZ

1. Who washed the disciples' feet? _____
2. Who washed Jesus' feet with perfume? _____
3. Who was told to wash in the River Jordan to cure his leprosy? _____
4. Who washed his hand to show he was not to be blamed for Jesus' death? _____
5. Who said he was washing away people's sins when he baptised them? _____

DUST AND POLISH

We are like mirrors reflecting God's love for others to see. We can become shiny by the good we do.

Look at your face in the mirror:

Draw yourself as a devil and then as an angel.

HYMNS AND THEIR MEANINGS

Hymns are sung in worship and we all have our favourites which are very familiar to us both in words and the tunes to which we sing them. They can be traditional and old, and new hymns are treated with strangeness. It is worthwhile noting that for all hymns there was a time when they too were new.

Over many years the author has been associated with hymns, both with the words and the music. Much more than just these facts, there has been an interest in the history of the hymn, why it was written and what music was written for it. There is also interest in assessing new hymns which have recently been added.

Songs of Praise recently devoted a program to hymns written in the latter part of the 1900's. One was written by Bernadette Farrell, a very young lady who was born in 1957. She is both a hymn writer and composer and wrote "O God, you search me and you know me..." and the words are based on Psalm 139 - God's Word is truth. It is used in the Catholic Liturgy and there is a recording of this by Wells Cathedral Choir.

While looking through my various hymn books for her name as an author, I found the name John Arlott as a writer of a hymn. I associated that name with a cricket commentator – could it be the same person? When I noted that this J.A was born in 1914 and died on 1991 it prompted me to look further. It was indeed the John Arlott whose voice became familiar in millions of homes across Britain over three decades when he was a test match commentator on the BBC.

He describes in his autobiography how he came to be a hymn writer. One day a female voice announced itself from another department of the BBC to ask, "Can you write hymns?" "I expect so but I have never tried" was the reply. She then went on to explain that she had approached some of the best poets but their efforts had not pleased the editors. She wanted three hymns on the subjects of Harvest Festival, Rogation and Plough Sunday.

John wrote all three and duly delivered them promptly. It was his first hymn which caught on and appears in several of our hymn books. The first line is "God, whose farm is all creation" The tunes include Gott Will's Machen by J.L.Steiner and Shipston.

John was born in Basingstoke in 1914; he grew up in the lodge of the local cemetery where his father was superintendent. His response to inquiries about his own spiritual experience is fascinating. His hymn is not about ourselves, it is about our response to God. The Christian message is not about what we do; it is about what God does for us. Faith is not about oneself, faith is about God.

John Arlott died in 1991. Harvest Hymn lives on.

Ron Tranter

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP

Saturday 28 January

Sixteen walkers set off from our house, including 4 newcomers – it was very good to welcome Stan and Avril Williams, and Frances and Robert, friends of Toni and Bob Evans. The weather was fine if a little cool but it made the Gluhwein at “coffee time” all the more welcome.

Leaving Beech Road, we crossed into Whittington Road and followed this over the Broadway, up Maynard Avenue and over Sandy Road before dropping down to Whittington Hall Lane. Sharp left through the gate and we were into Bunkers Hill Wood, passing alongside a field with guinea fowl roaming.

Following the path around the edge of the wood, we reached the corner of the Tennis Club and proceeded along the edge of the courts before exiting onto Sugar Loaf Lane. After briefly watching a buzzard on top of a fence post, we moved off again towards The Covert, skirting the edge of this brought us down onto Norton Road.

Crossing into County Lane, we turned left at the top and followed the sandy track, passed the water works and onto Ounty John Lane. Across Racecourse Lane and we safely negotiated the golf course before crossing the cricket pitch into Lea Vale Road, Stanley Road and into the park. Lunch was a carvery at the Old White Horse where we were joined by Ann and Chris.

A short walk for most, back to the cars, and the day was done.

Malcolm Frost

MAUNDY HONOUR FOR ROY

Our Reader Emeritus, Roy Peacock, has been invited to receive Maundy Money as a representative of Worcester Diocese and St Mary's, Old Swinford. This is a great honour for Roy and appropriate recognition of his mission and contributions throughout this parish and in the wider community during a lifetime of service to God. Roy will be accompanied by his wife, Pamela, at this very special Royal Jubilee event at York Minster on Thursday 5 April. Congratulations Roy. May you both enjoy the celebration of this special day in the knowledge that your many friends will be thinking of you, thou good and faithful servant.



HOLY WEEK AT ST MARY'S

Father in heaven, as your people prepare once more to follow the events of this Holy Week, may we be led by your spirit to deeper insights into your love and saving grace; that we may love you more and serve you better, for the sake of him who died for us and rose again, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Sunday 1st April PALM SUNDAY

8.00am Holy Communion

10.00am Parish Communion with reading of the Passion narrative.

This service begins in the Church Hall with palm procession into Church.

6.30pm Evensong and sermon.

2nd, 3rd and 4th April

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

7.00pm Meditation on the Passion in images with Compline.

Thursday 5th April MAUNDY THURSDAY

10.30am Holy Communion.

11.00am Chrism Eucharist in the Cathedral.

7.00pm Seder meal and Vigil.

Friday 6th April GOOD FRIDAY

10.00am Walk of witness from St John's.

11.00am Children's workshop in church.

2.00pm Devotions at the foot of the cross.

7.30pm The Passion: Choral music and readings.

Saturday 7th April

9.00am Church decoration.

10.00am Open church and vestry hour.

Sunday 8th April EASTER DAY

7.45am Holy Fire. The lighting of the Easter Candle.

8.00am Holy Communion.

10.00am Parish Communion.

6.30pm Choral Evensong and sermon.



O Jesus, Master Carpenter of Nazareth, who on a Cross with wood and nails has wrought our salvation, wield well your tools in the workshop of your world, so that we, who come to you rough-hewn, may by you be fashioned according to your will; for the sake of your tender mercy. Amen

NEWS FROM THE MISSION COMMITTEE

The Mission Committee were very anxious hearing the weather forecast just before the coffee morning. Fortunately we had sold many tickets before hand, a number to new friends, who as it happened turned up on the day. Although it was very cold, we walked in to the Narthex full of people chattering and enjoying good fellowship, scrumptious cakes and a welcome cup of coffee.

Just before twelve, people departed and clearing up began. This took a while and the snow began to fall. We left the church spick and span ready for Sunday Services and £500 for our Mission Projects. We were just in time!

Below is a letter written from Sasi and her son Mark written in Tamil which was translated by Kanthi Ariaraj. It is one of the projects supported by the Mission Committee.

To Kanthi and loving friends of St Marys,

Greetings for the New Year. I pray that you are all well. I will not forget you. I am so happy and relieved to know you are going to help me - this year - to buy food and extras. I will be ever so grateful to you for my house and land, and to live contently knowing no one will send me away is a wonderful feeling. You have made it possible and I cannot thank you enough.

If not for your help, what will be my plight? God has helped through you. As long as I live I will hold you in prayer - please tell all those who helped raise money how happy and humbly grateful I am. Your cousin will tell you, if it was not for your help I will not be able to send Mark to school.

Shall close with gratitude and thanks,

Sasi

Happy New Year.

I am in grade 3. I won a prize for being a good boy. I know you help my mother. Shall stop for now.

Mark (Sasi's son)

Janice Sutton

VIVA MUSICA

Come and enjoy a special evening of Music

Featuring St Joseph's School choir.

The event is being held at :

Our Lady and All Saints Catholic Church, New Road, Stourbridge,

7.30pm Saturday 10th March 2012.

Tickets are available from St. Joseph's School on 01384 818325 or Our Lady and All Saints Parish Office on 01384 395308.

£5 per adult – Children free.

A great evening guaranteed! Book now to avoid disappointment!

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

POTATO SOUP WITH SMOKED SALMON

This is a basic potato and onion soup with the last-minute addition of smoked salmon. I sometimes substitute chopped fried crispy chorizo for the smoked salmon. It's good for entertaining as it can be made the day before and re-heated and sprinkled with the smoked salmon which warms up in the heat of the soup. For everyday meals it can be finished off with lots of chopped herbs.

50g butter
400g potatoes peeled and chopped
1 medium finely chopped onion
2 chopped celery sticks
Salt & pepper
Hot vegetable stock
Full cream milk
Chopped flat leaved parsley
100g sliced smoked salmon, cut into ribbons

Melt the butter and gently fry the onion for 15 mins. on low heat. Add the chopped celery and continue frying for a further 15 mins. this is very important if you want to avoid the raw taste you sometimes get with homemade soups. You will need to stir it from time to time, leave the lid on the pan, this also prevents sticking.

Add the potatoes and continue frying for a few more minutes. Turn up the heat and pour over enough hot stock to just cover the vegetables. (2 cubes should be enough) Simmer for 30 mins until all the vegetables are tender.

Puree the soup in a food processor or blender. Add the milk to thin it down to the correct consistency. Taste and season.

When you are ready to eat, heat up the soup add the fresh herbs, ladle into bowls then sprinkle the smoked salmon over and serve.

I use the food processor to chop the onions and celery.

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE.....

Glancing through the ingredients, we observe the touch of sweetness from the onion, a creamy note and the strength of flavour in both the smoked salmon and chorizo variants. However, when we are thinking about our wine, we should remember that first and foremost this is a soup, a first course. It is unlikely that our choice of wine for the meal will be determined by this dish, so let's consider something by the glass to accompany our soup.

A prime candidate here is Chardonnay. Thankfully, it hasn't been killed off

by the ABC lobby (anything but Chardonnay). However, the intensely, flavoured smoked salmon really calls for some oak too, another anathema to some! Personally, i think there is no better style of Chardonnay than the creamy, oaky White Burgundy, copied in California and various parts of the wine world. If you meet such a superb soup when out dining, you may struggle to find a Meursault or Russian River Chardonnay by the glass. But worry not, a pleasing alternative would be a glass of bubbles. A modestly priced glass will suffice: a blanc de blancs, made commonly from Chardonnay, would be fine. Such wines are produced in France at a reasonable price outside the Champagne region and the style is replicated around the world - in South Africa, Australia. Cava too increasingly includes a proportion of Chardonnay in the blend.

A flavoursome start to the meal and a glass of fizz - bravo! Enjoy your wine sipping.

Richard W.B. Ryan

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

Four visitors joined members at the meeting on 14 February. The service was led by Pat Whalley who opened with her poem "Valentines Day". The usual cards and tokens often centre on gifts and the heart but Christians are reminded that love in its many forms, with faith and hope, is the centre or glue that holds everything together and is the new commandment given by Jesus Christ to guide our lives and actions.

During our prayers we remembered in silence two members, Rita Parton and Betty Adkins, who had recently died.

Mike Blaxland gave a very interesting slide talk on a walking holiday in Southern Turkey along the Lycian Way in the St Nicholas' area. Churches in two local areas were dedicated in his name. Turkey is a muslim country so each village has its own mosque. There was evidence of many looted tombs but also old Roman settlements with amphitheatres which were contemporary with the time of St Paul. We enjoyed seeing the rocky landscape with a beautiful backdrop of mountains fringed with a turquoise sea along the coast which Mike and his wife Janet had experienced. We thanked Mike for sharing it all with us.

The next meeting will be held on March 13 at 2.15pm in the Coach House entitled "A Lent Theme" with Reverend Ruth Atkinson as the guest speaker.

Dawn Nex

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

5th February Emily Frances Pritchard

Funerals

6.2.12	Rita Parton	Aged 90
8.2.12	Betty Adkins	Aged 94
20.12.1	Eva Gillis	Aged 20 months
14.2.12	Ann Garfield	Aged 81

FAIRTRADE FAYRE

Saturday 10 March 2012
St Thomas' Church,
Market Street, Stourbridge.
10:00 am - 1:00pm



**Take a Step for
Fairtrade**

**Displays by Local
Schools &
Posters**

**FAIRTRADE Stalls
Inc: Jewellery,
Clothing, Food, Gifts &
More!!!**

Cake Competition

**Fairtrade
Refreshments**

Come and find out more about the work of FAIRTRADE

CHILDRENS PAGE ANSWERS

TRACK SQUARE: The 9 lettered word is WEDNESDAY

CLEAN SWEEP: 1. Lazy 2. Selfish 3. Bad tempered 4. Greedy 5. Unkind

A GOOD WASH: 1. Jesus 2. Mary of Magdela 3. Naaman 4. Pontius Pilate 5. John the Baptist

A LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

We have become used to living in an 'age of austerity'. All of us will know people who are suffering significantly as a result of the recession and it is heartening to see the response of our churches to such hardship, in initiatives such as the new food bank in Worcester or the Christmas homeless shelter set up by Churches Together in Redditch.

Materially, pretty much everyone in this country is better off than the vast majority of people in the world today. But it's not just counting our blessings as far as our material wellbeing is concerned that will do us good this Lent. It's reminding ourselves of the overwhelming abundance of God's love, material and spiritual.

The gospels tell us of the amazing extravagance of God's love: the first miracle in St John's gospel is Jesus changing water into wine at Cana of Galilee. He created around 1140 bottles of wine at a stage in the party when some might have thought that 'enough is enough'. Then we read of the five loaves and two fish being transformed into enough to feed five thousand, with twelve baskets of bread left over. Jesus offers both material and spiritual substance in abundance.

These episodes remind us that we have been given all we need to be a Eucharistic community, one which gives thanks - for the abundance of God's love for us in Jesus and the blessings he pours down on us. As we do so, God will work wonders through us just as he did through the servants at the wedding at Cana in Galilee and the disciples who distributed the bread to the five thousand on the hillside in Galilee.

What about all the problems we face as a Church? – lack of money, lack of people, and lack of influence in an increasingly secular society. I was struck recently by something written by Sam Wells, who has ministered mostly in deprived areas in this country and is shortly to return from the USA to become Vicar of St Martin in the Fields in London. He says that in the American South, the churches, considered together, have all the things we think we need - numbers, money and social influence. 'But it turns out,' he goes on 'that the Kingdom of God is no closer. Living in this rather different culture and seeing the same questions from more than one point of view has helped me better understand and appreciate where the power of the gospel truly lies.'

The power of the gospel lies in God's love in Jesus - and the fact that through it he is able to work wonders through you and me, poor broken vessels that we are. I see God powerfully at work through the people of the churches of this diocese. One parish in vacancy I visited recently, for example, invites baptism families to breakfast in church before its monthly family service. I think also of the good work being done among refugees in the Halas team to Street Pastors just getting off the ground in Bromsgrove: there are so many examples.

May God give you grace this Lent to become ever more aware of God's abundance in an age of austerity so that we might together become a truly Eucharistic community, at all times and in all places giving thanks to God and sharing his love.



Bishop John

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