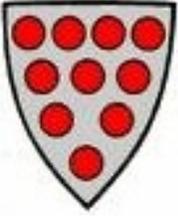


St Mary's
Old Swinford

Parish Church Magazine
Online edition
March 2013



ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD



Parish Church Magazine



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MARCH 2013

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 Tuesdays will alternate between St Mary's, St Thomas' and Holy Trinity Amblecote
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
Priest in Charge and Curate's Day Off:	Friday



OTHER REGULAR EVENTS

Bible Study Group:	Monday, first in month at 2.30 pm	379972
Mothers' Union:	Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm	392951
Outreach Group:	Occasional meetings	01562 851491
Music Group Practice:	Second Saturday at 10.00 am	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:	Mrs Marjorie Ferguson	393454
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
Organist / Choirmaster:	Mr Robin Walker	01905 353939
Treasurer:	Mr Russ Fowler	442684
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
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 MARCH 2013

Saturday 2	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 5.00 pm St Mary's Choir singing at Tewkesbury Abbey
SUNDAY 3	THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT 3.00 pm Baptism
Wednesday 6	9.00 am Full Staff Meeting
Thursday 7	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 9	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 10	MOTHERING SUNDAY 10.00 am Worship Together Copy date for April magazine
Tuesday 12	11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft 7.30 pm Bishop's Certificate Course
Thursday 14	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 16	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 17	PASSION SUNDAY 11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Wednesday 20	10.30 am Holy Communion
Thursday 21	7.30 pm Coach House AGM
Saturday 23	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 24	PALM SUNDAY 3.00 pm Baptism
Thursday 28	10.30 am Holy Communion 7.30 pm Maundy Thursday Holy Communion Dudley Schools close for Easter Holidays to Monday 15 April
Friday 29	GOOD FRIDAY 11.00 am Children's Workshop in church 2.00 pm Devotions at the foot of the cross 7.30 pm The Passion: Choral music and readings
Saturday 30	9.00 Decoration of church for Easter 10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 12.30 pm Wedding service
SUNDAY 31	EASTER DAY

TIME FOR A CUPPA?



You are invited to The Coach House on
Saturday 13 April, 10.00 am—12.00 noon



**The Coach House Annual General Meeting
will take place at 7.30 pm on Thursday, 21 March in the upper meeting
room.**

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

Lent is the time of the year when Christians are encouraged to take a health check on our faith. As we become more engrossed in the 'day to day' challenges of life we can lose sight of the importance of our faith to us, and what was once so clear and vital becomes a little dimmed and sometimes a matter of routine. Lent is the time to renew the vitality of that faith and to halt its drift into insignificance or irrelevance, once in that place it becomes difficult to rejuvenate. So Lent is a time to take stock before we reach that place.

How do we take stock of our faith?

FIRSTLY we can ask ourselves whether our prayer life is a joy or a chore. The answer to this gives us an indication of the nature of our relationship with Jesus. We are called into a close personal relationship with Him, which is affirming, challenging and supportive; if our prayer life does not show these characteristics, then we would benefit from some remedial work and attention.

SECONDLY our understanding of our faith must impact on our daily lives, informing what we do and how we relate to other people. If that connection between our faith and our day-to-day lives is not clear cut then we must look afresh at how we express that faith in our lives, and how the practical outworking of our faith is informed by our understanding of our faith and its claims upon us.

Over this Lent I hope YOU will grasp the opportunity to undertake a faith check by considering those two aspects of faith: your life of prayer and the relationship between your spiritual life and your day-to-day living. In order to help you in this task there will be a series of Lenten talks on 'Spirituality', aimed at looking at different styles of prayer. Our speakers will be offering you ways of praying from a number of different traditions which I hope you will find helpful and that you will try them in your own prayer lives.

Our spiritual lives are never static, we are constantly invited to seek new ways to build and develop the relationship between ourselves and God. In that work of building and developing I commend this year's Lent Course to you and invite you to try something slightly different in your spiritual journeys and see if that leads you to a closer understanding and love of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ.

May you be blessed in your journeying this Lent. *Stephen Stewart*

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NEW CHURCH ELECTORAL ROLL

As part of its regular six yearly cycle, this year the Electoral Rolls of all Church of England churches have to be started afresh, ie all church members are required to complete an 'Application for Enrolment on the Church Electoral Roll'. Please complete the forms which are available at the back of church and, when completed, may be placed in the box provided there. The inclusion of your postcode is particularly important.

Katey Fletcher
Secretary to the PCC

SERVICES IN MARCH 2013

3 March Third Sunday of Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am	Isaiah 55. 1-9	Corinthians 10. 1-13	Luke 13. 1-9
	6.30 pm Evensong	Genesis 28. 10-19a	John 1. 35-end	
10 March Mothering Sunday	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am	WORSHIP TOGETHER		
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	Joshua 5. 9-12	Luke 15. 1-3, 15b-end	
17 March Passion Sunday	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 43. 16-21	Philippians 3. 4b-14	John 12. 1-8
	6.30 pm Evensong	2 Chronicles 35. 1-6, 10-16	Luke 22. 1-13	
24 March Palm Sunday	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 50. 4-9a	Philippians 2. 5-11	PASSION READING
	6.30 pm Evensong	Isaiah 5. 1-7	Luke 20. 9-19	
31 March Easter Day	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 65 17-end	Acts 10. 34-43	John 20. 1-18
	6.30 pm Evensong	Isaiah 52. 1-21	John 20. 19-23	



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 24th March 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.

25th,26th,27th March

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

6.30pm Meditation on the Passion with Compline.

Thursday 28th March MAUNDY THURSDAY

10.30am Holy Communion.

7.30pm Holy Communion

Friday 29th March 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 30th March

9.00am Church decoration.

10.00am Open church and vestry hour.

12.30 pm Wedding service in church.

Sunday 31st March 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

Exploring Spirituality

A chance to study and experience prayer in different traditions

20th February: The Taizé tradition – Rev'd Alan Williams

Venue: Holy Trinity Church, Amblecote

27th February: The Jesus Prayer – Brother Nicholas Alan SSF

Venue: St Mary's Church, Old Swinford

6th March: The Iona tradition – Rev'd Dr Fiona Haworth

Venue: Holy Trinity Church, Amblecote

13th March: Praying with Icons – Rev'd Paul Hunt

Venue: St Thomas' Church Hall, Stourbridge

20th March: Franciscan Spirituality – Rev'd Canon Ruth Wintle

Venue: St Mary's Church, Old Swinford



Wednesday evenings from 7.30-9.15pm.

All sessions are free of charge, and include tea and coffee.

For more information, contact John Sutton on 01384 441003

EASTER LILIES

In keeping with our usual practice the names of loved ones will be placed on the altar for the Easter period.

If you wish to make a donation towards the cost of the Easter Lilies in memory of loved ones please place the donation in an envelope with the names of the person(s) being remembered and give it to Sally Frost or post it through the Rectory letter box.

These donations may be 'Gift Aided' if you are a UK tax payer. Should you wish to Gift Aid your donation please use one of the yellow Gift Aid envelopes and mark it clearly "For Easter Lilies."

The Ladies of the Flower Guild will be decorating the church for Easter on Saturday, 30 March from 9.00 am. All offers of help will be appreciated. Please sign the list at the back of church if you would like to do a particular pedestal.

Thank you.

Sally Frost





Fairtrade Fortnight 2013 : Monday 25th February – Sunday 10th March



Look for the FAIRTRADE Mark on products when you shop

www.fairtrade.org.uk

In 2012 the Fairtrade Foundation asked us all to take a step for Fairtrade in all sorts of ways...buying Fairtrade cotton, trying out Fairtrade Body Lotions from Boots (the Mango body wash is wonderful) and Marks and Spencer, sipping some Fairtrade wine or buying Fairtrade flowers or by just simply buying Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar!



Over the New Year the Fairtrade Foundation announced that 1,007,779 steps had been taken nationwide in support of Fairtrade...and some were even taken at the London Olympics!



In 2013 Stourbridge Fairtrade Steering Group would like the town to take some more steps for Fairtrade so that more farmers and workers will flourish and get a better deal from **trade**. **So can your church please support a couple of initiatives coming up around Fairtrade Fortnight?**

First of all young people in the town are hoping to join in with a national challenge from the Fairtrade Foundation to create artworks and/ or sculptures out of Fairtrade wrappers and boxes ! Are there young people in your church (or even older ones!) who would like to be creative for Fairtrade? Please collect wrappers and boxes from Fairtrade itemschocolate bar wrappers, Fairtrade labels off jars and bottles, boxes and bags that have contained Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar. All these can be used to create something that depicts "Going Further for Fairtrade" in some way.

The artworks can be uploaded onto the Fairtrade Foundation website and will also be on display in the Ryemarket on Saturday March 9th together with any creations that schools and other groups have done. Just bring your creations along to the Ryemarket from 9.30am onwards.

Secondly....do please come along to a Quiz Night organised by the Stourbridge Fairtrade Group on Friday March 15th in the Banqueting Suite at the Talbot Hotel. There will be a few Fairtrade questions but lots of general quiz questions along with a Fairtrade raffle and display. It should be a fun night to celebrate the success of Fairtrade and the fact that £1.3 billion of Fairtrade products were sold in the UK in 2011. We should also celebrate that we have lots of Fairtrade Churches in a Fairtrade Town!

Fairtrade only works if people buy the products. There are now more than 4500 items in UK shops...perhaps we can all take a further step for Fairtrade in 2013 by finding a new favourite Fairtrade item and buying it. For further information visit www.fairtrade.org.uk and also www.traidcraftshop.co.uk.

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

CRUNCHY ROAST CORIANDER POTATOES

Serves 4

1 Tablespoon of coriander seeds crushed in pestle and mortar or if you have an old pepper mill this will do the job easily.

500g peeled floury potatoes cut into large bite-sized chunks

Salt and black pepper

3-4 tablespoons of olive oil

Good splash of balsamic vinegar

Pre-heat oven to 220/200Cfan/Gas7

Boil the potatoes for 5-7 minutes. Drain, put back in the pan and give the pan a shake to rough up the edges.

Heat the oil in a roasting pan and when hot add the potatoes, coriander, salt and pepper making sure all the potatoes are covered in the oil and spice.

Bake for 30-40 minutes until golden and crispy. Take out of the oven and drizzle over the balsamic vinegar

Ann Jennings

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AND FOR THE WINE

Coriander represents the main added flavour in this recipe, inspiring thoughts of Indian Cuisine and dishes from even further east. However, the principal ingredient is potato—much more at home in western kitchens. Interestingly, coriander is used generously in Southern Portugal, specifically the Alentejo region, where the hot rolling plains are much planted with wheat and cereals, Coriander is the main accompaniment in many bread-based creations and bread thickened soups. So let us make the short hop in carbohydrates from bread to potato and find the Portuguese section of the wine shelf. Here admittedly we will see some less familiar grapes but take a little time to explore and the rewards are ample. Many wines feature a blend of varieties. One particularly successful wine is the Marques de Borba white, comprising the local grapes Roupeiro and Rabo de Ovelha in concert with the prized Arinto which adds a bright acidity to the fruit of the local varieties.

Red wines are more plentiful in Alentejo (pronounced like the French 'je') They will often incorporate the grapes Trincadeira and Aragonez—but lo and behold the latter is none other than the Rioja grape Tempranillo... in Portuguese clothes. Such reds would be well matched with a coriander and spiced beef stew, much loved in the region. Top name in the wine world here is Esperaro (pronounced....) hey never mind just delight in the wines of Alentejo and leave mastering Portuguese diphthongs for a rainy day; they don't get many in this part of Portugal!! Enjoy your wine sipping.

Richard W. B Ryan

CHILDREN'S PAGES

Holy Week, the week preceding Easter, begins on Palm Sunday of the liturgical church year. Holy Week is the culmination of Lent. The Easter Triduum, consisting of Maundy or Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday bring Christians to the highest point in the church year, Easter. Holy Week is also referred to as the Passion or Paschal celebration.

Word Search Puzzle

Words are in a straight line left to right or top to bottom

M E R C I F U L P S X R X
C L O T H I N G A L L E Y
S T E A D F A S T O O L E
P T H N A P H F M W R E V
L A E O N U Y A O L D N E
W B A T G N E S U O F T N
E O R W E I T T R V O S N
E U T I R S H I N E R R T
P N S T F H E N I J O E L
I D A H R I D G N J A N D
N I Y O O N O W G O D D M
G N S T M G R A C I O U S
M G R E T U R N Y O U R R

Word List

STEADFAST PUNISHING ABOUNDING MOURNING MERCIFUL GRACIOUS
CLOTHING WEeping RELENTS FASTING RETURN HEARTS ANGER YOUR
WITH SLOW SAYS REND LOVE LORD JOEL FROM EVEN YET THE NOW
NOT GOD FOR AND ALL

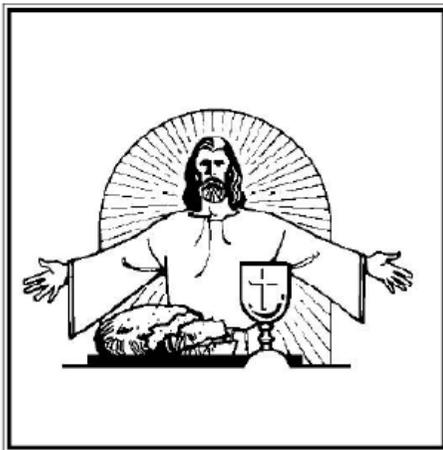
(Joel 2:12-13) Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; {13} rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HOLY WEEK?

Colour the pictures and learn about the last week before the first Easter.
Ask your parents to help tell the story to you this week.



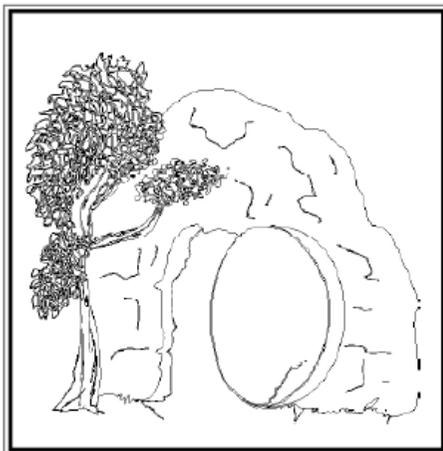
(HINT: Palm Sunday)



(HINT: Maundy Thursday)



(Hint: Good Friday)



(Hint: Easter Sunday)

??? DID YOU KNOW ???

Maundy Thursday has lots of different names:

CLEAN THURSDAY, GREAT THURSDAY, GREEN THURSDAY,
HOLY AND GREAT THURSDAY, HOLY THURSDAY, RED THURSDAY, SHARP THURSDAY,
SHEER THURSDAY, SHRIFT THURSDAY, THURSDAY OF THE MYSTICAL SUPPER

Traditionally, Maundy Thursday was the customary day for Christians to clean both themselves and their homes. Can you find any more in-depth histories behind some of the other names associated with Maundy Thursday?

TRACING OLDSWINFORD ANCESTORS – Part 3

Parish Registers

If you are hoping to trace your family prior to 1837, some of the most useful records are parish registers. Since 1538 (apart from a brief period during the Commonwealth) clergy have been required to record baptisms, marriages and burials. Many early sixteenth century registers have been lost, not least those of Oldswinford; copies of our parish registers survive from 1602 only. Registers are also kept by other non-conformists and Catholics, although these can be more difficult to find.

The original registers of most parishes can now be found at county record offices; earlier years can be difficult to read and entries may even be in Latin! Oldswinford registers are kept at Worcester Record Office at the recently opened building called The Hive in Sawmill Walk, Worcester WR1 3PB (telephone 01905 822866). But help is at hand if you cannot travel, as many registers have been transcribed and indexed, being published in hard copy or on compact disk (CD). Our parish is no exception and printed transcripts for the years 1693 to 1813 may be obtained from the BMSGH shop (www.bmsggh-shop.org.uk/ and entering a keyword search for 'Oldswinford'), or on a BMSGH CD (reference D101) which costs £10 and additionally contains many other Oldswinford parish record sources including a summary of our poor law documents from 1650 to 1834. Hard copies of transcripts may also be found in local libraries; one of the most extensive national collections can be found in Birmingham's Central Library (at the moment in Chamberlain Square, but note that this library will be closed for eight months in 2013 for their move to a nearby site). Stourbridge Library has microfiche copies of original Oldswinford registers for most of the nineteenth century, but these are not indexed and take a considerable amount of time to work through.

Computerised transcripts and indexes also exist for many other parishes. Make a search on www.freereg.org.uk. Another general website called www.CyndisList.com gives detailed information about every parish in the UK and for many other overseas countries. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gives free access to their worldwide Salt Lake City database of baptisms, marriages and many other genealogical records; this is called the IGI. It can be accessed freely on <https://familysearch.org>. Always try to eventually view the original record after having used any type of transcript, as transcribers' errors occur quite often due to the difficulty of reading old handwriting.

Monumental and Grave Inscriptions

A walk around Oldswinford churchyard on a pleasant day looking for ancestors' gravestones can be a fascinating experience. But trying to locate one particular burial place can also be extremely difficult, due to fading inscriptions and the sheer number of burials on site. The earliest gravestones date back to the 1690s, but most are nineteenth century or later. A considerable number of memorials can be found inside the church itself.

A typed index and plan of the churchyard does exist in the Parish Office, which can be viewed by appointment. But even after locating an ancestor in this document,

it is not always possible to find the actual gravestone. If found, each gravestone can give a wealth of information, including the person's age and date of death, similar details for their spouses, names of parents and children, their residence and occupation.

Looking further afield, the BMSGH shop (see above) has CDs of monumental inscriptions for each of the counties of Worcester, Warwick and Stafford, costing upwards of £20 each. A National Burial Index on CD ROM can be purchased from the Federation of Family History Societies, although this obviously does not cover every possible parish. A Roll of Honour 1914-1920 for the Worcestershire Regiment is available on the www.genuki.org.uk family history website in its Worcestershire section. This is just one of many local records that can be found on this useful national site.

My next article will look at Probate records and Newspaper Articles, which are a very useful source to further supplement any information already discovered about your ancestors.

Nigel Perry

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ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP PLAN "B"

For our January outing we had intended walking from Bobbington to Six Ashes and back followed by lunch in Bobbington. The weather forecast at lunchtime the day before was for a blizzard that evening and during the night; on which basis it was by no means certain that we would even get to Bobbington. The decision was made to cancel our pub meal and instead to meet at St Mary's, on the Saturday, and consider the implications of the overnight weather, and work out Plan B.

As it so happened, we had very little snow, but an awful lot of rain overnight, and Saturday dawned bright and sunny. We were amazed to find that 15 turned up in the hope of a walk. There still being a lot of ice and snow about, we opted to walk from St Mary's and set off through the churchyard, to the hospice, and out onto Hagley Road. The overnight rain had well lubricated the ice and snow, so there was plenty of potential for slipping and sliding. We encountered snow, ice, slush, mud and in one spot ankle deep water! We walked on via Pedmore, to West Hagley, and on again to Stakenbridge barns, where we stopped for our coffee break. Two of our number were much better prepared than most, with sufficient hot punch for us all to sample (many thanks to Sally and Malcolm). Our return route was over the water works hill to Ounty John Lane, then across the golf course and playing fields and out into Love Lane. We had walked about 5.5 miles with sunshine throughout and everyone had managed to stay on their feet!

We were all in need of sustenance, and enquiries at the Crabtree Pub resulted in us all being made very welcome, and able to enjoy a drink and a good meal before we all made our separate ways home. The pub was most accommodating, they were able to sit us all together and in view of there, by then, being 16 of us, allowed us to use the Monday to Friday meal deal. Well done them!
All in all an enjoyable if slippery walk in the sunshine!

Mike Blaxland

DECEMBER DISASTER—OR ...?

While shopping at Merry Hill on December 20 I had my handbag stolen. It was partly my own fault for being careless but the reason I am sharing this experience is because of the magic which followed. Everyone was so kind and helpful. The bank clerk let me have fifty pounds and found me the number to call a pleasant man who said he would cancel my debit card at once and I would get a replacement within five working days! (not at this time of year, I thought, but it reached me by the 29th by the same post as my new SIM card and I had not reported the loss of my mobile until the 27th).

Because most of my family contact me by text I had to phone around and confess my stupidity. All were concerned and supportive. Anne gave me the number to call the police and the Steve who took my details was sympathetic and gave me a record number which I was able to quote to the insurance company and Centro who provided me with a new travel card free of charge. The bus driver at Merry Hill refused to charge me when I explained why I did not have the fare. (I had changed one of my notes from the bank all ready).

Steve advised changing the lock on my front door because my key and address were in the bag. I was due to carry out a stint with the holy dusters at church on the Friday morning. I phoned another team member, Janet Beevers, to explain I would need to be in to see about the keys. I suggested that the team left a list of items for me to deal with during Open Church on Saturday. I was touched when, later in the morning, she called me to say that the job was finished because her husband Alec had gone in my place.

I called Stourbridge Windows early on Friday because they had fitted the door. Josh and his mate were with me quickly. They told me that the firm that supplied their locks had closed for the holiday but the boss had told them to take a lock from one of the doors in the showroom. (They were finishing that day for a fortnight so there would be plenty of time to put a fresh lock in the new door in 2013!) Over black coffee with two sugars and white with one we chatted in the kitchen. The job was done before the kettle boiled!

On Christmas Eve my son-in-law gave me an hour of his time, refusing payment for fuel, to take me to Kidderminster Hospital. I had lost the magnifier loaned by the ophthalmic department and they had agreed to have one waiting for me in reception. I enjoyed my time with Matthew, especially when he insisted he had been glad to help.. "One of the responsibilities of our relationship," he said with a smile, "and now I know where the hospital is in Kidderminster which I did not before."

Everyone, except the thief, has been wonderful. There are others I could mention: library staff, cafes who have provided fresh loyalty cards and kindly comments . Nobody has called me an idiot and I have been warmed by the concern and efficient help I have received.

Dorothy Gibson

IF

If you can keep the handbells ringing
When all around they cross and clash.
You can raise your game; so bringing
Well deserved success at last.

If you can lose and start again
When sequences are broken,
When focusing can wax and wane
And calls are left unspoken

If you can strive to be the master
To think ahead and set the aim
To meet with triumph and disaster
And treat them both just the same.

If you can think of holding on
And concentrate on winning
The pain will all be past and gone,
You're fit for a new beginning.

Pat Whalley
(apologies to RK)

This poem was written in celebration of the ringing of a quarter peel on the handbells, as reported in last month's issue. Congratulations to all involved. Many of us look forward to hearing the handbells rung in church in the near future.

CHOIR NEWS AT ST MARY'S

As promised in my previous news round-up, the successful awards candidates received their RSCM awards at the Annual Diocesan Festival held in November in the Cathedral. This was another rewarding event and the choir of St Mary's supported it well.

At the end of January the junior members, accompanied by some parents/chauffeurs, spent a few enjoyable hours at the bowling alley in Dudley. A great time was had and as always on these occasions, the adults were able to witness a side of the children they don't always see! Many thanks to all those who provided transport.

On Saturday 2 March, the choir will be visiting Tewkesbury Abbey to sing Evensong. It would be great to see members of the congregation there to support and worship with us. We will be rehearsing there from 3.00 pm but the service proper starts at 5.00 pm and will last a little under an hour. William Peart will be playing the fine Milton organ there and we have secured the help of a few extra voices in the form of former choristers, the Rector and his wife and people who have assisted us in the past.

Robin Walker
Organist and Director of Music

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE SOCIAL COMMITTEE

This month we highlight the activities of this dedicated group as they prepare for an evening event in the Church Hall to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

The Social Committee consists of seven members and hosts several annual events at St Mary's. At the Christmas Carol Service it provides a festive drink and seasonal cakes and mince pies. Harvest time is usually a Harvest Supper and the social events vary from Murder Mysteries and talks from outside agencies doing charity work in other countries to the ever popular barn dances with Eve and John.

A tradition started by Greville and Pauline some years ago is the summer picnic in the grounds of the Rectory. It has been continued enthusiastically by Stephen and Jean and last year we enjoyed a sunny afternoon in the garden. However this is one event when we can truly say "If wet in the Church Hall."

Biennially the Committee cook and serve an Agape meal on Maundy Thursday, with a slight difference this last time as Ruth had introduced a Seder meal, much in the tradition of the Jewish Passover.

Throughout the year the Committee is called upon to provide refreshments for a variety of Church groups and events. For example: when it is St Mary's turn to host the service for all Churchwardens in the parish; after the service for All Souls; Lent courses and parish breakfasts for Fairtrade amongst others.

Then there are leaving and welcoming parties, mainly for clergy, but also celebrations for long service to the Church. This is often when we ask people to bring and share food. We have always had a varied and generous response to these requests.

The Committee works well together to allocate which ingredients, drinks or accessories each will buy or bring from home; who will cook what and how to a) get it (usually) to the Church Hall and b) keep it hot when necessary. There are also all the other items needed, especially when providing food. Things such as tablecloths, cutlery, serviettes, serving dishes, salt and pepper, dishes and plates for the food, serving spoons, scissors, knives, pans, slow cookers, rice cookers etc. Having worked as a group for several, and in some cases many years, the Committee knows what needs to be done for whatever event and arrive an hour or more beforehand to get everything ready.

The Committee hopes that by the time you read this many of you will have enjoyed something we have not tried before, our Chinese New Year Party.

Sue Wakeley

Most readers will have enjoyed some of the varied functions which the Social Committee arrange during the year, and appreciated their work in arranging these events. Sue invited me to observe their activities as they prepared for the Chinese New Year Party.....

6.00 pm and the Committee is already busy in the Church Hall arranging tables and chairs for about fifty guests. An area is also being set up for creative craft activities with a Chinese theme. The ladies are busy in the kitchen preparing dishes for a three-course meal and slow cookers are emitting tempting oriental smells. White table cloths and red nappery are laid and soon the hall is magically transformed into a colourful, inviting restaurant. The Committee members seem to be perfectly coordinated in their tasks as plates for starters and sweets are laid out on serving tables. By 7.00 pm the finishing touches are being applied – josticks smoulder on the reception desk, candles are lit on the tables and chopsticks are laid at the place settings. The Committee is ready to welcome the arriving guests and to provide service for a most entertaining and enjoyable evening.

Alec Beevers

ST MARY'S MISSION GIVING

Mission Committee members braved snow and ice to attend January's committee meeting to discuss the allocation of St Mary's Mission funds. With thanks to the PCC for their annual donation of £1,750 for Mission giving, together with the funds remaining from our November coffee morning, we had £2,100 to distribute. We always ensure that there is something left in the bank for emergencies.

It was a pleasure to meet the Rev'd Canon Himily Lumambo in January when he was staying with Stephen and Jean as part of his visit to the Worcester Diocese from Morogoro, Tanzania and to discuss how, in some small way, we could offer help. He mentioned several areas needing support but felt that the problems faced by retiring Anglican clergy were a priority. They have no home of their own and no income when they retire. Himily explained that it was possible to make mud bricks to build a small dwelling to live in but there was no money to provide a roof. We have therefore made a donation so that much-needed corrugated sheeting can be purchased for them in Morogoro.

Our Mission giving from St Mary's was agreed as follows, with donations to:

Sasi and her son, Mark, in Sri Lanka	MAF (Mission Aviation Flying)
The Ifakara Bakery Project, Tanzania	Sight Savers International
The What? Centre, Stourbridge	No Limits, in the Coach House
Clover Leaf, in the Coach House	Top Church Training, Dudley
Mary Stevens Hospice, Stourbridge	The Food Bank.
Morogoro, Tanzania – roof covering for homes for retired Anglican priests	
St Basil's Home for the Homeless, Birmingham	
Cockleshell, Stourbridge (part of the Camp Hill Trust)	

There is always more we can do and therefore we are very grateful to everyone at St Mary's for their support for Mission Giving.

Pamela Scudamore
St Mary's Mission and Pastoral Committee

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

3 February James Henry Priest
Craig Dean Priest
Charles Andrew McAdam

Funerals

8 January	Patricia Taylor	Aged 75
9 January	Ann Davies	Aged 84
23 January	Dorothy Sewell	Aged 94
23 January	Annie Davis	Aged 65
24 January	Phyllis Wilkinson	Aged 82
28 January	Betty Blewitt	Aged 81
30 January	Florence Westwood	Aged 95
5 February	Kate Davies	Aged 90

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

On a bleak day twenty five members and four visitors reflected on the joys, refreshment and gave thanks during a service led by Brenda Selby and Janice Sutton for Pilgrimages and Holidays.

Mike Blaxland then gave an illustrated talk showing us the Land of the Midnight Sun. This was a summer cruise which he and Janet had taken along the Western coast of Norway, also travelling into the islands in the Arctic Circle. We enjoyed seeing the photographs of mountains, glaciers, fjords, interesting churches, villages and towns and were grateful they were safeguarded against any polar bear attack during their adventures.

For us, as we enter into Lent, which is a time of reflection, we can make the most of holy days and holidays as we journey towards Easter and springtime in God's care.

Dates for your diary:

- Thursday 28 February, 10.30 am, Mothers' Union Corporate Communion at St Mary's Church and blessing for the baptismal teddy bears.
- Friday 1 March, 10.30 am, at New Road Methodist Church, Women's World Day of Prayer.
- Tuesday 12 March, 2.00 pm, MU group visit to St Mark's Church, Pensnett.

Dawn Nex

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

In January I visited the Holy Land with two other bishops and several people from Christian Aid. We had been asked to go to visit some of the partners with whom Christian Aid works in the West Bank and Gaza. It was a privilege to be able to see the good work they are doing at first hand and offer moral support.

We were fortunate to obtain a permit to visit Gaza and it was our two days there which affected me most. After its people elected Hamas in 2008, Israel imposed a blockade. This has meant that very little has found its way into what is effectively a vast and miserable prison for 1.6 million people, other than through illegal tunnels from Egypt. The situation is pretty bleak but Christian Aid partners there like the Near East Council of Churches are doing wonderful work.

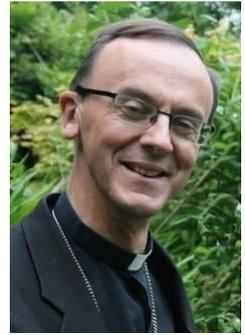
What was most heart rending was looking at the paintings of young people who were being counselled for trauma following last year's violence. They pictured the stark contrast between life now in Gaza and how they would like it to be. Their pictures of the present were dominated by bombs dropping and rockets firing - as they did in November - and those of the future by images of peace and happiness. The children spoke to us of what they wanted to do when they grew up: one wanted to be a doctor, another a teacher, another a lawyer - the ambition of all of them was to do something to help their fellow human beings in some way or other. It was moving to witness these poor children dreaming dreams. As they did so they articulated a vision of Kingdom values incarnated in that sorry place. They dreamed of a Gaza in which Kingdom values of love, compassion, justice and freedom prevailed - and they wanted so much to contribute to bringing it about.

What I am asking people to do this Lent is to dream dreams as did those children in Gaza. What would things be like in your life, in your church and in your community if Kingdom values were to prevail? What would be different? What would things look like? Can you imagine it? If you can imagine it, can you believe that it is just around the corner or, as Jesus put it, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand.' It is, you see, and our happy calling is to discern that fact and then to play our part in making it a reality.

When Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was at hand he wasn't expecting those listening to sit back and wait for it to appear. He was inviting them, as he is us, to work for it under God.

The children I met in Gaza had a vision of a better future under God. What is your vision and will you strive in God's strength to bring it about? Will you have hope, as they did? Will you be part of that change of which you dream, enabling the Kingdom values of love, compassion, justice and freedom, those Kingdom values that characterise the reign of God, to take root in your life, in your church, in your community and in our world?

May God bless you as you seek to become Kingdom people embodying Kingdom values.



Bishop John

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