

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD

**Parish Church Magazine
January 2014
Online edition**



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Parish Church Magazine



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JANUARY 2014

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 am and 11.00 am for Vestry Hour. You will be warmly welcomed. Tea and coffee will be available.

DIARY FOR JANUARY 2014

Thursday 2	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 4	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 5	THE EPIPHANY
	10.00 am Farewell Service for Revd Ruth Atkinson
	3.00 pm Baptisms
	4.00 pm Licencing of the Revd Nikki Groarke as the new Archdeacon of Dudley at St Thomas's Church, Stourbridge
Tuesday 7	Holy Communion at Hollycroft
Thursday 9	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 11	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 12	FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
Thursday 16	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 18	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 19	SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
Thursday 23	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 25	9.30 am St Mary's Walking Group
	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 26	THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
Tuesday 28	2.30-4.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Narthex
Wednesday 29	Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Thursday 30	10.30 am Holy Communion

NEW BISHOP OF DUDLEY

On 12 December it was announced that the Revd Canon Graham Usher will become the next Bishop of Dudley. Graham Usher was ordained in 1996 and is currently Rector and Lecturer of Hexham Abbey in the Diocese of Newcastle. Prior to this he worked in inner city Teesside and has also spent time living and working in Ghana, Africa.

The Bishop of Worcester, the Rt Revd Dr John Inge, said, "I am delighted about this appointment. He is an exceptionally able priest who, though relatively young to become a bishop, has considerable ministerial experience, both rural and urban..... This is a very exciting appointment and I look forward greatly to working with Graham for the good of the people of this Diocese of Worcester."

RICHARD HARRIS

It is with great sadness we record the death on 7 December of Richard Harris. Richard served as Treasurer to the PCC for 48 years until his retirement in April 2012 and subsequent move to a smaller home at Priory Court. Richard had always been a very strong supporter of St Mary's and the wider church, a wealth of knowledge, a wise counsel and a good friend. He will be remembered with great fondness and his life celebrated for the richness it provided to so many.

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

Janus was the Roman God of beginnings, he was also the God of transactions and of endings. He was portrayed as having two faces, one which looked backwards and one which looked forwards. He it is whose name is remembered in our first month of the calendar year, and it is a most suitable image to think about in January as we do look back to the year that has just passed with all its successes and failures, and also look forward to the year that is to come.

Of course as we look in these two directions we look from rather different perspectives. There is great certainty as we look back over the year just passed, we know the things that have gone well and the things that have gone badly, we know the feelings of jubilation as we have succeeded and the feelings of sadness when things have not gone to plan.

However, when we look forward there is no such certainty. None of us knows what the future will hold for us, and I always feel that this is a good thing, as if we knew what we had to face we might well be paralysed by fear and be unable to confront it. Instead we look forward through a mist of uncertainty: 'What will this year hold for us?' The answer is that we just don't know.

Will this year be the year when we start on a new relationship, or will it be a year when an established relationship breaks down for some reason? Will it be a year for a new job or role in life, or will it be a year when what has become familiar to us ceases to be? In other words will it be a year of beginnings or endings, will its aspect be positive or negative? We greet each of these possibilities with a mix of hope and fear.

As we express these uncertainties in the context of our faith we may read in the Bible of other people of faith down the years who have likewise looked forward with trepidation and expectation. The great prophets of the Old Testament were uncertain of what was to happen to them and their country, and as it relates in the letter to the Hebrews they looked forward to the time when they would receive God's promise, not knowing when that would be.

We too, should have faith in God, and when we face uncertainty about the future we should trust that God is the God of the past, the present and the future. When we go forward in faith we can trust that what will happen in the future is in God's hands and that ultimately God's will is done, even though at times we cannot see where that will is leading us.

So I urge you in this New Year to commit the year to God with all its uncertainties and to trust God, as people of faith have trusted him down the ages.

“The One who calls you is faithful.” 1 Thessalonians 5: 24

With best wishes and the hope of God’s blessing for the year ahead.

Stephen Agnew

SERVICES IN JANUARY 2014

5 January The Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 60. 1-6	Ephesians 3. 1-12	Matthew 2. 1-12
	6.30 pm Evensong	Isaiah 49. 1-13	John 4. 7-26	
12 January First after Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am	WORSHIP TOGETHER		
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	Joshua 3. 1-8, 14-end	Hebrews1. 1-12	
19 January Second after Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 49. 1-7	Corinthians 1. 1-9	John 1. 29-42
	6.30 pm Evensong	Ezekiel 2:1-3:4	Galatians 1. 11-end	
26 January Third after Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 9. 1-41	Corinthians1. 10-18	Matthew 4. 12-23
	6.30 pm Evensong	Ecclesiastes 3. 1-11	1 Peter 1. 3-12	

THANK YOU RUTH

Ruth Atkinson came to Oldswinford in 2009 when many parishioners celebrated with her at her service of ordination in Worcester Cathedral on 4 July. At that service, the address was based on the passage in St John's Gospel which describes how Jesus washed the feet of His disciples at The Last Supper, an example of the giving and acceptance of service to which all of us should aspire.



Now, as we bid our thank you and 'God Speed' to Ruth we are able to reflect on how Ruth has served us and how she has contributed so much to St Mary's, to the Oldswinford community and to so many individuals and families through her ministry in Stourbridge.

Ruth has played her part in full measure, gaining much during her curacy from the guidance and examples of Greville and Stephen and giving generously in her care, love and concern for those for whom she has been able to minister.

The year of interregnum was an opportunity and challenge that Ruth rose to with great presence. Her leadership during those difficult months of uncertainty provided a much needed sense of security and purpose and a constant reminder of the need for us all to place our trust in our faith and in our prayers.

So many people have had their lives touched for the better through knowing Ruth and many hold personal appreciation of how she has supported at times of great challenge. Her ministry has brought happiness at weddings, great joy at Baptisms, comfort at funerals and reassurance in daily contact and worship. Through her much valued work at the Hospice, local retirement homes, schools, the Coach House, the development of the 'Anchor Bereavement' and 'Children Together' groups Ruth has inspired, encouraged and supported in a way that has earned our respect, admiration and affection.

On behalf of all who have been blessed by her presence and prayers, thank you Ruth for all you have done for us all over the past four and a half years.

The Churchwardens

WELCOME ALL

The 10.00 am service on 5 January will be a special occasion when we shall say thank you and farewell to Revd Ruth Atkinson. The service will be followed with a Bring and Share lunch in the Church Hall 12.00 noon – 1.30 pm. This is being coordinated by Sue Wakeley and the Social Committee. There is a list at the back of church for people to sign and indicate a savoury or a sweet donation. Wine, soft drinks and tea/coffee will be provided.

For those not wishing to return home before the lunch the Church Hall will be open from 11.30 am.

NEW CLOCK MECHANISM

Every day people pass by St Mary's and glance up to the top of the tower to check the time as they hasten on in their busy lives. For many who live in the locality the familiar sound of the clock chiming the hours as the day passes provides a reassurance that all is well until.....the clock goes wrong!

Our tower clock has been faithfully and meticulously cared for by Ray Drew for the past ten years as he has undertaken a range of invaluable roles associated with any challenging task, preferably, it would seem, ones that are at least ten feet above the ground. Despite all the care given by Ray and others over the years, time and wear had taken its toll on the mechanism and in September the clock stopped. For weeks it remained an unreliable timepiece, uncomfortably out of place where it had indicated the passing of time for years. During these weeks Ray and others were identifying the cause of the problems and the possible solutions. Time stood still.



The root of the problems lay in old age.....of the mechanism, not the carer! The gears and bearings were worn out and no simple repair would resolve the issue. With the advice and assistance of professionals in the field, something which never comes cheaply, the installation of a new mechanism was identified as the only way forward. At the same time the option was made available to considerably reduce the need for those precarious climbs into the tower by the installation of a new facility that would ensure the clock displays the right time when it restarts after those occasions when the mechanism stops due to a break in the power supply and also when the hour changes in March and October.

The work was carried out in early November since when the clock has kept time once again to the relief of many and the satisfaction of those who regard the tower clock as an asset to be cherished.

Tony Tatford

MOVING ON

Many will want to share in the recognition of the contributions made by Dorothy Gibson to the local community and to send best wishes to her as she has moved to live in Kinver.

Dorothy has been a very highly respected and much loved member of the St Mary's community for many, many years and a loyal servant of the Oldswinford area. Dorothy hopes to maintain some of her links with St Mary's and has clear plans for future ventures by bus into Stourbridge.

We wish Dorothy peace and contentment in her new home, thank her for her friendship and look forward to maintaining contact in Kinver and here at St Mary's.

BISHOP'S CERTIFICATE 2012-13

In September 2012 nine members of St Mary's congregation along with four from other parts of the Deanery began their journey of discovery through the Bishop's Certificate led by Revd Stephen Agnew and Revd Ruth Atkinson. Our first meeting was in the Narthex and as we met together for the first time we had to explain why we were interested in the course. For many it was the exploration of their faith to gain a greater understanding.

The course covered three areas; the major themes of the Old Testament looking at the Creation, Abraham, Moses, The Passover and the Psalms to name but a few topics; our understanding of Jesus, during which we studied the Gospels and looked at Baptism, prayer and the Eucharist; and our membership of the Church and our Christian calling and living. This involved studying Ephesians, Pentecost, The Trinity and different faiths. Towards the end of the first term we had a Jewish Seder meal in the dining room of the Rectory and it was really interesting to note the links between this and parts of our Eucharist. In the spring term we visited a synagogue in Birmingham and were treated to an insight into the Jewish faith. The year ended with us reflecting where we were at the start of the course and where it would now lead us as we went into the future. For some this was moving on to do a Lay Reader course, for others now was a time to pause and reflect where they might go, but for all there was a desire to continue to study more in one way or another.

Throughout the course we had been encouraged to keep anything that we had felt relevant to our development during the year. We were told a good way to limit this collection was to collect it in a shoe box, that way we would not have a huge amount to store. For some this 'shoe box' caused a great deal of angst and it was with some trepidation that we met for our final evening to present our 'shoe boxes' to the rest of the group. However, we need not have worried, it was a truly inspiring evening with everyone now feeling very comfortable with their colleagues and so being able to share some very moving and personal details of what the course had meant to them.

The week after these presentations Kanthi Ariaraj invited us all to supper at her home, where we had a really wonderful evening together sharing delicious food, memories of the past year and lots of laughter. We also presented Stephen and Ruth with gifts to say thank you for their leadership throughout the course.



On Wednesday 13 November 2013 all those who had taken part in the Bishop's Certificate in other Deaneries in the Diocese were invited to a service in the Chapter House of Worcester Cathedral to receive their certificates. The Chapter House was warm and inviting with under-floor heating, candles lit in alternate arches around the room and a glass of wine. The service was led by Revd Robert Jones and took the form of compline. Tutors from each Deanery introduced their students to Bishop Christopher Mayfield as he presented the certificates. It was a very special, uplifting and moving service. Congratulations to all the candidates from St Mary's.



Sally Frost

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

As we publish our first issue for 2014 we look forward to bringing you the monthly news from St Mary's, reports from the parish and regular features during the coming year. We are always pleased to receive contributions from readers for inclusion in the magazine at any time.

The magazine is available in the Narthex from the last Sunday of the preceding month and the cost is still 50p per month. The annual subscription rate is £5.00 (for 11 issues) with free delivery within the parish and distributors will be collecting the subscriptions for 2014 during January / February. The postal subscription is now £10.00 per year.

The magazine can also be accessed on-line through the church's website at www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk under "Parish Magazine" on the top menu. The on-line subscription is also £5.00 and can be arranged through John Sutton, the Administrator, in the Parish Office. Archived copies (older than six months) are freely available on-line.

We thank our sponsors for their continuing support of the magazine and hope you enjoy our monthly publication.

The Magazine Committee

BISHOP'S CERTIFICATE

A new Bishop's Certificate course will be starting on Monday 6 January 2014 at 7:30 pm in the Church Office, Belbroughton. Tutors will be Pauline Jones with the Revd Diane Cooksey and Linda Kitto. Revd Paul Harrison to assist.

FLYING THE FLAG AT ST MARY'S

We have two flags which we fly from the flagpole at the top of St Mary's tower, the Flag of St George and the Union Flag.

The St George's flag can be just plain, or more elaborate by adding to the flag the escutcheon of the diocese, or in our case the escutcheon of St Mary's in the top corner nearest to the flagpole. The flag has a wooden toggle at the top to attach to the loop in the halyard on the flagpole, whilst at the bottom there is just a simple rope end to tie off to the bottom clamp on the halyard.



The Union Flag is standard, with the same fixing as above, this ensures that it is flown the correct way up. The broader (wider) diagonal white stripe should be at the top on the side of the flag nearest the flagpole,



Correct



Wrong

Which flag and when it is flown?

The Earl Marshal gave directions in 1938 stating that the flag of St George should be flown upon any church in the provinces of York and Canterbury, although it is not compulsory for the flag to be flown.

Churches may also, if they so wish, fly the Union Flag on the same days as it is flown from Government and other public buildings.

Generally at St Mary's the St George's flag is flown at the time of religious festivals and the Union flag is flown at the time of special civil occasions.

The flag is raised usually the day before the due date and stays there for the duration of the "festival".

On the next page are the times when each of the flags is flown at St Mary's commencing with Christmas day.

In addition to these dates it is normal to raise the Flag of St George when there is a special local event such as Confirmation or the licensing of a new Incumbent.

I hope this small insight into “**Flying the Flag at St Mary’s**” will help you to understand why these emotive symbols are a very British way of expressing joy and pride.

On a lighter side you may wish to try a new game “Spot the upside down Union Flag.” You may be surprised how many there are.

Ray Drew

DATE	OCCASION	PRIME FLAG
25 December	Christmas until Epiphany	St George
6 February	Her Majesty’s accession	Union Flag
March/April	Easter Sunday and the following 7 days	St George
21 April	Queen’s Birthday	Union Flag
23 April	St George’s Day	St George
May	Ascension Day	St George
May/June	Pentecost	St George
May/June	Trinity Sunday	St George
As appropriate	HM The Queen’s Official Birthday	Union Flag
3rd Sunday in September	Battle of Britain	Union Flag
21 October	Trafalgar Day	Union Flag
2nd Sunday in November	Remembrance Sunday*	Union Flag
11 November	Remembrance Day*	Union Flag
25 December	Christmas until Epiphany	St George

** Note The 2nd Sunday can be before or after the 11 November therefore the flag is raised for the first day to appear and taken down the weekend following the last to appear.*

IN APPRECIATION

As this edition is put on sale our clergy in particular and many more besides will be trying to relax a little after a very busy Christmas schedule. To everyone who has contributed in whatever way to the celebration of Christmas at St Mary’s, thank you for your generous gift of time, care and expertise. For regular worshippers and visitors alike the combination of quality music, song, reading and prayer has enhanced the season and contributed much to the celebration of Christ’s birthday.

CHILDREN'S PAGE

EPIPHANY



Also known as Three Kings' Day, celebrates the visit of the 3 wise men.

"Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star as it arose, and we have come to worship him.' " --

Matthew 2:1-2

The birth of Jesus showed what God considers important. He chose a young faithful woman, and a man who was willing to believe and act when God asked him to. He chose for Jesus to be born in a stable in very humble circumstances, perhaps surrounded by beasts of service. He chose shepherds out in the fields to be the first to know about the birth of the Saviour of the world. God values faith and trust in Him, not the riches of the world and wisdom of man.

- 1. Why were Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem?**
- 2. What did the shepherds see in the sky?**
- 3. What were the wise men doing in Jerusalem?**



CRAFT CORNER

Draw a picture of the angels singing using white crayon. Paint over it with slightly watered down black or blue paint. When dry, add some glitter for stars.

Make a beaded star: (2 pipe cleaners, sparkling beads, fishing line)

Cut pipe cleaners in half. Holding 3, twist together in centre. Spread apart to make star shape. Thread on beads and fold over ends.





The Wise Men probably travelled on camels or walked alongside the camels to give them a rest.

What would it be like if such people had to visit a new-born king in these days? Who might they be? How would they travel? Where would this king be? What gifts might they bring?

Try writing your own story of Three Wise Men. If you want to send it to the editor, with you name and address or a telephone number (please ask Mum or Dad first) the magazine committee will find an award for every entry.

The following words are hidden in this grid. Can you find them?
AFTER, BRING, CHIEF, COUNTRY, DEPARTED, EAST, FEAR, FRANKINCENSE, GIFTS, GOLD, HEROD, ISRAEL, JESUS, KING, MAGI, MARY, MYRRH, PACT, RETURN, SEARCH, SHEPHERDS, STAR, WARNED, WAY, WISE.

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

SOUNDING BOARD CARER'S SUPPORT GROUP

Supporting Carers and their Families in the Community

I recently attended a workshop run by the Community care project in Brierley Hill and part of the session involved talking about how we can advertise our particular groups to those people who may require our help and assistance. I realised that one of the ways in which I could advertise our existence was to put a piece in the church magazine.

Some of you may be aware that I have two daughters, the youngest of whom (Pippa) is Autistic and has a Mild Learning Disability. About three years ago I felt I needed to talk to other people in a similar position to myself and at this point realised that there were very few Carers Support Groups in the Stourbridge area. At first I thought that perhaps nobody else needed any support! I began to feel a bit of a wimp; as I already felt that I wasn't really a true carer for Pippa as helping my own daughter seemed to be just part of the job as it were. According to Social Services, the Dudley Carers Co-ordinator and various other professionals this is a very common misconception. People such as myself are euphemistically termed 'hidden carers' and apparently there are a lot of us out there. Fortunately God knows all about us and He came to my rescue in the form of the above mentioned support group run by Di and Basil de Souza. It had only recently been set up when I joined the group and due to my administration skills I got onto the committee of Sounding Board as secretary (actually nobody else wanted the job!).

The group consists of approximately twenty members and we meet on the first Tuesday of each month in the Coach House in Rectory Road, Oldswinford, for refreshments and a chat. We exchange information and ideas and some months we arrange for speakers to come to the meetings. These have included our local MP, a benefits advisor, a job coach and, more recently, a local solicitor. We also have various social events, including a Christmas lunch and, in conjunction with Dudley Carers Forum, we have been to the theatre and on day trips to such places as Chester Zoo and the Severn Valley Railway. The latest event for our members is a Pamper Day at the Coach House which we have managed to organise with the assistance of Bethel's very own Sue Sturdy! We have also been involved in running both the Summer and the Christmas Fayres at the Coach House, together with other groups who meet there including Clover Leaf (a Community Group giving choice to adults with learning disabilities) and No Limits Community Project (for adults on the Autistic Spectrum Disorder), of which Pippa is a member.

I have personally found the support group a great source of encouragement, inspiration and information, as well as making some really great friends from many different walks of life who care for a wide range of friends and families with varying disabilities. If you or someone you know is a carer and would like to join our group please contact me on my mobile on 07792 124270 or Di and Basil on 01384 374752. Alternatively, just pop along to one of our meetings on the first Tuesday of the month, any time between 1.00 pm and 3.30 pm. We would love to meet you!

Shirley Williams

FOCACCIA BREAD FROM HOLLAND HOUSE

Those who visited Holland House recently very much enjoyed the Focaccia bread that was served with lunch. By chance, the recipe for this popular item was printed in the Holland House newssheet and is copied here for all to enjoy.

Makes 1 Loaf

Pre heat oven to 250c gas mark 10

Ingredients

500g Strong white flour
5g Powdered dried yeast
10g Fine salt
325ml Warm water
1tbsp Olive oil

To Finish

Generous drizzle of olive oil
Sprinkle of flaky sea salt
Rosemary leaves finely chopped



Mix the flour, yeast, salt and water in a bowl to form a sticky dough. Add the oil and mix it in, then turn the dough out on to a clean working surface. Knead until smooth and silky, about 10 minutes.

Shape the dough into a round and coat with a little extra oil. Leave to rise in a clean bowl covered by a plastic bag. When doubled in size, shape into a rectangle and place in a lightly oiled shallow baking tray.

Press the dough into the corners with your finger, cover and leave to rise for a further 30 minutes.

Make finger holes over the bread drizzle with oil and sprinkle with salt and rosemary. Bake at 250C, gas mark 8 for 10 minutes then turn down 200C, gas mark 6 for a further 10 minutes. Turn out on to rack to cool serve warm or cold.

EUCCHARISTIC ASSISTANTS MEET IN HAGLEY

During the evening of Thursday 12 December, Eucharist Assistants from many churches in the Deanery met at St John the Baptist Church, Hagley, where, at a service of Holy Communion, Assistants were invited to re-affirm their commitment to this important and privileged role.

This was a special occasion as it was one of the first Deanery events to be Presided over by Revd Paul Harrison, the newly appointed Rural Dean for the Deanery of Stourbridge and provided an opportunity for many to meet him and to share in his direction of this annual service.

Eucharistic Assistants are licensed by the Bishop for a period of five years and attend a service of re-affirmation each year after which the licensing certificates are signed in confirmation of permission to assist at the administration of Holy Communion for the coming year. As many of the St Mary's Eucharistic Assistants have only recently had their five year licences re-issued our representation at this service was a small one, but one much supported by Stephen and Ruth.

CHRISTMAS MARKET RESULTS

The Christmas Market started earlier than usual as a wedding was booked for lunchtime but, even so, got off to a cracking start. Revd Stephen Agnew performed the opening ceremony, thanking everyone for all the work they had put into preparations and providing such an interesting selection of stalls. He also thanked the many people queuing for coming to support our Market whose profits go to support the work of St Mary's church and its mission. Father Christmas was soon with us and several children were able to visit him in his specially decorated grotto. All the stalls proved very popular as were the delicious homemade mince pies and coffee. The event was very successful in bringing together the many communities of church and parish. And I would like to thank everyone – both those who were hard at work and all who came to support us. The stalls raised:-

Books	46.75	Brought forward	848.45
Bottle Stall	74.10	Jewellery	502.40
Cake Stall	190.50	Jigsaws	57.30
China	36.00	Outreach	80.00
Christmas Hamper Raffle	138.00	Plants and Decorations	113.94
Donations	95.00	Refreshments	113.90
Entrance Fees	163.00	Soft Toys	115.17
Father Christmas	18.00	Tombola	125.70
Gifts	87.10	Treasure Island	31.00
Carry Forward	<u>£848.45</u>	White Elephant	113.40
		Youth Group Games	<u>34.85</u>
		Total	£2,136.11

Katey Fletcher

CHOIR NEWS

As I write this short article, the choir has recently completed one of its major regular annual services. The Advent Carol service carries with it a marvellous sense of anticipation and I hope we managed to succeed, in the music and readings, to prepare you for the big event which follows! Practices are currently devoted entirely to the music for the Christmas Carol service and the Midnight service.

A few months ago in a Summer article, I wrote a plea for more tenors. I am delighted to say that barely had the June magazine gone to print than William Croft (treble - Lily's brother) joined and supports Freddie Apperley admirably. Since the Summer holidays the choir has welcomed Bob Bowen, another tenor, who has recently retired to this area. We welcomed them both warmly.

Two of our newest recruits, Isaac Scott-Bowdler and Abigail Wragg have recently completed the first of the RSCM workbooks and as a result have received their surplices. Congratulations to them both. Two more probationers are in the wings for the same award.

Robin Walker
Organist and Choirmaster

PLANS FOR OUR YOUTH WORK

The support and encouragement of work at St Mary's which focuses on provisions for the younger members of our community is a key target and aspect for development. A generous bequest, specifically to benefit the people of the parish, in memory of the late Canon Lewis Davies and his wife Kate has provided a fund of resources which is to be used to promote this work. Recently, the team of leaders involved with the Friday evening Youth Club met with Revd Stephen Agnew and Dr Sarah Brush (Diocesan Youth Adviser) to discuss ways in which this work could be promoted and extended with the help available from this financial gift.

There was general support to develop this provision but concern around the lack of sufficient leaders.

As a starting point it was agreed to:

- Publicise youth work throughout church and the parish with special events.
- Establish a noticeboard in church featuring youth leaders.
- Seek additional leaders and helpers to join a flexible 'leader' rota.
- Offer training for new and established leaders.

Once more leaders are available the possibility of extending provision for secondary age young people will be reconsidered. Funding may provide for a sessional worker, equipment and the establishment of a suitable environment for such a youth club.

The timescale envisaged is for development to take place during Spring/Summer 2014 in anticipation of implementation for September 2014.

If you can help or know someone who may be able to help please make these details known to Stephen Agnew, Russ Fowler or any member of the Youth Club team.

LOCAL ETHICAL TRADING

Vines Stourbridge is a Christian social enterprise business operated and managed by Vine Social Enterprises in partnership with Living Springs.

The restaurant is located on the High Street on the site previously occupied by Christian Charity, The Well Trust for over 20 years and the site has undergone a major refurbishment to modernise the facilities for the current high street market.

The restaurant exists to provide training and employment for some of the most hard to help unemployed young people from the areas surrounding Stourbridge Town Centre. The model for the business has been in operation for a number of years at Vines Walsall and offers skilled apprenticeships and training opportunities for young people to start out on their career in the catering and hospitality sector.

Open Monday - Saturday from 8.30am - 5.00pm Vines offers freshly cooked breakfasts, lunches and afternoon teas and serves fair-trade tea and coffees in all the forms you would come to expect from a modern food outlet. As a not-for-profit business our prices are kept as keen as possible to ensure that we can appeal to shoppers and diners in the town centre and with a wide range of dishes including home-made soups, gourmet burgers, savoury crepes and classic daytime meals.

We would love to have the support of the churches in making this a great success as we continue to build God's Kingdom in Stourbridge and touch the lives of our young people in a real practical and lasting way.

For more information please contact Gary Watson on 07958 690057 or email gary.watson@thevinetrust.co.uk

OLDSWINFORD IS A FAIRTRADE SCHOOL!!!!

In November Oldswinford pupils learnt that their school had been successful in achieving Fairtrade status. The school have had to complete five goals which show a commitment to Fairtrade, including setting up a Fairtrade steering group, adopting a Fairtrade policy and committing to using Fairtrade products in the school for meetings, in cookery classes, PTA fayres. They have also been learning about Fairtrade across the school and taking action for Fairtrade with school and community events at least once a term.

Evidence of action - photos, articles, newsletters, posters, paintings, collages undertaken by the children - had to be submitted to the Foundation website to support the application. The process started in October 2011 so it has taken two years of hard work with the children, Foundation stage teachers, interested Governors and some very supportive parents to achieve the status. In order to mark the school's success the Stourbridge Fairtrade Town group arranged for a certificate to be presented to the school, by the Mayor, at the Dudley Council House, on Monday 2 December.

Seven children from the school's Fairtrade steering group, along with the



head, deputy head, parents and a governor representative went to the Council House and initially met Councillor Lowe, who was tabling a motion on Fairtrade at the council meeting that evening. He praised the children for their hard work and posed for pictures with them. The children then went into the council chamber and received the certificate from the Mayor, Cllr Alan Finch at the start of the council meeting.

A further visit to the Council House for a tour will be arranged early next year as there was not time that night. The children are also planning a Fairtrade day to celebrate in school during the 2014 Fairtrade fortnight.

It was also a lovely surprise to find that the Mayor's Chaplain, who led prayers at the start of the meeting was The Revd Judith Oliver, who was a curate at St Mary's a few years ago.

Maggie Abbotts

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

Christmas celebrations at the Coach House were enjoyed by twenty members and three guests. Stephen Agnew joined us for the occasion and entertained us by playing his guitar and singing Silent Night, Holy Night in German. Poetry readings and congregational carols were sung and were followed by splendid refreshments served by the committee.

Dorothy Gibson, a long standing member, has taken up residence in Kinver and we sent greetings to her and other MU groups and officials.

We welcomed back Margaret Ager from America as she now settles back in Stourbridge and rejoins our group.

All our members wish you a very happy and blessed New Year 2014. You are all welcome to join our activities in the coming year.

Dates for your diary:

Next meeting – Tuesday 14 January, 2.15 pm, in the Coach House – Members afternoon and AGM

Tuesday 11 February, 2.15 pm. "The Marriage Game" speaker Jean Swift.

Dawn Nex

STANLEY SPENCER'S PICTURE OF ST FRANCIS

You have broken all the rules!
You must think of us as fools!
We have to make it very clear
You cannot leave your picture here!
How dare you clothe the holy man
In slippers feet and dressing gown!
Best attired in flowing robes than
Garbed in costumes of a clown.
And why is he so very tall?
With head and arms above the wall.
He should be saint-like, slight and straight
Not grossly fat and overweight.
His hands, which should be clasped in prayer
Of godly, contemplative joy,
Are flung flat-parallel in the air
Disturbing face of girl and boy.

But all around him birds peck safely in the dust
They gaze on him with open faith and trust.
Chickens chatter, pigeons coo.
His feathered followers congregate, and wait
To listen to the word of God.

Pat Whalley
25-04-12

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

A MODERN FRUITCAKE

I thought this would be a good time to use up all the left-over Christmas dried fruit.

This cake is an update on the old fashioned light fruitcake. I have used some of the more up to date dried fruit that is readily available in the shops today. Feel free to ring the changes yourself or just use mixed dried fruit.

40g dried cranberries
100g dried berries and cherries
100g raisin and apricot mix
100g butter
100g caster sugar
2 large eggs
175g Self Raising flour
1 rounded Tablespoon of marmalade or apricot jam
A little Demerara sugar for sprinkling over the top

Pre-heat oven 160C/140 fan/gas 3. Grease and line a 2 lb loaf tin.

Cream together the butter and sugar until light and creamy (I use the food processor). Add the eggs, flour and marmalade and quickly process.

Mix in all the dried fruit, put into the prepared tin and sprinkle over the Demerara sugar.

Bake for 1 hour 10 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then complete cooling on a wire rack.

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE.....

Left-over fruits? Yes, we probably all have some. Left-over wine: I hope not! Sherry and Port will soon deteriorate too. Indeed, your bottle of Madeira is really the only one which will reward a return visit long after opening.....unless of course you received a wine preserver device for Christmas!

So often I look to a Vin Santo to accompany cakes. But with an abundance of fruits and a lighter style of cake, let's cast our net wider in the world of dessert wines. Bright tangy citrus fruits might call for a sweet Riesling or Semillon. However, with a range of yellow and red fruits at our disposal, we would be best advised selecting something with broader fruit flavours. Botrytized wines gain an extra layer of complexity from the effects of dry rot: Sauternes, Tokaji Aszu, Barsac all display these qualitiesat a price! Inexpensive examples can be found - probably younger wines which somehow feel 'second-best'.

A Muscat would offer a perfectly good, modestly-priced wine for our left-over fruit cake. Those produced in hotter regions hit just the right note: not too fresh and light but distinctly fruited and suitably intense for a fruit cake. Several options here: Samos (Greece), Pantelleria (Italy) or the Southern France Muscats of Frontignan and St Jean de Minervois. The Sardinian Nasco (related to Muscat) also scores well. Whichever you choose, the general advice is start the New Year with the warmth of the Med.....oooh, yes please !
.....Enjoy your wine-sipping.

Richard W. B. Ryan

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP

Buckpool and Fens Pool Nature Reserve

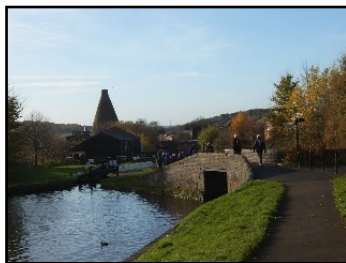
A bright sunny mild day saw eleven walkers on the November walk, which commenced at The Glassworks Pub in Audnam. A short walk up the hill took us onto the canal that we then followed in an easterly direction. At the first opportunity we dropped down into the Buckpool Nature reserve and followed the pools. The path brought us up onto the Leys, an open grassland area, which we crossed onto a footpath at the rear of some houses. After crossing the old freight railway line, only part of which is now in situ, we walked across a grassy area to Footshole Pool. The footpath followed the side of the lake, with the fence of Dell Stadium on our left, towards the canal. Following the canal brought us to the Pensnett Road which we crossed to gain access to the Fens Pool area.



The pools in the nature reserve have one of the country's best amphibian bio-diversity: this is because the land is not

farmed. Therefore there is no fertilizer run-off although ponies are tethered. Some of us were lucky enough to see Great Crested Grebes and there were plenty of other water birds to see.

We left the reserve to walk down Stourbridge Road past Wickes and Aldi to re-enter at The Wallows. A short walk brought us back to our coffee break spot and then our steps were retraced to the canal which we followed back to The Cone. Then down the road to the pub and lunch, where partners of two walkers joined us.



It was estimated the walk was between six and seven miles.

Sue Solley

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

17 November	Dotty Anita Cox Georgia Rae Dawson
1 December	Ava Lily Harris Rosalie Lily Orme

Weddings

7 December	Ross Collins and Leila Parry
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Funerals

4 December	Barbara Ellen Freeston	aged 92
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CHRISTIAN AID 2013 CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Christian Aid is focusing on Palestine and asking us to donate this Christmas to help rebuild lives devastated by past conflicts and present tensions. Christian Aid is working with the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) and supporting its life changing work. Christian Aid seeks a just peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Right now, more than half of Gaza's population is unable to grow or purchase enough food for their families. And those living closest to the barrier that separates the Gaza Strip from Israel are among the poorest and most vulnerable of all.

With your help, Christian Aid's partner agency, PARC, can provide more local families with goats, sheep, chickens and the means to care for their livestock. We have the chance to play our part in this life-saving, life-changing work this Christmas.

£6.00 could buy 3 olive saplings and give a family fruit and oil to sell at market.

£12 could provide 2 chickens and give a vulnerable family plenty of eggs.

To donate go to christianaid.org and enter 'Christmas Appeal in the search engine or call 020 7523 2225

Letter from Bishop John

The new year is a time for new beginnings and this new year is very much marked by new beginnings in the Diocese of Worcester. At 4.00pm on 5 January the Revd Nikki Groarke will be licensed as the new Archdeacon of Dudley at Evensong at St Thomas's Church, Stourbridge; she will be installed as an Honorary Canon of the Cathedral at Evensong two weeks later - 19 January, St Wulfstan's Day.



Nikki comes to us from London where she was Vicar of St. Stephen's Church in Canonbury, Islington. It is a vibrant inner-city church with two large social action projects supporting marginalised adults and young people. She grew up in Worcestershire, and was a pupil at Flyford Flavell Primary and Pershore High schools. Then, after gaining a degree in modern languages, she worked as a Marketing Manager in the publishing industry in Oxford for ten years, and as the Bereavement Service Co-ordinator for an Oxford hospice. She has been involved in training and development of clergy in various diocesan roles, and has worked with the mission organisation CPAS and New Wine network of churches.

As I said when her appointment was announced, Nikki is an exceptionally gifted priest with a wealth of experience both within and beyond the church. She has the added advantage of having grown up in this part of the world and this is, in a sense, a homecoming.

By the time you read this an announcement will also have been made from Downing St about a new Bishop of Dudley. I can't reveal his identity at present - it might be considered an act of High Treason. However, I can say that I am equally delighted about this appointment. He will be consecrated Bishop at St Paul's Cathedral on the Feast of the Annunciation, 25 March, and be formally welcomed into the Diocese at a service at St Thomas's Dudley at 4.00pm on Saturday 3 May. He will be installed as an Honorary Canon in the Cathedral at Evensong the following day, Sunday 4 May at 4.00pm.

These appointments come as a relief to me personally as life is more than usually demanding without either a Bishop or Archdeacon of Dudley. I might add that I am very grateful to all those, particularly the Archdeacon of Worcester and the Assistant Bishops of the Diocese, for helping with an exceptional burden during these vacancies.

However, these appointments are not just a relief, they are exciting. I believe that God has called two exceptionally gifted people to this Diocese in order to help us to fulfil our vocation to become Kingdom People. The Kingdom People Vision which we are now embracing is another new beginning and it is a crucial one. Formulated after extensive consultation it seeks to enable us to become people whose every breath and action proclaim the Kingdom of God where Kingdom values of love, compassion, justice and freedom reign. I look forward greatly to working with the new Archdeacon and Bishop - and with all of you - to see that vision realised so that we may see what we pray for, that God's Kingdom would come here on earth as it is in heaven.

Bishop John

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