

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD

**Parish Church Magazine
Online edition March 2014**



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Parish Church Magazine



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MARCH 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 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
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	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.

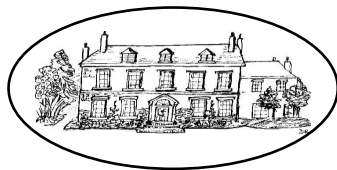
DIARY FOR MARCH 2014

Saturday 1	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 10.30 am-4.00 pm Marriage Preparation Day
SUNDAY 2	SUNDAY BEFORE LENT 9.00 am Fairtrade Breakfast in the Church Hall Open the Book team at Old Swinford Primary School 7.30 pm Standing Committee
Monday 3	7.30 pm Ash Wednesday Service
Wednesday 5	10.30 am Holy Communion
Thursday 6	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
Saturday 8	FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT - WORSHIP TOGETHER Paul Harrison, Rural Dean visiting 10.00 am service
SUNDAY 9	Copy date for April magazine
Monday 10	Holy Communion at Hollycroft
Tuesday 11	2.15 pm Mothers' Union meet at the Coach House
Thursday 13	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 15	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 10.30 am Book Launch—Roy Peacock 7.30 pm Charity Concert at Worcester Cathedral
SUNDAY 16	SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT Vicki Groarke, Archdeacon, visiting 10.00 am service 3.00 pm Baptism
Monday 17	Open the Book team at Old Swinford Primary School
Wednesday 19	7.30 pm PCC Meeting
Thursday 20	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 22	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 23	THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT 11.00 am Consecration of the Bishop of Dudley at St Paul's Cathedral 2.30-4.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Narthex
Tuesday 25	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Wednesday 26	7.30 pm Coach House AGM in the upstairs room.
Thursday 27	2.00 pm Wedding
Friday 28	9.30 am St Mary's Walking Group
Saturday 29	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 30	MOTHERING SUNDAY 10.00 am Family Service with Communion for Mothering Sunday British Summer Time starts - Clocks go forward one hour
Monday 31	Open the Book team at Old Swinford Primary School

BOOK LAUNCH

The public launch of the latest book to have been written by Roy Peacock will take place at 10.30 am on Saturday, 15 March, at St Mary's Church. The book, **THE ORIGINS OF STOURBRIDGE - From the Stone Age to the Middle Ages**, is published by St Mary's to which Roy has generously donated the profits from book sales. Priced at £12.95 the book will be available at the special price of £10 at the launch.

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

This month sees the arrival of Lent, that time in the Christian Year when we think of Jesus spending time in the desert, doing without the comforts of life in order to reflect on what God, his heavenly Father, was calling him to do. Many Christians try to copy Jesus by also giving up something for Lent.

Often people give up one of the luxuries of life: wine or chocolate, biscuits or cake. We don't relinquish these 'goodies' in order to become a little fitter or undertake some sort of 'detox'. The idea of 'giving something up' is so that we may become a little more aware of God's presence and God's call upon us by placing God first rather than giving prime position to particular foods which we may like. Every time we are tempted to have a piece of chocolate or a glass of wine, we should consider why it is we have given them up, and remember that it is because we want to place God first in our lives.

Fasting is an important part of most faiths, but it is not the only way in which we can observe Lent. Lent is also a good time to 'take stock' of where we have reached on our spiritual journey and to undertake some form of study which will help us to progress further on that journey. This year the people of St Thomas' Church and St Mary's will be encouraged to come together and study part of the new 'Pilgrim' course, which was recently launched with the blessing of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

The course is aimed at people who are embarking on the Christian journey, who are in other words 'Pilgrims', and it seeks to challenge people to think about what faith means to them in their life. The particular topic we are going to examine this Lent is a series of teachings known as the 'Beatitudes' or 'Blessings'. These are found in Chapter 5 of Matthew's gospel, and are often seen as a challenge to how a Christian should live their life.

The forms of the study will be informal and will include space for worship, Bible study, reflection and discussion and they will be led by members of St Thomas' and St Mary's congregation.

I hope that you will want to take part in these studies and to indulge in a little extra reflection, giving yourself a little sustenance for the journey ahead; after all it may be that you have denied yourself some of your usual sustenance! So come along and enjoy the provisions as we set out on the journey ahead.

With every blessing,

SERVICES IN MARCH 2014

2 March Sunday before Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Exodus 24. 12-end	2 Peter 1. 16-end	Matthew 17. 1-9
	6.30 pm Evensong	2 Kings 2. 1-12	Matthew 17. 9-23	
9 March First Sunday of Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am	WORSHIP TOGETHER		
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	Deuteronomy 6. 4-9,16-end	Luke 15. 1-10	
16 March Second Sunday of Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Genesis 12. 1-4a	Romans 4. 1-5,13-17	John 3. 1-17
	6.30 pm Evensong	Numbers 21. 4-9	Luke 14. 27-33	
23 March Third Sunday of Lent	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Exodus 12. 1-7	Romans 5. 1-11	John 4. 5-42
	6.30 pm Evensong	Proverbs 8. 1, 22-31	Revelation 4.	
30 March Mothering Sunday	8.00 am Holy Communion			
	10.00 am Parish Communion Special Service	Exodus 2. 1-10	Colossians 3. 12-17	Luke 2. 33-35
	6.30 pm Evensong	Micah 7.	James 5.	

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THE PCC?

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, 27 April, after Evensong. Please put this date into your diary and do all you can to come along and take part. Everyone is welcome and there are so many different ways in which you could choose to become involved with activities in the parish.

Stephen has announced the welcome news that Roger King has agreed to be nominated for appointment by Bishop John as a Eucharistic Assistant, nominally, but not solely, to administer at the 8.00 am service. We thank Roger for his service and wish him well in this valued and precious opportunity.

The outcomes of the Parish Visioning Day and subsequent Quiet Days are beginning to have an impact. The PCC recently considered an analysis of matters which may provide projects on which we may focus in the coming months and years. In part, these arise from the 'Kingdom People' focus which is a Diocesan policy and a review of our own parish 'state of health' and subsequently perceived needs. PCC meetings will increasingly focus on such matters and as these projects gain impetus the involvement of all who feel able and willing to make a contribution will be of great importance for progress to be made and built upon for future growth. Welcome all.

The first of these, an initiative developed by Stephen and Jean Agnew, will be the Wedding Preparation Days to be offered to those who plan a wedding at St Mary's. As Stephen shared with us in February's letter, this is an opportunity for many to contribute and to be part of helping others to prepare for that special day we hope will be a focus for the rest of their lives together. If you cannot help on 1 March, please remember the event and the couples involved in your prayers. There will be another such day later in the year.

Plans are being formulated for the implementation of a scheme to support work with the youth of the parish. This has been made possible through a generous bequest in the names of the late Canon Lewis Davies and his wife, Kate. Support and advice from the Diocesan Advisor for Youth Work, Sarah Brush, has been sought and as details become clearer these will be shared with you all.

The church hall roof has been completely re-surfaced with a hot-tar felt cover guaranteed for ten years. In the process some of the wooden boards forming the roofing surface have been replaced and the drainage of rainwater from the roof has been improved considerably. This important work will safeguard the weather-proofing of the church hall for a long time and will enable other internal fixtures, previously threatened by water leaks, to be made good.

A professional survey of the trees in the churchyard has been carried out and we await the presentation of the report which will indicate the species and variety of each tree and its exact location. This survey will provide some detail of the health of the trees, information which will help as we consider what work needs to be planned for. If you have walked through the churchyard in recent months you will have noticed that some trees are clearly not in good condition and branches have fallen from some in high winds. The presence of such hazards demands that we do what we can to ensure people's wellbeing.

There are a number of trees, notably some sycamores, that have self-sown and grown up destroying monuments and memorials as they have increased in size. Some of these, as well as some of the leylandii, that were planted around the border of the churchyard, are now presenting problems and are likely to require trimming or removal. The potential cost could be considerable, hence the need for a plan.

An important focus for the PCC has been to ensure that we can meet our financial commitments into the future. Some increasing costs, with no obvious means of providing equally increased income, suggest the need to consider the budget carefully and to encourage future giving. The Resources Committee has met and is evolving a plan to be presented to the congregation in the near future. More details will be made available in the diary.

On Sunday 2 March, there will be a Fairtrade breakfast in the Church Hall, at 9.00 am, to which all are welcome. This will provide a special opportunity for those who attend the 8.00 am service to share time with those who generally attend at 10.00 am, but everyone is welcome, regardless of the service you attend or not. Please try to come along and enjoy the Christian fellowship. You will be very welcome.

If you wish to enquire of PCC activity, you are reminded that minutes of the PCC meetings are available in a file in the Narthex and that any member of the PCC would be very willing to talk with you about current initiatives and plans for the future.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE

Diocesan Synod is meeting on Saturday 1 March to discuss the future of ministry in the Diocese. With the likelihood of fewer stipendiary ministers in the future, but an increasing number of people volunteering, the Synod is going to discuss the increasing role of lay ministry and non-stipendiary ministers as well as the importance of fostering 'young vocations'.

Please pray for all those who will be present at the Diocesan Synod meeting in March, including the children and young people taking part in the discussions. And pray that the decisions made will have a positive impact in the life of the Diocese.

SERVICE RECORDINGS

Thanks to the skill and attention of Frank McGain-Harding, John Sutton ensures that many of the services at St Mary's are recorded and are available for those unable to attend church to listen to at home. If you know of anyone who would like to make use of this facility please contact John in the church office.

THE RT REVD GRAHAM USHER, BISHOP OF DUDLEY

BIOGRAPHY

The Revd Canon Graham Usher was born in 1970 and spent his early life growing up in Ghana. He was educated at Pocklington School in Yorkshire and then studied for a BSc Ecological Science (Ecology) at Edinburgh University followed by gaining a degree in Theology at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge whilst training for ordination at Westcott House, Cambridge.



After his ordination in 1996, Graham served his curacy at St Mary's Nunthorpe in the Diocese of York, a large commuter suburb of Middlesbrough with four congregations and a significant amount of youth work. While there, Graham spent time as a Sessional Chaplain at HM Remand Centre at Northallerton, working with young offenders, and became a part-time producer with BBC Radio Cleveland, working on their Sunday religious news programme.

From here Graham moved to be Vicar of Holy Trinity in North Ormesby, Middlesbrough - at that time one of England's 2% most deprived communities, experiencing considerable poverty and social exclusion. A focus on the Church and community led to a growth in the congregation and the development and completion of a flagship community facility, The Trinity Centre, which was awarded HRH The Duke of York's Community Initiative Award.

In 2004, Graham moved to become Rector and Lecturer of Hexham. Hexham Abbey is part of the Greater Churches' Network and, whilst very much a parish church, has some of the outreach and facets found in many cathedrals. Graham worked with the congregation and partners developing a vision for the Abbey and its community and since his appointment the congregation has grown, links with the town and county have significantly increased, and the Abbey has been reunited with its historic monastic buildings which were taken from it at the Reformation. Graham was also Area Dean for five years from 2006.

Alongside his parish responsibilities, Graham is currently a Lay Member of the Governance and Access Committee of the Newcastle Biomedicine Biobank at Newcastle University, where he is involved in ethical discussions about human tissue storage and ensuring consent and dignity. He is also Chairman of the Northeast Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee of the Forestry Commission and is a Secretary of State appointee to the Northumberland National Park Authority.

In 2012, Graham's book: Places of Enchantment - Meeting God in Landscapes was published by SPCK. Graham has also previously been a member of the Scout Movement, including being a national trustee, and has been involved with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. For a number of years he was a Director of the Bible Reading Fellowship.

Graham is married to Rachel, a GP, and they have two children, Chad aged 13 and Olivia aged 11. In his spare time he enjoys hill walking, drawing, writing and the company of friends.

Diocese of Worcester

COACH HOUSE - NEEDLECRAFT FOR ALL

The needlework group is one of the Coach House's oldest regular activities and has been meeting weekly since its inception over 15 years ago. Under the guidance and coordination of Pamela Green it has provided a friendly forum for ladies who enjoy knitting, sewing or just to have a chat. We meet on Monday afternoons from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm – our meetings are very informal and flexible with attendance on 'come whenever you please' basis.

Pamela Green and another valued member, Dorothy Gibson, have moved away from Stourbridge recently and we thank them for their support over many years. We are keen to maintain this group activity in the Coach House and we extend an invitation to ladies who might be interested in joining us at any time. We are always happy to welcome guests and visitors so pop in to see us one Monday afternoon. We charge £2.00 per session to pay for the Coach House room hire and this includes tea and biscuits. We are sometimes closed for school holidays and half-term breaks so please call me if you require further details on 01384 444229. We look forward to seeing you.

Janet Beevers



LENT COURSE 2014

St Mary's Old Swinford and St Thomas', Stourbridge



Plans are underway to offer a course of six meetings that follow the recently published materials; Pilgrim, a Course for the Christian Journey.

It is intended that meetings will be held at 7.30 pm on Tuesday evenings in Lent at either St Mary's or St Thomas' church.

Dates of meetings to be 11, 18, 25 March, 1, 8, 15 April.

Further details to be published as soon as they are available.

GIFT AID PLEASE

When you are next in church you will see in the pews new notices that explain the purpose and use of the yellow Gift Aid envelopes. If you are a UK taxpayer, by placing your donation in this envelope and completing the information requested on the outside, St Mary's can claim back the tax you pay, equivalent to 25p in the £. Please do so if you can. This will help us to meet the ever-increasing costs of the buildings and ministry of St Mary's.

CHILDREN'S PAGES

During Lent Christians often give up something they enjoy as a sign that they recognise the suffering Jesus experienced for us.



Draw a big cross on a sheet of paper. Write around the cross the names of items that each member of your family will try to give up for Lent. Remember it is important to try really hard to keep this promise.

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

LENT WORDSEARCH

Can you find these words?

ABSTINENCE
DUST
FASTING
FORTY
LENT
MORALITY
MOURNING
OBLIGATION
PALM SUNDAY
PENANCE
SACRIFICE
SIGN OF THE CROSS



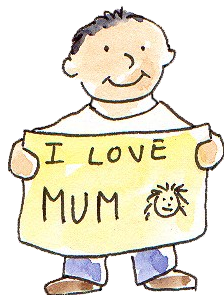
Four questions for Lent

1. On what day does Lent begin?
2. How many days does Lent last?
3. Why do we try to give up something for Lent?
4. On what day does Lent end?



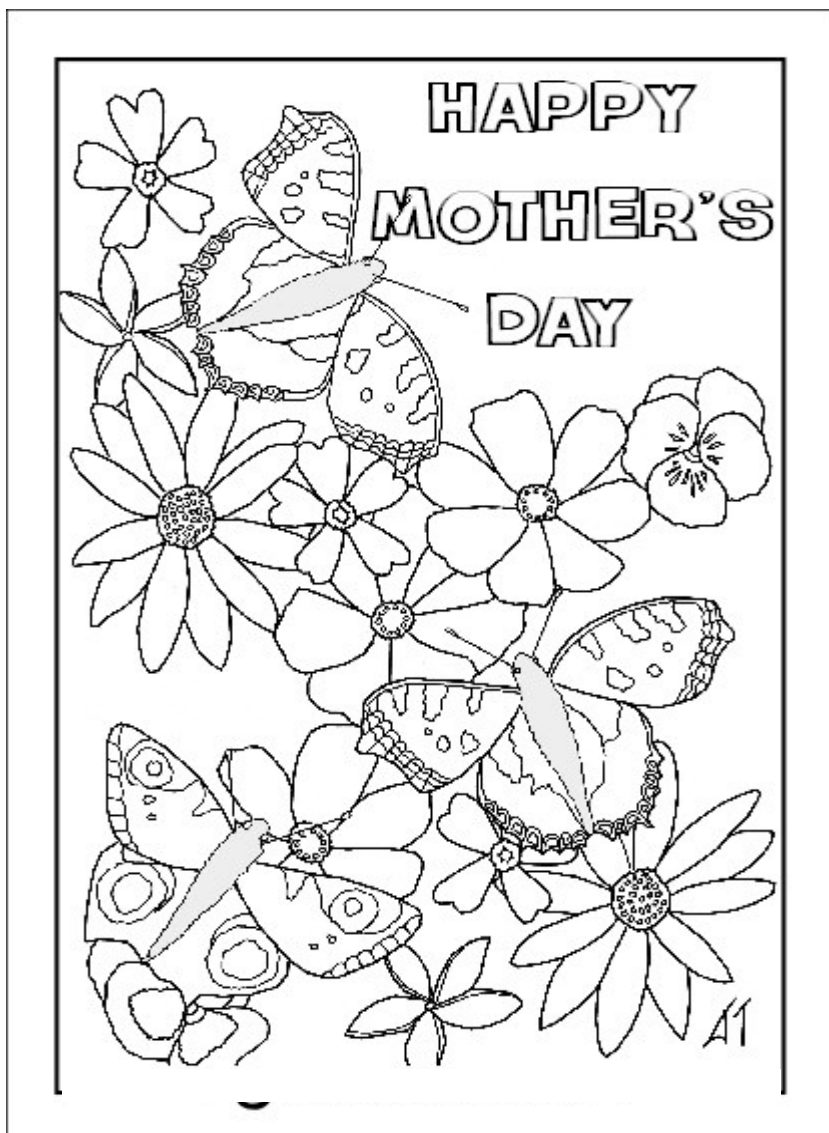
THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Do you know the story of Jesus being tempted by the Devil? Read it in Matthew or Luke, Chapter 4.



Colour this picture and give it to your Mum on Mothering Sunday.

Did you know that servants and maids were allowed a day off work on Mothering Sunday so they could go and visit their Mums?



CATCHING UP WITH FRIENDS

Friday morning and Jaci, my friend, is at the door for our regular chat. She's a bright young lady with interesting views on life in general. We both watch "Question-time" and enjoy expressing our views on topics discussed.

From time to time we cut out this discussion and turn our thoughts to what is happening at St Mary's – Jaci is always interested. A recent topic was the start-up of the monthly "Tuesday Tea" by the Mission Committee. Friends old and new come together in the Narthex to enjoy a cup of tea, perhaps a biscuit and maybe a slice of cake, and last but not least a chat with one or another. When I told Jaci about this activity she responded with the question "Do all churches do this?" I'm afraid to say I was unable to answer her question. What I do know is that when I arrived for the first event, charming ladies gave me a warm welcome and it was lovely to meet up with old friends and to be introduced to new friends.

Our next afternoon tea will be at 2.30 pm on Tuesday 25 March in the Narthex. There will be a raffle and cake stall, the proceeds of which will be sent to the Royal Marsden Hospital where Richard Tatler has had such wonderful treatment.

Do come along and join us – you can be assured of a warm welcome.

Anne Davies

You are invited to join us at a
Special Concert to help Special People

Spring into Action

Is in aid of CLIC Sargent, the charity which helps
children with cancer



Programme to include
**John Rutter's -
Mass of the Children**
featuring -

- **Birmingham
Philharmonic Orchestra**
- **Shulah Oliver (violin)**
- **The Oakville Singers**
- **Dionysius Chor (Germany)**
- **Local school choirs**

See our website www.springintoaction.info
Worcester Cathedral
Saturday 15th March 2014. 7.30pm

Tickets £6 - £12 from
Worcester Live **01905 611427**
or from members of Oakville Singers



Here is a great opportunity for a pleasant evening out with wonderful music from top quality performers, all in support of a very worthy charity.



Details are available in church. If sufficient people wish to go it may be possible to organise transport.

DOWN IN THE COUNTRY - UP IN THE CITY

With mooring ropes unhitched and
Engine's steady pulse beneath our feet
We push out peacefully into the day,
Floating easily between parallel banks
Lined with overhanging willows.

Far off, the faceless city skyline
Corrugates the overcast horizon.
Spires and chimneys lift hands above the gloom.
Then comes an unexpected rush of rain
As the sky descends to the earth.

Our journey brings us ever closer
To tidy lawns in urban gardens,
To factory yards and bridges,
The city's private back view is on show
Its public face is turned elsewhere.

Moving on to topmost lock
We slide through giant-sized doors
Into a cavern with a sky for a roof.
Entombed, we wait....
We wait for the surging water
For the splash of the spray on the prow
At last the sluice gates open
And the boat floats gently upwards.

Pat Whalley

EASTER FLOWERS

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 flowers in memory of loved ones please place your 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 found in the church pews and mark it clearly "For Easter Flowers."

NEWS OF SASI AND MARK

On 22 April, Mark will celebrate his 10th birthday. How time flies! It seems not long ago since we got to know him - a toddler in need of help. When I first met him in 2006, he was a shy little boy clinging to his mother. He would peep at me from behind his mother's skirt! Now, he is almost coming to the end of his primary school days, and is preparing for exams for secondary school.

Education in Sri Lanka is thankfully free. Primary school classes go up to grade 5. The secondary school he likes to attend is called Vaddu - Hindhu College. It has good exam results and is walking distance from his home.

Mark is currently the head monitor in his class and honours the responsibility that goes with it. Their school sports meet is on the 14th of February when he will be the flag bearer.

I was pleasantly surprised to read he has learnt to play chess and will take part in the under ten chess tournament. Good for him!

The continuity and stability and confidence he has gained in these years is amazing. Beyond expectation. From the shy toddler to a flag bearing, chess playing young lad preparing for the next step in his school life is a testimony to the grace of God, through the love and support of all at St Mary's. The monthly sum we give ensures he does not go hungry and the extras help to purchase his school wear and treats like the football he received last year. Not to mention the security of a home, provided by St Mary's.

Mark's mum, Sasi, works as a domestic to a rich family. That family is kind to her. We gave her a sewing machine previously and she undertakes orders to make skirts, blouses and kaftans. I have no news of their goats this time.

This year too the Mission Committee, decided to continue to support Mark. £20 month for a year + £60 extra. In all £300. This will go a long way and no doubt enrich his life. Mark and his mum will be pleased. So, a huge thank you from them and me. Thank you very much.

May God bless you all.

Kanthi Ariaraj

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP

Parish Walk Saturday 25 January 2014

The January walk was planned to be local in case of inclement weather, so it was that seventeen walkers set off from The Vine Inn in Kinver for a five mile walk. We were joined by another couple later.

As we walked towards Kinver High Street, the point where the Light Railway from Amblecote reached its destination was pointed out to us. The palings close to the water pumping station are the original ones that surrounded the railway station.

We continued down the High Street, turning left into Vicarage Drive to begin our ascent along a lane, then footpath, to Church Hill and up towards St Peter's Church. The views from the Churchyard extended across to Stourbridge, Brierley Hill and Dudley. We also spotted our cars parked at the Vine. After walking all round the churchyard we continued to Kinver Edge entering by the Warden's Cottage. We followed the left hand path to the edge of the ridge then turned right to walk along the ridge to the toposcope stopping along the way to admire the different views.

From the toposcope we descended down a steep and very muddy path to the Rock Houses and had refreshments in the picnic area. It has become a tradition now to have Gluwein at our coffee break on the January walk; this was then distributed. Suitably refreshed we continued across Compton Road, through a wood and onto the Staffordshire Way to Meddins Lane. At Potters Cross we turned into Hyde Lane and after about 400 yards turned onto the bridle path which took us to Hyde Cottage and onto the canal, then back to the Vine.



We were joined for lunch by nine friends who, for various reasons, were not able to do the walk. One of these was Dorothy Gibson who now she lives close to the Vine. We were really pleased she came and it was good to see her looking so well.

Once again the weather was really kind to us and the walk went ahead in beautiful spring sunshine. It was not the same for our journey home after lunch when we drove through heavy rain, hail, thunder and lightning. Our walk was truly blessed.

Sally Frost

COACH HOUSE SECRETARY

As the month of the Annual meeting approaches the need to appoint a new secretary for this valuable community charity becomes ever more urgent.

After many years of loyal service the current secretary needs to step down and therefore the Coach House Charity committee needs someone willing to undertake this important but not too onerous task. This is an unpaid role which would require a commitment of a few hours each month. There are four to six meetings a year where minutes are taken and agendas prepared for each following meeting. Work would normally be undertaken at home or at the Coach House when meetings are held.

For further details please contact Joan Barwick, 01384 395319 or speak to a Coach House committee member.

The AGM will be held on Thursday 27 March, at 7.30 pm in the upstairs room of the Coach House. All are welcome to attend.

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

POTATO & CHORIZO PIE

This is an original recipe I dreamt up for a competition with ingredients from my fridge and cupboard. It delivers a tasty double whammy of carbs (pastry and potatoes) with a spicy punch from the chorizo. Not for dieters, 'the must be baked blind school', or the 'I don't eat carbs brigade', but a great filling meal. I think it highlights how the contents of our fridges have changed over the years.

200g shortcrust pastry
2 onions, finely sliced
2 tablespoons rape seed oil
2 cloves garlic, crushed
150g cooking chorizo, sliced
600g potatoes, diced, boiled until tender and drained. (I don't bother peeling thin skinned white potatoes)
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
100g grated mature cheddar
25g cheddar or grated parmesan for the top of the pie

Fry the onions in the oil for 20 minutes until really soft. Add the garlic, fry for another minute. Push the onions to the side of the pan and fry the chorizo until cooked and crispy. Combine with the onions.

Mix together the cooked potato, onion mixture, parsley and the cheese. Season with salt, black pepper, and chilli flakes.

Pre-heat oven to 220C and put in a metal tray.

Line a metal pie dish with the pastry. Fill with the potato mixture. Sprinkle over the remaining cheddar or parmesan. Put the pie in the oven on the metal baking tray and bake for 25 minutes approximately. Lower the heat if it starts to brown too much.

Serve with winter salad.

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE.....

We meet chorizo in many different guises: here in a hearty farmhouse creation. Always we encounter its robust, spicy flavoursome character. A wine to match? We should be able to find some good candidates across southern Europe but let's follow logic and head to Spain.

As we travel around the country we come across three grapes quite widely: Tempranillo, Garnacha and Monastrell. The latter we enjoy in southern France as Mourvedre and is blessed with dense, herby, black fruits. Many Spanish examples reveal an appealing top note of olives and dates and it remains one of those grapes we really should drink more frequently.

Tempranillo is the great grape of Rioja and Ribera del Duero. If we are wanting a star wine for a special occasion, we can do no better. Garnacha is more

versatile - commonly used for rose wines too, it is better known by its French name Grenache. We find it as a major component of Gigondas and Chateauneuf-du-Pape where it exhibits exactly the robust spicy notes we are seeking.

So what of the grape in its Spanish clothes as Garnacha? Chief among many is Priorat, probably the world's only real contender to Chateauneuf-du-Pape as a top class Grenache-based wine. In this high outcrop of Catalonia, Carignan and varying amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon combine with Garnacha to produce wines of great depth and intensity.....at unfriendly prices !

For good Grenache-based wines at suitably modest prices for humbler dishes, head to Costers del Segre in Catalonia or Navarra and Carinena elsewhere in north-eastern Spain and let your wine be robust and spicy !

Enjoy your wine-sipping.

Richard W. B. Ryan

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

In January the MU Branch AGM was held with a full review of activities, finance and programme for the coming year using the theme 'Together we grow'. We saw two videos of the work at home and abroad which M.U. supports.

At the meeting on 10 February members agreed to financially support the two aspects of MU work, 'Away from it All' providing holiday breaks for needy families and 'Wheels Apart' for transport in Africa.

The theme of the meeting was love and marriage. Sally Frost led our service explaining some different traditions in orthodox, Hindu, and Spanish Catholic weddings which she had attended. Then she told us of the role of Valentine. He was a Roman priest in the 3rd century AD who was martyred by the Emperor Claudius for conducting Christian marriages for soldiers against imposed Roman edicts.

His celebration day, 14 February, was chosen in the time when the birds chose their mates and single people could pick their partners.

Jean Swift, who leads the Diocesan MU team at wedding fairs spoke on 'The Marriage Game'. These occasions are organised by the Stourbridge News. They publish a commercial magazine called 'I Will' with advertising advice for prospective wedding couples. The MU group are known as 'The God Lot'. They have a stall at the Spring and Autumn fairs in various venues. Up-to-date literature, help and advice are given on church and civil ceremonies, addressing the full aspect of building a happy marriage. Divorce questions are tackled and church blessing options may be available.

We all concluded that every marriage has to be worked on day by day as we acknowledged all partners are taken on—faults and all. BUT—

“Love is kind and suffers long,
Love is meek and thinks no wrong
Love than death itself more strong
Therefore give us love.”

Next meeting—Tuesday 11 March, 2.15 pm at the Coach House. 'A stitch in time' by Dawn Nex. You are welcome to join us.

Dawn Nex

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

2 February

Jessica Joyce Simpson

Funerals

16 January

Geoffrey Grant

Aged 75

7 February

Pam Hobman

Aged 76

MEN'S BREAKFAST

A local group of men meet about four times a year at the Talbot Hotel in Stourbridge, High Street at 9.00 am on a Saturday morning for breakfast, at a cost of £5 per participant. All men are welcome.

The format of each meeting is a breakfast of cereals, a variety of croissants, bacon butties, fresh and tinned fruit, fruit juices and tea or coffee which is followed by a short talk of about half an hour and then questions. The talk is by a Christian who explains the importance of his faith to his work. In the past, the Bishop of Dudley, the local Superintendent of the Baptists, Ron Headley, the Head of the local Food Bank and the Director of the School for Missionary Children in Indonesia have given their experiences.

At the last meeting on 11 January, the Revd Paul Nzacahayo, the Superintendent designate of Dudley Methodists was the speaker. He is a Hutu who is married to a Tutsi lady, a very unusual occurrence in Rwanda. He gave the background to the situation in the country from 1900 onwards. As a minister he was involved in trying to reconcile internecine tribal differences following colonisation. However, his position became untenable and he came to Edinburgh in 1993. Recently, he has been working in the North Dudley area.

If you or any of your friends are interested in coming to a future meeting please contact me.

Ian Nex

A prayer for Mothering Sunday

Dear God,
we thank you today for the gifts you have given us.
Thank you, too, for those who look after us,
who help us when things are hard,
who look after us when we are sick,
who work to earn money for us,
who cook our dinner,
and for all those who keep us safe.
We thank you, God.
Amen.

LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF DUDLEY, NIKKI GROARKE

My introduction to the Diocese of Worcester and the Archdeaconry of Dudley has been a very watery one. As I have met with diocesan staff to find out how their roles interact with mine, the views through their windows in the Old Palace offices have been ones of vast expanses of water stretching across to the Malverns. As I have driven from one church to another, detours to avoid roads and bridges closed by floods have featured often. I have learned that life in the country means permanently having a dirty car and that wellies in the boot are a must-have item!



The floods across our area, and in other parts of the country even more so, have been devastating for many, though thankfully held back by new defences along much of the Severn this time. Water in vast quantities in the wrong place can be powerful and destructive, it permeates everything, flows everywhere there is space, gets in through the cracks, over and under many barriers. Yet we know too that water is vital for life. In countries ravaged by drought, the rains are longed for, every drop of clean water is regarded as a precious gift.

It may be hard for us to imagine intense heat and desperate thirst, surrounded as we are by our flooded countryside and with clean water readily on tap, but that is the experience of many, and one with which many can therefore connect when King David draws a spiritual parallel with his need for God in Psalm 63: "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water."

God's presence is as life giving water to the soul, as crucial for our spiritual health as water is for our bodies. The Bible teaches us that through the Holy Spirit we can experience God's refreshing presence in abundance. In John's gospel Jesus talks about the water of life:

"On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive." (John 7:37-39)

As healthy kingdom people who are deeply rooted in prayer and being renewed and transformed by regular worship, we are constantly filled with the Spirit, in order that the Holy Spirit might flow from us into our communities. How wonderful it would be if the life and hope of the gospel, its values of love, compassion, justice and freedom, flowed from our churches into our communities with the same persistent permeation that flood water exhibits. What an impact for good will be made if God's love seeps through every crevice and crack as his people serve those around them. And what good news stories there will be to share if barriers are consistently broken down by acts of loving kindness in God's name.

I pray that my Worcester experiences will continue to be watery as I explore the diocese, but in the spiritual realms rather than the physical ones, as I see God's life-giving presence flowing from the people of our churches into our neighbourhoods.

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