

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD

**Parish Church Magazine
Online edition**

DECEMBER 2014



ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD



Parish Church Magazine



*May you share the Joy of the Christmas
Message of Peace on Earth*

PRIEST IN CHARGE: The Revd Stephen Agnew, The Rectory,
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DECEMBER 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 noon - 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	07968 586285
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661

Church Hall and		
Coach House: - Bookings	Parish Office	441003
Parish Administrator and		
Publicity Officer:	Mr John Sutton	441003
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Magazine e-mail address:	stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk	

ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS.

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

DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2014

Thursday 4	10.30 am Holy Communion 7.30 pm Annual Licensing Service for Authorised Lay Ministers and Eucharistic Assistants at St Thomas' Church, Stourbridge
Saturday 6	10.00 am Christmas Market
SUNDAY 7	SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT 10.00 am WORSHIP TOGETHER -TOY SERVICE
Monday 8	9.30 am Open the Book team visit Old Swinford Primary School
Tuesday 9	11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft Mothers' Union meet in the Coach House
Wednesday 10	Copy date for January magazine
Thursday 11	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 12	2.30 pm Old Swinford Hospital Carol Service
Saturday 13	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 7.30 pm 'Got to Sing' Concert
SUNDAY 14	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 4.30 pm CHRISTINGLE SERVICE
Tuesday 16	2.30-4.00pm Combined Tuesday Tea and Tea in the Coach house
Wednesday 17	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge 7.00 pm Old Swinford Primary School Carol Service
Thursday 18	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 19	End of term for Dudley Schools
Saturday 20	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 21	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT 6.30 pm CAROL SERVICE
Wednesday 24	CHRISTMAS EVE 4.00 pm Crib Service 10.00 pm First Communion of Christmas
Thursday 25	CHRISTMAS DAY 8.00 am Holy Communion 10.00 am Parish Communion
Saturday 27	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 28	FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS 6.30 pm Service of Readings and Carols



THOUGHT FOR THE SEASON



"Until one feels the spirit of Christmas, there is no Christmas. All else is outward display-so much tinsel and decorations. For it isn't the holly, it isn't the snow. It isn't the tree nor the firelight's glow. It's the warmth that comes to the hearts of men when the Christmas spirit returns again."

-- Anonymous

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

Another year has flown by (or so it seems) and once again we prepare to celebrate the great festival of hope and light, and it seems that we need that hope more than ever. Whenever we read or hear the news, however it comes to us, on TV or radio, on the internet or in the press, we come away feeling depressed.

We often feel besieged by the graphic details of the savage war in Syria and the lack of humanity as hostages are used as nothing more than pawns in a bid to capture the attention of the world. And then there is the sense of hopelessness in the faces of those people who have watched their family and friends die of Ebola and left them alone, the sole survivor.

Wherever we turn we are confronted by a sense of despair in the face of so much destructiveness and darkness. Wherever we look people's lives seem to be treated as unimportant, and there is a sense that the times are evil.

I suspect that every generation has felt this. From the time of Jesus, 2000 years ago, and indeed even before that time people have felt that they were in danger of being overwhelmed by the power of the destructive forces at large in the world, beside which they seemed small, insignificant and powerless.

It was into this world that Jesus came and was heralded as the 'light of the world', a hope when there seemed no hope at all. Christians believe that He came to show that despite all the evidence to the contrary, God, the God of love and possibilities, is involved in this world and brings good out of evil, and hope out of despair.

We may want to ask the question, 'Where is the evidence of that?' And whilst it may not always be as clear as we would like, there is evidence of goodness all around us. Whenever someone undertakes some act of kindness and love with no thought of gain, there is evidence that the God of love is at work in the world.

In my role as Parish Priest I have over the years seen many acts of kindness and love, often going unrecognised, but there nevertheless. Perhaps we need to have our eyes opened to these acts of altruism and love and recognise the signs of God at work in the people we meet every day. And perhaps if we can do that in our own small sphere of influence we may also catch a glimpse of God at work in the whole of life, from the smallest facet of human interaction to the largest canvas of human endeavour and lust for power.

Christmas celebrates an awareness of that hope and possibility. May this awareness be rejuvenated in your life, in your family, in our community and in the world as we celebrate the birth of a child in a stable in a remote part of the world some 2000 years ago.

Stephen Agnew

SERVICES IN DECEMBER 2014

7 December Second Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am	WORSHIP TOGETHER - TOY SERVICE	
	6.30 pm Evensong	1 Kings 22. 1-28	Romans 15. 4-13
14 December Third Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	1 Thessalonians 5. 16-24	John 1. 6-8, 19-28
	4.30 pm	CHRISTINGLE - A special annual service in support of the work of the Children's Society	
	6.30 pm Evensong	Malachi 3. 1-4, 4	Philippians 4. 4-7
21 December Fourth Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Romans 16. 25-end	Luke 1. 26-38
	6.30 pm	CAROL SERVICE - A traditional service of Readings and Carols	
24 December Christmas Eve	4.00 pm	CRIB SERVICE FOR CHILDREN	
	10.00 pm	Hebrews 1. 1-12	John 1. 1-14
25 December Christmas Day	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Family Communion	Isaiah 9. 2-7	Luke 2. 10-4
26 December St Stephen's Day	10.30 am	Said service of Holy Communion	
28 December The first Sunday of Christmas	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	1 Corinthians 1. 26-29	Matthew 2. 13-18
	6.30 pm	Service of Readings and Carols	

LIGHT UP CHILDREN'S LIVES WITH CHRISTINGLE



It's Christingle time again!



Thanks to many churches holding celebrations up and down the country.

£1.2 million was raised last year to go towards the work of the Children's Society helping vulnerable children and young people.

Will you join the celebrations this year to help raise even more vital funds?

Our service at St Mary's will be held on

Sunday, 14 December at 4.30pm

All are welcome



.....
The orange – represents the world.

The red ribbon – indicates the love and blood of Christ.

The dried fruits and sweets – symbols of God's creations.

The lit candle – symbolises Jesus, the light of the world.

**We are extremely grateful to Sainsbury's at Amblecote
for generously providing the oranges for our
Christingle celebration.**

Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's

FLICKER OF HOPE CHRISTINGLE 2014

Once again, the time of year is approaching when supporters all over the country start to light up the night with Christingle services.

Turn an orange into life-changing support. Join in with Christingle this year and change the lives of children living in poverty.

Our service will be held on Sunday 14 December at 4.30pm.

Wendy Tranter

TUESDAY TEA IN DECEMBER



Tuesday Tea in the narthex continues every month as a very relaxed and enjoyable afternoon for anyone who wishes to call in for a chat, tea or coffee and cake.

As you know, it is normally held on the last Tuesday of each month but our December get-together will be held on **Tuesday, 16 December at 2.30 pm**, this time with mince pies to enjoy. This occasion will be a joint gathering with the Tea in the Coach House group as our December dates coincided and we thought it would be much more fun to be all together in the narthex.

We are looking forward to welcoming more friends and neighbours on this afternoon. If you know of anyone who might enjoy a happy afternoon with mince pies and a hot drink, do please invite them along. Everyone is very welcome and we look forward to seeing you there.

Pamela Scudamore
St Mary's Mission and Pastoral Committee

ST MARY'S, OLD SWINFORD
We extend a warm invitation to our
SERVICES FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON 2014



Sunday 30 November

6.30pm Advent Carol Service

Sunday 7 December

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00am Toy Service (*During which you are invited to donate an unwrapped gift of a toy or toiletries which will be donated to the Dudley Women's refuge*)

6.30pm Evensong

Sunday 14 December

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00am Parish Communion

4.30 pm Christingle Service

6.30pm Evensong

Sunday 21 December

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00am Parish Communion

6.30 pm Christmas Carol Service

A traditional Service of Readings and Carols

Wednesday 24 December CHRISTMAS EVE

4.00 pm Crib Service for children

10.00 pm Communion with Carols

The First Communion of Christmas

Thursday 25 December CHRISTMAS DAY

8.00 am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

10.00 am Family Communion (Common Worship) with Carols

Friday 26 December ST STEPHEN'S DAY

10.30am Said service of Holy Communion

Sunday 28 December

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00am Parish Communion

6.30pm Service of seasonal carols and readings.

CAPE TOWN CHRISTMAS

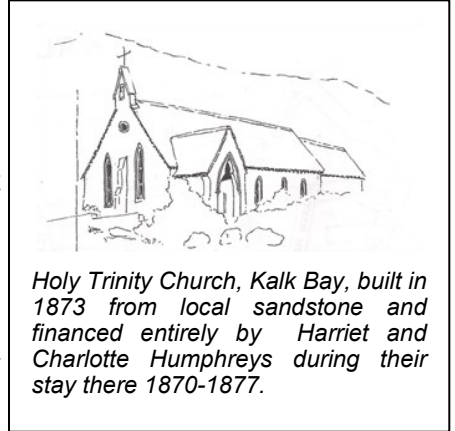
Any idea of enjoying Christmas lunch at the usual time was soon abandoned! Everything else was very similar, the crib, Christmas trees, decorations at home and in the streets, and the normal rushing around buying gifts and food, but with the temperature 24° and rising, we joined the rest of the Cape community and had our dinner on Christmas Eve.

We were living in the small fishing village of Kalk Bay, to the south of the city and our local Anglican church was a long, low stone building with a thatched roof. This was built in 1874, with money given by two English ladies working with a Sisterhood in Cape Town. They also built and ran a small hospital and an orphanage for the local coloured fishing families.

We loved living there; in contrast to Johannesburg it was an integrated community. We attended church together, celebrating communion and the other services. At communion, the servers were members of fishing families, and when we left church on Christmas Day, the wives and children offered us small gifts which they had made.

The rest of the day was spent on the beaches around the bay, Christmas lunch a picnic on the beach, enjoying the lovely weather and perhaps champagne "on the rocks".

Even though it is different, the spirit of Christmas is celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm, and we spent some of our best Christmases ever with the Cape fishing community.



Holy Trinity Church, Kalk Bay, built in 1873 from local sandstone and financed entirely by Harriet and Charlotte Humphreys during their stay there 1870-1877.

Carole Duff

FOOD FOR THOUGHT.....

On Sunday 26 October we welcomed Revd Michael Willows to St Mary's allowing Stephen to take a well earned break. The Gospel reading for that morning was taken from Matthew 22: 33-46 in which Jesus is tested by Pharisees in an effort to catch him out and be able to accuse him of blasphemy. As ever, Jesus was able to think of just the right thing to say and avoided their trap. Michael recalled a story from the time when he was a curate and had been challenged about his knowledge from somebody who he now realises was probably testing him or at least trying to demonstrate their own level of knowledge to him. I wonder if you've ever been in a similar situation and felt challenged like this by somebody. I know I have. Were you able to think of a suitable answer quick enough?

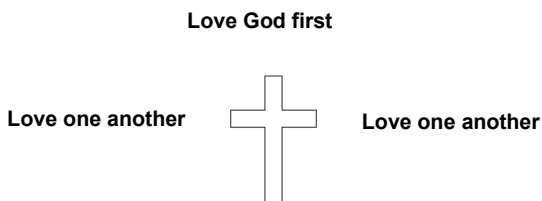
Michael went on to explain how the answer that Jesus gave quoting from Deut 6: *'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might'* and Leviticus: *'you shall love your neighbour as yourself'* could not be challenged as all the other commandments hang on these two and could be expressed as 'Love God first and love one another'.

This simple statement is something that **we** can easily hang on to and carry with us in our daily lives. How difficult is it sometimes to take our faith out into our daily life and even more to begin giving a simple explanation of what it is we believe to others? Perhaps this simple statement might help.

To draw together the two ideas of loving God and loving one another Michael gave us the analogy that it was like using an A-Z atlas where we need to have a page number letter and number to locate a place on a page. A horizontal and vertical reference. If religion was just about attending church it would be like an A-Z with only a vertical reference. The Christian faith is not just about rules and regulations but is about a relationship with God which by definition is a relationship with love and with each other. John says *'God is love and anybody who lives in love lives in God and God lives in him'*.

This is not always easy to do as we are challenged to *'love our neighbour as ourselves'*. Daily life throws up many challenges and difficult situations. Do you park your faith in church on a Sunday in a safe place or do you take it out with you?

As I reflected on this message I saw the shape of the cross, where we have a vertical and a horizontal. The vertical pointing upwards to God and the horizontal pointing out to the world around us. 'Love God first and love one another.' A simple but clear message for us to hold on to.



The final thought that Michael left us with was to remind us that God is always very close to us. As close as our neighbour and those around us, and we should always remember this in our daily lives.

Thank you Michael for your very thought provoking sermon, which, for me at least, provided much spiritual nourishment.

John Sutton

WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM

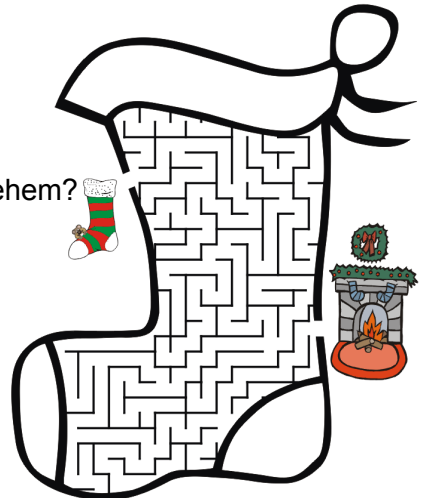
Remembrance took on a special significance this year with the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, the 70th anniversary of the Normandy invasion and the withdrawal of most of our troops from Afghanistan. Thank you to those who contributed to the commemoration of these events.

FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

A CHILD IS BORN

Can you choose the correct answer and get 10 out of 10 in our Christmas Quiz?

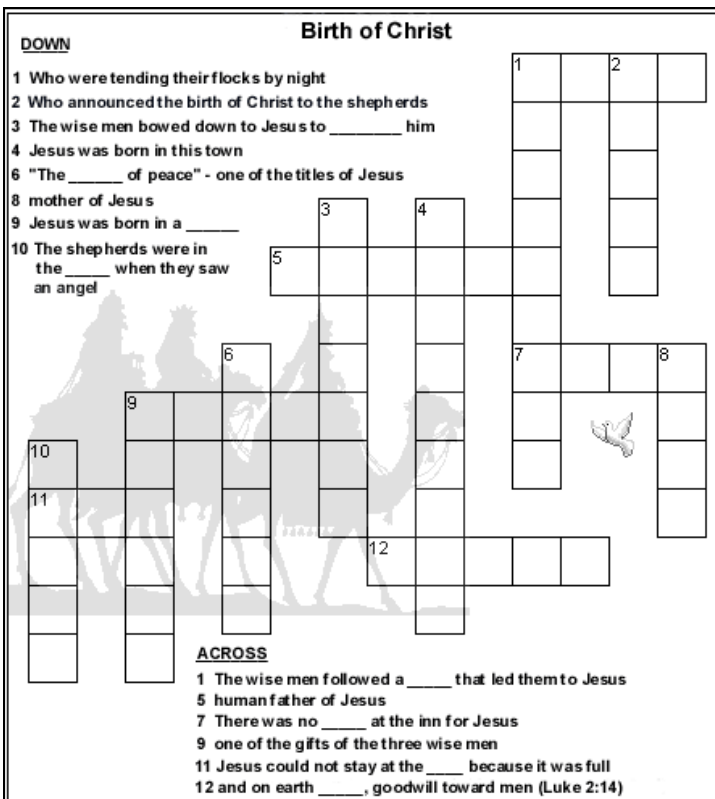
1. The name of the mother of Jesus was?
Martha/Mary/Eve/Deborah
2. Jesus was born in what town?
Jerusalem/Nazareth/Bethlehem/New York
3. Joseph was a?
Carpenter/Doctor/Engineer/Fisherman
4. Why didn't Joseph and Mary stay at the inn?
It was too expensive/There was no inn
/There was no room
5. How did Joseph and Mary get to Bethlehem?
Colt/Mary rode a donkey and Joseph walked/we are not told
6. After being born, Jesus was placed in a?
Basket/Manger/Pile of hay/on the back of a donkey
7. What is frankincense?
A form of gold/incense from a tree/
a jewel/none of these
8. How many wise men came to see Jesus?
One/Two/Three/The Bible doesn't say
9. Who told Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem?
An angel/Caesar Augustus/
Herod/Joseph was told in a dream
10. In which books do we find the story of Jesus' birth?
Matthew/Mark/Luke/John



Birth of Christ

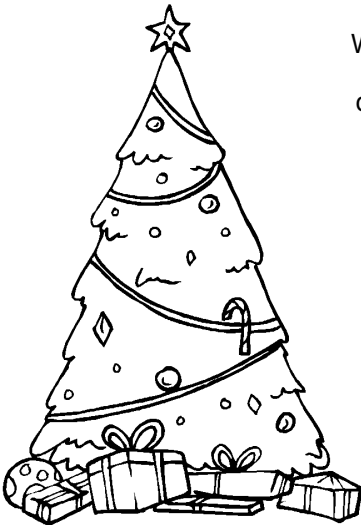
DOWN

- Who were tending their flocks by night
- Who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds
- The wise men bowed down to Jesus to _____ him
- Jesus was born in this town
- "The _____ of peace" - one of the titles of Jesus
- mother of Jesus
- Jesus was born in a _____
- The shepherds were in the _____ when they saw an angel



ACROSS

- The wise men followed a _____ that led them to Jesus
- human father of Jesus
- There was no _____ at the inn for Jesus
- one of the gifts of the three wise men
- Jesus could not stay at the _____ because it was full
- and on earth _____, goodwill toward men (Luke 2:14)



What are your colouring skills like? Brighten up your pictures and then send them in to the editors to be displayed in next month's edition of the magazine...



.....Completed coloured drawings may be left, with a name and telephone contact number in the magazine tray in the narthex.

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

"Remembrance is acknowledging that a life was lived." - Leo Tolstoy

Our meeting on November 11 was led by Anne May and centred on the theme of Remembrance. Anne opened with a tribute to a friend and supporter of M.U. activities, Margaret Brannon, who had died. Members also quietly reflected on their own personal loss of family and friends.

Anne then recounted her own family links with World Wars One and Two through the military experience and service of her father and father-in-law and of her own personal times as a child growing up during war.

We were also reminded of the service given by women, whether in the armed forces or by civilian support on land, in the factories or in the home. The service closed with a hymn and prayer.

Our guest speaker was Roy Peacock who recounted the instances of local service and borough memorials of the First World War which he had carefully researched. Mrs Owen, the then Rector's wife, had organised food parcels sent to Germany for our prisoners of war. His daughter, aged 17, volunteered as a nurse and served for two years. Just days after the armistice in 1918 she died in the Spanish influenza epidemic. Though not honoured for her war service locally she is named on a memorial in York Minster dedicated to the war service of women.

Roy showed illustrations of local area lych gates and civic cenotaph memorials reflecting peace, loss, victory and service, all bearing many names of the fallen. Other records can be found in schools, clubs, works, businesses, chapels and churches. Roy also gave the personal stories of some local casualties and the circumstances of their deaths. We appreciated the depth and sympathetic presentation Roy gave showing the sacrifice and pity experienced by war on all who served and their families.

Dates for your diary.....

Next Meetings -

Tuesday 9 December, 2.15 pm at the Coach House - Christmas Celebrations.

Tuesday 13 January, 2.15 pm at the Coach House - AGM

Dawn Nex

NEWS OF MARK - THE BOY WE HELP IN SRI LANKA

Mark has passed his grade 5 exam and is eligible to join the school of his choice next term. No doubt it is a great joy to his mum to see him do well. Exams are stressful times and children pray to their deity to help do well with fasting, vows etc. Mark was heard to say to his teacher, 'It is not only me and my mum who pray for me, but the church in England too'. Confidence!

His last school report was good. The head teacher had mentioned he was punctual, dressed cleanly, and diligent in his work.

He has a pet dog named Lucky. Unfortunately for Mark, Lucky catches poultry - all hens and chickens roaming around in the area. Lucky, therefore is unpopular with the neighbours and Mark does not know how to overcome this problem.

Playing football, volley ball, helping his mum and completing endless homework, seems to be his life style. During holidays they do not go anywhere, but they are happy and content, immensely grateful to St Mary's for prayers and plenty.

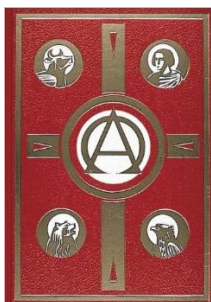
Sasi, his mum continues to work for the rich family as a domestic helper. She sells eggs, and undertakes dress making orders (making the most of her sewing machine) and runs her home stretching her finances that much further.

They wish you well as you prepare for your Christmas celebrations. Theirs will be different materially, perhaps a bauble or two, but rich in togetherness and joy in their home.

Kanthi Ariaraj

THE GOSPEL BOOK

Those who regularly attend the 10.00 am service on Sundays will have noted the change in liturgy with the reading of the Gospel. As part of the intention to take the Word of the Gospel to the people in both a literal and a symbolic sense, the Gospel is now read by the Deacon of the day from within the central aisle of the church.



Towards the end of the second hymn the Deacon is accompanied in procession by the Crucifer and the Server who carries the Gospel Book, to the central aisle from where the Word of the Lord is shared with the congregation. At the end of the reading, the Gospel Book is returned to the Sanctuary to the sound of improvised accompaniment played by the organist. This is an element of the service that, for many, is more familiar within cathedral settings but has been welcomed and received positively at St Mary's.

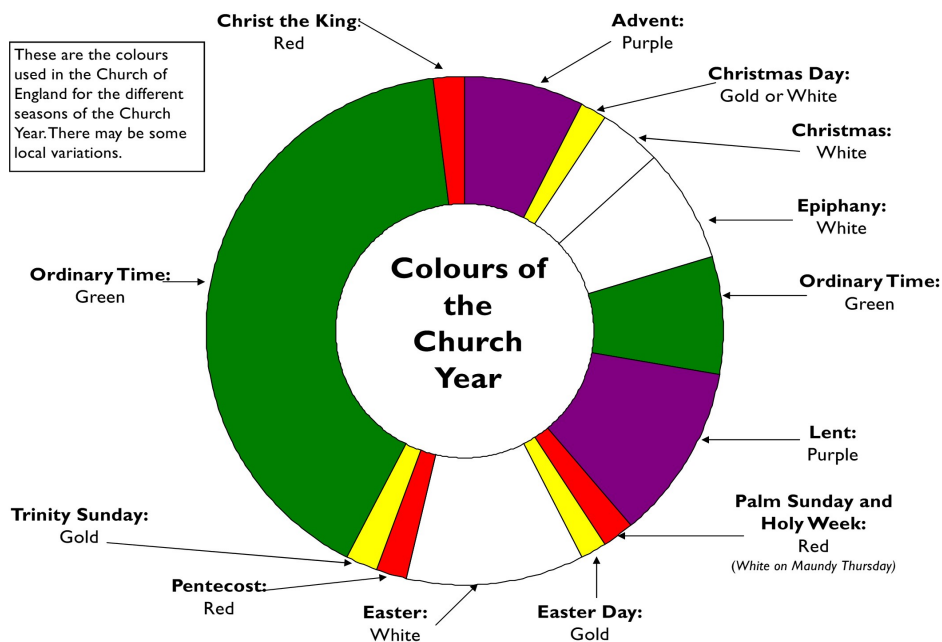
The book of the Gospels has been bought using funds that come to St Mary's as part the Bishop Hall Trust. Various such bequests are received from time to time, sometimes quite small amounts, occasionally amounts that are much more substantial. The PCC, with the valued guidance and advice of our incumbent priest, considers how best these sums may be spent in the overall best interests of the Church's Mission. The fabric of the church building will always provide a strong demand on such funds but the PCC is equally aware of and responsive to the need to put resources into the promotion and support of other important elements of how we profess and enact our faith. Activities in support of the young, to make the church more accessible and welcoming, to support and enhance the contributions of our organists and choir are among issues considered and provided for in this way.

Above all, we recognise the generosity of those who make such bequests and their families and we hold them in our thoughts as we use these gifts in furtherance of our shared mission.

LITURGICAL COLOURS

Recently, several people have asked about the relevance of the different colours of fabric items used in church. Last month's children's page contained a little information but here is a more detail.

The appropriate colour for the various fabric furnishings such as Pulpit and Lectern Falls, Burse and Chalice Veil and Clergy Vestments are suggested, but are not mandatory. The colour for a particular service should reflect the predominant theme. Otherwise, the colour of the church season, as shown in the diagram, is retained.



White is the colour for the festal periods from Christmas Day to the Presentation and from Easter Day to the Eve of Pentecost, for Trinity Sunday, for Festivals of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary, for All Saints' Day, and for the Festivals of those saints not venerated as martyrs, for the Feast of Dedication of a church, at Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday and in thanksgiving for Holy Communion and Holy Baptism. It is used for Marriages, and is suitable for Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination, though red may be preferred. It may be used in preference to purple or black for Funerals, and should be used at the Funeral of a child. Where a church has two sets of white, one may be kept for great Festivals indicated as 'gold or white'.

Red is used during Holy Week (except at Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday), on the **Feast** of Pentecost, may be used between All Saints' Day and the First Sunday of Advent (except where other provision is made) and is used for the Feasts of those saints venerated as martyrs. It is appropriate for any services which focus on the gift of the Holy Spirit, and is therefore suitable for Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination. Coloured hangings are traditionally removed for Good Friday and Easter Eve, but red is the colour for the liturgy on Good Friday.

Purple (which may vary from 'Roman purple' to violet, with blue as an alternative) is the colour for Advent and from Ash Wednesday until the day before Palm Sunday. It is recommended for Funerals and for the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, although either black or white may be preferred. A Lent array of unbleached linen is sometimes used as an alternative to purple, but only from Ash Wednesday until the day before Palm Sunday. Rose-colour is sometimes used as an alternative on the Third Sunday of Advent and the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Green is used from the day after the Presentation until Shrove Tuesday, and from the day after Pentecost until the eve of All Saints' Day, except when other provision is made. It may also be used, rather than red, between All Saints' Day and the First Sunday of Lent.



The Editors

STUDENTS SEEK TO CARE FOR ST MARY'S WAR GRAVES

Recently, a group of young students from the local Black Country Wheels School visited the church to view the First World War memorial as part of their wider education. The students are following a specially designated curriculum aimed at meeting their specific needs of personal development and employability skills. Their courses seek to provide opportunities for students to be self-aware and to learn life skills that will manage their work, lives and relationships.

The students wrote to Revd Stephen Agnew following their visit to thank him for his time and welcome. Many of them were particularly moved by the stories associated with the graves of servicemen buried in the churchyard. One of them wrote, " When I went to look at the gravestone of the sixteen year old boy it was upsetting inside to think a boy around my own age died fighting for the life we have now."

Several of the students expressed a wish to be able to maintain a link, especially through caring for the graves of the servicemen. Contact has already been made in the hope of establishing a regular opportunity which will serve history, valued traditions, an important local link and, perhaps above all, another means by which St Mary's may play a part in supporting and providing for the needs of young people in need.

Tony Tatford

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

CHRISTMAS STIR FRY

Serves 2

When making stir fried rice the golden rule is always cold rice. I tend to break this rule and cook the rice just before making the stir fry. This ensures that the rice is piping hot and there is no danger of food poisoning. This is a great dish when you have lots of odds and ends left that need using up. Feel free to vary the ingredients. Supermarkets sell good quality stir fry sauces: the secret is to not use as much as they recommend. I often buy the black bean sauce as it takes ages to make from scratch.

3 tablespoons of oil
3 spring onions
100g (4 oz) sliced mushrooms
Half a chopped red pepper
50g (2oz) cooked lean ham diced
50g (2oz) cooked diced turkey
50g (2oz) frozen peas thawed
1-2 eggs whisked
150g (6oz) long grain rice cooked
1-2 tablespoons soy sauce

Heat the wok, then add the oil, fry the onion, pepper and mushrooms. Don't overcook.

Add the remaining ingredients except for the eggs and the soy sauce. Stir fry until hot. If it starts to stick to the wok add a little water. Add the egg to the pan, cook for one minute. Add the soy sauce to taste.

Don't forget to kiss the cook!

With love and kitchen wishes for Christmas,

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE.....

No matter which oddments of left-over meat we stir in, there is one constant - and indeed a significant ingredient for our wine-matching - the soy sauce. Its salty character will require care. Any red wine we choose will clash if it is too tannic: the fleshier fruits of a Beaujolais, Montepulciano or inexpensive Merlot would suit better.

In general though, the clean acidity of a white wine works best in handling the oil and the salty sauce. The words 'clean acidity' feature on many a back label of Rieslings. The wine does not have to be dry, so 'halbtrocken' or off-dry would be fine. An English wine perhaps? Seyval Blanc or Madeleine

Angevine, but probably not the Sauvignon-like Bacchus. Demi-sec Champagne is favoured by some, given an accompanying note of sweetness in the sauce, although a Riesling Sekt would be just as suitable: after all, this is a left-over stir-fry not our main Christmas Day feast.



Sherry or dry Montilla scores on all counts too. A fino or manzanilla would be just about right but my favoured sherry style, Palo Cortado would be perfect. I always recommend a glass of this sherry to sip with a charcuterie platter with hams, nuts and olives - a lovely Christmas supper; so don't drink the whole bottle - save a glass for the stir-fry. Its extra flavour will work well alongside duck, turkey or whichever game bird we have left over for the dish. It's not too late to add a bottle to your Christmas wish-list ! Happy Christmas—Enjoy your wine-sipping.

Richard W.B. Ryan

HOT WASSAIL

I did promise, after last year's Carol service, that I would put the recipe for the fruit drink we serve after the event in the Parish magazine. I thought you might prefer to know the ingredients nearer the time rather than risk losing them over the summer!

This amount serves about ten people.

- 1 Litre unsweetened Apple Juice
- 1 Litre unsweetened pineapple juice
- 500ml cranberry juice
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 whole cloves
- 10 lemon slices



Place all the ingredients into a large saucepan and heat until simmering. On a low heat, simmer for at least ten minutes before serving with a slice of lemon.

Sue Wakeley

**CHRISTMAS GREETINGS
AND THANK YOU TO ALL OUR READERS, CONTRIBUTORS,
DISTRIBUTORS AND SUPPORTERS**

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

19 October Tabitha Eliza Cartwright
2 November Ronnie Frederick Gwynne and Iris Mary Gwynne

Weddings

31 October James Evitts and Naomi Powell
8 November Luke Shipley and Heather Underhill

Funerals

18 November Kenneth Carrington – Burial of ashes
31 November Colin Faulkner Aged 83

REMEMBRANCE PEAL

Printed below is the official record of a full peal, half muffled, rung in honour of the fallen on Tuesday, 11 November 2014, at St Mary's, Old Swinford.

Vale of Evesham Society Oldswinford,
Worcestershire St Mary
Tuesday, 11 November 2014 in 2H 51M
Weight of Tenor bell (10-03-12)

5100 changes of:
Remember Me Surprise Major
Composed by: Donald F Morrison (6829)
Rung by:

- 1 Stephen J Bedford (c)
- 2 Christopher Lees
- 3 Raymon A Sheasby
- 4 Stuart P B Talbott
- 5 Richard J Hurst
- 6 Geoffrey M Brewin
- 7 Darran Ricks
- 8 Alison R Williams

Half Muffled in honour of the fallen

Children's Page Answers

Christmas Quiz

1. Mary 2. Bethlehem 3. Carpenter
4. There was no room 5. We are not told.
6. Manger 7. A valuable incense made from the sap of a tree
8. No one knows, but more than one
9. Caesar Augustus
10. Matthew and Luke.

Birth of Christ Crossword

ACROSS:

1. Star. 5. Joseph
7. Room. 9. Myrrh 11. Inn
12. Peace

DOWN

1. Shepherds 2. Angels
3. Worship 4. Bethlehem
6. Prince 8. Mary
9. Stable 10. Field

LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF DUDLEY

Christmas Unwrapped

The rituals of gift giving associated with Christmas come from a multitude of sources, some mythological, some religious, many commercial. The Bible tells us that wise men from the East brought gifts for Jesus, and we celebrate Christmas with much exchanging of presents. But how many of us take time to see beyond this ritualistic giving and reflect on the real meaning of Christmas; to 'unwrap' Christmas so we can see what it's really about. We're always very keen to get the wrapping off our gifts quickly and not just admire the packaging, but are we prepared to do the same to the heart of Christmas, to see beyond the ribbons and bows to the truth of the underlying message?



That very first Christmas, only some people could see beyond the wrapping, or were prepared to look. Most were deceived by outward appearances. God's people were awaiting the gift of a Saviour, the Messiah who would come announcing a new age, heralding the start of God's kingdom on earth, setting them free from oppression and captivity, bringing peace. They had expectations of what this Messiah would be like - a king, a mighty warrior. They were expecting a governing prince, the Son of the most high God. That kind of Saviour would surely arrive with a flourish, a fan fare, making a massive impact.

But Jesus came effectively in disguise, a refugee born to a teenage mum in a borrowed stable. So most people missed him, missed the significance of his birth, and the life which was beginning. People failed to see beyond outward appearances then, just as they do now.

Some shepherds though, simple folk out in the fields, were surprised by angels. Angels who told them that the Saviour had been born, not in a palace, where shepherds like them would never get a security pass, but in a stable; not wrapped in the finest of regal garments, but wrapped in strips of cloth. They declared this child would bring peace to the world. And the shepherds took these angels at their word. They went and found the baby, lying in a manger. They saw beyond the strips of cloth and the impoverished surroundings. They had eyes to see who this baby was to become, and with joy and confidence they went out to spread the good news of his birth. News of peace and joy. We too can be surprised if we take time to unwrap Christmas; to seek God now as wise men and simple shepherds sought him long ago; to explore the real message of Christmas, which is most certainly more than the clamour of commercials to spend, spend, spend and the ringing of cash tills in our ears. At Christmas time we receive so many presents we don't really need, while God offers us a gift we cannot do without - the gift of peace, and relationship with him.

I pray you may receive and unwrap the gift of life this Christmas.

Nikki Groarke

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