

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD

Parish Church Magazine

**JANUARY 2016
Online edition**



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Parish Church Magazine



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JANUARY 2016

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)
Daily:	5.00 pm - Evening Prayer (except Fridays)
Wednesday:	1.30 pm - Toddlers' Group 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	01384 379972
Prayer Group	Third Wednesday in month, 10 -11 am	393454
Mothers' Union:	Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm	392951
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:	Mrs Kanthi Ariaraj	395115
Church Wardens:	Mrs Judy Hall	377349
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
Organist / Choirmaster:	Mr Robin Walker	01905 353939
Treasurer:	Mr Russ Fowler	442684
PCC Secretary:	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
Magazine Editors:	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
	Miss Gemma Sutton	0121 360 0933

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	
Facebook:	www.facebook.com/stmaryschurcholdswinford	
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 2016



Friday 1	Stephen's day off.
Saturday 2	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 3	THE EPIPHANY
	4.00 pm Christingle Service in support of the Children's Society
Monday 4	10.00 am Open the Book Team Planning Meeting
Tuesday 5	11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft
Wednesday 6	9.00 am Morning Prayers and Full Staff Meeting
Thursday 7	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 8	Stephen's day off.
Saturday 9	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 10	THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
	Copy date for January magazine
Tuesday 12	2.15 pm Mothers' Union Meeting in the Coach House.
Thursday 14	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 15	Stephen's day off
Saturday 16	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 17	THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
Thursday 21	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 22	Stephen's day off
Saturday 23	9.00 am Men's Breakfast at The Talbot, Stourbridge
	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
	2.00-4.00 pm Messy Church
SUNDAY 24	THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
Wednesday 27	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Thursday 28	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 29	Stephen' Day off
Saturday 30	9.30 am Walking Group Meet
	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 31	THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
	The Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

LOOKING AHEAD.... Social event for all the family.

Saturday 6 February, 7.30 pm, Barn Dance with Eve and John in the Church Hall

JOSIE CAPEWELL

As the December 2015 edition of this magazine went to print the St Mary's family was saddened to hear of the death of Josie Capewell. Josie was a very dear lady, much loved by all who knew her, a very devout and committed Christian, a loyal member of St Mary's and someone who possessed an incredibly extensive and accurate knowledge of Old Swinford during the past ninety years or so. Josie will be missed greatly.

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

New Year brings with it lots of new intentions: we are going to eat less, drink less, do more exercise, learn a new skill, be a little more agreeable - the list is endless. Why are there so many things we want to change? Partly, I suspect, because we can see that there needs to be change in our lives, we are not quite content with how our lives are, and in moments of clarity we can see that. After the excesses of Christmas feasting and partying there is no better time to start afresh, hence the idea of New Year's resolutions.

The thing we all know is that those resolutions have a habit of vanishing very quickly, few of us get to the end of the first week of January without having broken most, if not all, of our resolutions. Does that mean that the resolutions are a waste of time? Not a bit of it; it is instead just a demonstration of the weakness of human nature, that so often we seek to follow a particular idea or way only to give up when the going gets tough.

This idea of the frailty of our make up is demonstrated time and again in the Bible. People set off to follow the ways of God with all the best intentions, and then something happens to divert them from their route. Jesus talked about this in one of his best known stories, the parable of the sower, where the seed that is sown fails to come to fruition because there are many obstacles in the way.

There are many times when most Christians feel a little like the seed that fails to grow because it is distracted by the cares of the world, or comes up against so many hard challenges that they just give up and lie dormant. But we are called to a journey of faith, a journey which starts at our baptism, and as with any journey we move forward, not always quickly and perhaps not always in the right direction, but we are called to move, and to grow. If we do not move and grow then we become mere shells of what we could be and what God wants us to be.

It is for this reason that I asked Jonathan Kimber (Director of Discipleship in the Diocese of Worcester) to prepare and deliver a Lent Course which would help us on our journey of faith. You can read a little more about this course elsewhere in the magazine, and I urge you to join in the course with Christians from around Stourbridge on Tuesdays during Lent, starting on February 16.

With best wishes for the year ahead and the continued meeting of those resolutions.

Stephen Agnew

SERVICES IN JANUARY 2016

3 January Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 60. 1-6	Matthew 2. 1-12
	6.30 pm Evensong	1 Samuel 1. 20-28	1 John 4. 7-16
10 January First Sunday of Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am	WORSHIP TOGETHER	
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	Isaiah 55. 1-11	Romans 6. 1-11
17 January Second Sunday of Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	1 Corinthians 12. 1-11	John 2. 1-11
	6.30 pm Evensong	1 Samuel 3. 1-20	Ephesians 4. 1-16
24 January Third Sunday of Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 pm The First Communion	1 Corinthians 12. 12-31a	Luke 4. 14-21
	6.30 pm Evensong	Isaiah 49. 1-13	Acts 22. 3-16
31 January Fourth Sunday of Epiphany. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Malachi 3. 1-5	Luke 2. 22-40
	6.30 pm Evensong	Haggai 2. 1-9	John 2. 18-22

Throughout the Christmas and New Year Season we are holding a bucket collection in support of the Christian Aid Refugee Crisis Appeal. Thank you for your support.

EPIPHANY

The Western Church began celebrating the Epiphany in the 4th century where it was, and still is, associated with the visit of the Magi (the Wise Men) to the infant Jesus when God revealed himself to the world through the incarnation of Jesus. According to Matthew 2:11 they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.



'In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

*"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel."*

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Often, in service formats and in the carols we sing the events of Christmas and Epiphany easily roll into one. History will tell us that the Wise Men had learned from their readings and studies of astrology of the prophesies of an infant king to be born. This man was to be born a Jew, and was to become to be the saviour of all people.

Two thousand years ago the news of such a birth would have taken time to be shared widely and so the Wise Men would have had to travel for some time to see the baby born in a stable in Bethlehem. They would not have been there on the day, and hence history places the event some twelve days later. In different traditions Epiphany may be regarded as one day or as an extended period from January 6 to Ash Wednesday.

The knowledge and understanding of the wise men and the experience of visiting this child convinced them of the truth of what they had heard and seen and of the likelihood of danger being brought to the child if they had returned to tell Herod where to find him. So they left their gifts and went back to their homes without returning to Herod.

Who were the wise men? We do not know and we do not know from which countries they came. Tradition names them as Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar and the gifts they brought as Gold - a sign of Christ's royalty, Frankincense - a sign of Christ's holiness and Myrrh - a sign of Christ's humanity, his suffering and his death.

For children.....Why are the three kings not included in the crib when it is displayed in church up to and during Christmas?

Twelfth Night is the evening of the 5 January, when, in Victorian tradition all decorations would be taken down and burnt. In pre-Victorian times natural 'greenery' decorations from the land were thought to carry the tree-spirits and they were brought inside to protect them during the harshest weeks of winter. The greenery was taken down and placed outside on 2 February, Candlemass Day, to return the spirits to the countryside to ensure good growth for the coming year.

LOOKING FORWARD TO LENT

We were very pleased to welcome to our 10.00 am service on Sunday 29 November, Advent Sunday, Revd Jonathan Kimber and to listen and learn from him as our preacher. Jonathan is the Director of Ministry and Discipleship for the diocese and part of his work has involved the development of a Lent Course for use in 2016, entitled *Living as Disciples*.



The hope is that the course will help people to grow as disciples of Jesus – in our understanding, our living and our character. As awareness of this course has developed the decision has been taken for it to be used as the central theme of our Lent Course at St Mary's and this will be developed further early in the new year.

In explanatory notes introducing the course Jonathan writes:

"In five sessions it is not possible to cover every aspect of discipleship. Within the course, five different angles on discipleship have been selected. The hope is that each of these proves illuminating, shedding fresh light on what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ in the 21st century. The five sessions are entitled:

1. Disciples as learners.
2. Disciples as followers
3. Disciples as friends
4. Disciples as those who serve
5. Gathering it together in the light of the resurrection"

As further details become available these will be published for your information. Initial planning suggests the course sessions will be on Tuesday evenings starting at 7.30 pm. The first date will be 13 February..... something to add to that new diary!



As one year draws to an end and the first days of another dawn, we have the opportunity to pause for a few moments. Following the busy days in the lead up to Christmas and the often hectic celebrations and partying of the holiday itself, there comes a time when most of us find a few moments to relax. This may well be a time when we heave a sigh of relief that the constant round of making merry and associated expense may be over for a while. A time when we may reflect on what it has all been about.

One such thought that may pass through our minds is the appreciation we owe to those who contributed in their particular way to all we enjoyed and shared in during Christmas and the past year.

This provides a special opportunity for us to share in a well-meant thank you to all these people. To Stephen, Roy, Kanthi and Roger who lead our worship, to John our Parish Administrator, to Glenys our cleaner. To Jean, Pamela, Jo and Angie and all other family members who see their loved ones less than they might as a consequence of the time they give to serving us. To the many volunteers who contribute to so many different aspects of the life of our church communion and our role in the wider community of the St Mary's Parish. To all members of our choir and our music makers, those who care for the church building and its contents, those who decorate with flowers, the contractors who support us with their expertise and all those who take part in the many activities which fill the church and the church hall with the very meaning of what it is to be a community. To the children at schools and those who guide them as they grow to become our future; and the many tradespeople of our local shops and businesses and those who pass through our parish each day. It would be impossible to name or even list everyone, but we hope you will find in this message to you all a genuine expression of our appreciation of you being a valued part of the wider Parish of Old Swinford. Thank you for your gifts, for being there, for doing what you can and for sharing.

**Judy Hall and Tony Tatford
Churchwardens**

TREE OF LIGHT SERVICE

St Mary's Church was pleased to serve and host once again the Mary Stevens Tree of Light service on Saturday, 28 November. Since the unfortunate necessity of responding to the potential hazards of an outdoor service in inclement weather, this annual service has been held indoors at two locations, in Stourbridge at St Mary's and at St John's Church, Halesowen.

For 2015 the service took on a slightly new format under the direction of the new Chaplain, Revd David Knight, assisted by Revd Stephen Agnew. With regard to the feelings of loss and confusion so often brought about by bereavement the service was designed to encourage us to remember loved ones with affection and to celebrate and reflect on the part they played in the lives of their families. Prayers, readings, poetry and songs formed the essence of this act of worship and remembrance which included verses written by those who have been recently bereaved. Musical items included songs by children from Peters Hill Primary School and 'Got 2 Sing'. Those attending in memory of a named loved one received a candle which, as it was lit from the flame of the Pascal candle, spread the light of faith flickering through the church at the same time as the lights on the Tree of Light were illuminated in the grounds of Mary Stevens Hospice.

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE

In keeping with tradition this service begins in complete darkness. As the choir processes with candles lit, these flames are shared to illuminate the candles held by the whole congregation, symbolising the entrance of the light of Christ into the darkness of the world.

On Sunday 29 November this service began with the choir singing an arrangement of Psalm 121:

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

Our December meeting welcomed Jean Swift, the Diocesan Action and Outreach Unit Coordinator and Revd Stephen Agnew as we shared the celebrations of Christ's Nativity with a programme of readings and carols.

Then we all puzzled over a Christmas-themed quiz while we enjoyed a superb tea provided and served by several members.

We thank everyone who made this such a special happy time before the busy rush of Christmas activities.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, 12 January, 2.15 pm at the Coach House.

AGM followed by Linda Cross speaking about "The Street Pastors."

All are welcome.

Dawn Nex

A NEW YEAR

January 1 is the first day of a new year. On New Year's Eve people often celebrate with a party and big fireworks displays occur in many places across the world. Do you know where this picture was taken?

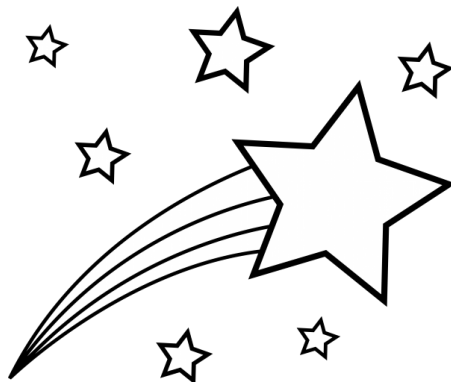


This figure is Father Time, an imaginary person representing the passing of time. Colour the picture of Father Time.

He is carrying a sand glass. Do you know how this is used to measure time? These were often used when cooking an egg.



Christians call the time just after Christmas Epiphany. This is a time when we remember how the Three Kings travelled a long way to see the baby Jesus, led by a bright star in the sky.





What were the three gifts brought by the Wise Men?

1. F _ _ N K _ _ C _ _ S E
2. _ O _ D
3. M _ R R _



Can you find all these words in the word search grid?

BALTHASAR BETHLEHEM CHILD EPIPHANY
 FEAST FRANKINCENSE GASPAR GIFTS GOLD
 HOMAGE JESUS KING MAGI MANGER MARY
 MELCHIOR MYRRH NIGHT OFFERING STAR
 THREE TREASURE TWELFTH WISEMEN



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

BISHOP GRAHAM IN PARIS

On 28 November, Bishop Graham addressed the Pilgrims who had walked from London to Paris at the Climate Change Conference Spiritual Movement, St Denis Basilica. He began thus.....

I am enormously grateful for this invitation to speak here and I bring you greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury and also the Bishop of Salisbury, the lead bishop for the environment in the Church of England. I bring our prayers for this wounded, fearful and hurting city that peace may be yours. I apologise that you are having to put up with a deputy-deputy today.

One regret that I have is that diary commitments meant that I could not join the pilgrims walking from London to Paris. Instead, as rather an armchair pilgrim, I've followed your journey on Twitter –which largely seems to have contained much mud amidst continuous rain –and joined with you in the beautiful, yet often disturbing, Pilgrimage 2 Paris reflections and prayers written as a collaboration between Christian Aid, Cafod, Tearfund and the Church of England. I know that many others have travelled here, alone or in groups, from across Europe and from around the world. You have gathered people along the way, held conversations, and heard and shared stories. I am in awe of your commitment and hard work for this vitally important issue for the future of our planet. Thank you.

The cross that I'm wearing is from New Zealand, a gift from a bishop there, which is made from green Pounamu rock and blessed in the Waikato river. Safeguarding the integrity of creation is a core mission imperative of the Anglican Communion as we strive to renew the face of the earth. Wearing this cross here reminds me that climate change is a *worldwide* problem that knows no national borders but has *local* consequences. It will affect all 7.2 billion people who share this one planet, our common home, but it is already disproportionately affecting the world's poorest people. Mitigating and adapting to its consequences need a *worldwide* effort with 7.2 billion *local* initiatives that will make a difference.

In Genesis there is the story of Hagar, a slave girl in the home of Abraham and Sarah. Now Abraham and Sarah, despite God's promise, are not able to have children at first, indeed for many, many years, and they take the matter into their own hands and Hagar is used as a surrogate. Pregnant with Ishmael, she incurs Sarah's jealousy and wrath, and is banished into the desert. God meets her when she is in a desperate state and asks her two questions;

'where have you come from and where are you going?' (Genesis 16.8)

Hagar can answer the first question, but in that desert of despair she can't begin to trace out an answer to the second. It takes God to give her direction.

The full text of Bishop Graham's address can be found at:- <http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news/2015/11/28/bishop-graham-speaks-pilgrims-paris>

SEVEN REASONS TO BAN THE LORD'S PRAYER

Britain woke up this morning to the news that the Lord's Prayer has been banned from cinemas.

The Church of England has produced a sixty second commercial. The only words are the words of the Lord's Prayer, said by children, the bereaved, people at work and so on. It's a beautiful film, Certificate U. The ad is to promote a new website, Just Pray.uk. The plan was (and is) to show the film before Christmas at screenings of the new Star Wars film to help everyone think about prayer and to pray. What could be more simple?

The distributors have declared the Lord's Prayer unsuitable for screening. They believe it carries the risk of upsetting or offending audiences.

Cue indignation from the press, fury from the Archbishop (according to the Mail anyway) debates about free speech, a possible challenge in the courts and a storm on social media.

But wait just a moment. Suppose the cinema chains got this one right?

I disagree with their decision and I disagree with the reasons they have given. I hope it's reversed. I don't believe the film will offend or upset audiences, in the way they mean, and I don't believe it creates a new precedent.

But from the point of view of global corporations and consumer culture, from the perspective of the gods and spirits of the age, there are very good reasons indeed to ban the Lord's Prayer from cinemas and from culture and from public life.

This is a prayer said by billions of people every day in every language on the planet. In every single moment in time, someone is praying these words. They are the first words of prayer we learn as children and the last words we say at the moment of death.

The Lord's Prayer is powerful for a reason. These words shape lives and families and communities and whole societies.

There are real reasons why the Lord's Prayer has been banned by the demigods of consumer culture, in the boardrooms of the cinema chains. Here are seven, one for every line.

First, this prayer gives to those who pray it an identity and a place in the world and a counter cultural community. **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name"**. It opposes the myth that we are random specks of matter floating through space and time. It opposes the myth that our lives do not matter. It opposes the myth of fragmented humanity.

We are created and loved and called into friendship with God who is our father and into community with our fellow human beings who are therefore our sisters and brothers. Only someone who has found this new identity can stand against the advertising culture which night and day seduces us to define who we are by what we spend.

Second, this prayer gives us the courage to live in an imperfect world. **"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"**.

The world is not as it was meant to be. It is distorted from its true purpose. But God is at work to redeem and transform this world, to establish his kingdom. The Lord's Prayer invites us not to retreat from the world in fear and pain, to anaesthetise or indulge ourselves. The Lord's Prayer invites us to join the struggle to see justice and peace prevail.

Third, and most powerfully, the Lord's Prayer teaches us to live with just enough. This is the most dangerous reason why it cannot be shown with the adverts at the cinema. It teaches us not to want more. It teaches contentment,

the most subversive virtue of them all.

“Give us this day our daily bread”. This is not a prayer for more. This is a prayer only for what we need. Every other advert in the cinema is there to encourage us to spend money in pursuit of happiness. This one restrains our greed.

Fourth, the Lord’s Prayer teaches me to live with my imperfections and the imperfections of others. There is a way to deal with the rubbish in our lives. **“Forgive us our sins”.**

Consumer culture holds before us the image of perfection. We cannot be happy until we look like this person, live like that one. Each image is a lie.

The Lord’s Prayer acknowledges human imperfection and sin, daily. The Lord’s Prayer offers a pathway to forgiveness, daily. The way of forgiveness cannot be bought. It is a gift. Grace. Grace subverts the whole culture of advertising.

Fifth, the Lord’s Prayer offers a way of reconciliation. **“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”.** We are not meant to feud or live in hostility or rivalry. We are meant to forgive and be forgiven, to be reconciled to each other. That reconciliation happens without expensive presents, without going into debt, without credit. People are not made happy by more things, another consumer lie. The greatest happiness comes from relationships. The key to great relationships is reconciliation and forgiveness.

Sixth, the Lord’s Prayer builds resilience in the human spirit. When you say this prayer each day you are prepared for the bad days. **“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”**

When we say this prayer we remind ourselves that we are not living in a Disney fairy tale, a saccharine creation of film makers where every story has a happy ending.

We are living in a real world of cancer and violence and difficulty, where we are tested, where bad things happen for no clear reason. We live in that world confident in God’s love and goodness and help even in the midst of the most challenging moments of our lives. Faith is for the deep valleys as much as the green pastures. We may not have the answers but we know that God dwells with us and in us.

And seventh, the Lord’s Prayer tells us how the story ends, how this life is to be lived and lived well. **“For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen”.**

The prayer returns as it begins to the praise and glory of the living God. Our hearts return to their origin and source, the one who created us. Life is to be lived to God’s praise and glory, not to satisfy our own small desires. We are beings with a higher calling and a greater purpose.

There are only 63 words in the Lord’s Prayer. It takes less than a minute to say them.

Yet these words shape our identity, give purpose to our lives, check our greed, remind us of our imperfections, offer a way of reconciliation, build resilience in our spirits and call us to live to the glory of our creator.

No wonder they have been banned in the boardrooms of consumer culture.

Steven Croft, Bishop of Sheffield

A MESSAGE TO SHARE

On opening the parish church magazine e-mail box recently there awaited a much appreciated letter from a former member of St Mary's congregation. We reproduce that letter below in order to share the good wishes it contains with those who know or may not know Brenda. We have replied with the good wishes and thanks of St Mary's.

Dear Gemma and Antony,

Re: October issue - Distant readers

Writing from the Cothi Valley in Carmarthenshire - I am fortunate enough to have a lovely friend (Toni Evans) who has for the past ten years posted the St. Mary's Parish magazine to me.

I enjoy reading all the news and articles and feel blessed to have shared fellowship with lots of wonderful people.

Thank you to my friend and the worshippers of St. Mary's for continuing to reach out to people who are far away. You are all in my thoughts and prayers

Brenda Christman

A past member of St. Mary's.

The Editors

WALKING GROUP

Penn to Swindon

On 28 November 2015, nine of us boarded the 256 bus departing at 10:00 am from Stourbridge Interchange. We alighted at Penn and walked towards Showell Lane, a narrow road with an interesting selection of mostly large properties. A few were already showing Christmas decorations. After the last house on the left, we crossed a stile to join a permissive path which skirted a very large field growing possibly a crop of winter wheat. Picking up a partially hidden footpath, we descended very steeply to join a road and then another footpath which brought us past the old railway station and on to the Bratch locks where we had our coffee break. We then joined the canal until we reached our lunch stop at the Waggon and Horses, just off the canal. We rejoined the canal until Bottenham locks where we joined a footpath which took us to Swindon (South Staffs, not Wiltshire). A 255 bus took us to Wall Heath where we changed onto a 257 bus back to Stourbridge Interchange.



Christine Day

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

CHICKEN ARRABIATA

This is an Italian classic and can be made as spicy or bland as you like to please your family tastes. My version is a medium version so add more chilli if you like it hot.

The name means 'angry' - and like the pasta sauce this *chicken* casserole is intended to pack a punch of heat and spice. The original version can be time consuming so my healthy version is designed to be cooked in 15 minutes.

Serves 4

1 onion chopped

1-2 cloves garlic chopped

400g chicken fillets cut into smaller pieces

390g Napolina Passata with peppers and chilli

Oil for frying

Fry the chopped onion in a little oil until cooked and starting to brown. Add the garlic and cook for one minute.

Pour in the passata with peppers and chilli, add the chicken and bring to a simmer. Cook for 10 to 15 mins until chicken is just cooked.

Serve with rice and vegetables.

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE...

I do hope you enjoyed the wine you selected with your Christmas meal. However, if you chose red and now wish you had gone white, here's an opportunity to revisit the poultry-with-sauce-and-additional-flavours dilemma.

Indeed, this chicken arrabiata is instructive in many fundamental wine-matching rules, which we will certainly encounter again during the year. If you opt for red here, the sign says 'take care'. Avoid anything too tannic (save such for steak or venison); make sure the wine has brisk acidity to cope with the passata; steer clear of wines high in alcohol - especially if you are ramping up the chillies and peppers as it will just seem even hotter and more fiery.

Safer with a white? Perhaps.....but again there are several pitfalls. Light citrus flavoured whites favour fish rather than white meats. The passata brings a fresh clean note (and indeed on its own is at home with Sauvignon Blanc) - so not too much creamy, toasty, tobacco and cinnamon oak please. A floral, aromatic white can elevate a bland dish - but we already have a layer of spice and a spike of chilli giving an uplifting sensation; moreover, Ann doesn't do bland food !

So, where does that lead us ? If you selected a Barolo or Barbaresco from your 'premium Piedmont' shelf and wish to stay in the red corner, then drop down a notch to a regular Barbera from the same region. Again. if you drank

your Puligny Montrachet with your Christmas feast, lower your price and oak levels now and open a village wine from the Macon district or perhaps a Limoux Chardonnay.

Something adventurous? A well-known television chef recently prepared a chicken and passata dish accompanied by a bottle of Grillo but he was in Sicily at the time

Enjoy your wine-sipping

Richard W. B. Ryan

Christmas Market Results

This year's Christmas Market started well. Georgia, a member of the Youth Club, took time out of her busy schedule to perform the opening ceremony which she did brilliantly by cutting the red and gold ribbon. Immediately the Hall was filled with eager buyers, some of whom had queued for a good half hour. Everything went very smoothly and customers and stall holders all looked and sounded equally happy to be there – much chatter and even more laughter, always a reliable sign of a successful event. I'm sorry if any of you were unable to join us as you missed out on a lovely occasion with lots of interesting things to buy and see; the prizes at both the Tombola and the Bottle Stall had all been won. The Teddy Bears all had new names and found new homes and all the other stalls did brisk business.

The chance to sit down to a delicious homemade mince pie and coffee proved as popular as ever. As always, the event was very successful in bringing together the many communities of church and parish and I would like to thank everyone for their immense generosity –those who donated so much, those who were hard at work on the stalls and behind the scenes and those who came to support us.

The various stalls raised:-

Books	60.95	Jigsaws	33.50
Bottle Stall	79.70	Name the Bears	33.00
Cake Stall	208.50	Plants and Decorations	63.45
Christmas Hamper Raffle	138.50	Red and Green Christmas	196.05
Christmas Quiz	50.00	Refreshments	118.00
Entrance Fees	150.00	Tombola	110.00
Face Painting	6.00	Treasure Island	172.00
Father Christmas	6.00	White Elephant	84.21
Jewellery	81.00	Youth group Games	46.80
Carry Forward	780.65	Total	1637.66

Katey Fletcher

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

6 December Jacob Anthony Haydon
 Myles James Evitts

Funerals

23 November	Frederick Thomas Wellings	Aged 89
24 November	Amy Josephine Capewell	Aged 94
1 December	Granville Arthur Rushton	Aged 81
8 December	Eric Atkinson	Aged 94

EDUCATION SUNDAY

Education Sunday takes place on 24 January 2016. Some of our Church Primary Schools have been learning about Tax Justice:

Death and taxes are said to be the only certainties in life. However even the young in Primary Schools can understand what happens to a society unable to use money from taxes to provide the utilities we enjoy in the UK.

It is these inequalities that the "Tax Justice Initiative" wants to address and thanks to the help of Paul Harrison, Vicar of Churchill, Blakedown and Broome, and Christian Aid, some schools in the Stourbridge deanery were offered the opportunity to learn about the problems which result from the inability to collect Tax.



The students were then able to take their petitions in support of Tax Justice and lobby their MP either in London or at school. A total of six schools from the West Midlands took part in the project. Four different MPs were approached which meant that they made a large significant impact in support of Tax Justice.

Diocesan News

COACH HOUSE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Coach House Committee wishes to provide advance notice to all interested parties that the Annual General Meeting will be held in the Coach House, at 7.30 pm on Thursday 31 March 2016. You are very welcome to attend.

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF DUDLEY

BE WHO YOU TRULY ARE THIS CHRISTMAS

A New Year brings with it a reflecting back over the last 12 months. We have the various personalities of the year, the top 100 of this and that, we are reminded of the major news events and iconic images that perhaps we have all too quickly forgotten.

It is also a time to look forward, praying for a more peaceful, generous, caring, loving 2016 between people and with creation on this our common home.



Recently I read an incredible little novel by the German author Robert Seethaler. *A Whole Life* is a delightful warm and gentle book that describes one man's life living in the Austrian Alps. One reviewer has written that it is 'an exquisite novel about a simple life, it has already demonstrated its power to move thousands of readers with a message of solace and truth'.

It is the story of Andreas, a man of few words, who is left broken hearted following the death of his wife. He leaves his valley just twice in his whole life. Once to fight in World War II - where he is taken prisoner in the Caucasus - and then, six months before his death, on a disorientating day trip by bus. Yet he knows the landscape of his home in immense detail; scaling its mountains, crosses its pastures, and sitting pondering at the doorway of his simple home.

A Whole Life is a tender but not sentimental book, about finding dignity and beauty in solitude. In the closing pages the author writes of Andreas, 'He couldn't remember where he had come from, and ultimately he didn't know where he would go. But he could look back without regret on the time in between, his life, with a full-throated laugh and utter amazement'.

Above all, in crossing backwards and forwards through one man's life, the novel weaves together the experiences and moments, often seemingly insignificant as they happened, that shape Andreas into the person that he is.

In this month of New Year resolutions, I wonder who God would truly have you be?

God loves us as we are because we are as God made us. He who knit 'me together in my mother's womb...for I am fearfully and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139.13-14), calls us to be somewhere between living life looking backwards, and living to far looking into the future. God's gift to us today is often lost, ignored or simply not seen. It lies in the sacrament of the present moment. There we find who we truly are. God calls us in every situation to be ourselves: nothing more and nothing less.

It is from ourselves that we can be sources of new life for others. It's a life-time's task but we are supported in this by other members of Christ's community, inspired daily by the Holy Spirit, the love of God the Father, and the companionship of Jesus who is the truest self of all.

Children's Page answers

The New Year picture was taken in LONDON

The three gifts were FRANKINCENSE, GOLD and MYRRH

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