

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD

Parish Church Magazine

**APRIL 2016
Online edition**



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Parish Church Magazine



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APRIL 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



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 APRIL 2016

Friday 1	Stephen's day off
Saturday 2	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 12.30 pm Wedding
SUNDAY 3	SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER
Tuesday 5	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Croft
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	THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
	Copy date for May magazine
Monday 11	Summer term begins
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 10.00 am - 12.00 noon Mission Coffee Morning....All welcome
SUNDAY 17	FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Tuesday 19	7.30 pm Annual Parochial Church Meeting in the church hall
Wednesday 20	2.30 pm Tea in the Coach House
Thursday 21	10.00 am Prayer meeting at the home of Marjorie Ferguson
Friday 22	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Saturday 23	Stephen's day off
SUNDAY 24	FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
	1.00 pm Wedding
Tuesday 26	11.30 am Holly Communion at Holly Lodge
Wednesday 27	2.15 pm Tuesday Tea in church
Thursday 28	7.30 pm Baptism preparation evening
Friday 29	10.30 am Holy Communion—MU Corporate
Saturday 30	Stephen's day off 9.30 am St Mary's Walking Group 10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour

A NEW DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

We are pleased to announce that Mr Graham Davies has been appointed as the new Director of Music at St Mary's. We look forward to welcoming him to St Mary's. Further details about Graham will appear in the next edition of the magazine.

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

At this Easter season it is easy to think about the central belief of the Christian faith, namely Jesus dying on the cross and rising again to new life. But actually this is not just something we remember at Easter; it is something we should remember each and every week, and that is the reason why people attend worship on a Sunday. Many people think that Sunday is the Sabbath or Seventh day, but Sunday is the First day of the week and was chosen as the Christian day of worship because it was on the first day of the week that Jesus rose from the dead; so technically every Sunday is a day when we remember the resurrection.

I am sure that some of you, as you read this, will want to say that, as the people of the resurrection, we should be conscious of that central event of our faith each and every day, not just on Sundays, and you would be correct. But if you would indulge me for a moment, because I would like to make the point that although we might traditionally worship on a Sunday, and there is very good reason for that, our faith is not just a Sunday faith. Our faith is much too important for it to be relegated to one small part of the week, and left there. We should look to allow our faith to permeate our whole lives, and for that to happen we must give time to matters of faith outside of times of corporate worship.

I know that there are many people who will read this who do just that: they might belong to a prayer group or a house group or a Bible study group of some sort, and by meeting together in faith they strengthen their own faith and their own understanding of what God wants of them. We have only just come to the end of Lent, a time when traditionally Christians have looked to strengthen their faith by participating in some form of study which is aimed at deepening faith, and I was delighted that so many folk from St Mary's availed themselves of the opportunity to take part in this year's Lent Course.

Just before Christmas I asked the congregation to consider how much they read the Bible, and offered some help and guidance on how we might read and study the Bible at home. As a result of that a small group of us meet on a monthly basis to discuss some Bible passages we have read and some guidance notes we have followed. Last month we met to talk about the book of Job, a challenging book which gave us many questions to think through about our response to bad things happening, and whether we were sometimes a little like Job's comforters! This month we will be studying the letter to the Ephesians. In order for the meeting time to be profitable it does require us to have read and reflected upon the material in advance, and then when we spend an hour together some interesting and challenging thoughts develop, and we journey on our faith together. Perhaps you might like to join us.

Or perhaps the thought of another meeting is just too much, in which case you might like to follow the **'faith@home'** sheets which have started to appear in

Church. They are there to help you read the Bible at home, make some connection between the Bible and your day-to-day life, and also prepare for the readings on the following Sunday, they are suitable for anyone of any age – and they're free! Take a sheet each week and help your faith to grow and blossom.

As Christian we should be aware that we are on a journey of faith and we should do our best to travel that faith road and grow.

Stephen Agnew

SERVICES IN APRIL 2016

3 April Second Sunday of Easter	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Acts 5. 27-32	John 20. 19-31
	6.30 pm Evensong	Isaiah 52. 13-53	Luke 24. 13-35
10 April Third Sunday of Easter	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am	WORSHIP TOGETHER	
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	Isaiah 38. 9-20	John 11. 27-44
17 April Fourth Sunday of Easter	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Acts 9. 36-end	John 10. 22-30
	6.30 pm Evensong	Isaiah 63. 7-14	Luke 24. 36-49
24 April Fifth Sunday of Easter	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 pm Parish Communion	Acts 11. 1-18	John 13. 31-35
	6.30 pm Evensong	Isaiah 52. 7-10	Mark 1. 1-15

TO CELEBRATE THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY



Letters have been circulated to houses and businesses in the immediate vicinity of the church's location in Oldswinford to invite involvement in a proposed celebratory event of the Queen's ninetieth birthday on Saturday, 11 June 2016.

A countrywide project involving the Church of England aims to include celebrations of this significant event in parishes throughout the country. An initial meeting in the Church Hall on Sunday 16 March indicated support for the project in the local area and a small number of people are currently supporting the early publication of the project and encouraging support.

It is envisaged that this should be a community event, organised by and for members of the community. Whilst there is already much willingness within the St Mary's congregations to be involved with and contribute to this event, it is hoped that others will also wish to be involved and may have ideas that will most usefully provide an event that will serve the needs of a wide-ranging group of people. The facilities of the grounds and buildings of St Mary's have been reserved to be available for the event.

The format of the event needs to be determined by all those who wish to be involved. Initial suggestions are for some form of community Bring and Share lunch party on the car park and lawns of the church grounds, possibly with various forms of entertainment and activities aimed at different age groups and interests. Some of the community groups that use the church hall facility have already expressed an interest in being involved. A flower festival within the church which may link with the display of photographs and artefacts illustrating events in Oldswinford during the past ninety years is one suggestion of what may take place, but at this time everything should be considered.

Ideas, offers of help in planning, advice, equipment, publicity, entertainment, whatever you may be able to provide will be welcomed. The next meeting to which all are invited is at 5.00 pm on Sunday 3 April in the church hall.

If you are interested in being involved with the organisation and arrangements of this event, now or at a later stage nearer the day, please let us know by contacting us :

by phone - 01384 441003,

e-mail - st.mary.os@btconnect.com,

facebook- [facebook.com/StMarysChurchOldswswinford](https://www.facebook.com/StMarysChurchOldswswinford)

or post to St Mary's Church Office, Rectory Road, Oldswinford, Stourbridge.
DY8 2HA.

Let's try to make this a real community get together and celebration.

The Church Wardens

THE CHURCHYARD CARE TEAM

Might you have a little spare time to help?

Following a remarkably mild winter, the warmest on record, the approach of warmer weather is already evident in our gardens and in the churchyard as plants begin to grow. If we are to build on the care that has been achieved in the churchyard in the past few years we need to keep on top of this growth from the outset through the combined efforts of those who are able to offer a little time and work.



There is always something in need of attention, from grass mowing, strimming, sweeping, tidying, and trimming. From time to time we will organise work parties when the combined efforts of several people may achieve a considerable impact on a particular task or area in need of care. At other times, the contributions of individuals or small groups who may spend an hour or so on tasks they can manage and enjoy all contribute to the total task.

Every gift of time and effort is valued and appreciated.

It would be most helpful if we are able to be aware of who is available to help and to have a means of communication so we may keep in contact. If you are interested in being part of this workforce, as part of a larger team or as an individual doing what you can, when you can, please let us know. A telephone call to the parish office, 01384 441003, an email to st.mary.os@btinternet.com or a simple note through the door of the office will serve to help us support you with your kindness.

If you are confident and able to use the mower or strimmer please get in touch so we may make the necessary arrangements for these to be made available to you when you are able to help.

NO LIMITS CELEBRATES WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY



We are holding an Open Day, upstairs in the Coach House on Wednesday, 6 April to celebrate World Autism Awareness Day.

Come and join us and have a free cup of tea/coffee with a cake/biscuit between 10.30 and 3.00 p.m.



Come and find out what we have been up to and what activities our members, volunteers & trustees are engaged in.

It will be great to see you.

Chris Morgan

A VISION FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS

Since the beginning of the year the PCC has embarked on a long-term consideration of how St Mary's might respond to the challenges currently facing the parish. Essentially focussed at the local Oldswinford Parish level, although with an awareness of and regard for wider issues, several individuals responded to the enquiry of a vision as to where St Mary's might be in ten years time. These responses were collated and presented at the January 2016 meeting of the PCC where a brief consideration of the overall issues raised and matters for further investigation were shared. This was our starting point, the summary of the responses received:-

Stourbridge is not of sufficient size to support seven churches under current circumstances and unless we can effect a massive turnaround we are in danger of becoming the curators of a beautiful but empty historic building rather than an active Christian community serving the needs of others. At present St Mary's finds itself catering for a very specific demographic which does not reflect the broader needs of the parish community. We need to have the courage to ask fundamental questions about our current ministry, the humility to change things that create barriers to others and the wisdom to recognise what is good and carry it into the future. It will not be achieved without prayers, hard work, lots of co-operation and good will. One thing is sure, the Spirit can only work if we are active, alive and kicking! A good way to start is to look at it with the eyes of the outsider and as such these are the points we should consider:-

- ◆ *Identify what has changed over the years and respond to it*
- ◆ *Be clear about what we know and don't know, then seek knowledge that will help us*
- ◆ *Listen to our senses – we often ignore them if they're uncomfortable*
- ◆ *Respond to information presented to us*
- ◆ *Match our response to the size of the 'threat' to us*
- ◆ *Have the courage to act decisively*
- ◆ *Recognise that things change over time*

The summary then listed a series of items which formed a 'Wish List' in relation to:

The church building - This included recognition of matters such as the challenges and costs of maintaining the building and the desire to improve access to, longer opening times and a wider use of the church.

The worshipping church family- This considered issues relating to the maintenance of a growing and thriving church that is attractive to young people and families, has traditional and new ways of worship, closer links with other churches and where the Christian faith is taught and practised.

The Christian mission of the church- This included the retention of traditional liturgies valued by our existing congregations and how alternative liturgies relevant to those new to the Christian faith might be explored. Also, a more effective communication with the wider local community.

The responses provided a very substantial list of ways in which these wishes might be achieved. These are available in the full documentary record of this exercise which may be found on the notice board at the back of church.

There is much work still to be done to determine what must be our priorities and how these may be pursued. Who may be involved? What do we need to do? How might we do it? What may be the costs? How may these be provided for?

At this stage many of the questions stand unanswered but with the potential for solutions to be sought and refined. Part of this process will be in prayer, with the gathering together as members of the church to prayerfully explore what God has in store for us. Please do join in with this important process of determining what we need to be doing to provide for the future at St Mary's. Your contributions will be much appreciated.

A NEW NOTICE BOARD

The small white notice board which provides for essential notices within the church grounds has served us well over many years but is well past its best, is too small for much to be displayed, leaks when it rains, and needs to be replaced with something bigger and more equipped to serve the role it needs to fulfil.

With this in mind the PCC has considered available specifications and the requirements of both the church and the church hall management teams to provide a means of informing people of services, events and opportunities associated with St Mary's.

A design has been agreed and the process of purchasing and installing a new notice board is underway. The need for planning permission and for a faculty application may mean that it will be a few months before the notice board is in place and in use.....but watch that space!

FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

The story of the Good Samaritan tells us how we should care for one another. Read the story or ask an adult to read it to you.

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came to where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will pay you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."



Can you find the following words in this word search?

COIN, HELP,
JERICHO
JERUSALEM, LOVE,
LEVITE, MERCY,
OIL, PRIEST,
ROBBERS





















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

The Good Samaritan showed love and care for another person who needed help when other people refused to help. The stories of the Bible show us the right way to lead our lives. We should care for all other people and do what we can to help them at all times.

How Can I Be
A Good Samaritan?

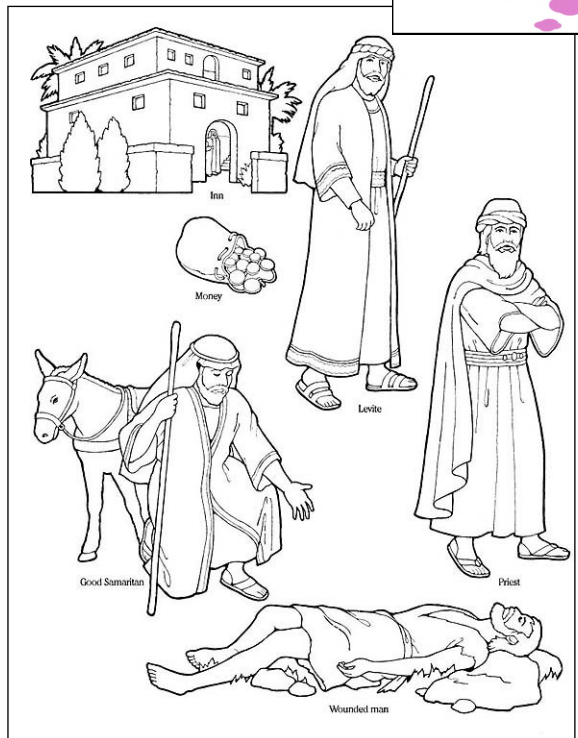
Make your own 'Helping Hands' Chart and try to be kind to others.

Helping Hands

Give a friend a hug when they are upset				
				
				
				
				

Everytime you help someone else like the good Samaritan did, you can colour in a 'helping hand' on your chart!

Ask a parent to help you pick some other good deeds for your chart.



MOTHERING SUNDAY EVENSONG

Our evensong on Sunday 6 March came at the end of a busy weekend for Stephen and it was his last service before his departure for the pilgrimage to The Holy Land. It was therefore appropriate that the theme for his sermon should be a reflection on the value of relaxation after an arduous task. That is not to say that the pilgrimage would be relaxing; Stephen later observed that he would look forward to his period of rest after Holy Week. Drawing on the two readings, he compared the messages from the books of Isaiah and 2 Timothy in which both passages emphasise how faith in The Lord gives strength to the tired and weary.

Perhaps it was a coincidence that these readings should be appointed for Mothering Sunday which is also the 4th Sunday of Lent, marking the midway stage of the Lent fast. On this day the Lenten rigours are relaxed and it is a day of hope with Easter being at last in sight. Traditionally servants were released from service for the day to visit their mother – hence Mothering Sunday.

During the readings there were two verses in each passage which further alerted my attention. During my career some of my work was concerned with metal-working and welding research, so I was pleased to hear in the Old Testament reading, a reference to the metal worker saying of the welding 'It is good' (Isaiah 41 v.7). However my pride was dented during the New Testament reading when Timothy was told that 'Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm'. (2 Timothy 4 v.14). It is interesting that both passages should pick on this particular trade to illustrate the text message. I am not sure how to interpret the conflicting views but clearly one should exercise care in taking short passages out of context.

Alec Beevers

ST MARYS WALKING GROUP

27 February 2016 6.3 miles Harvington, Worcestershire

The February walk started on the car park of "The Dog at Harvington" with sixteen people in our merry band. We set off in a north east direction across the meadow behind the pub. The path then descended to the edge of a wood named Fenny Rough and turned right along a well made track to a lane. We crossed the lane and continued past Mount Segg private reserve then descended through woodland (at this point Sue and Ray our new walkers had a message informing them that they had become grand parents) to cross Barnett Brook. The path then took us across agricultural land near to the eastern corner of Bissell Wood and Deansford Lane Kennels. Turning right on to the lane, then left into the very pretty Barnett Brook Valley, we eventually came to an old water mill where we crossed the brook and climbed up a short slope to a track leading to Stanleys Garden



Centre. We continued ahead to the very busy A450 road which we crossed to rejoin the Barnett Brook Valley on the high path. Looking down to the banks of the brook we were surprised to see a number of llamas and alpacas at the waters edge. The path descended to the brook and it was here that we took our well earned coffee stop, in lovely sunshine

The walk continued along the Barnett Brook to the very pretty hamlet of Hillpool where there are a number of houses on the banks with a waterfall at each house. We now turned right into the hamlet and left to join the meadow which leads up out of the valley with views of Chaddesley Corbett and long distant misty views of Malvern.

We walked over farm land to reach Woodrow Lane where we turned right and then, after a short distance left, we continued across a meadow to join a farm track which led to Harvington Hall.

This is a fine moated Elizabethan Manor House built in the 1580's with a series of Priest's hiding places. The house is open to the public from March until end of October.

We left the Hall by walking clockwise round the edge of the moat, past the fishing lakes on our right and crossed the A450 back to "The Dog"; where we had a very enjoyable lunch.

Ray & Jean Drew

A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING FOR MARRIAGE

Valentine's Day this year fell on a Sunday, an appropriate day to hold a Service of Thanksgiving for Marriage. A little after 2.30pm couples started to arrive for the service at 3.00pm. Margaret and Harold Swithenbank arrived with their son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren followed shortly afterwards by other couples whose marriages spanned years ranging from 19 up to 59.

As we waited for the service to begin Robin played different pieces of music related to the wedding service. It was lovely to be able to sit and listen to them in full.

Following Stephen's welcome we sang 'Love divine, all love's excelling'. The bible reading was from Colossians, chapter 3 verses 12-17, scripture that is relevant to a wedding but not as well known as other passages. The address was followed by a time of prayers of thanksgiving and confession. After the second hymn, 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind', couples moved to the front of the church for an act of rededication to each other. This moving ceremony concluded with each couple holding their rings and saying together, "This ring is a sign





of our marriage, a reminder of our promise, of lifelong love and faithfulness, in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The service concluded with the hymn 'Lord of all hopefulness' followed by the Lord's Prayer and the Blessing. The voluntary played by Robin was the Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen by Grieg.

After the service everyone enjoyed sparkling wine and traditional wedding cake cut by Gerald and Pauline Cartwright who have been married 59 years. We also had a few photographs taken.

Everyone who attended the service agreed it had been a very special afternoon.

Sally Frost

IN LOVING MEMORY

"There's some good stuff in Isaiah." Maybe this WAS one of recently departed Richard Ryan's most perceptive remarks. Certainly Stephen felt so, for he opened his address thus at Richard's funeral in February. After the loss of Doreen Ryan, my sister Rachel and I became aware that Richard was assembling a few guidance notes for when his day came. Inevitably, it was not until after he had passed away that we came to read his instructions. I spoke to Stephen about his admiration for the scriptures of Isaiah and agreed that "The Lord's Invitation" passage in chapter 55 would be quite appropriate. We spoke of his sense of duty - to his family - to his country, as an enthusiastic RAF serviceman - and to Church and God over twenty years as Verger, Sacristan and a range of other duties. As Judy Hall eloquently phrased it ".....the quiet way he worked demonstrating his faith."

And then, sorting out papers and boxes 'filed' around the house, I came across a 2005 parish magazine. It contained a "My Life - My Faith" piece which Richard had composed. Here it all was: "I dislike noise" he wrote - "I am a 'still small voice of calm' and 'dews of quietness' person." Precisely his rationale for selecting amongst his funeral hymns "Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here" and "Dear Lord and Father of mankind" with those lines "Drop thy still dews of quietness" and "O still small voice of calm!" Those present at his funeral will recall that this theme was highlighted with musical refrains and verses from "Be still my soul" as we reflected and held Richard in our thoughts. Elsewhere in the article, he declared the following to be his favourite piece of scripture: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the humble, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to those in prison; to proclaim a year of the Lord's favour and a day of the vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to give them garlands instead of ashes, oil

of gladness instead of mourners' tears', a garment of splendour for the heavy heart. They shall be called Trees of Righteousness, planted by the Lord for his glory.

The lines are from Isaiah, chapter 61, verses 1-3. Richard explained how they had made a deep impression on him - especially the words 'bind up the broken-hearted', for as a young reporter during the war years, he found himself interviewing many broken-hearted wives, mothers and fathers of servicemen who had been killed. Oh yes, "there's some good stuff in Isaiah!"

Let me conclude by quoting one further line from Richard's 2005 article: "I owe much to St Mary's and members of the Church who have given me support and encouragement." He is still thinking of you. We give thanks.

Richard Ryan and Rachel Ryan

**Please join us for a
Mission Coffee Morning
At St Mary's Church,
Saturday, 16 April 2016**

**10.00am—12.00 noon
in the Narthex**

Raising funds for Mission Giving

Coffee/tea and delicious cakes - £2.

CHRISM EUCHARIST IN THE CATHEDRAL

Monday 21 March, 11am

This year's Chrism Eucharist, which is the primary gathering during the year for diocesan clergy to worship together, is on Monday 21 March in Worcester Cathedral. All licensed priests and deacons should be robed for the service (robing will be in the Chapter House of the Cathedral and the dress code is cassock, surplice and white stole. During this service the oils for use in ordination, initiation and healing are blessed and there will be the opportunity to renew the ministerial vows made as deacons, priests and bishops. The service is open for anyone to attend but may be particularly appealing to Authorised Lay Ministers and Church Wardens as a service at which many who serve may worship together and reaffirm their commitment to the vows they have made.

Diocesan News

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CAULIFLOWER CHEESE SOUP

If you are making this soup to eat as a light meal you can add some crispy fried bacon with the cheese at the end.....depending ,of course, on what the food police are saying we can eat this week.

25 g (1oz) butter
1 onion, finely chopped
500 g (1lb 2oz) cauliflower florets
1 medium potato, diced
300 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ pint) skimmed milk
500 ml ($\frac{3}{4}$ pint) vegetable stock
50 g (2oz) mature Cheddar cheese, diced

Melt butter in a large pan and gently cook the onion for 10minutes until soft. Add the cauliflower, potato, milk, stock and some seasoning, bring to the boil.

Simmer for 25 minutes or until the vegetables are completely tender. Blend until smooth, return to the pan and check seasoning, adjust the consistency with more milk or stock if needed.

To serve, reheat the soup if necessary and ladle into warmed bowls. Top with the cheese just before eating and add some freshly ground black pepper.

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE...

In the course of my wine studies, I particularly prized single varietal wines in order to identify the flavours of particular grapes. Perhaps that's why I'm such a fan of red Burgundy (a mono-varietal) whereas the great glories of Bordeaux are invariably a blend. However, in dishes such as this, where we might add cheese and bacon into our cauliflower soup, wines assembled from a mixture of grapes really come into their own. Here we require a white blend. Unsurprisingly, the big name grapes Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc frequently find themselves partnered with a lesser variety - often to add structure and definition of fruit. Where then should we go to find a blend to reflect this breadth of flavours? Faced with just such a challenge recently, I opted for a blend from the Alentejo region in central-southern Portugal - and what a success it was! Within Portugal, regional specialities exist (Arinto in Bucelas; Loureiro in Rios do Minho) but there is no dominant variety and frequently bottlings contain a blend of lesser known regional

grape varieties. So too on this occasion : Fernao Pires, Malvasia, Roupeiro and a dash of Arinto. It had everything: fresh, clean, aromatic, with both tangy fruit and a zing of mouth-watering acidity. More successful, in my opinion, than a Rhone Valley blend (where Roussanne and Marsanne are soul-mates) or indeed concoctions from southern France, where Clairette, Rolle, Bourboulenc and Grenache Blanc are all invited to the blending party.

Incidentally, the Alentejo white I selected was actually to accompany a flight of amuse-bouches and in this respect it would be a perfect partner too for the various nibbles on our plate at a buffet table.

Enjoy your wine-sipping

Richard W. B. Ryan

ST MARY’S WITH ST JOHN’S MOTHERS’ UNION

Sixteen members and one visitor attended our meeting. Anne May was able to join us following her treatment and Dorothy Gibson has moved back from Kinver to Oldswinford. Sally Frost welcomed them and we remembered Marjorie Ferguson who was in hospital having a heart pacemaker fitted.

Revd Tom Fish, curate at Christ Church, Lye, led our Lenten meditation. Before being ordained he and his wife were lay pastors in areas of London, especially Brixham. Now they are working to re-establish a fellowship and ministry in Stambermill.

Jesus the Way, Truth and Life (John 14: 1—6) was the theme of the meditation. We were guided to reflect that Jesus leads us on the way to the Father by going ahead, never by going away. Next, in His earthly ministry, by His teachings and actions, Christ reveals the truth and deep love of the Father. Finally, eternal life is possible through Christ’s sacrifice of love so God, our Father, is fully known. Each of these thoughts were focused and deepened as we listened to a modern Christian song. Revd Tom Fish was thanked for leading us to think on these deep-reaching issues as we approach Easter.

Next meeting is on Tuesday 12th April at 2.15pm in the Coach House - “Are you up a tree?” - June Young. All are welcome.

Dawn Nex

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

7 February	Madeline Joy Lowe
21 February	Katy Laura Joyce
	Megan Ann Andrews
	Millie Louise Boex

Weddings

No weddings this month

Funerals

22 February	John Duncan	Aged 97
25 February	Alison Audsley	Aged 59
1 March	June Macleod	Aged 90

NEWS OF SASI

A photo of Mark is on the Mission Board. He has definitely grown! When St Mary's was first made aware of him and his mother, Sasi, in Sri Lanka, he was just a toddler. The family had been through much sadness and difficulty as his father had died of cancer before Mark's 2nd birthday. He touched our hearts and we felt drawn to help him grow. Coffee mornings, fund-raising events and contributions helped to support them in a small, steady way.

Mark has just begun in senior school. Schools in Sri Lanka offer two ways in which to study - in the native language or in English. Mark hails from the north of Sri Lanka where the spoken language is Tamil. He is now studying in English which offers better prospects for him. It is a great achievement for Mark to come to this level, thanks to his determination and his mother's ambition to give him the best she can.

Of course we have our own sense of happiness in supporting this family. We also know that what is allocated goes directly to them, with no intermediaries and no fees etc. Above all we delight in their progress.

Mark's father was a Christian minister from a different denomination. Their church is not as we imagine in the West. It is just a hut which they cannot use anymore. Therefore Sasi has offered her small home to host services and for the past few months the tiny congregation has squeezed in there. What happy news!

And so it has come full circle. St Mary's helped to build Sasi's home. It is now used to serve God.

We hope Mark will continue to study and someday - who knows - the possibilities are endless!

Kanthi Ariaraj

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF DUDLEY

Easter people are thankful people.



Throughout this year, I've been offering to spend an hour or so visiting all of our licensed clergy at home. These visits have been one way of interpreting that part of a bishop's calling to serve and care for the flock of Christ, to love and pray for those I seek to serve, and to know them and be known by them.

What a blessing for me these times have been. It has been a privilege to share in laughter, tears, happiness and worries. Some conversations have looked back regretfully to a lost era, whilst others have been thankful. Some have looked forward with concern, whilst others have held optimism and renewed hope.

Thankfully I haven't heard the expletives engendered by a visit from Bishop Brennan on 'Father Ted', nor have I had Carnation milk accidentally poured over me as in the young and sporty bishop's visit to Susan and the ambitious Geoffrey in one of Alan Bennett's monologues!

Throughout our diocese I have met incredible clergy colleagues, deeply committed to their vocation and the ministry entrusted to them, highly skilled in what they do, often working very long hours. There is also a sadness from many that sometimes life is made harder by those parishioners who appear quick to criticise.

This is reflected in some of the letters and emails that I receive. Rarely do I receive a message praising the many thousands of positive aspects those in ministry share each week.

We seem to live in an age of negativity. What would it be like, I wonder, if in this season of Easter joy we were to turn our minds to an age of appreciation?

The Resurrection hope turned the negative, downcast thoughts of the disciples into joy and thanksgiving. Being Easter people means living thankful lives, and the people of Thessalonica were encouraged to "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5.16-18).

That's also good advice to us. Lest I be misunderstood, I'm not advocating a 'Hug a Vicar Day' or a 'Priest Appreciation Society'! However, if we begin by being thankful for those around us, including those we pray and journey with at church, I'm sure we will also see our appreciation of all that God has done for us lit up in new ways with the rays of Resurrection light.

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