

**ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD  
DECEMBER 2021**

**Online Edition**

# ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD DECEMBER 2021



# Merry Christmas

RECTOR

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**Magazine e-mail address:** [stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk)  
Please note the copy deadline for the magazine is the 10th of the month.

**ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS by  
phone or email to Rev'd John Flitcroft or Emma Boex**

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## PARISH REGISTER

<b>Baptisms:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> November	Albert LEES
	14 <sup>th</sup> November	Isaac Joseph MARTIN
	21 <sup>st</sup> November	Daisy Olive EVITTS
	28 <sup>th</sup> November	Sydney Dorothy TRIMBEE
<b>Funerals:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> November	Baby Louie George HOWELL Aged 3 months
	17 <sup>th</sup> November	Laura Elizabeth Kathleen JONES Aged 33 years

## SERVICES DURING DECEMBER

Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup>	10.30am	Holy Communion
	7.00pm	AGM Coach House
Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup>		Clergy day off
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Parish Eucharist
	4.00pm	4 O'Clock Church – Christingle Service <i>An opportunity for families to come together and make their own Christingles and join in with activities, prayers and songs.</i>
Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Holy Communion
Friday 10 <sup>th</sup>		Clergy day off
Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Parish Eucharist <i>Confirmation Service and Toy Service with the Bishop of Dudley</i>
	6.30pm	Choral Evensong
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup>	7.00pm	King Edward VI College Carol Concert
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Holy Communion
	7.00pm	Mary Stevens Hospice Carol Concert
Friday 17 <sup>th</sup>		Clergy day off
Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup>	4.00pm	Carols and Punch outside with Nativity Scene
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Parish Eucharist
	6.30pm	Nine Lessons and Carols
Friday 24 <sup>th</sup>		CHRISTMAS EVE
	4.00pm	Crib Service
	11.00pm	Midnight Mass
Saturday 25 <sup>th</sup>		CHRISTMAS DAY
	10.00am	Christmas Day Eucharist
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Parish Eucharist
Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Holy Communion
Friday 31 <sup>st</sup>		Clergy day off

## FROM THE RECTORY



### Advent Children.

The church is quiet.

Morning prayer has ended, the doors are closed and the air has grown still again. In the stillness the undecorated Christmas tree gathers the grey light to itself. The animal figures and the musical shepherds, the angel and the Holy Family among the straw in the crib, are the essence of waiting.

The big door slowly opens and in come children. Coming in with the nursery workers who care for them. In the short trek from the Church Hall they've picked up energy from the outside air, the cold and the light has filled them and they're more boisterous than they were among the toys and tables in the hall, they're bumping into each other like balloons.

Once beyond the porch though, through the Narthex and into the high space of the bright church, a kind of awe descends. Hands are held more tightly, and voices become more hushed. As they walk through the corridor of pew ends, as they follow the river of flagstones in the wooden ravine of the pews, the light seems to build around them and draw them up.

In the corner, the big model stable is brightly lit and the light is brittle on the golden straw and hazy on the wispy hay. It is magical. That there should be a donkey there. That staring out at us is a doe-eyed ox and that sheep, lambs and silent, carolling shepherds in stillness wait. The children can recognise that mother figure by her solicitous gaze and they can see too the strange cot for her baby.

Whatever it is, this brief time of standing in the high space, it is very different from the sounds of the small church hall where the noise rebounds off the plastic toys and the child-sized tables and chairs. Whatever the children make of this brief time, however it is comprehended, interpreted or felt by toddler minds and bodies, it is an altogether-elsewhere place. They bring with them the God-given gifts that Elaine's pre-school helps to instil; the friendship, the playing together, singing together, making and sharing. These have helped to form them, to till and feed them so that they're like small seedbeds in the damp December air.

In the quiet and still church perhaps something is sown. And who knows how deeply any sown seed has set? Who knows how such seeds might grow if, as a Church, we help to nurture whatever tender shoot shows?

The song we sing when the smallest children come into church has a last verse which runs like this: 'Child in a manger born, I want to know you more. Know you are near me, Love you more dearly, Jesus my Lord.' There isn't any Christmas present they could have more precious than that: a desire to know and follow Jesus. May we continue to hear how God is sowing the seeds of future disciples. May we continue to work with God to nurture and grow those seeds.

We hope to see you at some time over the seasons of Advent and Christmas and, in the meantime:

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR,  
GOD'S BLESSINGS TO YOU AND TO ALL WHOM YOU LOVE!

**Rev'd John**

**ST MARY'S, OLD SWINFORD**  
**We extend a warm invitation to our**  
**SERVICES FOR THE CHRISTMAS**  
**SEASON 2021**



**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December**

**4 pm: 4 o'clock Church - Christingle Service**

*A service aimed at families with young children*

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December**

**10 am:** Confirmation and 'Toy Service' with the Bishop of Dudley

*(During which you are invited to donate a new,  
unwrapped gift of a toy or toiletries which will be donated to the  
Dudley Women's refuge)*

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December**

**6.30 pm: Nine Lessons and Carols**

*A traditional Service of Readings and Carols sung by the choir*

**Christmas Eve: Friday 24<sup>th</sup>**

**4 pm: Crib Service**

*A service for families with children during which we build our Christmas Crib*

**11 pm: Midnight 'Mass'**

*The first Communion of Christmas with carols*

**Christmas Day: Saturday 25<sup>th</sup>**

**10 am:** Christmas Day Eucharist

*A Common Worship family service*

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> December:**

**10 am:** Parish Eucharist

## CHRISTMAS PUDDING MINI CHEESECAKES



Easy to make, easy to eat. Little individual desserts with a surprise filling of Christmas pudding.

If you don't have any leftover Christmas pudding you can add a little stem ginger. For ease I just drop in a whole biscuit in place of the biscuit crumb base, it's a healthier option as it eliminates the 100g of butter needed and speeds up the process. If you have fresh clementines substitute for the tinned oranges. Easy to scale down the recipe.

Makes 10-12

10-12 ginger biscuits

200g cream cheese

200ml extra thick double cream

50g icing sugar sifted

Grated rind of an orange

Can of orange segments drained well

100g approx. of leftover crumbled cooked Christmas pudding

Line a 12 hole muffin tin with paper cases. Drop in a ginger biscuit.

In a bowl whisk the cheese until smooth, fold in the cream, orange rind and icing sugar.

Whisk until it just reaches soft peaks. Spoon half the mixture over the biscuits, top with the crumbled pudding then cover with the remaining mixture. Chill overnight if possible.

Decorate with the orange segments. Peel away the paper cases.

See I told you they were quick and easy to make.

Don't forget to kiss the cook.

**Happy Christmas Ann**



# Community News

No need to look any further than Mary Stevens Hospice in Old Swinford for a bustling social calendar in December. Note these five events for your diary:

## **Christmas Coffee Morning**

Come along and support your hospice whilst enjoying a mince pie or two! There will be lots of stalls with Christmas gifts and coffee and cake for all to enjoy. At 11.00am their very special guest...Santa, will be joining them underneath a snowy sky ready for some festive photographs. Starts 10.30am, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December. Hospice grounds, Admission Free.

## **Santa Jog**

Go to Mary Stevens Park to experience the most spectacular event of the year! Hundreds of Santas jogging around the park. 2021 sees the return of this family favourite event and as they say, it's all for a good Clause. Starts 10.00am, Mary Stevens Park, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December. Admission Free.

## **Festive Fittle and Fayre**

Join them at the Bonded Warehouse in Stourbridge where there will be plenty of festive food and drink on offer. Apparently there will be masses of things there to distract you including music and choirs, cider, sausages and much more besides. Starts 14.00pm, Bonded Warehouse, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December. Admission Free.





### **Santa Trail**

Join them on a Christmas trail and follow the clues to find the great man himself. Costs £12 for children which includes; reindeer antlers, visit to Santa and gift, Santa trail map and clues, visit to frozen snow globe, letter to Santa and ride on Christmas express train. Sounds like a snip to me. Starts 10.00am, Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December, Mary Stevens Park.

### **Christmas Concert**

Go along to St Mary's Church, Old Swinford for an evening filled with festive music and carols. The evening will feature; Emily Carew-Gibbs, Sovereign Brass, Issy Winstanley, The Mary Stevens Hospice Chioir and more. There will be refreshments provided for all guests. Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December at 19.00.

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### **Children's Society Boxes.**

Many thanks again to all those who have already been in touch. If you would like to keep your house box and need the contents counting please let me know. If you ring 01384 371247 (and leave a message if I am not there) I will contact you to arrange collection. If you would like to change the way you collect donations I can let you have a direct debit form or you can pay by cheque made out to the Childrens' Society & I can collect that instead.

If it is easier, you may leave your box with a warden at either the Sunday or Thursday service and they will put it in the safe for me to collect. I will then get a receipt to you.

Thank you again for all your support in these challenging times

**Maggie Abbotts**

## **Church Walk through Woodgate Valley**

Due to Tony being unable to lead the intended walk for October, plans were changed at quite short notice to enable an alternative to take place. Mike kindly sent round an email with details of Plan B.

Saturday morning was dark and wet – just what was not needed. Nevertheless twelve people were at the car park and decided to go ahead. The walk started from Woodgate Valley Visitors' Centre car park where the path went downhill towards the stream at the bottom. By this time blue sky and sunshine were replacing the rain and the weather really did us proud for the rest of the walk. We took the path with the stream, which I had never seen flowing so fast, on our left as this has a good surface, the other path can get very muddy.

Along the way we met runners, joggers but not many dog walkers. The route continues along the Bournbrook Way and after a stop for coffee we continued to the road leading up to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and University railway station. Here we descended a flight of steps on to the canal towpath. There are usually a number of joggers and cyclists passing but there did not seem to be as many on Saturday.

We continued along the towpath noting the refurbished university clock tower and what I believe is a new station being built further along from University station. Getting near to the Vale, which is part of the university, we remarked on the absence of waterfowl on the canal. It was all a bit too quiet. Here we left the canal and walked to Church Road and along Westbourne Road to wait for the 23 bus which took us back to the Visitors' Centre. Thank you to all those who were prepared to get wet, maybe very wet, and were rewarded with blue sky and sunshine.

**Sue Wakeley**

# Around the Diocese

## **Pilgrimage of Prayer and Hope.**

Throughout Autumn, Bishop Martin will be journeying around the diocese in a pilgrimage of prayer and hope, spending two days in each of our deaneries and visiting as many churches as possible. His pilgrimage started in Worcester Cathedral, where he was blessed by Bishop John. Bishop Martin visited St Mary's Old Swinford on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> November.

## **Quarry Bank Church Choir**

Congratulations to Quarry Bank church choir whose lockdown recordings have helped Black Country Radio win Community Show of the Year in the annual Community Radio Awards.

## **St Mary & All Saints, Kidderminster**

St Mary & All Saints, Kidderminster is holding a Christmas Fayre on 4<sup>th</sup> December. 10.30am until 3.00pm. There will be festive music, tea, coffee, sausage rolls, tombola, with plenty of prizes and lots of hand-made crafts.

## **Fladbury Church and CE Primary School**

To mark this year's Remembrance Day and to commemorate 100 years of the Royal British Legion, there was a river of poppies outside Fladbury Church and CE Primary School during November. 'Fladbury Flow' has involved people from the village and beyond, with over 3,800 knitted and crocheted poppies due to be displayed along the church wall in the centre of Fladbury.

## **St Stephen's Church in Redditch**

St Stephen's Church in Redditch is looking for volunteers to help sort, receive and collect toys and donations to their Christmas Toy Appeal at the distribution and collection points.



## Remembering

My Great Uncle Fred was killed in the First World War on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1918. On the Saturday nearest to that date my Nan used to take flowers and place them by the War Memorial in St Germain's Church, City Road Birmingham. When I was young my sister and I would go with Nan to take flowers that Granddad had grown in the garden. As Nan got older I used to take her in the car rather than walk the distance.



After Nan died I did carry on the tradition for a couple of years but then one year I found the church locked and so was unable to gain entrance.

My sister and her husband came to us on 12<sup>th</sup> November. She suggested we take flowers again. She contacted the church by e-mail and had a lovely reply from the Operations Manager saying he would be happy to meet us.

We decided we would park outside Nan's house and walk to church as we had done when we were little. We were all surprised to find that the distance was not nearly as long as it had seemed when we were 9 and 10. When we arrived at St Germain's we found it surrounded by tall wire fences and all types of building materials and any accessible doors locked. We were a little concerned until we walked round to the church hall and saw a man putting out a sign advertising lunches. We went into the hall with him and met Len the operations manager who was expecting us.

Len took us into the church, found us a vase and water and let us put our flowers where Nan would have put hers. We spent some time in the church hearing about all the renovations that are going on. The church is a listed building as it is one of only two in the country that were built during the First World war.

We returned to the hall and ordered our lunch. The lunches are prepared and served on Mondays and Fridays. The man who oversees the preparation and cooking of the meals explained how the system works. The ingredients are all from supermarkets in the area and have passed their sell-by date so would be going to landfill. The food is collected from the shops, brought to church hall, prepared and cooked on site by volunteers. Anyone can go in for lunch; no charge can be made because the ingredients have all been donated. Those who are able can make a donation to help cover any costs. There was a lovely atmosphere in the hall, very warm and friendly and several people came and spoke to us.

Revisiting the past always throws up questions. We wondered why Uncle Fred's name is on that particular board when his family lived in Bearwood and out of the parish. Our Mum and Dad were married at the church; again Mum lived outside the parish. My sister and I were christened at the church, which was probably because it's where Mum and Dad were married. These are questions we will never know the answer to, as those we could ask are no longer with us.

When we got back home we got out the photos of Mum and Dad's wedding (and some others). It was a very special time wandering down memory lane.

**Sally Frost**

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**AN EXTRACT FROM:  
A CHRISTMAS CAROL  
BY CHARLES DICKENS**

"I don't know what day of the month it is!" said Scrooge. "I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!"

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer, ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding, hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist, clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!

"What's to-day?" Cried Scrooge, calling down to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

"Eh?" returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

"What's to-day, my fine fellow?" said Scrooge

"To-day!" replied the boy. "Why, **CHRISTMAS DAY.**"

**Charles Dickens  
London, 1842**

# Flower Guild

Members of St Mary's Flower Guild will be decorating Church for Christmas on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December from 9.00am. Please sign the sheet at the back of Church indicating where you would like to arrange flowers.

We would welcome donations of foliage to help with the decorating.

**Sally Frost**

# Christian Aid

Christian Aid are pleased to announce that the grand total collected for Christian Aid Week 2021 was in excess of £5 million. Many thanks to all who helped with our local collections and/or who donated.

Your fund raising will greatly benefit many in need in the wider world.

**Mike Blaxland**

# Magazine Committee

The Magazine Committee would like to wish all our readers:

**A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR**



## AT THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

Let's hope we can celebrate Christmas more openly and at ease this year than last! Looking back over the past 18 months or so it is hard to believe how much we've had to put up with and how we've changed our behaviour in order to stay safe. I'm amazed how we have adapted our lives. Who would have thought that wearing masks in crowded places would become second nature? That a nationwide vaccination programme would have been so successfully developed? And that we'd all get used to administering lateral flow tests ourselves?



We have learned to manage public worship as safely as possible. We have celebrated funerals, weddings and family events in new and creative ways, though at some cost along the way. We have had to concentrate on the essentials. We have put ourselves out to look after ourselves and others with practical loving kindness. Although we lost so much, it seems to me we have gained much as well. Perhaps, you could say, we put the heart back into human society.

Do you remember how last year's Christmas celebrations were much more muted than usual? People commented on how much they actually enjoyed the simplicity of pared down celebrations and an albeit enforced break with old routines. We had to re-think. We had to ask what really counted. We had to improvise - because we couldn't sing in church, we went outside to sing our carols. Strangely enough we took Christmas back to where it first began - not shut inside holy places, however beautiful, but outside in the world God so loved.

Mary and Joseph also had to improvise as they found a place for their son to be born. The heart of Christmas was born in the mucky manger of Bethlehem: even there, surely, their hearts sang for joy. The beating heart of Christmas was and is the Babe of Bethlehem, born for us.

Love came down at Christmas  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Stars and angels gave the sign.

(Christina Rossetti)

I wonder what will make our hearts sing this Christmas.

**Robert Jones**  
**Archdeacon of Worcester**



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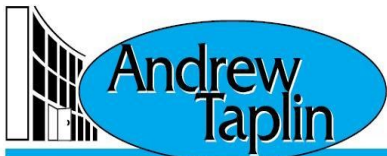
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