

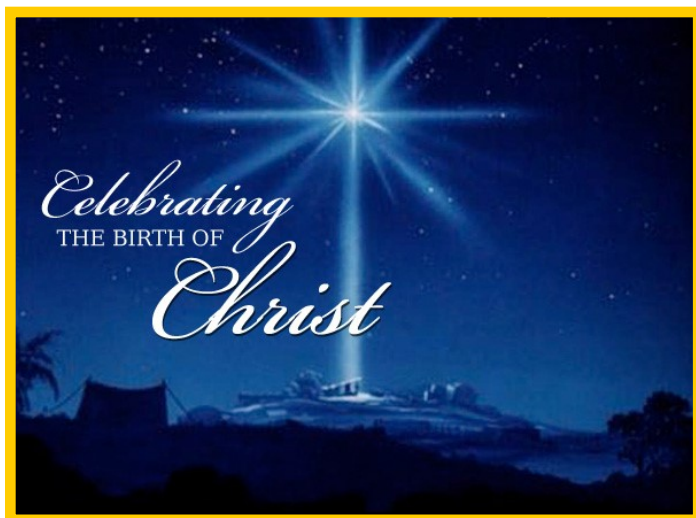
**ST MARY'S
OLD SWINFORD**
Parish Church Magazine

DECEMBER 2016
Online edition



ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD

Parish Church Magazine



Merry 
Christmas

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DECEMBER 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 (weekdays)
Daily:	5.00 pm - Evening Prayer (weekdays)
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
Curate's Day Off	Monday



OTHER REGULAR EVENTS

Prayer Group:	Third Wednesday in month, 10 -11 am	393454
Mothers' Union:	Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm	392951
St Mary's Walking Group:	Last Saturday of the month. Depart 9.30 am	

Reader:	Mrs Kanthi Ariaraj	395115
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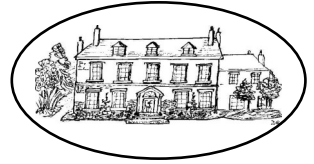
ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS.

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

DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2016

Thursday 1	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 2	Preparation for Christmas Market From 3.00 pm
Saturday 3	10.00 am—12.00 noon Christmas Market in Church Hall No Open Church and Vestry Hour.
SUNDAY 4	SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
	4.00 pm CHRISTINGLE Service
Monday 5	Christmas tree into church 11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft 7.30 pm Bishop's Certificate course in the Rectory
Wednesday 7	9.00 am Morning Prayers and full staff meeting
Thursday 8	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 9	Stephen's day off 2.30 pm Old Swinford Hospital Carol Service
Saturday 10	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 7.30 pm Got 2 Sing Concert in church Copy date for January magazine
SUNDAY 11	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
	10.00 am Toy Service
Tuesday 13	2.15 pm Mothers' Union Meeting in the Coach House 7.30 pm Bishop's Certificate course in the Coach House
Wednesday 14	7.00 pm Oldswinford Primary School Carol Service
Thursday 15	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church 1.30 pm Magazine Committee meeting 7.30 pm Civic Carol Service
Friday 16	Stephen's day off.
Saturday 17	9.00 am Decorate church for Christmas 10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 12.30 pm Wedding 2.30 pm Wedding
SUNDAY 18	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
	6.30 pm Carol Service
Tuesday 20	2.15 pm Tea in the Coach House.
Wednesday 21	10.00 am Prayer Group meeting 11.30 Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Thursday 22	10.30 am MU Corporate Communion in Church
Friday 23	Stephen's day off
Saturday 24	4.00 pm Crib Service 10.00 pm First Communion of Christmas
SUNDAY 25	CHRISTMAS DAY
Monday 26	St Stephen's Day
Tuesday 27	Bank Holiday
Thursday 29	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 30	Stephen's Day Off
Saturday 31	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends

It has been a strange sort of a year, not the sort of year that we might have predicted last December. After all not many people guessed that when the votes in the June referendum on Europe were totalled up we, in the United Kingdom, would have a mandate to leave the European Union. Equally how many people expected Donald Trump to be elected into office as the next President of the United States of America? As I say, it has been a strange sort of a year.

The strangeness of the year also masks something a little more disturbing. In the weeks and months following the EU referendum there has been a significant rise in reports of hate crime and racial abuse in many parts of the UK. In the USA there have been large demonstrations against the President elect in the few days since Donald Trump was elected. The reason for many of those people joining the demonstrations in the USA seems to be the desire for people to dissociate themselves from the well-documented remarks made by Donald Trump on subjects such as women, Muslims, people from Mexico, Afro-Americans, Chinese and many other groups.

The two elections seem to have generated a sense of division within both societies, and with that division the sense of hatred has grown. Maybe this division and the resulting hatred has always been present, but masked, so it could be argued that bringing it into the open is somehow cathartic, the prelude to it being removed from society. But that doesn't seem to be very evident at the moment. Instead there is a sense of unease that many people have with society on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

It was into such a world of suspicion and hatred that Jesus was born some 2000 years ago. As he was born he was greeted as the deliverer, the ambassador of peace. In his life he welcomed the outsiders of his own society and in the act of crucifixion he opened his arms wide on a cross in a posture of vulnerability and embrace, and died for the broken world which he came to save.

The message that Jesus came to bring was a message of hope; hope that despite all the troubles which the world faced in his time, despite the animosity and hatred between peoples of 2000 years ago, God was still present and had not given up on his world. That message of hope is as relevant now as it was all those years ago.

Christians believe that Jesus came to proclaim and demonstrate God's love for his world for all time. The hope that that brings is a hope that can be real for us as we once again prepare to welcome the infant Jesus, the bringer of hope into the world.

SERVICES IN DECEMBER 2016

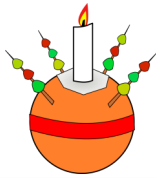
4 December Second Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Romans 15. 4-13	Matthew 13. 1-12
	6.30 pm Evensong	1 Kings 18. 17-39	John 1. 19-28
11 December Third Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am	WORSHIP TOGETHER TOY SERVICE	
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	Isaiah 5. 8 - end	Acts 13. 13 - 41
18 December Fourth Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Romans 1. 1 - 7	Matthew 1. 18 - end
	6.30 pm Evensong	CAROL SERVICE	
24 December Christmas Eve	10.00 pm First Communion Of Christmas	Hebrews 1. 1 - 4	John 1. 1 - 14
25 December Christmas Day	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Titus 2. 11 - 14	Luke 2. 1 - 14

**The Son of God became a Man
To enable Man to become the sons of God.**

CHRISTINGLE 48

It seems hard to believe that we began our Christingle services at St Mary's forty eight years ago. As a result of our service last year, the Society's extensive campaigning has already had an amazing impact this year, helping to directly support over 5000 children and young people through their 'Youth at Risk' programme.

By gathering our church community together for Christingle again, and through our financial support for the Children's Society, we shall be taking steps to create a country where no child faces disadvantage.



Please join us for our Christingle Service at 4.00 pm on Sunday 4 December 2016.

Wendy Tranter

AN UPDATE WITH THANKS FROM MARGARET AND MIKE

Mike Is fortunately maintaining generally good health and progress. Recently, the Parkinson's nurse visited with a physiotherapist to check on his progress. Fortunately, Avril and Stan Williams were still here, having helped Mike to walk on one of their usual Monday morning stints. Avril and Stan stayed to demonstrate how, together, Mike is supported to walk and exercise. The physiotherapist was absolutely amazed at how well Mike was meeting this challenge and also at the dedication of our dear friends, Tony and Sue Tatford (Tuesday mornings) and two Rotarian friends, Norman Burrows and Bob Lloyd-Jones (Wednesdays) who have all now been coming to help us virtually every week for four years!!!!

Both Mike and I realise how he would not be anywhere near as mobile as he is now without this continued support. This is just amazing dedication and 'Thank you' seems so inadequate - but we would like to say a big "THANK YOU" to you all.

John Sutton still calls every week to bring the memory stick on which the Sunday services have been recorded. Through this additional dedication we are able to listen to the services and to remain much more in touch with our church, something else we very much appreciate.

In addition to several other occasional visitors, Alex French has added himself to the list and is coming on a regular basis to bring us Holy Communion at home....another blessing.

Our 'family' at St Mary's has been truly wonderful and the mainstay of our support. We hope, when the need has arisen, and under the sometimes difficult circumstances with which we cope, that we have done what we can to support you too.

With our heartfelt thanks we send you our best wishes.

Mike and Margaret Woodall

CHURCH HEATING

The best laid plans sometimes go awry, and so it has been with the church heating.

For over a year a team of people has been involved with the various consultations and investigations required of the process to source the right equipment to replace our ageing boiler. Conscious of the need to get this right - the right boiler, the right installation, the right price and convenient timing it now seems inevitable that delays due to poor health, holidays and managing the input of several consultants would mean this would be a long process. Hopes for a summer 2016 installation faded. Despite an initial trial run in September, when the boiler fired and we were reassured, later the boiler refused to start and, as is said, 'The rest is history.'

Our Master of Fabric, Tony Lloyd, has been unforgiving in his pursuit of the specification for the new installation and for the necessary authorities that we must have in order to proceed. As a consequence, a quotation for the supply and installation of the new boiler has been accepted and an order has been placed. There is a great deal of work to be undertaken which, hopefully, should start within the next two weeks and will take about ten days to complete.

Scaffolding has to be erected to allow access to the roof for the accurate calculation and fitting of a new flue before the fitting of a new boiler, heat exchanger, dirt separator and necessary pipework changes can be effected.....all after the old boiler has been removed and the room prepared for a more modern system. We are grateful to the contractors for their response to our state of urgency and together, we are doing all in our power to enable normal service to be resumed in the church building as soon as possible.

As is often the case, good can come about from apparent disaster, and, as Revd Stephen Agnew indicated in his letter for November, there have been benefits to recognise from our enforced move into the church hall. It may be that this should be considered as the location for occasional services with a particular focus. The experience has certainly provided food for thought, something that will, no doubt, feature in the deliberations of the newly convened Worship Group. This group is charged with reviewing the worship at St Mary's, and with the agreement of the Parochial Church Council to implement any changes which are considered desirable. Please share your views with members of this group. There are still opportunities for you to join in and take part if you wish.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Once upon a time, a very long time ago, a young girl called Mary was visited by an angel. He told her that God wanted her to have a very special baby, and that she was to call the baby Jesus.



Mary and Joseph knew that they must keep their little baby safe from harm, as he was God's son.



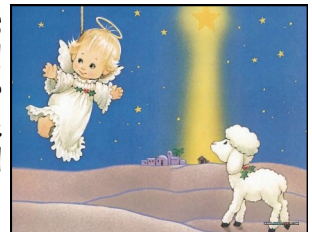
A little while later, Mary was married to Joseph. Even though she was going to have her baby very soon, they had to make a long journey to a little town called Bethlehem to pay a tax.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, there were so many people there already that Joseph couldn't find anywhere for them to stay. Poor Mary! Finally a kind inn-keeper told Joseph that they could stay in his stable with the animals.



Joseph and Mary settled down and there, among the animals, Mary had her baby! They wrapped little Jesus up warm and settled him into a manger filled with straw, as they had no cradle in the stable.

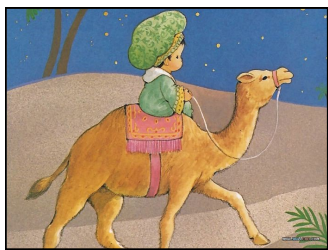
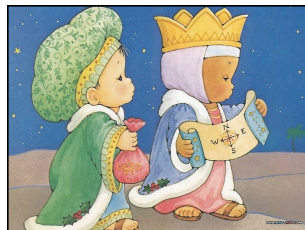
Meanwhile, on the hills outside Bethlehem, some shepherds noticed a bright star in the sky. They had never seen anything like it before, and were frightened. An angel appeared and told them not to be frightened.





The shepherds went to Bethlehem to see the baby, bringing him gifts. They were filled with joy when they saw the baby Jesus, and they worshipped him. They told Joseph and Mary what the angel had said.

Far away, three wise men who studied the stars noticed a new, bright star in the sky. They knew that when a new star appeared, it could mean that a great new ruler had been born. They wanted to meet this great new ruler.



The wise men decided to follow the star to see what they could find. They set out on a great journey.

The bright star led the wise men to the stable in Bethlehem and the baby Jesus. They knelt down and worshipped the baby, and gave Him precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.



Mary and Joseph knew that they must keep their little baby safe from harm, because, as the angel had told Mary, he was God's son.

That is the story of the very first Christmas and the reason why we celebrate Christmas every year.



FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

CHRISTMAS

JOY TO THE
WORLD AND PEACE
TO ALL MANKIND



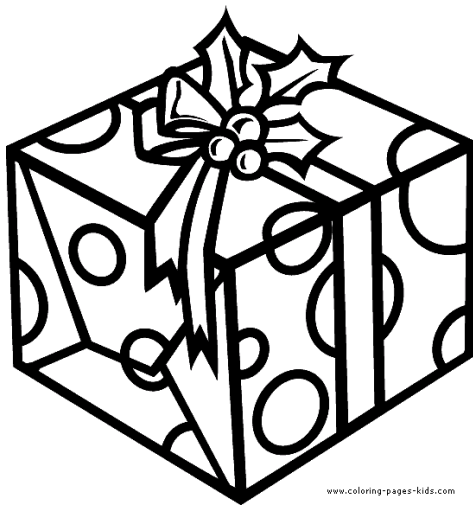
At Christmas we celebrate the birth of a very special baby, Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus was born in a stable with Mary, his mother and Joseph his father.

Shepherds and Kings came to see him.



The Kings brought special gifts for Jesus. This is why we give presents to each other at Christmas



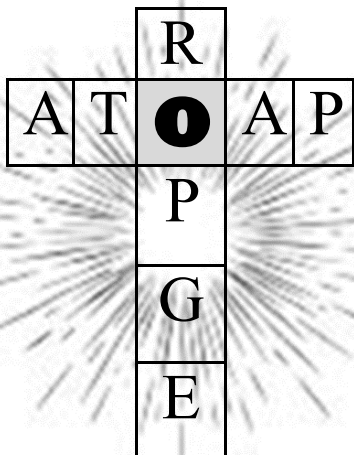
A bright star in the sky shone over the place where Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

This showed the way for the kings and shepherds who went to see Jesus.

The Three Kings



CROSS WORDS 1.



How many words can you find having at least 4 letters using each letter only once. No plurals. No foreign words.

No proper nouns/names but verbs ending in 's' are allowed. You must use the centre letter in every word.

There is one nine letter word.

**15 is average, 20 is good,
25 or more
Is brilliant!**



Can you find these words in the grid?

LAMB, MANGER, MARY, STABLE,
INN, JOSEPH, HOLY NIGHT, MAGI,
STAR, GABRIEL, JOY, BETHLEHEM,
ANGEL, CHRISTMAS

WORDSEARCH

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

Many people celebrate by decorating their homes and having family parties.

In church we celebrate Christmas with special songs called carols.

Do you know the carol 'Away in a manger'?

A STORY FOR CHRISTMAS

- adapted from Francois Coppee

It was so long ago that the whole world has forgotten the date and even the name of the little town in which lived a little boy whose name was Hans.

Little Hans lived with his aunt, who was quite an old lady. She was not always kind to Hans, but this made no difference to him. He loved her just the same, and forgot that she was forever cross and very unkind to him at times.

Hans went to school with many other boys, but he was not dressed as they were. He had to wear the same clothes both weekdays and Sundays; the same even in the summer that he wore in the winter.

It was now midwinter, when everything was wrapped in snow and glazed with ice, while the north winds blew loud and whistled down the chimneys, played very roughly with the bare trees, and crept through every crack and crevice of the house. The frost, too, was busy pinching the cheeks and biting the toes of the boys, and making them run, jump and dance to keep warm.

The children were wild with the excitement and the joy that was astir at this time. For there were secrets in the air. Every one was busy making gifts for some loved one.

It was the night before Christmas, the one great birthday on which the whole world rejoices and when all endeavour to make their fellow men happy.

The schoolmaster and all of his pupils started out for the midnight worship and prayer at the church. All of the boys were well clothed, with heavy coats, fur caps, thick mittens, and very heavy and warm shoes. But little Hans had only a poor, plain, ragged suit, with no overcoat, no mittens, and his shoes were only wooden ones. It was a very cold night, and the boys and the schoolmaster had to walk very fast to keep warm. But little Hans did not mind the cold so much, because the stars smiled down upon him and seemed like so many diamonds set in a deep blue canopy, each one glittering and flashing in the darkness. The snow, too, was a sparkling mass, and Hans wondered if the stars could see themselves reflected in the tiny snow crystals which covered the earth.

At last they reached the church, whose windows were shedding forth a soft, golden light on the stillness and darkness of the cold winter night. This little group of worshipers quietly passed into the church and sank noiselessly into their pews. It was a beautiful place to Hans. He loved it dearly, and was always happy to come here. The candles were all lit, and they burned steadily brighter and brighter, filling the church with a beautiful mellow light. The grand old organ softly and clearly sent forth its tones, each one growing richer, deeper and sweeter, and gradually the voices of the choir boys and the tones of the organ filled the old church with such beautiful music that little Hans's heart seemed to bound within him, and his whole soul was enraptured, while there shone from his face a radiance that only a divine inspiration could bring forth.

At length, after the people had sung, each one knelt and offered thanksgiving to the Heavenly Father. Little Hans, too, knelt and offered thanks for the blessings which he had received during that year, and for the tender

care of the Father of all.

The people then quietly passed out of the warm church into the cold of the night. Hans was the last one out, and as he carefully made his way down the icy steps he noticed a little boy no larger than himself sitting on the steps, with his head resting against the church. He was fast asleep. His face was beautiful, and seemed clothed in a golden light. Beside him, tied in a cloth, were a square, a hammer, a saw and other tools of a carpenter. He had neither shoes nor stockings on his feet, although his clothing was spotless and of the purest white. It grieved Hans that the child should have no shoes, not even one to place for the Christ-child to fill with gifts.

Hans stooped and took from his right foot the wooden shoe and placed it in front of the sleeping child, so that the Christ-child would not pass him by. Hans then limped along on the ice and snow, not feeling how cold it was, but only thinking of the poor child asleep out in the cold.

The other boys were talking about the good things waiting for them at home, of the feasts, the plum pudding, the Christmas trees, and the many drums, wagons and blocks the Christ-child would put in their shoes that night.

When Hans arrived home he found his aunt awaiting him, and when she saw that he had only one shoe, and he had told her all about the other one, she was very angry with him, and sent him to bed. Hans placed the wooden shoe from his left foot at the fireside, hoping that the Christ-child would remember him as he passed by.

The first sunbeam that crept into Hans's bedroom and kissed him the next morning awoke him, and he bounded downstairs, and flew to the great open fireplace to find his shoe.

Hans rubbed his eyes and caught his breath, for, to his great surprise, there were both of his wooden shoes, filled with beautiful toys; by the fireside he found warm clothing and many other things to make him comfortable and happy.

Hearing loud voices, Hans went to the door. The people were standing in a crowd around the priest, who was talking to them. He told Hans that where he had seen the child asleep on the church steps there was now in the window above a beautiful crown set with precious jewels. He said that the child was the Christ-child, whom the Heavenly Father had again sent among men on earth for that night, and that it was He with whom Hans had shared his wooden shoes.

The people bowed before that miracle that the good God had seen fit to work, to reward the faith and charity of a child.

CHILDRENS' PAGE ANSWERS

Answers to Cross Words 1

Appro, atop, ergot, goat, goer, gore, groat, grope, grot, ogre, opera, orate, poet, pope, pore, port, portage, potage prop, PROPAGATE, repot, rope, rota, rote, toe-rag, toga , tope ,topper, tore, trope.

CONGRATULATIONS IF YOU FOUND MORE

REMEMBRANCE

This year our service took place in the Church Hall where the congregation laid poppies at the foot of a candle lit to symbolise the peace to which we aspire.

The service was jointly led by Revd Alex French, Roger King and Roy Peacock, and included the traditional Silence marked by the tones of the Last Post and Reveille.

In his address that reminded us to “Remember the men of Oldswinford” alongside all those who have served their Queen and country, Roy recounted the story of two local men and read a poem written, a while ago, by his wife, Pamela, during a visit to Messines Ridge, Flanders, near Ypres.



WYTSCHAETE WOOD

**The land has healed
The weeds have turned the ground
From battlefield to bloom
Only the wind whines thro' the tree
Keening with sorrow tuned
With the last breaths of those who died.**

**The unspeakable horror of blood and bone
Lives just below Memory's bearing
In those who, from Flanders, came home.
Blood red poppies nod in the soft wind,
Frantically urging us to remember this well
Our boys and their boys in the battle from hell.**

From fortitude to peace?

MUSIC NOTES

The lack of heating in the church has challenged us all, not least the choir. We have huddled round a small electric fire in the vestry for Friday rehearsals and have tried to keep the show on the road to provide anthems for our worship in the hall and narthex. However, a recent highlight saw the choir representing St. Mary's at the annual RSCM Choirs Festival in Worcester Cathedral on November 12 where we sang Choral Evensong with other choirs in the diocese, supported by the cathedral girl's choir and men's voices. The service included music by Piers Maxim, Harwood and Elgar. Our Lily Croft was presented with her Dean's Chorister Award during the service.

At the time of writing, latest news of the heating suggests it may be working just in time for the Christmas Service of lessons and carols on December 18 and we hope for the usual large congregation in church.

Looking forward to 29 January, we will be celebrating the season of Epiphany. This special service will take the form of Evensong, including seasonal readings and anthems. Please put this in your 2017 diary and give this service your support.

Graham Davies
Director of Music

BARNT GREEN WATERWAYS

The church walking group's October walk started and finished at the Victoria Inn at Barnt Green. The weather was misty with light drizzle to start and finish but the 14 walkers were not deterred. On leaving Barnt Green we encountered the only significant climb of the walk up a grassy field that had recently had muck spread, no smell though! We crossed over the M42 and continued along a track to Foxhill Lane before descending through fields to the delightfully named Withybed Green. Due to the low cloud the distant views were somewhat obscured but throughout the walk the vibrant autumn colours were very evident. We joined the Worcester and Birmingham towing path at Withybed Green and followed it for some two miles around the western edge of Alvechurch. There were no locks at all on our route so the level walking made up for the steep hill at the start.



We came across a pair of swans with six cygnets that were pretty well full size though not yet in their all white plumage. They were clearly used to people as we and they stood on the towing path a few feet apart without any sign of aggression from either side! Our route crossed the dam of the Lower Bittell Reservoir before we left the canal at bridge 66 to go over a ridge to walk along the dam of the Upper Bittell Reservoir. This is used by a sailing club but there were no boats on the water as we passed. We descended to the level of the lower reservoir and followed a track alongside one of its inlet arms before turning back towards Barnt Green across newly sown fields. A gentle slope up the main street brought us back to the Victoria Inn for lunch, we were joined by one of our regular walkers who had been unable to walk; the fifteen of us sat down at one large table for a drink, conversation and satisfying food. Well done Victoria!

Mike Blaxland

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

On Tuesday 8 November Pat Whalley led our service on the theme of Remembrance and peace. We opened our meeting with the hymn "Like a mighty river flowing" and especially remembered members who had recently died.

Our speaker was Alan Sanders, a retired maths teacher, who presented an illustrated talk on reflections on the Scripture Union Summer Camps for 100 teenagers at Salcombe, Devon. Alan and his wife led and organised activities with 48 other helpers for the fortnight camps from 1958 – 2003.

Tents were sited on fields at South Sands near the quaint fishing and sailing village. The youngsters enjoyed many activities including walking, sketching, helping at harvests and with expert instruction and total safety went climbing, sailing, windsurfing and snorkelling. Workshops, evening talks and discussions on the claims of Christ were held in a large marquee and on Sundays, church services were available. These were provided in the R.C. church building which was also used by the local Baptist church for communion and worship.

The impact of the camp meant that several youngsters became followers of Christ or experienced a deepened faith. When Alan's wife died he heard from many former campers. Some had become missionaries or ordained. One, Michael Perry, became a Christian poet and hymn writer. We did not realise but our opening hymn had been written by him and was on the theme of the perfect peace of God (see mission Praise Hymnbook 145). Do try to search it out. I think it reflects the experience, revelation and faith he had at Salcombe Camp. Alan was delighted too.

Scripture Union still organise holidays for young people and adults to explore the wonders of creation and the Christian Faith including 'Adventure Plus' – www.adventureplus.org.uk, Christian Mountain centre – www.adventure.org.uk and Scripture Union Holidays – www.scriptureunion.org.uk.

Next meeting Tuesday 13 December, 2.15 pm at the Coach House.
Readings and Carols for Christmas.
All are welcome.

Dawn Nex.

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

HERB STUFFED LEG OF LAMB

For the cook at Christmas this can be a busy time. I have included this recipe as it's one I roll out on many occasions. It could be a good one for New Year's Eve after all the poultry eaten over Christmas. Its simple vivid green stuffing adds interest and for me a must, easy to carve. It can be prepared a couple of days in advance, covered and chilled until needed. My butcher is always happy to take the bone out for me but I know Waitrose will do this for you if you ask on the meat counter. I serve it with celeriac puree, gravy made from the juices and a neat bunch of watercress on the side.

Serves 6-8

50g flat leaved parsley

10g mint leaves

2 tablespoons chopped rosemary leaves

2 garlic cloves chopped
1 boned leg of lamb about 2 kg

4 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and pepper

Put all the herbs, garlic, oil, salt and pepper into a food processor or blender and blend until smooth.

Lay the lamb fat side down on a board, spread the herb mixture across the inside, roll up tightly, tie with string and chill until needed. This can be done well in advance.

I usually start 1½-2 hours before serving as I am a great believer in resting meat.

Pre-heat the oven to 220C/Gas 7. Roast the lamb for 15 minutes, then turn down the oven to 190C/Gas 5 and roast for a further 45 minutes to 1 hour. I use an oven thermometer; for medium it should read 75C or 80C for well done. Cover loosely with foil and rest in a warm place.

Carve the lamb into slices and serve with the celeriac puree and watercress -pass the sauce round for people to help themselves to.

Keep calm and love Christmas

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE...

At a Boxing Day feast - or a New Year meal, as Ann suggests - lamb cannot be bettered. I am a fan of a good Rioja with this meat; and as you probably know, I also favour those American oak flavours of tobacco, vanilla and cinnamon. However, with the emphasis on green herby notes here, perhaps we should look elsewhere.

At this special time of year, maybe it's the right time to select a bottle from your Claret shelf: rich, and classy with layers of black fruits. But don't overdo it: the Vasse Felix wines from Western Australia based on Bordeaux grape varieties are wonderful - but such intense wines are best suited where we are serving a cassis sauce with our lamb; remember it's a celeriac puree here. Similarly, leave the Greek Nemea wine for another occasion: we are not following a slow-cooked casserole recipe. But how to get the emphasis on the herby flavours translated through to our wine?

We might not always look at Languedoc-Roussillon wines for special event dining, but these wines have all the elements we want here. If you normally frown at spending over £10.00 for a bottle of wine from this area of France, then this is perhaps the one instance when you should be tempted. There will generally be some peppery Syrah or Grenache in the blend - which the watercress will like. But where we find higher proportions of Carignan and Mourvedre, then we are really hitting the spot. Head to the quality end of Corbieres and Fitou and you will be on a winner. Consider also Lebanon's Chateau Musar for its incomparable aroma; or Bandol, the great herb-scented Mourvedre wine of Provence.

Enjoy your Christmas wine-sipping

Richard W.B. Ryan

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

16 October	Amelie Vanessa Chambers
23 October	Scarlett Rose Flynn
6 November	Jack Javier Hunter
	Matilda Rose Lee

Funerals

15 October	Interment of ashes of Janet Blaxland
3 November	Alan Pearson Aged 71
12 November	Interment of ashes of May Ethel Roden

THANK YOU TO

Everyone who has helped during our temporary move into the Church Hall for services, to the congregations for their understanding, to all those who have rallied around to help move furniture and to prepare the hall or the narthex, to Frank McGain-Harding for his work in maintaining a facility by which people may be able to hear the services and to those who have accepted adjustments to previously planned events with good grace and understanding.

The team from Clover Leaf and other individuals who have spent time sweeping and collecting leaves over the past several weeks as we endeavoured to keep the grounds looking tidy and safe from wet, slippery, fallen leaves. And to the individuals and teams from Muddyboots Ground Care and the Community Payback Groups who help to maintain our churchyard.

To those who have helped to install additional lighting to make movement during the dark evenings a safer journey.

To all members of the clergy who have adapted, as necessary, to ensure the quality and accessibility of our corporate worship has been maintained and enjoyed.

To Glenys, our cleaner and everyone who helps with the cleaning, the flowers and decorations, the washing, the refreshments, the administration, the magazine, with readings, intercessions, administering the chalice, supporting our work with children and young people, our choir and musicians, members of our PCC and anyone else we may have omitted to mention.

Thank you. Merry Christmas and may 2017 bring you much joy and peace.

The Churchwardens

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF DUDLEY

Creating a Manger in our Lives

A fable from my childhood came to mind recently. It went something like this:

In the carpenter's shop the tools were tetchy.

"Brother Hammer, you're too noisy."

"Me? Brother Plane's work is all superficial. No depth."

"Me? Brother Tape Measure is always telling others what to do, measuring us all by his own standards."

"Me? It's Brother Screwdriver who drives us all crazy going round in circles."

"Me? Sister Sandpaper always rubbing the wrong way."

"Me? Sister Saw goes back and forth endlessly."

Then the footsteps of the carpenter could be heard and the bickering ceased.

When he entered the shop, he put on his apron, went to his bench, and picked up Brother Tape Measure, then Brother Plane, then Brother Hammer and Sister Screwdriver, then Sister Saw, and lastly Sister Sandpaper, whom he used to smooth all the rough edges of the manger he had made. A manger for a herd of animals to snuffle their noses in so as to find the oats in the bleak midwinter.

Perhaps through the season of Advent we should make a manger in our lives, being guided by he who learnt these skills in a Nazareth workshop.

Measure where we are in relation to he who gave the length of his.

Plane away the places where forgiveness is needed.

Hammer against the injustices of the world and screw together the fragments in need of reconciliation.

Saw away the dead branches that need to be pruned so that we might grow.

Sand the rough edges of our tongues, our thoughts, our lack of generosity.

In such a way we respond to the invitation "come let us walk in the light of the Lord" and Jesus is laid again in the manger of our lives and our communities.

From the manger he looks at us, and the whole world, with eyes of peace and forgiveness and love. Just as he will when others use their carpentry skills to fix a wooden beam to a tree outside a city wall.

Travel well this Advent in the company of the master carpenter and see again his most amazing creation, not in wood and nails, but in flesh and blood.

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