

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

DECEMBER 2017
Online edition



ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD

Parish Church Magazine



*I am the light of the
world. Whoever follows
me will never walk in
darkness, but will have
the light of life.*

John 8:12



Peace be with you at Christmas and always

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DECEMBER 2017

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:	Friday



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
Church Wardens:	Mrs Judy Hall	377349
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
Director of Music:	Mr Graham Davies	01905 353939
	st.mary.os.dom@btconnect.com	
Treasurer:	Mr Russ Fowler	442684
PCC Secretary:	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
Magazine Editor:	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
Safeguarding Officer:	Mrs Liz Fourness	394359
Church Hall and Coach House: - Bookings:	Parish Office	441003
Parish Administrator and Publicity Officer:	Mr John Sutton	441003
Parish Office:	Open 9.00 am -1.00 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 9.00 am to 12.00 noon Friday Closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday	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, BANNINGS 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 2017

Friday 1	Christmas Tree Festival Clergy's day off
Saturday 2	10.00 am Christmas Market in the Church Hall Christmas Tree Festival
SUNDAY 3	ADVENT SUNDAY Christmas Tree Festival 6.30 pm Advent Carol Service
Monday 4	Christmas Tree Festival
Tuesday 5	Christmas Tree into church
Thursday 7	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 8	Clergy's day off 2.00 pm Old Swinford Hospital Christmas Service
Saturday 9	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 7.30 pm Got 2 Sing Concert in church
SUNDAY 10	SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT 10.00 am Toy Service The Fairtrade stall will be available after the 10.00 am service Copy date for January magazine
Monday 11	7.30 pm Redhill School Carol Service
Tuesday 12	11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft. 2.15 pm Mothers' Union Meeting in the Coach House 7.00 pm King Edwards's Carol Service
Wednesday 13	7.00 pm Oldswinford CofE Primary School Carol Service
Thursday 14	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 15	Clergy's day Off
Saturday 16	9.00 am Church to be decorated for Christmas 10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 1.00 pm Wedding
SUNDAY 17	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 4.00 pm Christingle 6.30 pm Carol Service
Tuesday 19	2.00 pm Joint Tuesday Tea in the Coach House/Narthex
Wednesday 20	10.00 am Prayer Group meeting 11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Thursday 21	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 22	Clergy's day off
Saturday 23	10.00 am Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 24	CHRISTMAS EVE 4.00 pm Crib Service 10.00 pm Communion with Carols
Monday 25	CHRISTMAS DAY
Tuesday 26	St Stephen's
Thursday 28	10.30 am Holy Communion in Church
Friday 29	Clergy's day off
Saturday 30	10.00 am Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 31	CHRISTMAS 1 6.30 pm Service with Readings

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends

The month of December looks like being a month of great busyness if my diary is anything to go by. But then, that makes my experience of Christmas similar to the experiences of so many people the length and breadth of the country. One reason for my diary being so full is that this year at St Mary's we are hosting Experience Advent and also a Christmas Tree Festival, both for the first time, and in each case there are many people involved in the staging of these new events.

Often we celebrate Christmas in ways which are very familiar to us. Each family unit tends to have its own traditional ways of 'doing' Christmas, and in our thoughts Christmas is seen as a 'traditional' time. So to do something 'new' at Christmas – that might be a little bit of a surprise. And yet, Christmas is all about new things. It is about the birth of a baby in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago, that is not particularly new, but its significance is far greater than that of a simple birth.

Christians believe that the baby who was born in the stable was none other than the Son of God; the ultimate sign of God coming down to our level, to show his love and concern for the World and all the people in it. The idea of God coming to earth in human form was and is a very new thing. Many people still struggle with the idea that God could become human. And yet Jesus' life and teaching, his performing of miracles, his trial, death and ultimately his being raised from the dead all point to an extraordinarily novel and earth-changing event. God was so involved in his World (he loved it so much) that he invested his Son in the World as we might invest money in a project close to our hearts.

Was there ever an action that was more radical and new as this? Was there ever an action which had such consequences for the people of the World?

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas again I hope that we can recapture the sense of wonder with which children celebrate it. I hope that it is more than just a traditional festival where we do the same things year after year, for no apparent reason. I hope that we can recognise the earth-changing newness of that first Christmas, and perhaps even dare to do something new in our celebrations of Christmas 2017.

May you be blessed in all your celebrations of Christmas, traditional and innovative.

Every blessing,

SERVICES IN DECEMBER 2017

3 December Advent Sunday	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 64. 1 - 9	Mark 13. 24 - 37
	6.30 pm Evensong	Advent Carol Service	
10 December Second Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am	Toy Service	
	6.30 pm Choral Evensong	1 Kings 22. 1 - 28	Romans 15. 4 - 13
17 December Third Sunday of Advent	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Isaiah 61. 1 - 4, 8 - end	John 1. 6 - 8, 19 - 28
	6.30 pm	Carol Service	
24 December Christmas Eve	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Romans 16. 25 - end	Luke 1. 26 - 38
	10.00 pm First Communion of Christmas	Hebrews 1. 1 - 4 (5 - 12)	John 1. 1 - 14
31 December Christmas 1	8.00 am Holy Communion		
	10.00 am Parish Communion	Galatians 4. 4 - 7	Luke 2: 15 - 21
	6.30 pm	Service for New Year with special readings	



The Magazine committee would like to take this opportunity to express their thanks to all those who have contributed articles, helped with the printing and distribution and supported the magazine in any way during the past year. We wish you all a Joyous Christmas and a Peaceful 2018.



ST MARY'S, OLD SWINFORD
We extend a warm invitation to our
SERVICES FOR THE CHRISTMAS
SEASON 2017

Sunday 3 December

6.30 pm Advent Carol Service

Sunday 10 December

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

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

6.30 pm Evensong

Sunday 17 December

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00 am Parish Communion

4.00 pm Christingle Service

6.30 pm Christmas Carol Service

A traditional Service of Readings and Carols

Sunday 24 December CHRISTMAS EVE

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00 am Parish Communion

4.00 pm Crib Service for children

10.00 pm Communion with Carols

The First Communion of Christmas



Monday 25 December CHRISTMAS DAY

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00 am Family Communion (Common Worship) with Carols

Tuesday 26 December ST STEPHEN'S DAY

10.30 am Said service of Holy Communion



The Festival will be open at the following times:
Friday 1 December 11.00 am till 4.00 pm
Saturday 2 December 11.30 am till 4.00 pm
to include items to entertain and activities for children
6.00 pm till 8.00pm
when the church and the trees will be fully illuminated
and mulled wine will be served
Sunday 3 December 12 noon till 4.00 pm
Monday 4 December 11.00 am till 4.00 pm

MUSIC NOTES



A good number of our congregation travelled to Birmingham Cathedral on 11th November to support St Mary's Choir when they sang Choral Evensong. The choir sang splendidly and received warm appreciation from the Cathedral staff as well as from our own supporters. Being Remembrance Weekend, appropriate music was chosen, including the very moving anthem – "So they gave their bodies", set to music by Peter Aston. Richard Hall played the organ.

Later in the day Gig Caritas presented a concert at St Mary's given by the Stourbridge Chamber Orchestra conducted by Keith Horsfall in works by Beethoven, Haydn, Elgar and Mendelssohn. This event was in aid of The Friends of the Music at St. Mary's. All the pieces were enthusiastically played by the orchestra, some of whom travelled a great distance to this event. The highlight of the concert was an excellent performance by Edward Roberts-Malpasse of the Trumpet Concerto by J Haydn. He showed great virtuosity and received a warm reception from the appreciative audience of approximately eighty.

Despite the considerable effort which was put in to publicise this event throughout our own church community attendance was somewhat disappointing. We will be able to share details of the total monies raised for the Friends in due course.

Graham Davies
Director of Music

MAGAZINE CHANGES

This is the last edition of the magazine in its current format and marks a significant stage in the history of its publication. In its early days, nearly 140 years ago, it was typeset and printed by Mark and Moody and its evolution has followed the printing technology of the time. It was eventually printed 'in-house', and in the last two decades computer-aided publishing and laser colour printing have changed the style and appearance of the magazine. However it has maintained its mission to inform and report on events, news and activities at St Mary's with little intrusive advertising. Archives of most of the years of publication are held by Alec Beevers who edited the magazine from 2003 to 2008 and are accessible for reference.

In the last decade our retiring editor, Tony Tatford, has brought in new ideas and content, with themed covers and colour illustrations, while preserving the traditional elements of the 'Magazine for the Parish'. As churchwarden he has been able to provide well-informed reports and comments on the church's activities. However the demands of combined editorial and wardenship duties have become excessive and, as we have not received a voluntary editorship nomination, from next month the committee are implementing the proposed changes which have been announced in previous issues and letters.

Our new 'Monthly News' will continue to report on the church's events and activities and will include the 'Letters from the Rectory' and notes from the diocese. Group leaders / reporters are invited to submit their reports, articles and coming events features to Alec Beevers via the magazine email address, or to 17 Rectory Road, or the parish office before the deadline of 10th of the preceding month.

The committee and our readership record our thanks to Tony Tatford for all his work on the magazine over the last nine years. We are also grateful to Ann Jennings and Richard W. B. Ryan for their long-running series of 'Recipe and Wine for the Month' which appears for the last time in this issue.

The Magazine Committee

A montage of all the magazine issues edited by Tony Tatford will be included in the Christmas Tree Festival in St Mary's Church from 1st – 4th December.

CHRISTMAS MARKET

**Saturday, 2nd December from 10.00 am - 12.00 Noon
in the Church Hall**

Please support the Christmas Market with your presence: to help with preparations in advance and on the day by attending with your friends and family for a morning of fun and fellowship in aid of St Mary's Church, Old Swinford.

NEWS FROM THE PCC

The PCC is currently concerned with several significant matters with which you may be able to help.

The resignation of Russ Fowler as Treasurer leaves an important role to be filled. We record our appreciation of the work undertaken in this role by Russ during the past six years. We recognise the challenge presented by the task and thank him for his much valued contributions.

The PCC is seeking to fill this vacancy with a team of appropriately skilled and motivated people who will share the task and allow for temporary absences of one or more of the team whilst maintaining continuity of the process. Already some members of the church community have offered their services but we would gladly consider offers of help from anyone else who may wish to put themselves forward. Please have a word with one of the clergy, one of the wardens or with John Sutton.

The challenges of presenting a realistic budget where income and expenditure balance is in the forefront of the PCC's thinking. This is not a matter that can be resolved in the short term but must rely, in part, on an appeal to the generosity of all who worship at St Mary's and to the wider parish community. A stewardship campaign is already being formulated to address this urgent appeal and will be a significant focus of PCC activity in 2018 and beyond. Please be generous in your giving and share the need for such generosity throughout the parish.

Anne Batchelor, Mission Enabler appointed by the Diocese, has been engaged in an analysis of our past and current work with children and young people with the purpose of helping us to identify ways of attracting and retaining new members to our church community. At times of change, established patterns can often seem threatened by innovation. Reflection on the past two thousand years will show how the Christian 'tradition' has been challenged many times but our current practices should reassure us that change often brings about a rejuvenation, something that may prove to become more relevant to the time and the society in which we live. You are encouraged to be receptive to the potential for new ways in which people may share and live a Christian life.

The long-worked on Deanery Plan for Stourbridge has evolved to promote a more defined working cooperation between St Mary's and St Thomas' at clergy and PCC levels at least. The full implication of the proposal is not yet fully appreciated by the PCCs of either church and consequently further clarification has been sought. Once details are understood these will be shared with the St Mary's congregations.

At various intervals it is appropriate to look again at the guiding principles of our ministry at St Mary's. This was undertaken, in some detail, about five years ago and Revd Stephen Agnew has drafted a guide to encourage a review and revision, if needed, of these principles on which our 'Parish Vision ' may grow. Details are available at the back of church and will be shared more fully after the November meeting of the PCC.

FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

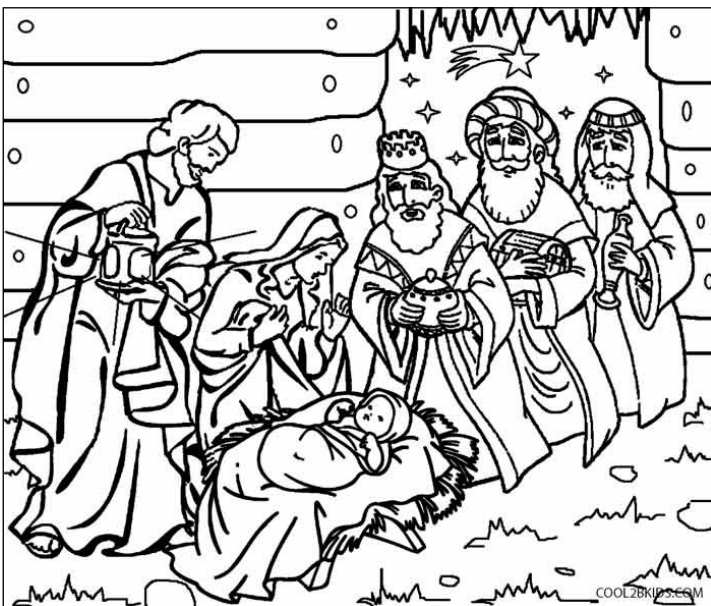
CHRISTMAS



The Christmas Story, the nativity, tells of the birth, in Bethlehem, of Jesus. Jesus was the promised son of God, whose care, on Earth, was entrusted to Mary and her husband Joseph, a carpenter.

Joseph had to take part in a census in his town of Bethlehem which is why they travelled at that time and why there were no rooms available for them to stay in.

Jesus was born in a stable, and was visited by shepherds who had heard of His birth from an angel and by Wise Men who followed a star in the sky.



Jesus lived on earth to show us how we should lead our lives. He led a sinless life but eventually died on a cross to pay for our sins. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for all of mankind.

To show our thanks we pray for forgiveness for when we do things we should not do.

"Forgive us our trespasses."

Christmas is a time of great joy. It is a time of celebration, a time to share, a time to give and to receive presents, a time for families to get together.....a time to remember those who have less than we do.

CROSS WORD 13



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 1 nine letter word.

15 is average, 20 is good, 25 very good

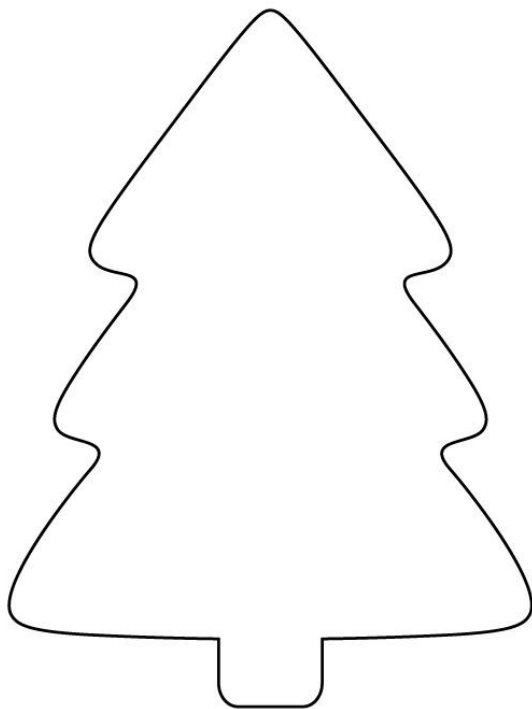
30 or more is brilliant!

Answers on page 18



Use the template to cut out several Christmas tree shapes. Decorate them like the ones above.

Stick them onto lolly sticks or perhaps onto string so you have a line of them to hang.
Who can make the best one?



After Christmas, before the Christmas Cards are thrown away, see if you can cut out some small cards to use as gift labels next year. This is a good way to reuse the cards and you can then recycle the bits you don't want.



BISHOP'S CERTIFICATE AWARDS

The presentation of the Bishop's Certificates for the 2016/2017 course took place in the Chapter House of Worcester Cathedral on Wednesday 7 November. As well as our Oldswinford contingent, other groups from Evesham, Droitwich and Old Hill received their awards which were presented by the Bishop of Dudley. The ceremony was part of "A Service of Night Prayer" during which Bishop Graham delivered an address on the theme of Stones. Our tutors, Stephen, Alex and Mary German (from St Peter's, Pedmore) were in attendance and it was a wonderful opportunity to meet again and to renew our fellowship which we had enjoyed throughout the course. The picture shows the Oldswinford group and includes St Mary's representatives with six members from other parishes.

Alec Beevers



CHRISTINGLE 2017

We shall be holding our 49th Christingle Service on Sunday, the 17th December at 4.00 pm.

For over 130 years the Children's Society's volunteers and fundraisers have been changing the lives of this country's children and young people for the better. Thanks to all those who have contributed, the Society is able to help thousands of children escape the everlasting cycle of poverty, abuse and neglect.

Last year the services directly helped over 18,000 children, giving vulnerable young people up and down the country the hope of a brighter future.

Do come and join us at our Christingle celebration.



Wendy Tranter

REMEMBRANCE 2017



The past few years have seen Remembrance focus on the centenary events associated with the First World War. On 10 November, near Lille, France, a service of remembrance was held to commemorate the centenary of the end of the Battle of Passchendaele. A salute of 100 rounds was fired from 16 guns of WW1 vintage, by volunteers from UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium and France.

On the same day, with no apparent connection, teams from England and Germany played a football match. The significance of this game was not the score line or any particular element of play but that every player on the field, regardless of nationality, wore on their arm a poppy, a high profile symbol of remembrance and respect.

At a national Commemoration of the start of this battle held at The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Tyne Cot Cemetery in Belgium, the official programme for the event carried the following words of introduction from His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales.

The battlefield of the Third Battle of Ypres, or Passchendaele as it became known, was like no other. A desolate landscape of quagmires and mud, coupled with fierce fighting, concentrated in a small area of ground across which thousands passed; the experience of Passchendaele was seared into the memory of all who survived.

It is deeply humbling to consider how these men, on both sides, withstood such deplorable conditions. Passchendaele is in many ways a tale of human endurance and perseverance, through camaraderie and comradeship, bravery, humour and bittersweet memories of home.

Many who survived the destruction of the battle, as well as the bereaved, would return after the war, bound to the fields of Flanders, to visit their own hallowed corners of the landscape, from beloved sanctuaries behind the front lines to the graves of fallen comrades and loved ones. It is in this same tradition of pilgrimage that we gather here today.

And in the same tradition, at Acts of Remembrance throughout the country this November, we joined together, in spirit, to acknowledge with gratitude the sacrifice of so many and in the hope of a true reconciliation.



A MUCH ENJOYED OCCASION

The Mission Coffee Morning held in the narthex on Saturday 28 October was very well supported by visitors and the Mission Committee team of helpers.

The warm welcome extended to all on such occasions serves to attract loyal supporters and newcomers to a social event that enable many people to drop in for coffee and cake, to keep in touch with community neighbours and to share a purpose providing for good causes.

Quality cakes are a hallmark of such occasions, a matter of quiet pride for those who produce them with such care and delight for those who enjoy them with such relish.

With the sale of the popular Mission Cards, a well-supported raffle and the cake sale a substantial sum was raised that has been donated for the benefit of St Mary's.

Thank you to all members of the Mission Committee, helpers and visitors for their generosity.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT ST MARY'S

Anne Bachelor, Mission Enabler, appointed by the Diocese to work in Stourbridge churches, presented a baseline report of her initial analysis of our work as she continues with this important engagement through to Spring 2019.

At the 10.00 am service on Sunday 19 November Anne shared details of her work and hopes to support St Mary's in pioneering developments and growth in this important aspect of our mission - Calling Young Disciples.

Anne's message was one of positivity, achieved through her challenge for us to reflect on our own faith journey and the diverse routes these might have taken. She underlined the many, valued and valuable elements of the work currently undertaken at St Mary's and the high regard in which the Church and its community is held locally.

The congregation responded with involvement and obvious concern for the challenge of how to attract more family members to church activities and to worship and were generally surprised by the reach of our impact to date.

There were no magic answers at this stage, more an awakening to what we do well and the potential for our impact to grow, perhaps, in part, through a greater recognition of the need for traditional patterns to bend to fit modern societal needs.

These are early days which offer exciting times ahead. Thank you Anne for your support and encouragement to date.

DIY CHRISTMAS

This Christmas will be different:
Santas gone on strike.
Last year he took a pay-cut,
deer and sleigh were sold in May,
now there's just his bike.
For years he's worked his socks off
providing girls and boys
with every game to play
brought peace and joy on Christmas Day
And lots of high-priced toys.
So give three cheers for Santa!
Support him in his plight,
and fill your own Yule socks this year
on Christmas night.

Pat Whalley

We thank Pat for the enjoyment given through the many verses she has written and shared with us during past years.

REMEMBRANCE



Our Field of Remembrance on the
steps of the Chancel.
With thanks to Revd Alex French and
Roy Peacock for their leadership of
our Remembrance Service.

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

On the 14 November Revd Sue Oliver led our service of Remembrance followed by an illustrated talk about her sabbatical from parish duties to have leave for study and travel to Australia with her husband.

Having celebrated Christmas service and meals in north Italy they flew to Sydney and met up with Tom, their son. Sue found the 'summertime' far too hot and for this reason, when the time came, they moved on happily to New Zealand.

On the journey they had met a Pentecostal minister from New Zealand and were able to experience worship and services in his church in Auckland.

Having met with a family cousin, her husband enjoying fishing trips while Sue went on to attend Vaughan Park Retreat House, which takes international visitors, to study St John's Gospel.

On reflection, the most important lesson she appreciated was when church members from any tradition are open and friendly to visitors their welcome draws others into fellowship. First impressions matter! Let us be an open, joyful and welcoming church.

Next Meeting 2.15 pm, Tuesday 12 December in the Coach House. -
Readings and Carols for Christmas.

Deanery Coffee Morning Saturday 27 January, 2018, Norton Church Hall,
10.00 am—12.00 noon.

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

ORLANDO'S EASY MINCE PIES

Orlando, a foodie friend, swears by this recipe and as I am asked lots about making pastry I thought I would pass this recipe on. Last year his recipe got a mention on Chris Evans breakfast show as getting the most searches on the BBC Good Food website. I did reduce the sugar in the pastry by 25g (the original recipe uses 100g) as I find bought mincemeat very sweet. There is no rolling required. Press the raw, crumbly pastry directly into your tin for a short, biscuity finish. I did roll mine out between cling film, cut out to fit my tins and just topped with a pastry star. My oven is hot and I found they cooked in 15 minutes.

225g cold butter diced
350g plain flour
75g-100g golden caster sugar
280g mincemeat
1 small egg beaten to glaze
Icing sugar to dust

To make the pastry, rub 225g cold, diced butter into 350g plain flour, then mix in 75g golden caster sugar and a pinch of salt. Combine the pastry into a ball – don't add liquid – and knead it briefly. The dough will be fairly firm, like shortbread dough. You can use the dough immediately, or chill for later.

Preheat the oven to 200C/gas 6/fan 180C. Line 18 holes of two 12-hole patty tins, by pressing small walnut-sized balls of pastry into each hole. Spoon 280g mincemeat into the pies. This should take about 2/3 of the pastry

Take slightly smaller balls of pastry than before and pat them out between your hands to make round lids big enough to cover the pies. Top the pies with their lids, pressing the edges gently together to seal – you don't need to seal them with milk or egg as they will stick on their own. (The pies may now be frozen for up to 1 month).

Beat 1 small egg and brush the tops of the pies. Bake for 20 minutes until golden. Leave to cool in the tin for 5 minutes, then remove to a wire rack. To serve, lightly dust with icing sugar. They will keep for 3 to 4 days in an airtight container.

Ann Jennings

AND FOR THE WINE...

..... Even after reducing the overall sugar content, these easy mince pies will still call for a sweet dessert wine, so send for some of our old favourites !

Pedro Ximenez leads the charge - good to have a bottle in stock anyway over the Christmas period. Malaga and Samos Nectar would not be far behind, with Moscato Passito di Pantelleria a strong contender too.

However, if this is Christmas Day lunch and you have already enjoyed a glass of Pedro Ximenez with your Christmas pudding (a very good idea), then you might be looking for something rather different when serving a mince pie as the conclusion to the meal. Maybe something clean and a little more fruited to refresh the palate, like an apple liqueur or a plum brandy. Perhaps not Calvados : it is a wonderful tippie, but hardly a refresher !

Fino sherry can work beautifully to leave a clean-as-a-whistle finish - as can Limoncello, although the lemon zest notes may be too intensely citrus for mince pie. Quince liqueur ? Marmalade vodka ? - why not try something a bit different ! There again, maybe it's the last drink of the day : mince pie at supper time with a wee sipper..... reach for the Drambuie, or maybe a nut liqueur. But whenever you choose to munch your mince pie, enjoy your Christmas and enjoy your Christmas wine-sipping.

Richard W. B. Ryan

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP

Church Walk - October 2017

We started our walk from the 'Waggon Wheel Inn' in Grimley Village and walked across a variety of different fields. A couple had views of huge lakes where there was an extra path to walk down to the lakes and look at the birds. We continued through cobbled paths and woodland to reach Hallow Village Green. On leaving the 'Green' and lovely old houses, we worked our way down a lot of steps through woodland, to join the river. We returned along the river to have our meal at the Waggon Wheel Inn.

Toni and Bob Evans

PLEASE DON'T FORGET THE FOOD BANK

For all sorts of reasons the Christmas season is a time when the most vulnerable members of our society face particular hardship. The Food Bank provides essential support for many such people throughout the year and demand in the weeks leading up to and just after Christmas can be especially high. Sadly, some will find themselves turning to the Food Bank for the first time. As you do your shopping please remember those who face such challenging times and add a little something to your trolley that can be passed on via our collections in church.

Thank you to all who support the Food Bank, our appeals by the Mission Committee and the work of the Mothers' Union to support these vulnerable people.....and a special thank you to those who, weekly, ensure our gifts reach their destination and are available when the need arises.

Merry Christmas.

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

15 October	Hugh Edward Brown
29 October	Ivy Charlotte Tanner
5 November	Annabelle Victoria Hazlehurst
5 November	Oliver Michael Reid

Funerals

23 October	Muriel Wheeler	Aged 95
26 October	Marcus Smith	Aged 54
3 November	Olive Eley	Aged 95
7 November	Kathleen Richards	Aged 80
14 November	Vyvyan Hobby	Aged 83
14 November	Brian Pickersgill	Aged 83

THANK YOU

As I retired from teaching and Sue retired from nursing we promised ourselves the opportunities to travel more widely and to experience something of the quietly hidden wonders this world has to offer. If we are honest, we haven't done badly so far, but we have not yet disappeared for a time, without a schedule for our return, allowing interest, whim and novelty to take us where they will. We hope to do this in 2018 and so I felt it important to provide for the full coverage of those commitments I had undertaken.

To resign from the lead role of editor of this magazine after nine years has not been an easy choice. If there was someone who could volunteer to take over, I could step back without any sense of remorse, but unfortunately we do not find ourselves in such a position.

With Alec's leadership of a reduced publication the team will continue to serve St Mary's and Old Swinford. I will play my part when I can and will continue to be grateful for the wonderful support of the magazine committee colleagues and everyone who has helped with contributions for and appreciation of this publication.

Thank you for your support and encouragement. Please continue to subscribe to and enjoy this next evolution of our Parish Magazine.

Tony Tatford

Answers to Cross Word 13

APART, APPAREL, APPARATUS, PAPA, PARA, PARS, PART, PARTS, PAST, PASTA, PATS, PRAT, PUPA, PUPS, PUTS, RAPS, RAPT, RASP, SATRAP, SPAR, SPAT, SPRAT, SPUR, SPURT, STRAP, STUPA, SUPRA, TAPA, TAPS, TARP, TRAP, TRAPS, TUPS, TURPS.

CONGRATULATIONS IF YOU FOUND MORE

LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF WORCESTER

It seems that Christmas has been coming for several months now. I saw a Christmas tree lurking in my local pub at the beginning of September – surely a record! And yet it doesn't feel very 'Christmassy' as we look at world affairs, politics and what goes on in the lives of so many people.



It doesn't feel very Christmassy, of course, because we've made Christmas in our own image, rather than in the image and likeness of the very first Christmas. The very first Christmas was a tale of a birth – always a joyful event – in the midst of considerable human turmoil. It was not at all different from what so many of us are experiencing today; a real life born in the real circumstances of the day.

We tend to dress things up, and maybe there's no real harm in that. For example, Christmas trees came quite late to the party – introduced by Victorians. Many years later they appear in my local pub as the symbol of the season!

We do this in so many ways. Let's take Advent. No doubt inspired by those Blue Peter candle stands made out of metal coat-hangers (I'm showing my age, but do you remember them?), we tend to think of the wonderful season of Advent as a countdown to Christmas. But it has a far wider reach than that; it is a countdown to the time when God's will is done here on earth as it is in heaven.

We dress up holy seasons, and we dress up holy places. One of the great excitements of today's church is the way we are opening up the buildings to much more community activity. We have holy space and community space, and they rub along well together, which should not surprise us as Christmas people believing in the God who came to be among us.

Maybe we do it for ourselves too. I sometimes wonder whether we simply need to re-learn wonder and awe at God's beautiful creation and re-creation. At the feast of Epiphany the Magi come without commentary or explanation simply to worship and bring their gifts.

Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, these festivals give us a wonderful excuse to celebrate the God who shows us in Jesus just how much He loves us and reminds us just how valuable human beings really are. And if I was nudged to think about that a couple of months back in my local perhaps that was really no bad thing. Seasons' greetings!

Robert Jones

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