

**ST MARY'S
OLD SWINFORD
Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS

JANUARY 2018
ONLINE EDITION**

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD Parish Church MONTHLY NEWS JANUARY 2018



50p

PRIEST IN CHARGE:

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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 (Monday to Thursday)
Daily:	5.00 pm - Evening Prayer (Monday to Thursday)
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

		Tel:
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	

CONTACTS

Reader:	Mrs Kanthi Ariaraj	395115
Church Wardens:	Mrs Judy Hall	377349
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
Director of Music:	Mr Graham Davies	01905 353939
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PCC Secretary:	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
Monthly News Editor:	Mr Alec Beevers	444229
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, 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.

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

19.11.17 Freddie James Moss

Funerals

15.11.17 Olive Eley Aged 95

22.11.17 Brenda Wootton Aged 90

DIARY - JANUARY 2018

Tuesday 2	7.30 pm Standing Committee
Wednesday 3	3.00 pm Holy Communion at Oriel House
Thursday 4	10.30 am Holy Communion 3.00 pm Guidelines Group meeting
Friday 5	Clergy day off
Saturday 6	10.00 – 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 7	EPIPHANY 12.00 Noon Baptism
Monday 8	11.30 am Pastoral Committee Meeting
Tuesday 9	10.00 am Open The Book 11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft
Thursday 11	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 12	Clergy day off
Saturday 13	10.00 – 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 14	SECOND SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY 10.00 am Worship Together
Tuesday 16	2.00 pm Tea in the Coach House
Thursday 18	10.30 am Holy Communion 7.30pm Coach House Committee Meeting
Friday 19	Clergy Day off
Saturday 20	10.00 am -12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 21	THIRD SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY 3.00 pm Baptism
Tuesday 23	10.00 am Open the Book 2.00 pm Tea in the narthex
Wednesday 24	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge Evening, Learning Community Meeting
Thursday 25	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 26	Clergy day off
Saturday 27	10.00 – 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church 9.30 am Church walking group meet.
SUNDAY 28	FOURTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
Monday 29	7.30 pm PCC meeting

WORCESTERSHIRE AND DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION

TRIBUTE TO HAROLD WHITE

A full peal of 5040 Grandsire Triples was rung in 2 hours 56 minutes at St Peters Church, Cradley on Saturday 2 December in thanksgiving for the life of Harold White.

Harold learned to ring at this church in 1944 and maintained a lifelong connection with the tower, serving as captain for many years. He was passionate about his ringing. Members of the family were present during part of the peal and provided refreshments afterwards.

FROM THE CURATE



Your travel plans may well have suffered some disruption recently due to the replacement of gas pipes at the end of Red Hill. As the maintenance work meant that the junction onto Glasshouse Hill was blocked off, drivers wanting to access Red Hill had to follow a diversion via Hagley Road and Cranbourne Road. Although this was a relatively short redirection, given the volume of traffic that uses this particular junction, longer and slower moving queues of motorists became a common occurrence around the traffic lights at The Cross. As the maintenance work progressed it was a real eye opener to see how some drivers navigated the road closure.

Despite many signs stating that the road was closed and bollards across the junction offering a physical barrier, numerous drivers simply ignored the road works and signage. Some cars by weaving around the signs and holes in the road and by mounting and driving along a stretch of pavement were able to gain access to Glasshouse Hill, bypassing the diversion. Some drivers even stopped at the barriers and got out of their cars to remove the bollards to the side of the road so that they could drive past.

Although only a brief picture of modern life, I think it illuminated how busy and time pressured life has become, of how waiting is seen as something to be avoided and how easy it is to ignore the signs telling us to change direction.

I'm sure that there are lots of us who despite trying to be patient, don't like waiting. We find when we get delayed, increasing levels of anxiety, fretfulness and frustration. It's really difficult to stop these forces building up in us so as our waiting drags on, we find it hard to be graceful and still when we experience a delay.

We are in such a rush, so much of the time, unforgiving in the pressure we place on ourselves in our haste. We have come to see waiting as nothing more than a problem, a nuisance, an interruption in our stream of life which breaks the control we think we have over time. The idea that waiting is often necessary, or occasionally valuable, seems hopelessly at odds with the rhythm of life we create and sustain for ourselves. However, having to wait and be at the mercy of another challenges the illusion that our timetable, our busy plans for getting things done, should take priority over everybody and everything else that matters.

Chronic busyness, when we start to define ourselves by how busy we are is addictive and it conspires to deaden our understanding of the true value and purpose of God-given time. It takes hold when we have not asked ourselves what is important in our lives and had the strength to stick to these priorities.

I pray that 2018 will be a year where we don't attempt to drive through the roadworks, that it will be filled with unavoidable slowness. A year where we can fully live out the refrain 'all in good time' and discover the growth and wisdom that comes from patient and graceful waiting. If there's still room for another New Year's resolution, make it your intention to find the space and stillness in 2018 to breathe fully, to stop the rush and to experience the wholeness and blessing that God pours into all our lives.

Grace and Peace

Alex

THE NEW 'MONTHLY NEWS'

Welcome to the new version of our Parish Magazine, We hope this revised format will continue to provide you with news and information about events and activities at St Mary's Church. We are sorry that we are no longer able to provide the monthly delivery service but hope that the arrangements for collection from the narthex will be acceptable. We shall be reviewing the arrangements over coming months and we will try to address any problems in due course.

Readers are reminded that the magazine is also published on-line and from this month it will be accessible free of charge from the date of publication. We understand that more readers are now keeping in touch with St Mary's through this facility and you can find us on your smart-phone, tablet or computer. Look for 'parish magazine' on the top menu bar of the home page of the church's website at www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk where you can read every copy of the magazine since January 2010. Copies of the magazine may also be purchased at Oldswinford Pharmacy.

As this January issue 'goes to press' we have already enjoyed the Advent Carol Service and the Christmas Market and the church has been filled with visitors from schools for the 'Experience Advent' event and carol services, although some were disrupted by adverse weather. St Mary's has also hosted the Mary Stevens Hospice 'Tree of Light' service and the Stourbridge 'Got2Sing' Christmas Concert as well as our wonderful Christmas Tree Festival. Reports of some of these events are included in later pages.

The church will no doubt be fuller still for the Christmas Carol Service and the Communion with Carols on Christmas Eve – a busy period for our clergy and many helpers, but we also pray that it will be time of peace, joy and celebration. The New Year may give us an opportunity to relax, reflect and hope as we face changes and new challenges.

Happy New Year to all our readers

The Magazine Committee

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL



It is now six months since I was asked to lead the organisation of the Christmas Tree Festival. I have to admit that at first I refused the invitation but after talking ideas through with our Church Wardens I felt I would be supported by a strong team so accepted the challenge.

Following our initial meeting I asked for help through an article in the parish magazine and sent out letters to all the groups connected with Church, the Church Hall and Coach House. The response was amazing. Very soon toilet roll tubes were arriving in large numbers, French knitting was being done and invitations to provide trees were accepted. It seemed everyone was excited and enthusiastic about this new venture.



After a great deal of hard work behind the scenes the Christmas Tree Festival all came to fruition over the first weekend of December. How wonderful the Church looked when decorated by 32 Christmas trees, the small French knitted trees and the two trees made from the cardboard tubes.

There were many visitors over the weekend, some came from Gornal (they like to tour round festivals in the area), others came from Sutton Coldfield and many came from our parish.

Families came to see the Baptism Tree to find their child's name. Children enjoyed the Messy Church area and made items to add to the tree. Many people added prayer requests to the Pastoral Team tree. It was a great means of out-reach; many people commented, "We didn't know there were so many groups connected to Church".

For me Saturday night was really special. The trees' lights showed up well against the darkness outside, the aisle candles were lit and carols rung using hand bells. Mulled wine and mince pies were served. There was a real festive atmosphere.

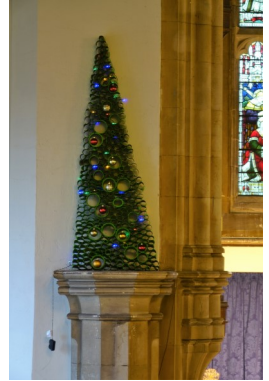


I would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who supported the

Festival in any way, those who saved cardboard tubes, who did French knitting or provided and decorated the trees. Those who acted as stewards and welcomed our visitors and those who provided refreshments. Every one of you helped to make the first Christmas Tree Festival a success, thank you.

Sally Frost

....and the visitor's perspective



displays and shared the observations of skills and creativity in each tree with fellow visitors. The guide notes were very helpful in describing the activities of

the exhibiting groups, some of which were reflected in the displays, - binoculars and boots for the walking group and a 'tree of magazines' for the magazine committee. But there were other less visible, subtle and inventive ideas which were explained to us; - the 'Fairy' (liquid bottle) on top of the youth group tree made from recycled plastic bottles, the trees on top of the pillars at the chancel arch made from all those cardboard rolls which Sally had been collecting and the Coach House tree in the west porch made from a wooden pallet.



There was a steady stream of visitors during the four days of the event, even during 'off-peak' periods, and stewards and refreshment providers were kept busy until the close on Monday afternoon. The visitor comment sheets all referred to the enjoyment of the event and the inventiveness of the displays. Many expressed the hope that another festival might be arranged next year. A card sent from one visitor summed up the feelings of us all.

Christmas Tree Festival.

Just a quick note to say
Thank You to everyone
involved. I enjoyed so much
looking at all the trees.
Such hard work to organise
and pull together.

Also, I did not realise all the
activities that go on at the
church!

Thank you,
Red Janet

CHRISTMAS MARKET

Another successful event at this year's Christmas Market, this time coinciding with the Church's Christmas Tree Festival. Although this meant extra work and responsibilities for some, both events helped each other. Not only did the Market raise a total of £1,768.58 for church funds but we did it while enjoying a happy and relaxed time.

All the stalls were attractively presented; throughout the event people were chatting, laughing and generally glad to be with us. The Tombola and the Bottle Stall were emptied of prizes. The stalls selling goods had far less to take home than had been brought in to the Hall and the coffees and mince pies were flying out to the people taking a break before re-entering the throng. When it came time to leave, visitors, stall holders and helpers were still smiling, proof that it had been a successful affair.

If you were unable to join us, make a note in your diaries for next December as it is a really lovely thing to include in the run up to Christmas.

My thanks to everyone who contributed in the many ways – without you we would not have had anything like the success.

Katey Fletcher

WALKING GROUP - NOVEMBER WALK - HANBURY

The walk started from the Eagle and Sun near Hanbury Wharf and followed the six mile Hanbury Circular Walk route. sixteen walkers plus Bonnie the dog, set off on a crisp but sunny morning.

At Hanbury Wharf, the Droitwich canal, originally built in 1771 and whose restoration was completed in 2011, joins the Worcester and Birmingham canal. Both were constructed to carry salt from Droitwich.

The walk followed the Worcester and Birmingham Canal for approximately two miles before leaving it just after passing bridge number 40 and the lock keeper's cottage.

Proceeding through fields and over several footbridges, we reached Piper's Hill and stopped for our coffee and to admire the open view before entering the woodland consisting of pollarded Beech and Sweet Chestnut and large Oaks, believed to be 300-400 years old. This woodland is also an excellent habitat for fungi and some 200 species have been found there.

Following the track around the bottom of the wood, we reached a gate and passing through it, headed up a steep hill towards Hanbury Church. Exiting the churchyard and following the road, we entered the grounds of Hanbury Hall following an avenue of Oak trees before passing in front of the gates of the hall.

Navigating more fields and kissing gates, we rejoined the canal and headed back to the pub for a well earned lunch.

Malcolm Frost

DISRUPTION TO SERVICES

The heavy snowfall during the weekend of 8 – 10 December caused many problems across the parish. Early on Friday morning sharp, unexpected heavy snow showers caused local traffic problems, school closures and the cancellation of Old Swinford Hospital School carol service in St Mary's. A brief respite allowed church activities to continue on Saturday including vestry hour for wedding arrangements and the 'Got2Sing' concert. During the Saturday coffee morning in the narthex, clergy and wardens discussed the expected impact of the forecast of heavy overnight snow on Sunday services. In the event the snow did come, deep and even but not very crisp, and St Mary's was virtually inaccessible for most of the 8 o'clock regulars but three brave souls managed to get there by foot. Conditions were a little easier for the 10 o'clock Toy Service but unfortunately attendance was much reduced.

The evening service was scheduled to be choral evensong but our organist and choirmaster, Graham Davies and many others were unable to make it to Oldswinford so the 'Choral' element of evensong was abandoned. However Peter Thompson had managed to walk in to play the organ and others in the congregation had walked from Amblecote and Penfields; the clergy were at full strength and we were able to enjoy an intimate service for the 2nd Sunday in Advent.

Despite the disappointment of reduced congregations we were grateful that we had had fine weather the previous weekend for the Christmas Market and Tree Festival. As I write, the wintery conditions are forecast to last for a few more days and Redhill School carol concert in St Mary's (and perhaps others) have been cancelled. We hope that conditions will be easier for the Christmas period.

Alec Beevers

DATES FOR YOUR NEW DIARY...

St Mary's has accepted an invitation to host a production of Jesus My Boy on Saturday, 24 March 2018 at 7.30 pm.

Jesus My Boy, by John Dowie, is an extremely humorous one-man, one-act play. It is incredibly moving, beautifully and cleverly written. Previously performed in the West End by international star Tom Conti, it makes audiences both laugh and cry.

This event is staged by the professional Worcester Repertory Company, starring Jonathan Darby and will form part of our Easter programme 2018. Other local churches and the wider population will be invited to attend. Full details of ticket sales and event arrangements will be available in the New Year.

The Annual General Meeting of the Coach House will be held in the Coach House at 7.30 pm on Thursday 22 March 2018

NOTES FROM THE DIOCESE

PLOUGH SUNDAY—7 JANUARY 2018

The observance of Plough Sunday on the First Sunday of Epiphany goes back to Victorian times, but behind it there is a much older observance, associated with the first working day after the twelve days of Christmas, hence 'Plough Monday' in some places.

In medieval times some ploughs were kept in the parish church, and some churches kept a 'plough-light'. In days when work was scarce in winter, the observance looked forward to the time of sowing with the promise of a harvest to come.

Although the nature of farming has changed over the centuries, Plough Sunday is seen as a way of generally celebrating farming and the work of farmers. Some church communities have also reintroduced it as a focus for asking a blessing on human labour near the start of the calendar year. It is an opportunity to cherish the land and human labour, and to remind us all of our dependence upon it and upon God.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY. 18 - 25 JANUARY 2018

Praying for the unity of the Church involves a recognition not only of the brokenness of Christian relationships but also how injustice in the world at large separates Christian communities and impedes our participation in God's mission. History too plays a part, casting a shadow over how we live our lives together in community. All of these issues emerge from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

HOMELESS SUNDAY - 28 JANUARY 2018

Organised by Housing Justice, Homeless Sunday is a chance for Churches and Christian groups from across the country join together to pray, reflect and plan practical action on homelessness but also for a united Christian voice to offer solidarity and be a prophetic voice for change.

Homelessness in England is rapidly rising. Being homeless carries significant personal risk; on average, homeless people die at 47, far below the UK life expectancy of 81 years. A homeless rough sleeper is 35 times more likely to attempt suicide than a someone who has never faced homelessness, 13 times more likely to be a victim of violent crime and 47 times more likely to be a victim of theft.

Further details and prayers for these events can be found on the Worcester diocese website at <http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news>

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP



New Year brings an opportunity for a new beginning: hence the tradition of New Year's resolutions.

The thought of new beginnings is particularly on my mind this New Year since, less than two weeks into it, on 12 January, I shall be married.

A marriage is, as much as anything, a new beginning: the beginning of a new life for two people joining together. It's also, of course, a new start in love when two people pledge their love for one another. HJ and I shall do this before God in a Church.

We shall also do so in the light of the greatest love story ever told; that between God and humanity. We have just marked Christmas when we celebrated the coming of God into our world to show the depths of His love for us.

Love is a beautiful thing but unrequited love is a terrible tragedy. If we haven't experienced that tragedy for ourselves at some point in our lives, we shall almost certainly know someone who has, and the misery that it brings.

God pledged his love to us when he came to live among us and, in so doing issued us with an invitation: Will we return His love so that the outcome of the greatest love story ever told can be glorious and not tragic?

This New Year I shall be pledging my love anew to God as well as to HJ. What will your response to God's invitation in Jesus be?

Happy New Year.

+John

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