

**ST MARY'S
OLD SWINFORD
Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS
FEBRUARY 2018**



50p

PRIEST IN CHARGE:

The Revd Stephen Agnew
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CURATE:

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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 Day Off Friday

OTHER REGULAR EVENTS

Prayer Group	Third Wednesday in month, 10 -11 am	Tel: 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

7.1.18 Robert Aarron Moore
Julie Angela Simpson

Weddings

16.12.17 Wesley Ellidge and Laura Purslow

Funerals

28.12.17 David Browning - Interment of ashes
29.12.17 Kenneth Roden aged 87
3.1.18 Norma Dunn aged 64
5.1.18 Lucy Rennie aged 96
9.1.18 Sheila Westwood aged 89

DIARY - FEBRUARY 2018

Thursday 1	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 2	Clergy's day off
Saturday 3	10.00 – 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 4	SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE LENT
	3.00 pm Baptism
Tuesday 6	10.00 am Open The Book at Oldswinford Primary School
Wednesday 7	9.00 am Morning Prayers and Full Staff Meeting
	3.00 pm Holy Communion at Oriel House
	7.00 pm Baptism Preparation
Thursday 8	10.30 am Holy Communion
	7.30 pm Churches Together in Stourbridge Meeting - Narthex
Friday 9	Clergy's Day Off
Saturday 10	10.00 – 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 11	SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT – Worship Together
	6.30 pm Joint Choral Evensong with St Thomas' at St Mary's
Tuesday 13	10.00 am Assembly at Oldswinford Primary School
	11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft
WEDNESDAY 14	ASH WEDNESDAY
	7.30 pm A service for the start of Lent
Thursday 15	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 16	Clergy's Day Off
Saturday 17	10.00 – 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 18	THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
	3.00 pm Baptism
Monday 19	School's half term holiday week
Tuesday 20	2.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Coach House
Wednesday 21	10.00 am Prayer Group at Marjorie Ferguson's home
Thursday 22	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 23	Clergy's Day Off
Saturday 24	9.30 am Church Walking Group – Saltwells
	10.00 – 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
	12.00 noon Wedding
SUNDAY 25	THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
Tuesday 27	10.00 am Open The Book at Oldswinford Primary School
	2.30 pm Tuesday Tea in the Narthex
Wednesday 28	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge

“Remember that Lent and Ash Wednesday is not just about putting away the bad things. It is about creating good things and helping the poor and the needy, being kind to people and much more.”

Jacob Winters



Dear Friends

Easter comes early this year, Easter Sunday falls on 1 April. The natural consequence of an early Easter is that the six weeks of Lent, leading up to Holy Week and Easter, also fall early. So Ash Wednesday which marks the start of Lent is on 14 February, a date which for some reason sticks in my mind.

Why I mention all these dates is that Lent is traditionally a time for thinking about our faith and about how we measure up to the sort of life that God wants us to live. Lent is a time of self-examination and as part of that self-examination we often embark upon study courses, either by way of a series of talks or meetings together with the intention of deepening our faith.

This year at St Mary's we will once again embark upon a course which Alex has written, and we will study it in small housegroups. The aim of the course is to consider the blessings that we have received from God and in response to these blessings to determine how we can be faithful to our calling as God's representatives in this part of Stourbridge. Over the course of Lent we will be thinking about different facets of our mission as Christian people and developing a vision for the congregation of St Mary's. I hope that you will get involved in this series of housegroups as you got involved and enjoyed the housegroups last Lent.

At the time I was starting to think about Lenten groups and writing this letter, by coincidence another group had arranged to meet together for a social event, the 2016 – 17 Bishop's Certificate group which had met together in the Coach House during the last academic year. They decided that they would like to spend a little more time together because they had enjoyed their study time together so much. It was lovely to meet up again, especially with the people from other parishes. But it also got me thinking about how many people from St Mary's had enjoyed the Bishop's Certificate Courses which we have run over the past three years – you may not know who has taken part, so here's a list of those who have really enjoyed the study of their faith: Alec, Alex, Dawn, Ian, Jean, John, Judith, Marjorie, Mike, Peter, Roger, Ruth, Stephen. Perhaps next time there is an opportunity for you to join in with such a course you will put your name down, because everyone who has taken part in the past has found them not only to be great fun but also the course has helped the participants on their faith journey, and that is surely something we should all seek to do.

Our understanding of our Christian faith is not just something which comes by a sort of osmosis, it is like everything else we do, we need to put in some effort in order to gain some reward. Putting in the effort is usually great fun, as we meet other people on their own faith journey, but perhaps more important we become strengthened and affirmed on our own journey of faith, our journey to God's kingdom.

Stephen Agnew

ST MARY'S AND ST JOHN'S MOTHERS' UNION

The branch Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday, 9 January 2018. Sally Frost chaired the meeting on behalf of Anne May. 11 members attended.

NEXT MEETING.

Tuesday 13 February 2.15 pm at the Coach House. The talk will be "Faith works through love." The speaker is Dawn Nex.

COFFEE MORNING at Norton Church Hall on Saturday 27 January between 10.30 am and 12 noon. All are welcome.

Dawn Nex

ON-LINE SERVICES

Our everyday lives seem to be increasingly dependent on, if not controlled by, on-line services. Buying goods, booking appointments, paying bills, accessing services and many more routine activities which we used to do by writing letters, making phone calls or visiting shops and offices are now carried out on the internet. Many of our 'senior' generation, and some younger ones, who do not have the facilities or competence to use new digital information technology are often disadvantaged by this trend and have to seek help. There does not seem to be a simple answer to this problem but those with the appropriate skills might be more alert to the needs of the less able and offer help and support where possible.

Like most large organizations the Church of England has embraced this information technology and the diocesan websites provide a valuable source of information. However the problems of 'Access by the IT illiterate' are highlighted this month by the on-line publication of the 2018 Lent course called "#LiveLent – Let your Light Shine". The web-pages give an inviting description of the course as a "Lenten journey through the gospel of John" but it soon becomes clear that the course is to be delivered on-line with 'material to download; apps for android and IOS; email and text signs and additional download resources'. I think some of our St Mary's congregation, and many others elsewhere will not be able to access the internet and I hope the diocese might address this disadvantage in the future.

If any readers are interested in following the C of E Lent course (see Diocesan notes on page 10) and do not have the internet facilities I would be happy to share my resources for occasional visits to the website during Lent. However another option might be to join one of our own Lent course groups which Alex is arranging (see page 7) when you will be able to share the fellowship with friends from St Mary's congregation.

Alec Beevers

LETTER FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS

The past Christmas season has been a particularly busy and sometimes challenging time for our church community. Our one disappointment must be the enforced cancellation, due to the severely adverse weather conditions, of all of the scheduled school and college carol services. We very much regret the loss of these opportunities to welcome into St Mary's and to engage with large congregations. We thank all those who shared with us the tasks of preparing for these events which focus on the active inclusion of young people in the celebration of the Christmas story. We look forward in hope for the future.

Several other events avoided the ravages of the heavy snowfall. These brought many people to St Mary's and created opportunities for very successful collaboration. The Advent Experience, led by Revd. Alex French and the Christmas Tree Festival led by Sally Frost both proved very popular and successful for all those who helped and those who visited to take part.

Wendy Tranter led the organisation of our 49th Christingle Service in support of The Children's Society. This was well attended and raised almost £250 to assist with the provision of the important support that is so essential for some of our less fortunate young people.

Young people featured most significantly at the Christmas Eve Crib Service, an increasingly popular occasion when the Christmas Story is told in prose and musical items during which children bring the characters in the story to the crib. The active involvement of children of all ages brings both challenges and real delights to this occasion and may make it one of the most relevant of such opportunities during the church year.



Music featured highly in services and other events. On the Saturday evening, during the slight lull in the snowstorms, a 'Got 2 Sing' choir of well over 100 singers performed in a well-attended and much enjoyed concert. This was the sixth time the choir has chosen St Mary's as the venue for this event and we hope to welcome them again in 2018. Our own choir and musicians contributed greatly at many services. The musical items they had rehearsed and performed with such competence provided much enjoyment and brought considerable praise from all who heard them sing.

Throughout this busy time the clergy, led by Revd Stephen Agnew, provided leadership of our services and much important pastoral work throughout the parish for those unable to get to church. This often invisible element of their work is substantial and generally goes unnoticed by many.

In all, a very warm and sincere message of thanks is due to everyone

who contributed to and participated in these events for Christmas 2017. May the wishes of peace become a reality for you all and may the New Year bring you much joy and happiness.

With our very best wishes and warmest thanks.

Tony Tatford, Judy Hall - Church Wardens

CHRISTMAS BUCKET COLLECTION

The recent Christmas bucket collection raised over £700 in response to our appeal to support local charities. The outcome of the generosity of those who visited St Mary's and contributed to the appeal has been that almost £250 has been sent to each of the three Important, targeted social causes, The Food Bank, Street Pastors and The Debt Support Centre.

Thank you for your generous response and gift of support that will bring much hope to those in need.

LENT COURSE 2018 - 'COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS'

Following the success of last year's Lent Course we have put together a five week programme which we will run again through house groups.

By studying a variety of Bible passages together, we will explore some of the myriad of ways in which God, through God's utter generosity and unconditional love blesses our lives. Although we can't stop God loving us and wanting to bless us, we can choose how we respond to the blessings of God. The first step in any response is to start by recognising the ways in which our lives have been blessed.

Each weekly session will include a discussion focused on what our responses should be to God's love, teasing out just what we might do differently either as individual disciples or corporately as the Body of Christ in the parish of Oldswinford.

No previous knowledge is needed nor is any particular depth of faith. All that is required is a willingness to engage in discussion with others and to be open to where God's Holy Spirit may take you this Lent. Details of dates, times and venues of the group meetings will be displayed in the Narthex. Please don't hesitate to speak to Stephen or Alex if you have any queries.

MUSIC NOTES

On Sunday 11 February our own singers will be joined by the Choir of St. Thomas's, Stourbridge for a service of Choral Evensong at 6.30 pm. Do support this if you can.

During February we will be admitting three new junior chorister members of the choir. They are Martha Gale, Luke Thompson and Alexandra Jones. We hope you will give them and their families a warm welcome.

Graham Davies - Director of Music.

ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD

Several members of our congregation enjoy occasional, if not daily, walks through the churchyard and it is particularly popular with dog-walkers, often en-route to the fields adjoining the Mary Stevens Centre. February may not be the best time to visit but at the moment it is clear of overgrowth, thanks to the efforts of 'Muddy Boots' and 'Community Payback', which allows a clearer overview and easier access to particular areas.

The initial impression of the graveyard on entering from the northwest gate is of a higgledy-piggledy collection of headstones, toppling in different angles and directions. Erosion has obscured many of the inscriptions but those that are readable provide an interesting reflection of Victorian life: large families with many children dying in infancy, industrial accidents such as falling into a clay pit and frequent repeated surnames indicating close family communities with little mobility.

Further along the path is an area affectionately known as 'Millionaire's Row' with familiar names from the entrepreneurs of the day. Here the graves are marked with large family tombs, elaborate sculptures, columns, wrought ironwork and Celtic crosses. The names include Evers and Evers-Swindell, whose biographies are recorded in a book by Elliot Evers called 'Butterflies in Camphor'. The name Evers-Swindell appears in New Zealand's Olympic honours list for twin sisters winning gold medals by rowing in the double skulls in 2008 and 2012 - evidently descendants from the Stourbridge family.



Other names who were significant figures in the community are recognized from street names such as Rufford and Craufurd, and several other former rectors of St Mary's are remembered here. Charles Wordsworth, rector from 1878 to 1892 started the parish magazine in 1878 and was the great-nephew of the poet William Wordsworth. Towards the eastern slope of the churchyard are the graves of two of our most eminent industrialists and benefactors – Ernest Stevens and James Foster.



The churchyard also holds a number of war graves which are remembered each year on Remembrance Day. One near the south gate has been planted with a small clump of early snowdrops

which appear in January and provide a timely message of renewal of life and hope for the new year. The custom of 'dressing' graves and memorial stones with floral tributes at significant anniversaries and festivals has been encouraged this year by the good maintenance of the more recent areas and the Christmas displays have been particularly colourful.

Apart from being a peaceful sanctuary for our departed loved ones, the graveyard provides a unique habitat for flora and fauna which measure the passage of the seasons. The variety of trees give continuous colour, shade and shelter from early spring blossom to late autumn leaf-fall, while birds and insects enjoy the natural symbiosis. Lichens and algae on the grave-stones add to the rich diversity and experts can use these primitive lifeforms to indicate the presence of atmospheric pollution, as well as geographical orientation.

Whether you walk for daily exercise or take an occasional leisurely stroll, the location invites you to pause, look, ponder and reflect on lives past. Read the inscriptions and wonder about the family histories. We would be interested to hear of any particular epitaphs which might stir your thoughts and memories.

Alec Beevers

BELL RINGERS' CORNER

Ringing Remembers

On Sunday 11 November 2018, 100 years since Armistice, bells will ring out in unison from churches and cathedrals in villages, towns and cities across the country. Big Ben will also strike at 11am to mark the centenary.



To mark the final year of the First World War centenary commemorations, 1,400 new bell ringers will be recruited in honour of the 1,400 that lost their lives during the First World War.

Church bells across the UK remained restricted throughout the course of the war and only rang freely once Armistice was declared on 11 November 1918.

The campaign to recruit bell ringers, **Ringing Remembers**, will keep this traditional British art alive in memory of the 1,400 who lost their lives – linking together past, present and future.

The campaign is being run by the Department of Communities and Local Government in collaboration with Big Ideas Community Interest Company and the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.

If you think that you, or a family member or friend, might be interested in learning about bell ringing, and being one of the ringers that participates in the commemorations on Sunday 11 November this year, then contact John Sutton on 01384 441003.

Stephen Howard

RECIPES AND WINES

Although the Recipes and Wines page is no longer featured in our Monthly News format, we have produced a collection of Ann and Richard's articles from magazines published in 2009 and 2010. Their offerings are as fresh and entertaining as ever and if you enjoy original ideas for your table this compilation will provide a useful addition to your kitchen bookshelf. Priced at £1.00 + postage, copies may be obtained from Alec Beevers on 01384 444229

FROM THE DIOCESAN OFFICE

Fairtrade Fortnight

This year, Fairtrade Fortnight runs from Monday 26 February until Sunday 11 March. During fairtrade fortnight, campaigners, businesses, schools and places of worship show their support for the farmers and workers who grow our food in developing countries.

"For hundreds of years, we were taught to serve, to be workers. Now with Fairtrade, we are entrepreneurs." says Marcial Quintero, member of Coobana, a Fairtrade banana co-operative in Panama.

Historically farmers and workers were being taken advantage of. Now across the globe, Marcial and hard-working producers like him are unravelling this legacy. They're fighting for a fair deal, supported by Fairtrade, earning their way out of poverty and transforming their communities.

Together we're stronger, and more people choosing, sharing and shouting about Fairtrade in the UK means more power to producers like Marcial to break the stranglehold of poverty prices.

This year, the theme of Fairtrade Fortnight is "Come on in to Fairtrade" and meet your neighbours – the farmers who grow and produce the food we eat each day. For churches, this theme gives the opportunity to celebrate God's welcome for all, and helps us consider how as Christians we can be good neighbours to others.

Find out more at: <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/fortnight>.

Church of England Lent Course 2018

This year's lent course from the Church of England will be #LiveLent - Let your light shine. It is a Lenten journey through the Gospel of John, offering a short daily reading, a pause for reflection and prayer and a challenge to act, with a focus on witness to link with Thy Kingdom Come (between Ascension Day and Pentecost). It is written in simple and accessible language by the Archdeacon of Wandsworth, John Kiddle, and includes a welcome from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

There will also be daily *Let your light shine* material available to download. The materials will help to bridge from Lent and Easter into Pentecost and *Thy Kingdom Come*.

Resources will shortly be available at www.churchofengland.org/lent

Sam Setchell - Communications Officer



LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF DUDLEY

Do you, like me, love to see people of all ages growing in faith and enjoying the love of God?

One of our four priorities within the Kingdom People vision is to increase our engagement with children, young people and their families across the diocese. Our newly formed team of ***Calling Young Disciples*** Mission Enablers are already having an impact in their host parishes and further afield. We now have six, working under the leadership of Project Director Ruth Walker, the final two having started in January.



I have been greatly encouraged to hear stories emerging as this creative team build relationships with congregations and both equip them, and help them to think differently!

Adam, for example, tells of how Messy Church is developing parish -wide as resources and talents are pooled and how it's being increasingly seen as an additional congregation rather than something to feed into the 9.30 am service.

Anne, Helen and Amy have enthused about the willingness to try something new from people who haven't been on the radar of clergy, people who have had a 'holy unrest'. The introduction of a Mission Enabler to poke and shake things up has helped to revive the fire in people. They have had '*God moments*', when children, young people and adults have spoken about God and faith, and there has been a strong sense of God preparing the way in the places where they're allocated. They have seen evidence of where people have been working beneath the surface to progress the Kingdom People ethos and are now ready and willing to move with the tide.

Alongside the work of this team, as well as that of our Youth Officer, Simon and Children's Officer, Emma, we also had the privilege of a day's training from Lucy Moore on how to keep the discipleship focus of Messy Church in November. Nearly a hundred people were inspired and enthused to take their Messy Churches to the next level, and from some of the tweets I saw leading up to Christmas, this had excellent results.

I long to see churches across the diocese truly engaging with all ages effectively – our churches need to be multi-generational if they are to reflect the welcome of God's kingdom. I am looking forward to many more encouraging stories as we intentionally focus on this, and hope that all those families who packed out our special Christmas services will be invited back for other events soon. Please join me in praying for the work of the Calling Young Disciples Team, and our Diocesan Youth and Children's Officers, giving thanks for seeds sown, green shoots appearing, and the promise of more to come. I am sure we have an exciting year ahead!

Nikki Groarke

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