

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

MARCH 2018
ONLINE EDITION**

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50p

PRIEST IN CHARGE:

The Revd Stephen Agnew
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Old Swinford
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CURATE:

The Revd Alex French
58 Arlington Court
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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

		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	07845 968025
	st.mary.os.dom@btconnect.com	
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

Funerals

2.2.18	Vera Hill	Aged 96
10.2.18	Kenneth Roden	Interment of ashes

There were no baptisms or weddings during this reporting period

EASTER LILIES

The Church will be decorated for Easter on Saturday 31 March from 9.00am.

Anyone wishing to contribute towards the cost of the lilies in memory of loved ones can do so by putting donations in an envelope with the name of the person to be remembered and giving it to one of the Church Wardens or Sally Frost. Donations can also be put in yellow gift aid envelopes. Please mark these "For Flower Guild".

Thank you very much.

DIARY - MARCH 2018

Thursday 1	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 2	Clergy day off
Saturday 3	10.00 - 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 4	THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
Monday 5	7.30 pm Standing Committee
Tuesday 6	10.00 am Assembly at OCEPS
	2.00 pm Flower Guild Meeting in the Narthex
Thursday 8	10.30 am Holy Communion
	7.30 pm Coach House Committee Meeting
Friday 9	Clergy day off
Saturday 10	10.00 - 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 11	MOTHERING SUNDAY
Monday 12	11.30 am Pastoral Care meeting
Tuesday 13	Parish Office closed
	10.00 am Open the Book team visit OCEPS
	11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft
Wednesday 14	Parish Office closed
	9.00 am Morning Prayers and full staff meeting
Thursday 15	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 16	Clergy day off
SUNDAY 18	FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT
	3.00 pm Baptisms
Tuesday 20	2.00 pm Tea in the Coach House
	7.30 pm PCC meeting
Wednesday 21	St Mary's Quiet Day at Holland House
Thursday 22	10.30 am Holy Communion
	7.30 pm Coach House AGM
Friday 23	Clergy day off
Saturday 24	9.30 am St Mary's Walking Group—Saltwells
	10.00 - 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
	Wedding Preparation Day
	7.30 pm Performance of 'Jesus My Boy' in Church
SUNDAY 25	PALM SUNDAY
Monday 26	11.00 am Chrism Service at Worcester Cathedral
	6.30 pm Service of Reflection
Tuesday 27	10.00 am Open the Book team visit OCEPS
	2.30 pm Tuesday Tea in the Narthex
	6.30 pm Service of Reflection
Wednesday 28	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
	2.00 pm Oldswinford Hospital Easter Service in Church
	6.30 pm Service of Reflection
Thursday 29	10.30 am Holy Communion
	7.00 pm Agape Meal in the Church Hall
Friday 30	GOOD FRIDAY
	2.00 pm Service of Reflection
	2.00 - 4.00 pm Messy Church in Church Hall
	7.30 pm Service of Readings, Meditations and Anthems
Saturday 31	9.00 am Decorate church for Easter
	10.00 - 12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church

FROM THE CURATE



By the time that you read this letter Easter will be fast approaching. Lambs will be gambolling in the fields, birds will be singing and darting across the sky and buds will be breaking forth across many plants, shrubs and trees in our parish. In fact if we are willing to open our eyes and ears and notice what is happening around us, then we can't escape the recognition that this time of the year cries out to our senses - fresh beginnings, new life.

This is God's glorious creation at work, bringing forth growth where it has seemed to be absent, life out of apparent decay. Indeed what we see today bursting forth from the rhythms of our natural world is mirrored in our theological reflection as we prepare to celebrate God's wondrous act of recreation, of renewing life in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This one act, given by God for you and me is like moving from winter into spring and then being held permanently in this life-creating environment. Death and decay no longer have the last word. Christ is resurrected, gaining both a victory for all time over death and offering the promise of the same eternal life to all those who believe in Him. New life abounds!

Belief at the moment is an interesting word. Pick up a newspaper, watch the news on television or listen to it on the radio and more often than not questions are being asked about the validity of any information we are given. Whether it is the almost daily cry of 'fake news' from the other side of the Atlantic or the credibility of the claims made by those campaigning for Brexit, we are presented with narratives by the media which ask and expect us to question the things we are told. Doubt and disbelief seem to be a new default position, the place from where our thinking starts.

Very slowly and more often than not at a subconscious level, we seem to be being drawn into a culture which questions and dismisses the claims made by others as false, erroneous or just incorrect. Trust seems to be being eroded, by the working of scepticism and cynicism.

Pick up the Bible and read any of the stories about Jesus' teaching and preaching and almost always he was met with doubt and disbelief. Few people believed what he claimed or what he stood for; you can almost hear the cry of 'fake news' being shouted at him. Yet we mustn't forget that an important part of our celebration of Easter symbolizes the complete verification and confirmation of all that Jesus preached and taught during His three year ministry. If He had not risen from the dead, if He had merely died and not been resurrected, He would have been considered just another teacher or Rabbi. However, His resurrection changed all that and gave final and irrefutable proof that He was really the Son of God, that He had conquered death once and for all and that he could be believed.

He is someone this Easter in whom we can trust and place our belief, resting secure in the knowledge of God's faithfulness and truth. May this truth bless you and all those who you love with new life this Easter.

Grace and Peace

Alex

PARISH QUIET DAY AT HOLLAND HOUSE

As part of our Lent study and reflection groups we have organised a Parish Quiet Day at Holland House on Wednesday 21 March. The day will be led by Stephen and we shall be reflecting further on the themes covered in our Lent groups relating to St Mary's and how we move forward as a Christian community. This will be a whole day event to include lunch and transport will be organised for people who need it. Please make a note in your diary and look out for further details and sign-up sheet soon.

HOLY WEEK AT ST MARY'S

Sunday 25 March PALM SUNDAY

- 8.00 am Holy Communion.
- 10.00 am Parish Communion to include a reading of the Passion narrative. This service begins in the Church Hall with palm procession into Church.
- 6.30pm Evensong.

Monday 26 March

- 11.00 am Chrism Service in Worcester Cathedral.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 26, 27, 28 March

- 6.30 pm Service of Reflection with Complin.

Thursday 29 March MAUNDY THURSDAY

- 10.30 am Holy Communion.
- 7.00 pm Agape Meal in the Church Hall.

Friday 30 March GOOD FRIDAY

- 10.00am Churches Together in Stourbridge procession of witness.
- 2.00 pm Service of Reflection.
- 2.00 pm Messy Church in the church hall.
- 7.30 pm Service of readings, reflections and music based on the last 7 words of Christ.

Saturday 31 March HOLY SATURDAY

- 9.00 am Church decoration.
- 10.00 am Open church and vestry hour.

Sunday 1 April EASTER DAY

- 7.45 am Holy Fire. The lighting of the Easter Candle.
- 8.00 am Holy Communion.
- 10.00 am Parish Communion.
- 6.30 pm Choral Evensong with sermon.





CHRISTINGLE No. 49

Our Christingle service held just before Christmas was a truly family occasion. We are extremely grateful to all those who took part; instrumentalists, readers and everyone who supported The Children's Society. The amount of £222.96 raised will go a long way in helping our country's vulnerable children and young people.

Thank you so much,

Wendy Tranter

FLOWER GUILD

The Flower Guild AGM will take place in the Narthex on Tuesday 6th March 2018 at 2.00pm. Anyone who is interested in joining the Flower Arrangers is very welcome to join us for this. At this meeting the ladies who arrange flowers on the High Altar and in the Lady Chapel each week choose dates they would like to do this. Very often it is to celebrate a special birthday or anniversary or in memory of a loved one. This year there will be more spaces on the rota than usual as our calendar runs from Easter till the following Lent. Next year Easter is not until 21st April, much later hence giving extra dates on the rota. If anyone would like to contribute to the flowers at any time during the year please contact me.

Sally Frost

ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD - NAMES REMEMBERED

Following our feature about the churchyard last month two readers have responded with recollections of epitaphs, experiences of walks and memories of names on gravestones.

The Renaud Family

One morning many years ago, I was taking my dog Misty for his daily walk when I met a young couple searching the gravestones and curiosity drew me into conversation. They'd travelled from Skipton near Preston to search for their family grave with the name Renaud. The churchyard was very overgrown at the time and the search was difficult but I remembered I had a book which contained a map and names of graves. I ran home for the book and we eventually found the grave – very elaborate with ornate wrought iron railings and many names hidden by grass and nettles. I returned home again for tools, shears etc., to trim the area which I left with the visitors as I had to go to work. When I returned that evening the tools were left on my doorstep with a lovely letter of thanks. The family had owned a glass works near Dudley Castle which was originally called Castle Foot Glassworks and later became Guest, Wood and Guest.

Margaret Casey

Revd John Malsbury Kirby BD

Last month's article about our churchyard reminded me of an epitaph on a stone I have always found to be poignant. It details a family tragedy that took place here in Old Swinford in 1840, during the early years of Queen Victoria's reign.

The unhappy circumstances are recorded on a large slate slab set into the brick wall at the southern end of the churchyard. The circumstances may not have been that unusual at the time that they happened, but they give an insight into the uncertain nature of life in those days. I have recorded the words written on the memorial below.



In a vault beneath lie the mortal remains of the Rev John Malsbury Kirby BD second master of the Free Grammar School and Chaplain of the Stourbridge Union Workhouse. Who with his two daughters were carried off by a malignant fever. In little more than a month leaving an afflicted widow and six sons to lament their irreparable loss.

Sarah Clarrissa died Oct 31st 1840 aged 16 years and 5 months. Issabella Elizabeth died Nov 20th 1840 aged 2 years and 6 months. They were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not divided. Their affectionate father followed them Dec 1st 1840 aged 45 years and 10 months.

I have managed to find out a little more about Revd John Malsbury Kirby. He was born in 1795 the son of Edmund Kirby of Blakesley. He married Elizabeth Peell at St Thomas's in Winchester in 1823. He was educated at Rugby School and Queen's College Cambridge.

By 1830 he appears to be living in Old Swinford, his fourth and subsequent children all being born here. In 1832 he was recorded as being second master at Stourbridge Grammar School, and Chaplain of the Stourbridge Union Workhouse.

He had eight children in all, the fever seems to have carried off his eldest and youngest children, both girls. The Revd Kirby is recorded as dying in Hagley in 1840. His wife Elizabeth became a governess at the grammar school, moved to Amblecote and raised her remaining six children alone.

Stephen Howard

The book referred to in Margaret's note is a directory compiled by the Birmingham Society of Genealogy and Heraldry. The survey was carried out in 1989 - 1990 by a group which included several of our own parishioners and contains notes on locations and comprehensive descriptions of all the gravestones in the churchyard. A copy of the book is held in the parish office and is often used as a reference to help visitors who are looking for information on their ancestry.

BELL RINGERS' CORNER

On 1 February, the Old Swinford bell ringers and their guests attended their annual evening out. The function was held at the Rainbow Palace Chinese restaurant in Stambermill. We chose to use this venue again, having enjoyed a similar evening there a year or two ago. We were presented with a series of authentic dishes and tongue-tingling treats.

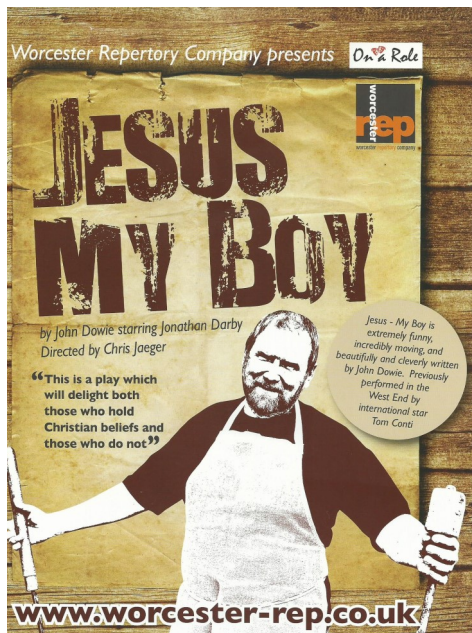


Whilst enjoying a very jolly evening we were also able to anticipate a full year's ringing ahead, - not only service ringing on Sundays and practice evening on Thursdays, but fifteen weddings to ring for and the nationwide day of ringing on 11 November .

This nationwide day of ringing will mark the final year of the First World War centenary commemorations. There is a campaign to recruit 1400 new bell ringers across the country in honour of the 1400 that lost their lives during the conflict.

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 11 November this year, then contact John Sutton on 01384 441003.

Stephen Howard



EASTER PLAY

JESUS MY BOY

Saturday 24 March in St Mary's Church, Oldswinford

Beginning at 7.30 pm

followed by light refreshments and meet the actor in the Church Hall

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WALKING GROUP - JANUARY WALK

Just a'walking in the rain!

On Saturday 27 January a group of nine walkers met for the church walk. The forecast was not promising and it was even raining as we stood in the church car park. Amazingly no one had rung to ask if we were still going to do the walk.

Our journey included some public transport, the first was the shuttle from Stourbridge Junction into the town. Walking through Stourbridge, down the High Street, under the underpass and out past the ring road to walk by the Bonded Warehouse we continued along the tow path of the Stourbridge Arm of the canal, passing recently developed landscaping allowing clear views of the Lion Health Centre and along newly restored footpaths. Here the rain had stopped for the moment. At the Wordsley Junction of the canal we turned left towards our destination at Kinver. By a bridge near Wollaston we stopped for the now traditional cup of mulled wine on the January walk. The rain at this point was not too heavy and the forecast had said showers and maybe sunny intervals. Wishful thinking!

As we continued along the tow path the rain got heavier and it was continuous, no sign of a break in the clouds. No one seemed to mind as we made our way towards the Stewponey at Stourton. Leaving the tow path at Hyde Lock we walked past the stables and into Kinver via the playing fields.

We had booked for lunch at the Old White Hart pub where we were joined by two more people. Everyone enjoyed the food and we gradually dried out. The return journey was by bus and then the shuttle back to Stourbridge Junction and so to the church car park. Some of the group had a lift with the ones who came by car.

Sue and Tony Wakeley

ST MARY'S TODDLER GROUP

Elaine Pritchard has been running the Church Toddler Group in the Church Hall on Wednesday afternoons during term time for 6 years and would now like to stand down.

We would like to continue running this successful community group and in order to do so we will need to gather together a group of people from Church and from the Toddler Group who will help to run it. Could you help us with this? It is not onerous, but it is great fun. If you would like to offer your support have a word with Stephen.

LENT COURSE 2018 - 'COUNTING YOUR BLESSINGS'

The home group meetings for this year's course will operate as follows:

Mondays 7.00pm—8.30pm at 6 The Heathlands

Tuesdays 10.00am—11.30am at 23 Walker Avenue

Wednesdays 2.00pm—3.30pm at 18 Wollescote Road

Thursdays 7.00pm—8.30pm at 4 Worcester Lane

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

Anne May opened with a prayer, notices and reports on absent members.

Pat Whalley led the service on the theme of service to others using Alfred Nobel as an example, leaving his fortune for prizes to those considered to have made an important contribution to the world.

Dawn Nex then gave a demonstration of the work involved in the compilation, stitching and hanging of the banner on the balcony of the church. In all it took about five years from the original suggestion of a memorial to Jane Harris to completion, by which time Doreen Ryan who helped design the banner and Richard Harris had died. The quality of the work and patience of Dawn in completing this banner was overwhelming and her talk was much appreciated.

Dates for your diary:

Friday 2 March	10.30 am Our Lady and All Saints RC church Women's World Day of Prayer.
Tuesday 13 March	2.15 pm in the Coach House Lent Meditation led by Kanthi Ariaraj
Thursday 22 March	10.30 am St Mary's Church Mothers' Union corporate Communion

Joan Barwick

FROM THE DIOCESE MOTHERING SUNDAY

Mothering Sunday is celebrated on the 4th Sunday of Lent and is traditionally the day when children, mainly daughters, who had gone to work as domestic servants were given a day off to visit their mother and family. This year it falls on 11 March.

Centuries ago it was considered important for people to return to their home or 'mother' church once a year. So each year in the middle of Lent, everyone would visit their 'mother' church - the main church or cathedral of the area. Inevitably this return became an occasion for family reunions when children who were working away returned home and most historians think that this led to the tradition of children being given the day off to visit their mother and family. As they walked along the country lanes, children would pick wild flowers or violets to take to church or give to their mother as a small gift.

Mothering Sunday was also known as Refreshment Sunday because the fasting rules for Lent were relaxed that day. Simnel cakes have particularly been associated with the day. A Simnel cake is a fruit cake with two layers of almond paste, one on top and one in the middle. The cake is made with 11 balls of marzipan icing on top representing the 11 disciples (Judas is not included).

Sam Setchell - Communications Officer

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF DUDLEY

God's work

Have you noticed that when you turn the pages of scripture people are often described by the job they do? Abraham was a herdsman, Noah was a farmer, David was a shepherd, the first disciples of Jesus were commercial fishermen, Matthew was a tax collector and Lydia was a merchant. Amongst other occupations, we meet doctors, tent-makers, perfumers, cooks, domestic servants, millers, sailors, prostitutes, shop keepers and builders. Jesus, who grew up in and around the family carpentry business, kept speaking of the world of work in his parables - farmers sowing seeds, women making bread or cleaning the house, and labourers in the vineyard. Work is all around.



In January I attended an event celebrating the 350th anniversary of Old Swinford Hospital School in Stourbridge. The guest speaker was the Bank of England's Chief Economist, Andrew Haldane, and he explored the rise of the robots and what this would mean for the future of work. Apparently further advances in computers may well mean that we don't need 95% of today's accountants, but teachers are harder to replace; we'll perhaps only lose 1% of them! I failed to ask for his prediction about clergy!

Andrew Haldane was clear that we can trace major changes and trends in the job market back to the industrial revolution. Innovation and ideas have kept changing the need for different jobs and this will continue. He suggested that our challenge for the future of work is to be one step ahead of the machines by preparing people to work in areas that machines will find it hard to replicate. This means that creativity and the ability to think outside the box, as well as emotional intelligence and social skills, will all have a key place in the world of work.

It strikes me that the journey of Christian discipleship equips people very well in many of these future areas. In following God we are drawn into being co-workers for his Kingdom. God is always opening us up to the possibility of seeing things in his way, not following the crowd, but being open to new ideas and seeking to mend the world. Prayer draws us into the slipstream of God's wonder and transformation, seeing the needs of our neighbours and those the world wishes to leave behind. And our churches are social places where generations mix and learn together.

Jesus compared the work of building his Kingdom to the manual labour of those working in the fields, to the fishermen out all night and to the ownership of a vineyard. The workers bring in their offering of grain and fish and grapes to create a feast. As we prepare for Holy Communion we offer the work of human hands, taking kneaded and baked bread, and squeezed and fermented grape juice, together with our whole selves, our work, our joys, our sadness and struggles. We offer back to God in thanksgiving for what we receive. This is what St Benedict called *opus Dei*, the work of God, to which we are all called to contribute.

Bishop Graham

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