

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

APRIL 2018
ONLINE EDITION**

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APRIL 2018**



50p

PRIEST IN CHARGE:

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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

		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, BANNOS 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

18.2.18	Sebastian Philip Tromans
4.3.18	Darcie Dee McCulloch
4.3.18	Alaana Anne Akel

Weddings

24.2.18	James Collins and Chloe Farthing
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Funeral

5.3.18	Barbara Kent Aged 89
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DIARY FOR APRIL 2018

SUNDAY 1

Monday 2

Thursday 5

Friday 6

Saturday 7

SUNDAY 8

Monday 9

Tuesday 10

Thursday 12

Friday 13

Saturday 14

SUNDAY 15

Monday 16

Tuesday 17

Thursday 19

Friday 20

Saturday 21

SUNDAY 22

Monday 23

Tuesday 24

Wednesday 25

Thursday 26

Friday 27

Saturday 28

SUNDAY 29

EASTER SUNDAY

Bank holiday

3.00 -7.30 pm Bellringers' Association AGM

10.30 am Holy Communion

Clergy day off

10.00 am -12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Worship Together

3.00 pm Baptism

Parish Office closed this week

11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft

10.30 am Holy Communion in church

Clergy day off

7.00 - 9.00 pm Choir Practice

10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour

4.00 pm Wedding

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Annual Parish Church Meeting following 10.00 am service

3.00 pm Baptisms

School term begins

10.00 am Assembly at OCEPS

2.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Coach House

10.30 am Holy Communion in church

Clergy day off

10.00 - 11.00 am Vestry Hour

10.30 am - 12.00 noon Mission Coffee morning

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

2.00 pm Talk on dementia in the Coach House

10.00 am Open the Book team visit to OCEPS

2.30 pm Tuesday Tea in the narthex

11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge

10.30 am Holy Communion in church

Clergy day off

9.30 am Parish Walking Group – The Parish Bounds

10.00 am – 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

At Services in St Mary's on Sunday 18 March, Stephen, our Priest-in-charge announced that after 39 years of ministry since his ordination he was planning to retire at the end of September 2018.

We recognise with gratitude Stephen's ministry at St Mary's and elsewhere and hope to be able to support him and Jean as they prepare during coming months for a long, healthy and rewarding retirement

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends

No it's not an April Fools' prank, it's real. Christ is risen!

Because of the historic calculations of when Easter should be we have, to many people's annoyance, what can only be described as a floating Easter. Easter Sunday can be any time between the last week of March and the last week of April, this year it falls on April 1st. Hence the reference to April Fools' pranks.

How unfortunate, we might think, that something so central to the Christian faith should be somehow connected with something that is, on the surface, as trivial as April Fools' Day. Actually, I have the feeling that this connection between Easter and April Fools' Day is quite a helpful one, and even has a sort of Biblical connection.

As I read the Bible stories of the resurrection one thing always strikes me, and that is the sense of disbelief with which the news is greeted. That disbelief is sometimes overt as in the story of 'doubting' Thomas, but more often it is something that seems hidden in the text of the story. An example would be from Mark's gospel where the women come to the tomb and there they were greeted by a young man wearing white, and they were dumbfounded. Not only that but they ran away from the tomb, saying nothing to anyone because they were afraid. And if we read on in Mark's gospel we are told that when Mary Magdalen told Jesus' followers that she had seen him, and that he had risen, they didn't believe her. There is a real sense in which the news of the resurrection is greeted as an April Fools' prank.

But as that first Easter Day unfolds the disciples start to realise that this is no prank, it is not the sort of fake news of which we are all so suspicious today. It is real, it is true – Christ is risen.

And it is that rising from the dead which inspired the first group of Christians to risk everything and start to tell other people about Jesus; and the Christian mission which started with Jesus spread to other followers, and the church started to grow. Of course, the story in the Bible is incomplete, because as each one of us reads it we are drawn in and become the latest person to marvel at Christ rising from the dead, and to be challenged by the news. And when we accept that it is not fake news, that it is not an April Fools' prank, and we believe it actually happened, then it becomes something which gives us a guide and inspiration by which to live our life.

So this Easter season dare to believe that Christ is risen, and then go about living your life in the hope that the resurrection of Jesus brings to all those who accept it as real news. Believing that Christ has risen gives us the capacity to know that the God of the impossible is at work in his world bringing about the most amazing transformations, not just in the lives of other people, but in our own lives as well.

May you be blessed and be filled with Easter joy.

Stephen Agnew

GROUP MINISTRY PROPOSALS

Following careful consideration the PCC has agreed to a proposal from the Bishop of Worcester for the establishment of a Group Ministry arrangement between St Mary's and St Thomas'. This has come about as a development of the Deanery Plan and in response to encouragement from the PCC for the regularisation of Revd Stephen Agnew's incumbency as Rector. The arrangement allows for the incumbents to more easily support each other by leading worship in each of the two parishes but retains the independence of the parishes whilst providing for easier cooperation and collective worship.

THEFTS AND SECURITY MEASURES

The theft from church of food donated for the Food Bank, consecrated items from the aumbrey, the Lambert memorial bookstand, a length of the lightning conductor and various other minor items has led to the church being closed for a while, whilst damage was repaired and enhanced security measures were installed. The installation of CCTV is being seriously investigated and will, very likely, be installed in the near future.

It has been the cause of much sadness to many people that someone should find it necessary to treat St Mary's in this way, especially as we offer and promote a scheme to support and assist those who face genuine hardship. The generosity of those who contribute to our several forms of collection of food and day to day essentials is much appreciated by all who benefit from this care. Please do not be disheartened by the actions of one who, for reasons we may find difficult to appreciate, resorted to this rather selfish behaviour. Let us all restate our intention to practise our Christian love by maintaining our donations in support of those who deserve our help.

MOTHERING SUNDAY



Mothering Sunday was celebrated with great joy on 11 March. In the middle of Lent, the church was brightened by the baskets of posies that awaited distribution following the care of Wendy Tranter and her team of helpers in assembling them. Our thanks have been passed to Co - Op Funeral Care who kindly donated the daffodils used in the posies. Worship Together combined a celebration and appreciation of motherhood with the welcome of those recently baptised and, through the considered selection of hymns, readings and prayers provided a



Do join us for our
Mission Coffee Morning
on
Saturday, 21 April 2018
10.30 am - 12 noon in the Narthex
Everyone welcome!
Coffee/tea and cakes *£2.00*

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

The March meeting opened with the Diocesan MU Wave of Prayer and thanksgiving service to reaffirm the vision of our founder, Mary Sumner, and to continue the worldwide mission of the MU to support families everywhere.

Kanthi Ariaraj then led our Lent meditation based on Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ and to her total acceptance to be the servant of the Lord.

We saw two 15th century illustrations; the icon showing "Our Lady of Perpetual Help" and a painting entitled "Too hard to bear". In both, Mary is shown looking out to the viewer to be drawn to see Christ as a boy and on the Cross, and in both, to invite a response to follow him in deeds, teaching and love at this passiontide. The challenge to us from Mary is, as at the wedding in Cana to the servers, "Whatever he tells you to do, do it".

Dates for your diary:

Tuesday 10 April at 2.15 pm in the Coach House - Work in the Church Army and the Magic Circle. Speaker Tony Maidment.

Thursday 26 April at 10.30 am in St Mary's - Corporate Communion.

All are welcome.

Dawn Nex

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP - SALTWELLS

On Saturday 24th February Bonny the dog, ably assisted by Keith and Linda, led the walk from the Saltwells Nature Reserve car park on a five and a half mile walk. There was a good turn out of about sixteen people on quite a cold day, but then what do you expect in February!

On leaving the car park we walked through the nature reserve, at first following the orange trail and noting some of the sculptures of animals and bats on the way. Continuing in a northerly direction, over the Dudley canal to Blackbrook Lane then through the northern part of Saltwells Reserve to Cinder Bank. After crossing Cinder Bank we made our way through Netherton Park to Bumble Hole Nature Reserve and a welcome break for coffee etc. It was mentioned that we really needed the mulled wine from the previous month to warm us up.

The walk continued past the Visitors' Centre and along the canal to Netherton Reservoir. Leaving the canal at the reservoir it was only a few hundred yards, passing the deep quarry, to a welcome lunch at the Saltwells Inn.

Sue Wakeley

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to William Peart on the award of Associateship of the Royal College of Organists. The award was conferred by the RCO President Martin Baker at a ceremony in Southwark Cathedral on Saturday 10 March.

William began his chorister experience under the direction of Richard Hall, developed his organ-playing interests in St Mary's Church under Robin Walker's tutorship and has continued his musical studies at Birmingham Conservatoire. We have maintained a great interest in his progress, enjoyed his performances in services and concerts in St Mary's and look forward to future appearances.

GARDEN SUPPLIES DIRECT



As the new gardening season gets under way thoughts turn to the procurement of the various needs to plant and nurture our gardens. One of our sponsors - Garden Supplies Direct (see back page) - provides a special delivery service to our readers on a wide range of garden products which is particularly useful for heavier items such as compost, grow bags etc. The list also includes fertilizers, tools and flower arranging materials.

You are invited to visit the website at paulsgardensupplies.co.uk or phone Paul on 01562 741820 for friendly advice and to discuss your needs.

ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD - MORE NAMES REMEMBERED

Edward Hickman 1724 - 1802

Amongst some of the prominent family names to be found in our churchyard is the name of Hickman. Their wealth originated from the wool trade which flourished in Stourbridge during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the eighteenth century they had abandoned the wool trade and become substantial land owners in the Stourbridge and Lye areas.

Of particular interest are the Hickmans that took up residence in the large house known locally in Old Swinford, as The Castle. The first member of the family to reside in the house was Edward Hickman. It seems likely that by 1759 he was living in The Castle with his mother, but he did not at that time, own the property.



Built, it is thought, in Tudor times, the house when Edward moved in had an exterior of black and white timbering and gables. This feature can still be observed on the western aspect of the building that faces on to Church Road. Edward did not become the owner of the house until 1782, when he obtained it in exchange for two pieces of land.

Once the owner of the property, it seems that Edward set about some large scale building works at the house. There was a fashion for Gothic revival at the time, and it was he that initially added the castellations that led to the property becoming known as The Castle.

At the time he moved into the property it consisted of a "capital mansion house, with the coachhouse, stables, brewhouse and other outbuildings, garden, shrubberies, pond of water, land and appurtenances thereto belonging". In all about two thirds of an acre. Later on, Edward purchased a pleasant piece of parkland known as the "pleck", which stretched from the end of his existing garden up to the churchyard.

Edward lived a gentlemanly life, concerning himself with local activities and duties. He became a Feoffee of Oldswinford Hospital, a Governor of King Edward's School, and a Trustee of the Stourbridge Turnpike. His most important appointment was that of Justice of the Peace for Worcestershire and Staffordshire.

Edward's gravestone in the churchyard bears the simple inscription "E. Hickman died 19 April 1802 aged 78 years.

Reference: The Hickmans of Oldswinford M.V. Herbert

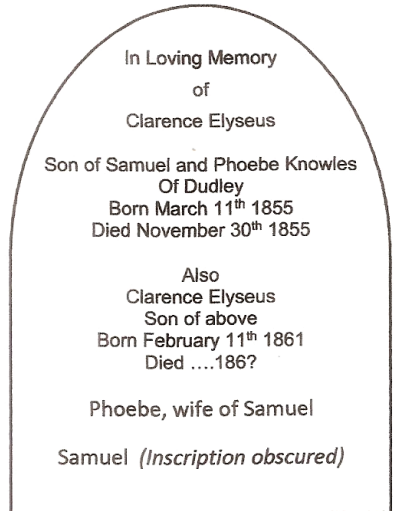
Stephen Howard

The Knowles Family

Near the south gate of the churchyard is a gravestone of a family called Knowles. The inscription is unusual in that it records the memories of two sons with the same name – Clarence Elyseus.

On closer reading the stone reveals that the first son died in infancy aged 9 months in 1855 and the second son, born about 5 years later, was given the same name. Although the lower part of the headstone is partially obscured it is evident that the second son also died in infancy or childhood. One can only imagine the grief of the parents of this sad experience, made more poignant by the love of the repeated name. The records in the parish office show that the father Samuel died in 1907, about 40 years after the death of their second son.

Like many other graves in the churchyard this inscription is a reminder of the hardships of Victorian life and of the improvements in living standards and health care which we enjoy today.



Janet Beevers

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW



I regularly feed the birds so have got used to seeing wildlife in my garden. The squirrels call to steal the fat balls and the pigeons argue over the scraps.

During the recent snow it was interesting to look down from a bedroom window and follow the various tracks in the snow, including the local cat and at least one fox. It was Sunday before I could replenish the bird feeders and put out a few bits and pieces. As I walked back towards the house there in the snow were the unmistakable tracks of a Muntjac deer – something I didn't expect to see in Pedmore. It has almost made me look forward to it snowing again.



Joan Barwick

BELL RINGERS' CORNER

A Ringing Endorsement from the Government



Church bells are to be given protection under new rules to stop people who move into nearby new homes objecting to the sound and forcing councils to silence them.

Ministers have said that official planning guidance in England is to be changed for new homes to show that the government is “standing up for churches.” Churches have sometimes had to comply with noise abatement orders to silence their bells when often only a handful of people have objected. This is despite the fact that the bells may have been ringing out at a church for centuries.

Sajid Javid, the housing minister, has said that “Churches have been part of British life in towns and villages for centuries. Their bells should not be silenced...” This change in the law is to come about after a Member of Parliament raised concerns about a ban by Dover Council on the chimes of the bells of St Peter’s church clock in Sandwich.

Dover council had served an abatement notice after receiving a single formal complaint about the night time chimes of the church clock, despite it having chimed since 1779.

Craig Mackinlay, the MP concerned said “Church bells have tolled for centuries across the country and it is vital that they can continue to be heard.”

If you think that you, or a family member or friend, might be interested in finding out a little more about bell ringing then contact John Sutton on 01384 441003. Practice takes place on Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm. Visitors are always welcome.

Stephen Howard

FROM THE DIOCESE

Vocations Sunday - Sunday 22 April

There’s an old quip that says – ‘if you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?’

Vocation is about living out the implications of the faith we profess. Crudely put there are two kinds of vocation – a) serving the world in God’s name by acts of compassion or justice, and b) resourcing the church to better serve the world in God’s name.... We need both!

Traditionally vocations have been understood in terms of ordained ministry, and we desperately need more of such vocations, people who will energise and envision the community of faith in its witness and mission by word and sacrament. But vocation mustn’t be limited to this.

Vocation is simply the answer to the question, how do you offer life in the service of God and of others and God's people (lay and ordained) can do this is a huge variety of ways, both within the church and within society.

Vocations Sunday offers us an opportunity to stop and reflect on our vocations individually and corporately. Are we living our faith as we would like to? What changes might we make? Who might we encourage to consider some form of ministry more seriously?

John Fitzmaurice, Diocesan Director of Ordinands & Vocation

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF WORCESTER

The fact that the date of Easter varies from year from year is an irritation to many in today's secular world. It means nothing to them that it is set by the date of Passover, the commemoration of the People of Israel's Exodus from Egypt, which itself is celebrated at the first full moon after the Spring Equinox on 21 March.

It strikes me as providential that, though the date of Easter falls on a different date every year, it is always in spring, the season when we are reminded of the pattern of death and resurrection



by the natural world. Everything bursts into new life at just the time that we are celebrating the new and eternal life of Jesus risen from the tomb. The vivid and bright greens of the hedgerows together with the radiant yellow of the daffodils combine with the chorus of song birds to proclaim that the reign of winter is ended and life is bursting forth anew.

This should surely be an indication to us that death and resurrection are built into the nature of things. We see the pattern all around us just as we see it in all its fullness on the stage of human history in the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord. We should also expect to find it reflected in our own experience.

New life has burst into my life in the most wonderful way during the last few months as a result of my relationship with and marriage to H-J. It came after a long period of what I have described as a wilderness, a period of distress and sadness following bereavement.

My hope and prayer for all of us this Easter is that, even if we feel trapped in what feels like an enduring experience of pain and dereliction, we shall have faith that love will triumph; that resurrection life is waiting round the corner for all of us. May we know deep within our hearts that resurrections will follow crucifixion as sure as spring follows winter, as sure as day follows night. May we know that death will not have the last word but that life and love will prevail.

Bishop John.

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