

**ST MARY'S  
OLD SWINFORD  
Parish Church  
MONTHLY NEWS  
JULY / AUGUST 2018  
ONLINE EDITION**

# ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD Parish Church

## MONTHLY NEWS

**JULY / AUGUST 2018**



**50p**

### RECTOR:

The Revd Stephen Agnew  
The Rectory  
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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

**Rector 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

<b>Reader:</b>	Mrs Kanthi Ariaraj	395115
<b>Church Wardens:</b>	Mrs Judy Hall	377349
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
<b>Director of Music:</b>	Mr Graham Davies	07845 968025
	st.mary.os.dom@btconnect.com	
<b>PCC Secretary:</b>	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
<b>Monthly News Editor:</b>	Mr Alec Beevers	444229
<b>Safeguarding Officer:</b>	Mrs Liz Fourness	394359
<b>Church Hall and</b>		
<b>Coach House: - Bookings:</b>	Parish Office	441003
<b>Parish Administrator and</b>		
<b>Publicity Officer:</b>	Mr John Sutton	441003
<b>Parish Office:</b>	Open 9.00 am -1.00 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 9.00 am to 12.00 noon Friday Closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday	441003
<b>Church website address:</b>	www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk E-mail: st.mary.os@btconnect.com	
<b>Facebook:</b>	www.facebook.com/stmaryschurcholdswinford	
<b>Magazine e-mail address:</b>	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.

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## PARISH REGISTER

### Baptisms

- 20.5.18 Macey-Mai Riley Clarke  
Sophia Lin Simpson
- 27.5.18 Benjamin Stuart Hunt  
Zoe Marie Saunders
- 3.6.18 Arthur John Mills  
Robyn Hope McLellan

### Funerals

- 17.5.18 Tom Mole Aged 14
- 24.5.18 Hazel White Aged 93
- 4.6.18 Andrew Holdaway Aged 62

## FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends

Over a number of months now we have been thinking of our vision for St Mary's and have been considering what that vision might be under the headings of:

Being a community which is BLESSED,  
Being a community of DISCIPLES,  
Being a community transformed through WORSHIP,  
Being a community which shows God's LOVE, and finally  
Being a community which is SENT by God to share our faith.

I thank you all for your engagement with this task and for your help in shaping this vision which will be published in a few weeks time. Of course such a vision is never complete and final; it is always a working document, and I hope that it will be of use to the people of St Mary's in the future months and years as you consider what actions St Mary's should take in the days to come.

One of the important considerations as we plan for the future is that we seek to align ourselves as a Christian community with the will of God. Any action which is not based on God is bound to fail, and as a community of Christians our paramount prelude to planning or action is to pray. It is in prayer that we open ourselves to God's presence and God's voice, allowing ourselves to be still so that we may hear what God is calling us to do and to be. It is for this reason that each working day in the parish starts and ends with prayer.

The prayer that is offered each morning at 9am and each evening at 5pm is not just prayer for ourselves (although that is necessary and important), it is prayer for the world and in particular for the parish. During this time of prayer there is also space to listen to the voice of God. Usually the prayer is said by the clergy of the parish, and it is a delight and privilege to be given time and space to pray as part of our daily duties. But at least once each week we are joined by others as we pray together and enjoy the stillness of the church in which God's voice may be heard.

It seems to me that this time of prayer is a time of refreshment and sustenance that other people might enjoy and from which they might gain strength and insight as they participate. And so I write this to invite anyone who would like to come along and join us in church at 9am or 5pm (Monday – Thursday) for a time of prayer and silence as we discern God's will for the parish of St Mary, Oldswinford. You might also want to take part in the Monthly prayer group which meets at Marjorie Ferguson's home on Wednesdays, you will always be welcome. When we pray together we encourage one another in our faith, as we listen together for God's voice and mould our lives on him.

*Stephen Agnew*

## DIARY - JULY 2018

### **SUNDAY 1**

Tuesday 3  
Wednesday 4

Thursday 5  
Friday 6  
Saturday 7

### **SUNDAY 8**

Monday 9  
Tuesday 10

Thursday 12  
Friday 13  
Saturday 14

### **SUNDAY 15**

Tuesday 17  
Wednesday 18

Thursday 19  
Friday 20  
Saturday 21

### **SUNDAY 22**

Monday 23  
Wednesday 25  
Thursday 26  
Friday 27  
Saturday 28

### **SUNDAY 29**

Tuesday 31

### **FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

Baptisms at 12 noon      Rotary service at 3.00 pm  
10.00 am and 1.30pm Y2 children from OCEPS visiting church  
9.00 am Morning Prayers and Staff meeting  
7.30 pm Baptism preparation  
10.30 am Holy Communion in church  
Clergy day off  
10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour  
7.30 pm The Amicus Trio present a concert in church.

### **SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

10.00 am Worship Together  
7.30pm Learning Community meeting at St Thomas'  
10.00 am The Open The Book Team visit OCEPS  
11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft  
12.30 pm MU lunch in the narthex.  
10.30 am Holy Communion in church  
Clergy day off  
10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour

### **SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

3.00 pm Baptisms  
10.00 am Assembly at OCEPS  
2.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Coach House  
9.30 am—12.30 pm Rotary Club using the narthex  
1.30 pm—3.30 pm Y6 leavers' rehearsal  
7.00 pm OCEPS Y6 leavers' service.  
10.30 am Holy Communion in church  
7.30 pm Standing Committee meeting  
Clergy day off  
10.00 am – 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour  
11.00 am—12.30 pm Visit by members of the Worcester and  
Districts Organist Association  
3.00 pm Wedding  
Love Stourbridge Event in Mary Stevens Park today.

### **CELEBRATION OF MARY MAGDALENE**

Kanthi's final Sunday as reader. Coffee and cake following  
10.00 am service.  
7.30 pm PCC Meeting  
11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge  
10 30 am Holy Communion in church  
Clergy day off  
9.30 am Parish Walking Group – Envile  
10.00 am – 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour

### **NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

2.30 pm Tuesday tea in the narthex

## DIARY – AUGUST 2018

Wednesday 1	9.00 am Morning Prayers and Staff meeting 7.30 pm Baptism preparation
Thursday 2	10.30 am Holy Communion in church
Friday 3	Clergy day off
Saturday 4	10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour 12 noon Wedding in church
<b>SUNDAY 5</b>	<b>TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b> 2.00 pm Wedding in church
Thursday 9	10.30 am Holy Communion in church Parish office closed today
Friday 10	Clergy day off Parish office closed today
Saturday 11	10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
<b>SUNDAY 12</b>	<b>ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b> 10.00 am Worship together
Thursday 16	10.30 am Holy Communion in church
Friday 17	Clergy day off
Saturday 18	10.00 am – 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour 12 noon Wedding
<b>SUNDAY 19</b>	<b>TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b> 3.00 pm Baptisms
Tuesday 21	2.30 pm Tuesday tea with coach house tea in the narthex
Thursday 23	10 30 am Holy Communion in church
Friday 24	Clergy day off
Saturday 25	10.00 am – 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
<b>SUNDAY 26</b>	<b>THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b> 3.00 pm Baptisms
Wednesday 29	9.00 am Morning Prayers and Staff meeting
Thursday 30	10.30 am Holy Communion in church
Friday 31	Clergy day off

### NOTICE

The parish office will be closed from  
24 August to 10 September inclusive.

Summer is the time when one sheds one's tensions with one's clothes, and the right kind of day is jewelled balm for the battered spirit. A few of those days and you can become drunk with the belief that all's right with the world.

Ada Louise Huxtable

## NEWS FROM SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

There are many variations to the legends that give rise to the association of Santiago de Compostela with the apostle St James, but whatever you may choose to believe or not, the link is firmly established. As a revered site of pilgrimage for catholics, the cathedral of Santiago houses the shrine in which rest, according to legend, the remains of the apostle St James and is visited by thousands every year. Many travel by plane, train or coach, several hundred seem to arrive every day by bicycle, but for most, the only way to realise the real significance of the journey is to complete the Camino de Santiago. This walk, 'The Way of St James', originating from various places throughout Europe, most notably the Camino Francés, 'The French Way', follows a mediaeval tradition of penance. Today, the route and the challenge of the undertaking is for many a sporting enterprise, a recreational achievement, a holiday, a pilgrimage and a retreat. Annually, over 200,000 people have completed the Camino in each of the past several years.

For those who undertake the Camino on a formal basis the ownership of a document called the credencial is an essential. This pilgrim's passport is stamped at hostels and wayfaring stations along the route and verifies the authenticity of the travellers claim. Possession of the credencial entitles the pilgrim to cheap, sometimes free accommodation and easy access to refreshment and the means to rest. Those who, with a wholly or partly religious reason to have walked at least the last 100 or cycled at least the last 200 kilometres of the route may present their credencial in Santiago where they may be awarded the compostela, a significant scroll that acknowledges the achievement. A simpler certificate is awarded to those who make no claim to the involvement of religion in their Camino. For a great many the last 100 kilometres is simply the last 100 kilometres. Many cover several hundred and some thousands of kilometres, perhaps over a number of years, each covering different sections of the journey.

Stan and Avril Williams met with Sue and me in Santiago at the beginning of June. We admit to having driven there, somewhat envious of those who had walked at least the required distance, but pleased to be able to recognise the achievements of those who celebrate with such enthusiasm in the central square and to share the ambience of what is a special place. We walked and cycled around Santiago, visiting all the sites identified on our tourist maps and relaxing in several cafes. In the cathedral, hundreds were assembled for the celebration of mass whilst visitors continued to line up to walk quietly around this magnificent church. The huge silver Botafumeiro (the cathedral's thurible) hangs on its rope from the series of pulleys that enable this 1.5metre high and 53 kilogram censer to be swung by a team of eight tiraboleiros as incense is burned at special services at least twelve times a year.





Along the route the symbol of the pilgrim, a scallop shell, is seen on posts and shelters marking the way. Most pilgrims carry such a shell, an indicator of their devotion and commitment to the cause. Whilst legends associate the scallop shell with St James the origins of this symbol may actually originate more as a pilgrim's souvenir from the shores of Galicia, whilst also serving as a useful bowl for mealtimes and for drinking. Whatever, the scallop shell is now widely representative of pilgrimage.

**Tony Tatford**

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## **MY "EXPERIENCE PENTECOST"**

Alarm bells should ring when Alex turns up to a Flower Guild meeting or sends a letter asking for help. This time our help was needed to create displays for the different stations for Experience Pentecost.

Local schoolchildren were invited into church to listen to information about the displays and then to join in related activities. Alex provided plenty of ideas, pictures, possible displays etc. We were left to choose and discuss these. The group I worked with chose 'Sharing'. Remembering Alex saying we could interpret what we did in our own way and not having to copy examples given, the idea was to create a picnic scene.

We knew what each of us had to do, or so we thought. Then the Thursday before setting up the following Tuesday we had the 'script'. Alex is excellent at providing what I shall call chapter and verse for these experiences. There in the instructions for our station was for the children to look at the model of the church. What church? We had planned a grassy hill, dolls sharing a picnic, knitted picnic food and a living hedgerow at the back. Bunting at the front and lettering completed the plan, but no church.

Fortunately I had a suitable cardboard box in the garage. I spent the weekend improvising a change of use to make it into the model of the church. I was also lucky that inside the box were a couple of sturdy card dividers – ideal for a tower. With the use of felt pens and a ruler, windows and doors were added, and there was even a clock on the tower. So now the children *could* look at the model of a church.

I expect others erecting displays for the remaining stations could tell their own tales of bringing ideas to fruition. There were many ingenious ideas as always. The children themselves not only gain from what is offered but bring so much to discussion and completing activities. Thank you Alex for the latest experience!

**Sue Wakeley**

## NEWS FROM THE PEWS

In view of the confirmation of the pastoral reorganisation plans within Stourbridge we are pleased to announce that Stephen now holds the title of Rector of St Mary's, Oldswinford.

Our crowd funding campaign to raise funds for the CCTV system has now ended. With online donations and gifts given through our gift aid envelopes we have reached our target of £1500. A huge thank you to everybody for your generosity. The notice regarding our faculty application has now been displayed for the statutory length of time and has been submitted to the registrar. We have made a provisional booking with the installer for the work to be carried out in early August, but are hoping that it may be sooner. This will then enable us to open the church full time once again for visitors to enjoy the building and have the peace of mind of this added level of security. Thanks again everybody.

During a recent visit to the church by classes from Ham Dingle school the pupils were moved by the reports of thefts of some of the church's treasured items. Independently the pupils set up their own fund-raising campaigns including toy sales and sponsored walks, to raise money for the CCTV appeal. As a result the church has received a generous donation from the school. A selection of the pupils' letters is on display in the narthex. Thank you to all at Ham Dingle Primary School.



The final total from our Christian Aid collection this year, including funds raised by the school, is £2559.38. A huge thank you to everybody involved and to Mike Blaxland for coordinating this.

Kanthi will be retiring from her role as LLM Reader on Sunday 22nd July. If you would like to make a contribution towards a gift to her from St Mary's there are some envelopes at the back of church to use. Please hand the envelope to a warden or sides person or place on the collection plate.

Roger King will be licensed as an LLM reader at a special Reader Licensing service in Worcester Cathedral at 2.30 pm on Saturday 15 September. Further details will be announced nearer the date.

A Messy Church event will be held on Wednesday 22 August from 10.00 am. - 12.00 noon. The event is being arranged by Ann Bachelor, our Mission Enabler and Emma Pettifer, the Diocesan Children's Officer. A planning meeting is being held in the narthex at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 11 July. Please come along if you can help.

## VALERIE'S POEMS

Readers may remember that several years ago we included poems in our magazine which were taken from collections by Valerie Partridge. The editor has recently received on loan from Valerie a book of some of her original poems hand-written in beautiful manuscript which records many of her life's memories and thoughts in verse – from childhood joys to more recent poignant reflections. The following poem will no doubt have a particular resonance with many of our readers.

### 70+

The world is slightly shrinking  
One eye is failing me  
“Look at the stars” she said,  
But not one could I see.

I have difficulty in reading  
The words are not so clear.  
My sewing gets quite messy.  
Fine work too hard, I fear.

But there are advantages  
I don't do all I should.  
In fact I'm often lazy  
And work when in the mood.

Imperfections don't show up  
And now I can't see dust.  
All blemishes have gone,  
My house is clean I trust.

If you don't like what you see  
When you come to visit me  
Please bring a duster and use it.  
Doubly welcome you would be.

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## BELL RINGERS' CORNER

### Church Bells to Appear on a £2 Coin



Two St George's Chapel bells will appear on the reverse of a commemorative £2 coin issued to celebrate the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. The coin is issued by the Isle of Man Treasury and has received official approval from Buckingham Palace.

The bells at St Georges Chapel in Windsor Castle are rung out to celebrate major Christian festivals and royal events such as birthdays and weddings. A full peal, approximately three hours of non-stop accurate ringing, was rung in November 2017 to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh.

The chapel has a ring of eight bells ranging in weight from just over 6cwt to 22cwt and in date from 1612 to 1898.

**Stephen Howard**

## **ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP - MAY WALK**

### **Himley - Greensforge - Wordsley**

The advertised walk had been changed due to the ground conditions in terms of excessive mud and some steep hills. Therefore eight walkers assembled at Stourbridge Bus Station to catch the number 256 to Himley Village at 10.00am.

Leaving the bus, we crossed the main Bridgnorth Road and immediately followed Botterham Lane that passed by the local civic amenities site before reaching the Staffordshire and Worcester canal and turning left.

We followed the canal for a time passing through Swindon and eventually stopping for coffee at the Greensforge Memorial Garden, a tiny oasis of calm on the canal side. After coffee we continued on our way, passing Ashwood Garden Centre then Ashwood Marina before leaving the canal, crossing over at Gothersley Bridge and following a well defined track up to the Roman Road. Walking along here for a little way we then entered a field and followed the path round then across a second field before exiting onto the A449.

Carefully crossing the road we entered another field following the path round to Lawnswood. Crossing over again we walked down Hunter's Ride and entered Friar's Gorse behind the pumping station. Climbing then up a steep hill we entered Mount Pleasant Covert where we stopped for a picnic lunch.



So far, apart from two VERY brief spells of drizzle, the weather had been very kind to us so our plan for a picnic, instead of the proposed pub lunch at the end of the walk, had proved successful. After lunch, we continued following the path through the wood before dropping down to a path, crossing over the River Stour before emerging onto the Stourbridge canal. We then followed this as far as the Redhouse Cone where we left the canal and made our way to the café there where we sat out in glorious sunshine having tea and cakes before catching the return bus to the bus station.

An excellent walk arranged by Sue and Tony Wakeley. Thank you.

**Malcolm and Sally Frost**

The next walk on 30th June will not be at Studley as advertised but Holy Cross instead. We will meet on the Church car park for 9.30 am as usual.

## **FRIENDS OF THE MUSIC AT ST MARY'S - ANNIVERSARY**

### **An Organ Recital**



It was an absolute delight to welcome William Peart on Saturday 23 June as we celebrated the first anniversary of Friends of the Music at St Mary's.

Graham Davies introduced William as a wonderful example of how children can be helped and guided into music-making through being a member of a choir. William joined St Mary's as a chorister in 2004 at the age of eight. Richard Hall was then organist but after Richard's retirement William started organ lessons with Robin Walker, Richard's successor.

William is now an Associate of the Royal Collage of Organists. In 2016, the same year as he achieved this distinction he was a finalist in The Northern Ireland International Organ Competition.

William's recital on Saturday, consisting of works ranging from J. S. Bach to César Franck demonstrated his brilliance as a very accomplished organ scholar.

We wish him continued success with his organ studies at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and especially next term when he will study with Professor Martin Schmeding in Leipzig.

**Brenda Selby**

### **Anniversary Choral Evensong**

The second event of the Anniversary celebrations was a special Choral Evensong on Sunday 24 June - a beautiful midsummer evening with the church bathed in sunlight. The choir, conducted by Graham Davies, was augmented for the occasion with returning choristers including Becca Sutton and Robin Walker, former Director of Music at St Mary's. The organist was Richard Hall - completing the trio of past and present leaders of music at St Mary's.

The opening hymn - "Angel voices ever singing" was an appropriate choice for the occasion and set the scene for a service of beautiful music. The theme was again reflected in the anthem "I will sing with the Spirit" by John Rutter.

The date in the church calendar was Trinity 4 and the celebration of the birth of John the Baptist. Alex's sermon opened with his characteristic amusing tale which may have come from a "Two Ronnies" sketch. It led to a reflection of the New Testament reading from Matthew 11 on John's life and questions and misunderstandings in our faith.

After the service, congregation, choristers and clergy lingered long in the narthex to share experiences and appreciation of the evensong event.

**Alec Beevers**

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The third event in the anniversary celebration will be a concert in St Mary's on Saturday 7 July given by the Amicus String Ensemble, directed by Will Croft with Graham Davies - organ.

## ST SWITHIN'S DAY

St Swithin's day if thou dost rain  
For forty days it will remain  
St Swithin's day if though be fair  
For forty days 'twill rain na mair.

So says this traditional rhyme, but what do we know about St Swithin? Very little is known for certain about the life of Winchester Cathedral's first patron saint. It is known that he was born in Winchester around the year 800. He became counsellor to the Saxon kings Egbert and Ethelwulf, and he was Bishop of Windsor for the last 10 years of his life.

Much else has come down to us through legend. It has been claimed that St Swithin tutored the young Alfred the Great. His one recorded miracle during his lifetime was making a poor woman's broken eggs whole again after her basket had been jostled from her hands by careless workmen.

St Swithin died in 863. It is said that he requested to be buried outside, where people might walk over his grave, and rain from the heavens might settle. He was allowed to rest in this grave for over 100 years but on 15<sup>th</sup> July 971 his remains were removed inside the restored cathedral and placed into a shrine built for him.

According to legend 40 days of awful weather followed, suggesting that St Swithin was making his displeasure felt that his wishes had been ignored. Ever since it has been said that the weather on 15<sup>th</sup> July determines the weather to be expected for the next 40 days.

St Swithin lay in his shrine until the Reformation when Henry VIII's commissioners smashed it apart under the cover of darkness and stole all the valuables. Nothing remains of the shrine today but a modern memorial within Winchester Cathedral marks the spot.



**Stephen Howard**



### FRIENDS OF THE MUSIC AT ST MARY'S

#### Forthcoming Events

Sat. 7 July  
7.30 pm.

Concert given by The Amicus String Ensemble  
Directed by Will Croft with Graham Davies - organ

Sat. 20 October  
7.30 pm.

Michael Jones (Piano) presents an entertaining  
evening of music with his friends

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

Our speaker in June was Mary Wear from Bewdley who told us of the life and legacy of the founder of the Mothers' Union Mary Sumner (nee Heywood).

Her family were very wealthy and owned an estate at Hope End, near Callow, Herefordshire. Mary was a gifted singer, organist and linguist. At the age of 19 she married a clergyman, George Sumner, the youngest son of the Bishop of Winchester and a relative of William Wilberforce. Their parish base became Old Alresford in Hampshire where she led a music and bible studies group and brought up three children.



In 1876 she was concerned about how local mothers related their Christian faith to family life and formed a parish group of 30 from all social classes for mutual support. This idea spread to other parishes.

In 1885 a National Church Council meeting was held in Portsmouth and the Bishop of Newcastle asked Mary to speak. Though reluctant to speak publicly her passionate address about national morality and the importance of women's vocation as mothers to change the nation for the better was supported in Church of England dioceses and parishes.

By 1900, there were 169,000 members in the whole of the UK and by 1920 groups were found in New Zealand, Canada and India. All were effective in easing the stresses following the First World War. Now there are 4 million members in 83 countries in every continent of the World. Mary gave several life changes which Mothers' Union brings for so many today.

Membership is open to men and women of all ages who are baptised Christians regardless of marital or parental state. Every six months members receive a booklet "Families Worldwide" with current news for praying, campaigning and enabling - changing every week. A Magazine, "Families First" is also published and is available on the MU notice board and table. Do check us out.

Mary then concluded by quoting Mary Sumner's Prayer.

"All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe or the life I live. Amen."

Mary was thanked for her informative and inspiring talk.

### Dates for your diary

Wednesday 4 July at 7.30 pm St Saviour's Church, Hagley - Diocesan AGM

Tuesday 10 July at 12.30 pm in Narthex Members' Bring and Share lunch

Tuesday 11 September at 2.15 pm in The Coach House

Kerala Partnership in India - Jane Clarke MBE

**Dawn Nex**

## A MIDSUMMER SOIRÉE

This concert in St Mary's on Saturday 9 June was presented by a combination of Viva Musica Choir and Central England Camerata in aid of Mary Stevens Hospice.

In the Oxford dictionary a soirée is defined as "An evening party or gathering, typically in a private house, for conversation or music". However this was far removed from a cosy home performance and the church provided a very fitting venue for the majestic music in the programme. Two pieces—Handel's 'Zadok the Priest' and Parry's 'I was Glad' - had very royal associations and were appropriate for the evening of the Queen's official birthday. The 70-strong choir gave a stunning opening to 'Zadok the Priest' which set the scene for the rest of the evening. The changing moods in Pachelbel's Canon and Gigue were followed by Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No 3 which gave us a whimsical reminder of the 'Antiques Road Show'.

The second half of the programme was Handel's 'Dixit Dominus' - less familiar to some of us - but the programme notes provided a useful guide and interpretation through the various movements. This challenging work is described in the notes as "...music of exceptional brilliance, the dramatic contrasts within and between movements vividly illustrating and reinforcing the words" and was beautifully performed by the soloists, choir and Camerata.

We were interested to see that William Peart was once again performing - this time with Central England Camerata— on the organ and continuo.

**Alec Beevers**

### LOVE STOURBRIDGE 2018 - SATURDAY 21 JULY



Churches Together in Stourbridge are running this year's "Love Stourbridge" event in Mary Stevens park on the afternoon and evening of Saturday 21st July. There will be many exciting activities along with music provided by the churches in Stourbridge. St Mary's will be running an origami table where we will be able to make cranes (the bird which has a deep spiritual significance in Japan) alongside hearts. Come along and be filled with love for Stourbridge



## *Flower Festival*

St Thomas' Church  
Friday 6th - Sunday 8th July 2018



Musical Performances on Friday and Saturday  
5.00 pm Sunday - Songs of Praise and Sale of flowers

Refreshments available each day

Further details - 01384 394185

## LETTER FROM THE DIOCESE

Frequent reports of how lonely we are, across all ages and nations, have dominated the news for months. We live in lonely times. Increasing numbers of elderly people are living alone for longer. Many young people describe acute senses of loneliness. People are lonely, both in our cities and in rural areas, so much so that loneliness is now considered a public-health issue, with some commentators declaring that "the world is suffering from an epidemic of loneliness."



Recent studies assert that loneliness is hazardous to our health, disrupting sleep, increasing stress and inflammation, and weakening immune systems. It's also associated with cognitive decline, heart disease, and greater frailty later on in life. With a significant effect on mortality rates, loneliness is now considered a public health threat potentially more harmful than obesity and as bad as smoking. It's especially ironic that as we are globally connected to the worldwide village through social media, we are somehow more socially isolated than ever.

As church communities, we can and really should be part of the solution, reaching out to those who are alone and inviting them into the family of God. During the recent archdeacons visitations, I heard heart-warming stories of churches signing up as 'places of welcome', offering cake, coffee and chatter sessions, or knit and natter gatherings. Community is being built as people experience the loving welcome of church members not just on Sundays, but as our church buildings are used as places of connection and outreach during the week too.

Saint Paul says in his letter to the Corinthian church that 'whoever loves God is known by God'. (1 Corinthians 8:3) As his people, we can find security and comfort in the knowledge that we are never alone, God knows us and sees our comings and goings (Psalm 139), even if we feel alone and that no-one else cares. But God's promise to place the lonely in families is fulfilled when we, as his body on earth, reach out to those who are alone for whatever reason, loving and welcoming them, listening, and enabling them too, to experience being known by God, and cared for by his people.

**Nikki Groarke**  
**Archdeacon of Dudley**

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