

**ST MARY'S
OLD SWINFORD
Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS
SEPTEMBER 2018
ONLINE EDITION**

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50p

RECTOR:

The Revd Stephen Agnew
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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

		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:	Mr Roger King	379800
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,	441003
	9.00 am to 12.00 noon Friday	
	Closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday	
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	

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

17.6.18	Ruby Mary Price
1.7.18	Gage William Potter
15.7.18	Arlo James Bates
	Ruby Louise-Jane Taylor

Weddings

21.7.18	Mark Grainger and Samantha Gittos
4.8.18	Benjamin Ball and Jessica Ashman
5.8.18	David Perks and Amy Webster

Funerals

25.6.18	Violet Hardwicke	Aged 85
5.7.18	Margaret Tromans	Aged 90
	Jean Jackson	Aged 83
9.7.18	Gillian McClean	
	Roy Bradley	Aged 76
19.7.18	Jean Raybould	
20.7.18	Leslie Naylor	Aged 76
30.7.18	Graham Hill	Aged 78
6.8.18	Andy Holdaway	Interment of ashes

DIARY - SEPTEMBER 2018

Saturday 1	10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 2	FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 3.00 pm Baptisms
Monday 3	Start of Autumn Term
Tuesday 4	7.30 pm Standing Committee meeting
Wednesday 5	3.00 pm Holy Communion at Oriel House
Thursday 6	10.30 pm Holy Communion
Friday 7	Clergy day off
Saturday 8	10.00-12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour 12.00 noon Wedding
SUNDAY 9	FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 10.00 am Worship Together with Baptism 6.30 pm Evensong (not choral)
Tuesday 11	9.30 am Visiting bell ringers ringing a peal 11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft 2.15 pm Mothers' Union meet in Coach House
Thursday 13	10.30 am Holy Communion 7.30 pm Coach House meeting
Friday 14	Clergy day off
Saturday 15	10.00-12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour 12.30 pm Wedding 2.30 pm LLM Licensing Service at Worcester Cathedral
SUNDAY 16	SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 3.00 pm Baptisms
Tuesday 18	9.30 am Open the Book visit to Oldswinford Primary School 2.00-4.00 pm Tea in the Coach House 7.30 pm Service for Street Pastors at Amblecote
Thursday 20	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 21	Clergy day off
Saturday 22	10.00-12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 23	SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 3.00 pm Baptisms
Tuesday 25	10.00 am Assembly at Oldswinford Primary School 2.30-4.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the narthex 7.30 pm PCC Meeting
Wednesday 26	11.00 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Thursday 27	10.30 am Holy Communion 7.30 pm Churches Together in Stourbridge in narthex
Friday 28	Clergy day off
Saturday 29	9.30 am St Mary's Walking Group 10.00-12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour 2.30 pm Roy's Book Launch at St Michael's, Brierley Hill
SUNDAY 30	EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY Revd Stephen Agnew's retirement services at St Mary's 12.30 pm Bring and Share lunch in the Church Hall 4.30 pm Afternoon Tea in the Church Hall followed by.. 6.30 pm Choral Evensong



Dear Friends

September is seen by many people as a month of new beginnings. As the new school and college year starts tens of thousands of people will be going to school or college for the first time, many more will be starting in new classes or year groups, and for the teaching and lecturing staff they will face a new year of targets and all the challenges which they bring. Each new school year brings new opportunities for many people as well as new obstacles to overcome, and so it is a time of looking forward with anticipation and hope as well as some trepidation.

It is not only for people connected with the education sector that this sense of newness and looking forward is relevant. In our lives we all have times when there is a very clear sense of things changing and moving on. As I look forward to my retirement, and as St Mary's looks towards the appointment of a new Rector there is for each of us a sense of anticipation at the possibilities of the future, as well as an uncertainty at what might lie ahead.

At the centre of the Christian faith is the message that God is not only the unchanging God that we sometimes refer to in some of our older hymns, but is also a God who is forever demonstrating new ways of entering into relationship. God is a God of change as well as a God of constancy. The Bible testifies to a gradual awakening of an understanding amongst God's people of how God works. Time and again the people of the Bible are surprised at where God can be found and how God can be seen to work, and in my ministry that is something to which I would testify.

We should expect to see God working in what we might consider unlikely places and also we should expect God to work through unlikely people. It is, we believe, God's world that we live in, so it should not surprise us if we are sometimes taken aback at where we find signs of that presence.

As we go into the future we should never travel in fear that God is not going to journey with us to the same degree as he journeyed with us in the past. Instead we should look forward with a sense of anticipation that we will discover God in the most unlikely of places and that we will continue to be surprised that he travels with us in our newest of experiences. We should be reminded of Jesus' promise to his disciples as recorded at the end of the gospel of Matthew: 'I am with you always, to the end of time.'

Let us live in that hope,

With every blessing.

Stephen Agnew

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

Stephen's final Sunday with us will be Sunday 30th September. We shall be holding a bring and share lunch and presentation in the church hall on this day. If you would like to make a contribution towards a gift to Stephen 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.

Our harvest festival this year will be on Sunday 7th October. The church will be decorated the day before on Saturday 6th October.

The next Friends of the Music concert will be on Saturday October 20th. Michael Jones will present a concert of music.

On Tuesday 11th September a full peal will be rung on our bells by a visiting band of ringers. A full peal consists of 5000 consecutive changes and takes just under 3 hours to ring.

Despite our best endeavours to secure our church properties from theft and vandalism, we have again been victims of an atrocious theft. A large quantity of coping stones has been stolen from the south wall of the churchyard adjacent to the drive to the Mary Stevens Centre. These special Victorian bricks will be very expensive to replace. The area is out of coverage of any CCTV cameras but it is thought that the theft took place during the week ending on 22 July. If you have noticed any activities which might be related to this incident we would be grateful if you could inform the church wardens or the parish office.

Congratulations to Roger King who has now completed his training as Licensed Lay Minister or as it is more commonly known, Reader. His official licensing service will be in the cathedral on Saturday 15th September at 2.30pm. Watch out for further details of transport sharing for people who would like to attend the service.

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.

DUDLEY SCHOOLS WORSHIP FORUM

I recently had the real pleasure of accompanying Mrs Roberts and six members of the Worship Group from Oldswinford Primary School to a Worship Forum at St James, Wollaston. The day was organized by a Teaching Assistant from St James Primary School and attended by several Dudley schools.

About 120 children were split into six groups all with a World Cup themed name; Trophies, Players, Referees, Goal Keepers, Footballs and Managers. There were 6 stations for them to visit throughout the day; different Churches from around Stourbridge including Chawn Hill, Amblecote Christian Centre and Wollaston Methodist Church ran these. I was able to visit four stations with the children I was supporting. We made Prayer Bunting, played Higher Sports, designed a badge and learned a song using Makaton sign language.

Revd Nick Kaleniuk, the Priest-in-Charge at St James, led the Higher Sports group. He had goal posts and a net which each child had a go at shooting into; they then completed a certificate with their name and added a gold star. Nick talked to them about a Higher Sports football, which is made up of hexagonal shapes. Some of the shapes were coloured red, green, gold, blue and black and he explained how the colours represented different aspects of the Christian faith. For example, red represents the blood of Jesus but it's also the colour we think of as being connected to love, green is the colour of the earth and black the dark, sad things that happen in the world. He went on to ask the children about goals they might have for themselves, their school and the world and their thoughts were written onto post-it notes to be displayed on a board.



In another group the leader talked about being Ambassadors, and what that means. He asked how the England football team could be seen as ambassadors for their country, for the sport and for their fans. He then explained that as Christians we are ambassadors for our religion. He went on to talk about the team badges and what they represented and how very often they include a motto. The children were then asked to make a badge that represented who they were and to include a motto. The photo shows the three badges made by the girls I was supporting. Their mottos were; "Always by your side", "I'll always be there" and "Never have too

much Glitter".

Our morning finished in the group where we learned a song and Makaton sign language to accompany it. The song formed part of the worship at the end of the afternoon.

I was really sad that due to another commitment I couldn't stay for lunch and the two afternoon groups. I found the morning extremely uplifting and look forward to being asked to go again next year.

MICHAELMAS DAY

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;

John Keats 1795 - 1821



Michaelmas comes at the time of harvest's end, and the start of autumn's mists and mellow fruitfulness. The feast of Michael and All Angels, is celebrated on 29th September every year. It is associated with the completion of the harvest and the beginning of Autumn. In England it is one of the "quarter days".

In British folklore, Old Michaelmas Day, is the last day of the season that blackberries should be picked. It is said that on this day Lucifer was expelled from heaven by St Michael. He fell from the skies to earth, and in doing so fell into a prickly blackberry bush. This didn't improve his temper one jot, and so he cursed the bush, stamped and spat on it, and generally cursed all blackberries. It is said that because of this, blackberries should be picked by Old Michaelmas Day, or else they will be unfit for consumption.

The day was also associated, in time past, with the long standing tradition of mop fairs and goose fairs. Goose was frequently eaten at this time. Free range geese would have become nicely fattened up, having been feeding on stubble remaining in the fields after the harvest.

The time was also associated with the hiring of farm workers and servants, the mop fair at Stratford upon Avon being a good example. Prospective employees would carry an emblem of their trade, for example a shepherd might carry a crook, a milkmaid a milking stool, a housemaid or someone with no particular trade a mop.

If you are glancing at your calendar and wondering if there is still time to harvest some blackberries, then be aware that there is eleven days slack built into the system. This is because of the change from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar which took place in 1752. To cut a long story short, this resulted in eleven days going missing from September of that year. This caused a lot of confusion at the time, and not a little dissent. Including, some say, rioting in the streets. Nevertheless, it does mean that we can take a more relaxed approach to our blackberry gathering, and could let it slide into early October.

Stephen Howard

Every now and again take a good look at something not made with hands, a mountain, a star, the turn of a stream. There will come to you wisdom and patience and solace and, above all, the assurance that you are not alone in the world.

Sidney Lovett

ST MARY'S YOUTH CLUB WEEKEND

Friday June 15th was a day that I had looked forward to for quite some time. It was the day that I was going on the Youth Club Weekend in the Far Forest. After getting home from school and hurriedly eating my tea, my dad drove me to the place where I would be spending the next few days. As other people began to arrive, we unpacked, made our beds and following a chat about safety, then began to explore. We found a games room which had a pool table and table tennis. Outside there was space for the boys to play football while the girls chose to sit and chat. It was then time for supper and bed, but I didn't sleep much!

Following a large breakfast our Saturday plans began to take shape. Looking through the window I noticed that it was drizzling, but then I was shocked to see a small herd of deer passing by, something I had never seen before. We were then placed into small groups for travelling to the Safari Park where we received our wristbands. The first activity was to drive around the animal enclosures where we saw loads of different species. I really liked the giraffes, lions and white tigers, but they were all good to see. After eating our packed lunches we went to the rides. I went on the log flume seven times - I was addicted.

Returning to Far Forest, we changed into swimming costumes and had a water fight, a good way to cool down. Following a tasty meal of chicken nuggets and chips, everyone had the opportunity to entertain the group in a show called 'St Mary's Got Talent'. This turned out to be mainly musical items. The final activity of the day was a bat walk through the nearby graveyard. Sadly no bats were seen. Returning to The Centre, hot chocolate and marshmallows were served and then it was bedtime, bringing a full and happy day to a close.

Sunday morning dawned and it was my 10th birthday! We had breakfast, after which the group went for a walk in the forest. On finding a stream we paddled and managed to get rather muddy. On returning to The Centre, Pizza was served for lunch. It was then time to pack away and wait for our parents to collect us. What a lovely weekend. It could only have happened with the help of the adults and young leaders. So thank you to all of them.

Connie Pittaway

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP – JULY WALK

Leasowes and Lapal Circular Trail

The weather forecast for Saturday 28th July was for rain and strong winds, so we were pleasantly surprised when 14 people turned up, ready and eager, for the church walk.

We started our 5 mile circular trail at Leasowes car park by the Ranger's office. Crossing the canal by large willow trees, we followed its course past houses and a school, towards Manor Way. Having crossed this busy dual carriageway via the central reservation, we crossed a stile into a field to begin using the rights of way around Lapal.

Crossing a stile into the next field and heading towards a footbridge over the stream, we saw what remains of Halesowen Abbey, which was founded in 1215 by canons under a grant from King John. This abbey was suppressed during the dissolution of the monasteries and much of the fabric was used for building material for the surrounding area during the industrial revolution.



We had superb views across the countryside as we passed through several fields where the corn had recently been harvested, and finally arrived at Illey Lane before making our way along a track towards the local football ground.

As we approached Cooper's Wood we encountered a large bull which eyed us suspiciously, making sure we didn't approach his herd of cows. Needless to say, we made sure we stopped for coffee in the next field!! Entering Cooper's Wood, we followed the track until we reached a gap in the hedge which gave us access to a field where we headed towards our outward path. The unusual undulations in this area are what remains of this section of Dudley Canal.

Returning to the car park and feeling fortunate that we had only had a short, brief shower and that the sun had actually shone, some of us stayed on for a picnic lunch. The weather for planning our next rota and BBQ that same evening wasn't as kind, but we all agreed it was a very enjoyable occasion.

Avril and Stan Williams

REMEMBRANCE 2018

You are all invited to a book-launch, display of photos and talk on Saturday, 29th September, at St. Michael's, Brierley Hill, at 2.30. The book is 'Remembrance 2018, Never Good Bye' and is a Great War Memorial for the men of present-day Dudley, including many from Oldswinford and St. Mary's. The launch date is the exact centenary of 'The Day the Staffords won the War'. They didn't quite do it alone but their exploits were remarkable. I have based the book on fifty short accounts which focus on individual soldiers' experiences and on our local regiments (now merged into The Mercian Regiment - The Heart of England's Infantry). It has over 100 pages with many pictures in colour and will be a real souvenir of our Remembrance. It will probably be priced at £10.00 and a draft copy will be available to view after the September Sunday morning services at St. Mary's.

Roy Peacock

CONGRATULATIONS



We send our congratulations to Wendy Tranter who celebrated her 90th birthday in July.

Wendy is the longest serving member of our congregation. Apart from acting as Sunday School superintendent for over sixty years she has led St Mary's work with the Children's Society and last year arranged her 49th Christingle Service. She also arranges the posies for Mothering Sunday services. She has sung in the choir until fairly recently and still regularly worships at our Sunday

evensong services.

Her birthday celebrations with her many friends included lunch at The Fountain in Clent, afternoon tea at Himley Hall and coffee and cake in the narthex after the Communion service on Thursday 19 July.

Well done Wendy and thank you for all you have done for St Mary's.

Alec Beevers

SMILE! YOU'RE ON TV

The installation of our CCTV system took place on 7-8 August and it is now fully operational. As the notices advise, the system will record images of everyone who enters the church building at all times when the church is not being used for services and will track movement around the building.

It is most unfortunate that circumstances have forced us to take the step of introducing CCTV but following the various recent thefts and the hope that the church may be open and accessible to all, the advice of the police and our insurers has been followed.

The system has been designed and will be operated in a manner that, hopefully, will serve the purpose of discouraging those with inappropriate intent whilst having the minimum of impact on those who wish to enjoy the peace, tranquility, architecture and history of our church building.

Thank you to everyone who has helped to make this project possible through their donations, advice and support. If you have any questions please speak to one of the wardens, a member of the clergy or to John Sutton, Parish Administrator.

Tony Tatford

KANTHI'S RETIREMENT

Our Parish Communion service on Sunday 22 July was a special occasion to mark the retirement of Kanthi as our Reader / Licensed Lay Minister. A large congregation of friends, family and colleagues from past years assembled to join in our thanksgiving to Kanthi for her contribution to worship at St Mary's.

In her address Kanthi referred to the concession she had been given to choose the hymns and readings for the service. Kanthi had chosen readings that reminded her of significant times during her ministry and popular, favourite hymns which the congregation sang joyfully. In her sermon Kanthi used the beech tree in her garden and another tree in her homeland Sri Lanka to illustrate the importance of being faithful to our roots in our witness to God's love and how we may be restored when we are open to God through His son, Jesus Christ.

For Kanthi, the post communion prayer was particularly meaningful: "Strengthen for service Lord, the hand that has taken holy things; may the ears which have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute; may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit; may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life."

At the end of the service Stephen Agnew warmly acknowledged Kanthi's ministry whilst the wardens expressed our thanks by presenting Kanthi with a gift and flowers.

The reception in the narthex afterwards provided an opportunity for all to meet, chat and reflect on Kanthi's contribution to St Mary's as a reader since her licensing at Malvern Abbey over 13 years ago - a service which Kanthi had embraced as a great privilege.



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

On 10 July members and guests enjoyed a bring and share lunch in the narthex at St Mary's and were entertained by the message and magic of Tony Maidment.

Next Meeting: Tuesday 11 September at 2.15 pm in the Coach House.
Kerala Partnership in India.
Speaker: Jane Clarke MBE.
All are welcome.

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP
Programme of Walks September 2018 - July 2019

Date	Location	Miles	Leaders	Tel. No.	Lunch
29 Sept 18	Whitwick	6	Toni and Bob	01384 377096	Pub
27 Oct 18	Kinver to Blakedown	5.5	Sue and Tony (Bring Bus Pass)	01384 838635	Pub
24 Nov 18	Barnt Green	5	Mike	01384 390537 07779 873892	Pub
December	No walk				
26 Jan 19	Kinver Centenary		Sally and Malcolm	01384 377146 07779 255827	Pub
23 Feb 19	Wyre Forest	5	Linda and Keith	01384 825177	Pub
30 March 19	Woodgate Valley to B'ham	6.5	Sue and Tony (Bring Bus Pass)	01384 838635	Pub
27 April 19	Stanford Bridge	5	Jean and Ray	01384 836924	Pub
25 May 19	Langley Green To B'ham	6	Mike (Bring Train Pass)	01384 390537 07779 873892	Pub
29 June 19	Stroud area	6	Sally and Malcolm	01384 377146 07779 255827	TBA
27 July 19	Bewdley	5	Avril and Stan	01384 392290	Pub
August 19	No walk				

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise stated all walks leave from St Mary's at 9.30 am.
2. There are no walks in December 2018 or August 2019.
3. All walks are on the last Saturday of the month.
4. For picnic lunches please bring your own food. For pub lunches there is usually a good selection of meals for purchase.
5. Country walking is not risk free, all persons joining our walks do so in the knowledge of this fact.
6. For further information on the walks please telephone the leaders.

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP - JUNE WALK

Broome - Holy Cross

On Saturday 30th June seven walkers arrived at the church to travel to Holy Cross to do a short circular walk from Holy Cross to Broome and back.

The walk was easy and gentle but as it was a hot day we all appreciated the light breeze that was blowing.

After traversing lanes and open fields, which afforded us lovely views of our countryside, we arrived at Broome where we gratefully accepted the shade we found in the local churchyard to stop and have our break and a welcome drink to "top up" our fluid levels.

From Broome we completed our circular walk back to Holy Cross and then retired to the French Hen where we were joined by another member of our group for lunch.

All agreed it had been a very pleasant walk and the shorter distance was much appreciated on such a hot sunny day.

Sylvia Cooper

BELL RINGERS CORNER

Government Announcement of Armistice Plans

The UK Government has announced that they invite all bell ringers to join the nation in marking the end of the First World War by ringing together on Remembrance Sunday. They would like ringing to take place at 12.30pm on Sunday 11th November to coincide with the nation's tribute as thousands march past the Cenotaph.

This request runs alongside the Ringing Remembers initiative which is being run jointly by the Big Ideas Company and the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers. This project aims to recruit 1,400 new ringers to ring on the day. This being the number of ringers that perished on active service during the Great War. The latest announcement from the database is that 854 new ringers have been registered so far.

At 7.05pm the lighting of beacons around the country is planned to celebrate the ending of hostilities. At the same time the bells of churches and cathedrals in villages, towns and cities from around the UK will ring in unison.

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 7.30pm. Visitors are always welcome.



Stephen Howard

VISITORS TO ST MARY'S FROM CANADA

A few weekends ago Basil and I had a visit from friends from Canada. At short notice they asked if they could visit "the lovely church in Oldswinford". As it meant bringing them after 7.00 pm on Sunday evening I phoned Judy who agreed to stay on at church after evensong. When we arrived at 7.30 pm we were made most welcome by everyone and spent a lovely half hour looking, photographing and chatting.

We received a text message next day saying how much they had enjoyed their visit to our lovely church and wished to express their thanks to everyone for the warm welcome they had received.

Thank you to all concerned for making their visit so memorable.

Diana and Basil de Souza

FROM THE DIOCESE

Letter from Bishop John - August 2018

As I write this we are in the midst of the longest and most intensive heat wave I can remember since the mid 1970s. It's a great joy for most – though tempers do tend to get a bit frayed now and then when people feel they are about to melt.

During the heat wave, the General Synod gathered at York University to consider a number of things, among them a motion encouraging the Church of England to take an ever greater interest in the absolute necessity to address climate change. The motion urged us to recognise the 'escalating threat to God's creation from global warming and climate change, and the suffering caused, particularly to the poor.'

Global warming has now been shown by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to be 'unequivocal'. We see the effects of it in this country – for example, in the pattern of flash flooding increasing in frequency and severity in Cornwall, culminating in the 'apocalyptic' downpour and flash flooding in Coverack last year. The worst effects, however, are felt by the poorest countries and people who lack resources and resilience. In some areas – notably the Pacific Islands – it is devastating.

The work of creation care is an obligation on all Christians, firmly set within our understanding of mission. The fifth mark of mission of the Anglican Communion commits us to 'strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.' This includes helping to tackle climate change. Our primary duty is to God, then to our fellow human beings in this and future generations.

I hope and pray that, as we prepare to celebrate harvest and give thanks for all the blessings that God showers upon us, we shall all renew our commitment to doing our bit to tackle climate change. That would be a suitable thanks offering.

+ John

Letter from the Archdeacon of Worcester - September 2018

On the news the other day they reported a study which showed that most people check their mobile phone every twelve minutes, with many looking at messages within five minutes of waking up. I remember seeing a cartoon of a family sitting at their meal, all reading their phones or tablets, and the caption read: 'At breakfast the family was best left to their own devices.' Given how much we now depend on them to talk to people, I do wonder why we never used to see long queues outside telephone boxes. (You might have to explain to your children what a telephone box is!)



Undoubtedly, the internet has opened up new possibilities of communication, but like any new invention we need to develop a way of using it ethically and well.

It is ever so easy to press the button to see who wants to get in touch, and it is rather nice to know. It's important to develop good practice so that we learn how to get the best out of the technology without it taking us over.

Some words from Pope Francis' encyclical; 'Rejoice and be glad' grabbed my attention: 'The presence of constantly new gadgets, the excitement of travel and an endless array of consumer goods at times leave no room for God's voice to be heard. We are overwhelmed by words, by superficial pleasures and by an increasing din, filled not by joy, but rather by the discontent of those whose lives have lost meaning. How can we fail to realise the need to stop this rat race and to recover the personal space needed to carry on a heartfelt dialogue with God?'

Recovering personal space seems a pretty good idea to me, allowing space for God and for our flourishing. That's a lesson I often still need to learn myself!

There is a strand in the Bible which suggests that wisdom waits. Yet technology creates an expectation of immediacy. Do you remember the email which you sent spontaneously, and afterwards wished you hadn't? Personal space leads to reflective space, and I can't help thinking we need more reflecting and less reacting.

When I've finished writing this, I will email it as an attachment and magazine editors will receive it on a website. That's the wonderful thing about technology. Then I'll go and make myself a cup of coffee and instead of picking up my phone I might just go out into the garden for a few minutes, bathed as it is in beautiful sunshine. Or there again, has someone just messaged me? Shall I take a quick look?

Robert Jones

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