

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

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Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS**



50p

NOVEMBER 2018

CURATE:

The Revd Alex French
58 Arlington Court
Old Swinford
Stourbridge, DY8 1NN
Tel 01384 622400
E-mail:
st.mary.os.curate@btconnect.com

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
Curate Day Off	Friday

OTHER REGULAR EVENTS

Prayer Group	Third Wednesday in month, 10 -11 am	Tel: 393454
Mothers' Union:	Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm	392951
St Mary's Walking Group:	Last Saturday of the month. Depart 9.30 am	

CONTACTS

Reader:	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, 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, BANNES 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

16.9.18 Sofia Maude Mounsey
Thomas Edwin Clough
23.9.18 Ava May O'Carroll
7.10.18 Matilda Grace Larkin

Weddings

15.9.18 Matthew Janes and Hayley Homer

Funeral

27.9.18 Bob Jones

BARN DANCE - SATURDAY 3 NOVEMBER

St Mary's Church Hall at 7.30 pm

£10.00 Supper included - Bring your own drink

DIARY FOR NOVEMBER

Thursday 1	10.30 am Holy Communion with Revd Alison Maddocks
Friday 2	Clergy day off
Saturday 3	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 10.00- 12.00 noon Bell ringers' training 7.30 pm Barn Dance
SUNDAY 4	ALL SAINTS AND ALL SOULS DAY 10.00 am All Saints Parish Communion 3.00 pm Baptism 6.30 pm All Souls Evensong Service
Monday 5	7.30 pm Standing Committee Meeting
Tuesday 6	10.00 am Open the Book team at OCEPS
Thursday 8	10.30 am Holy Communion with Revd Andrew Sillis
Friday 9	Clergy day off
Saturday 10	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 11	THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT REMEMBRANCE – Worship together 12.30 pm National Peal of Remembrance 11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft
Tuesday 13	7.30 pm Magazine Meeting
Wednesday 14	10.30 am Holy Communion
Thursday 15	7.30 pm Messy Church Planning Meeting
Friday 16	Clergy day off
Saturday 17	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 18	SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT 12.00 noon and 3.00 pm Baptisms 7.30 pm PCC Meeting
Monday 19	10.00 am Open the Book team at OCEPS
Tuesday 20	2.00-4.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Coach House
Thursday 22	10.30 am Holy Communion with Revd Andrew Sillis
Saturday 24	10.00 am Open Church and Vestry Hour 7.30 pm Parish Nativity Play
SUNDAY 25	CHRIST THE KING 2.00-4.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the narthex
Tuesday 27	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Wednesday 28	10.30 am Holy Communion
Thursday 29	Clergy day off, Preparation for Christmas Market
Friday 30	

CHRISTMAS MARKET - SATURDAY 1 DECEMBER

For many years this has been a very successful and happy event. This year there will be stalls for cakes, gifts, books, jigsaws plus the Christmas Raffle and the bottle stall. Any contributions are welcome and can be left at the back of church on Sunday, Thursday morning or Saturday morning when someone is around to put them in a safe place now we are able to have the church open. Otherwise contact me direct and I will arrange collection.

Helpers are always welcome – do contact me, Katey Fletcher, on (01384) 378182 or by email at kateyfletcher@btinternet.com.

FROM ROGER KING, OUR READER.



Dear Friends,

This month we celebrate the centenary of the Armistice. In the North Porch of our church there is a unique memorial to the men of Oldswinford who served their country in the Great War. It records not just the seventy names of those who died but also the names of all of the three hundred and sixty five men from the parish who served in uniform.

Unlike the majority of stone memorials to be seen throughout the towns and villages of Britain, this memorial is mainly of wood, similar in appearance to a wayside shrine but with five bronze panels in which the names of the men were raised in relief. The memorial was designed and made by the well-known Bromsgrove Guild of Applied Arts (1896-1966) which, amongst other highly regarded artefacts also designed and made the gates for Buckingham Palace.

However, the North Porch, which is also the main entrance to the church, is built of poor quality sandstone that no longer repels the rain that falls on it. The walls are damp and the plasterwork has deteriorated with age. The porch gives a poor impression to visitors and no longer does justice to the important memorial it contains.

That is why the PCC is appealing to our congregation and the wider parish for funds to repair and improve the North Porch. In this way we will be able to make St. Mary's more welcoming for those new to the church, and to present the memorial in a manner which befits its purpose and the sacrifice of all those named.

The Christian Church has always relied on the generosity of the community to support its mission. Luke tells how Joanna, Chuza and Susanna provided for Jesus and the disciples out of their own resources. Paul in his letters encourages the Corinthians to collect for the 'saints' in Jerusalem. The wonderful stained glass windows and many monuments in our own church are witness to the generosity of past generations. And in recent times money has been raised to repair parts of the stonework and to renovate the organ.

Now it is our turn to continue this tradition of generosity, in order for St Mary's to maintain and extend its mission to the community of Oldswinford. One way in which you can help is to become one of our regular givers by paying a set amount to the church through a monthly standing order. If you are an existing regular giver then please consider increasing your gift. Alternatively, you can donate through our Facebook page (see page 2) or by text using FOSM29+amount to 70070

In the words of St Paul:

'...the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.' (2.Cor.9.6-7)

Grace and Peace,

Roger

THANK YOU AND GOOD WISHES

The final few days of September were filled with much activity around the Rectory as Jean and Stephen supervised the packing of their property for the move to Lincoln. There was much anticipation of the last scheduled services as congregation members prepared to say their thank you and goodbye in appreciation of nearly six and a half years of loyal ministry.

And so it was that Stephen presided at his final 10.00 am Eucharist on Sunday 30 September and later, with Jean, joined assembled parishioners for a celebratory Bring and Share lunch and the presentation of gifts to acknowledge all that Stephen and Jean have contributed to the community of Oldswinford during these past years.

During a very enjoyable social occasion, with a wonderful selection of food so generously donated, Church warden, Tony Tatford, spoke on behalf of all parishioners to thank Stephen and Jean. Tony acknowledged the tremendous personal involvement of Stephen in so much of what has been achieved in the name of St Mary's, and reflected on the considerable accomplishments during a comparatively short period of time. "The records of the past years show just how much has been undertaken, how teams have been built, targets identified and a genuine community sense of purpose has been nurtured. During sometimes difficult and challenging times and at times of great joy and rejoicing Stephen has reminded us of our need to trust in God through his meaningful and commanding preaching."



"With Jean, much has been undertaken in order to encourage the greater involvement of young families and children with church activities. Messy Church, and Open the Book serve as two such innovative examples, alongside established provisions such as St Mary's Toddlers, Family Worship and the encouragement of young recruits to the choir."

In appreciation of their generosity in ministry Judy Hall presented Jean with some white rose bushes to help in establishing the garden she has planned and Stephen received a cheque for him to buy some quality scopes to enable him to pursue his hobby of birdwatching.

Stephen donated to St Mary's his pyx, a small silver container used to carry communion wafers (following the theft of such from church), and a new sign board for use to promote our 'Open Church' policy.



The day concluded with an afternoon tea for Stephen and Jean's family and friends from former parishes and appointments before most people assembled in church for Stephen's final Choral Evensong service. This was followed by a short concert presented by his choir.

With our thanks, Stephen and Jean left Oldswinford, for their new home, with warm wishes for a long, healthy and rewarding retirement.

THIS YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE SOCIAL COMMITTEE

It might not be quite a year strictly speaking, but near enough.

There are certain activities in the church year when the Social Committee always organises the activity and any refreshments needed.

This year we were asked to cater for the Agape meal on Maundy Thursday. Previously this has happened in alternate years and the last one being in 2017 we were not expecting one in 2018. Stephen asked if we would organise the Agape meal this year as well. There were 40 people at the meal and the traditional meal including bitter herbs and a lamb dish were served.

When we knew Stephen and Jean were due to retire, the committee knew there would be a farewell lunch to arrange. The date was very close to Harvest and this meant having to think of two events in a short time. The bring and share lunch for the retirement was very well attended and I have never seen such an array of dishes from the congregation and other guests. Thank you so much for all you contributed. The Social Committee arrived early on the Sunday morning to put out tables and chairs, then set out food as it arrived and provided the wine and soft drinks.

When the last of you left in the afternoon we did a quick turn around to refresh the tables, clear the food (some of the unopened items were donated to the Food Bank) and reset the central table with scones, jam and cream for choir and clergy invited to Afternoon Tea. That involved a lot of cups and saucers and plenty of tea to drink. The choir were a thirsty group, especially after their rehearsal. Next it was on to all the washing up.

As we were leaving the Church Hall after all the clearing up we jokingly asked if we could meet again, same place next week. Of course we could – Harvest Supper! On the Saturday morning some of us who are also flower arrangers completed our tasks in church then went home to finish preparing and cooking for the evening. At 6 o'clock we were back at the Church Hall to set up tables and chairs, and put out all the other things that were needed. Two people also learned how to use a rice cooker for the first time! Mike provided more great quizzes to keep everyone entertained between courses. After tea, coffee and mints the clearing up began. More volunteers appeared to help us with washing up and finally putting back the furniture and sweeping the floor.

Next it will be a return to the Church Hall for the Barn Dance on November 3rd with Eve and John. Dancing to start at 7.30 pm. Refreshments will be provided if you could bring your own drinks and glasses.

If you want to see us in action again we will be in church to serve refreshments after the Nativity Play. For those of you wanting even more there will be a mulled drink and seasonal eats after the Carol Service just before Christmas.

As you can see 2018 has been and still is a busy year. I would like to finish by thanking the Social Committee for all their hard work – to Maggie Abbotts, Mike Blaxland, Sally Frost, Sue Tatford, Peter Thomson and Avril Williams, and to all members of our families who support us.

Sue Wakeley

ST ANDREW'S DAY

St Andrew was one of the original twelve apostles and brother to another apostle Simon Peter. They lived and worked as fishermen in Galilee.

The feast of St Andrew falls on 30th November every year. When he began his ministry, he is said to have travelled extensively, along the Black Sea and as far as Kiev, preaching his ministry of Christianity. He ended up at Patras in Greece, where he was martyred for his faith. He met his end on an X-shaped cross or "saltire".

Andrew's remains were preserved at Patras. It is said that a monk at Patras was advised in a dream that some of the relics should be taken away and hidden. In a second dream the same monk was advised that the hidden relics should be taken to "the ends of the earth" for protection. He should set sail in a boat and expect to be shipwrecked. Wherever the shipwreck occurred he was to build a shrine for them. He set sail westward towards the edge of the then known world and had the misfortune to be shipwrecked at Fife, on the coast of Scotland.

According to legend, in 832 AD the Picts and the Scots engaged in battle with the Angles led by Æthelstan. The Scots were led by Óengus II, who finding himself massively outnumbered pledged, whilst engaged in prayer on the eve of the battle, to make St Andrew patron saint of Scotland should victory be granted to him.

On the morning of the battle, white clouds formed the shape of a saltire in an otherwise clear blue sky. The Scots went on to be victorious, despite being heavily outnumbered by the Angles. Accordingly, St Andrew became the patron saint of Scotland, and the white saltire on the blue background, representing the white clouds against a clear blue sky, was adopted as the flag of Scotland.

St Andrew has been adopted as patron saint by other countries as well as Scotland. So on St Andrew's day in times past, whilst people in Scotland were enjoying a well deserved plate of neeps and tatties, and perhaps a dram or two, girls in Romania would be dreaming of their future husbands. They could be assured of doing this by placing a sprig of sweet basil underneath their pillow before retiring. If in their dreams, a fellow came along and removed the sprig, then he would be the one that they would marry.

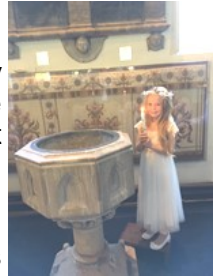
If this failed to produce the desired results, then they could always try forty-one grains of wheat, which also came highly recommended. Indeed in Romania wheat was handy for predicting good fortune generally. If some wheat was planted in a dish of water on St Andrews day and kept until New Year's Day, then the better it looked on the day, the better the forthcoming year would be.



Stephen Howard

BAPTISMS

As a member of Mothers' Union I often attend baptisms on behalf of the wider congregation and to support the clergy. The baptisms are usually very well attended by the family and friends of the young child and can sometimes be quite noisy. Stephen and Alex always impress on the families that it is an informal service and not to worry about disruptions.



Recently a Year 3 pupil from Oldswinford Primary school was baptised. The family group was made up of Ava, her 2 cousins and 6 adults. Because of the small numbers Alex decided to move the civic chairs from the front of the pews into a semi circle around the font. The family all sat down for the whole of the service. It was a very quiet, moving and very meaningful time for everyone. It was certainly a contrast to our usual baptism service and one that moved me. It was a real privilege to be present that afternoon.

There is always a member of the Mothers' Union at a baptism service and at the end we give the child a card and a knitted teddy. These are always much appreciated by the families.

The welcome that is given as the families arrive at church is a very important form of outreach as the visitors very often have never been in our church. As time goes by there are fewer MU members who are able to carry out this important work. As we move into the Interregnum and our wardens ask for people to consider coming forward to help in different ways with our parish life I would ask you to think about helping with this outreach. It is not necessary to be an MU member. If you would like to know more please contact me.

Sally Frost

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

In October our speaker was Karen Turnock, the special project advisor from CHADD – a Churches Association for help in Dudley and District. CHADD was a vision of three clergy in Dudley and supported by the parishes. It is an independent system but it has now become a vital support for many people needing help.

Explicit abuse among teenagers is rife and many are warned of this pressure among their "friends" on the internet. Help is given to teach life skills to young parents and teenagers. It is also found that people over 55 years can face acute needs through disability, long-term health conditions or personal abuse. People with mental health problems also receive help from the group. Last year 11,294 nights of safety in refuges, houses and flats were provided for over 1000 men and women of all ages. On average they stayed for 6 to 7 months but no time limit is set.

Our M.U. gives help by providing toiletry bags for those in refuges. Other frequent needs are towels, tea towel and kitchen items when people move into accommodation. Monetary gifts are also appreciated.

Karen opened our eyes to these local needs and problems which are around us. We pray these neighbours will continue to be served through CHADD and have refuge in time of trouble.

NEXT MEETING 13 November at 2.15 pm in the Coach House
"Fiddle Quilts" - speaker Karen Perry.

All are welcome. **Dawn Nex**

BELL RINGERS' CORNER

Arrangements for Armistice Day Bell Ringing at Oldswinford

The Oldswinford bell ringers will be joining in with other ringers around the nation, and indeed, around the world, on Sunday 11 November. This will be to mark the centenary of the end of the Great War, and the cessation of hostilities.

We will be undertaking service ringing as usual. In addition to this we will be ringing at 12.30 pm to coincide with the nation's tribute as thousands march past the Cenotaph. It is expected that church bells around the country, in towns, villages and cities will be ringing in unison at this time to commemorate the great outpouring of ringing that took place on the day in 1918.

Not only this but it is hoped that the commemorative ringing will become an international effort, with church, military and other bells being rung in England, Germany, Europe and the USA all at the same time.

Stephen Howard

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP - SEPTEMBER WALK

Fifteen people set off from The Dudley Arms pub to head towards Himley Hall. In lovely weather we walked across the grounds and turned right on a path that led us to Baggeridge Country Park - a bit of a climb but lovely scenery. We passed the Café and play area to join a tarmac track and shortly moved onto a side path to avoid any traffic.

We soon turned into Gospel End Common and walked along a variety of paths which were high up and had lovely views. We stopped for a short break, and then continued along woodlands and fields passing a farm and heading towards the A449. We safely crossed the dual carriageway and continued down Battlefield Lane to Wom Brook by 'The Pool Dam'.

We walked along open ground following the brook and finally headed up a flight of steps to the disused railway track. We passed remnants of the old Himley Station, and further on went down steep steps to the road where we did a U-turn to go under the railway track. We headed on along a bridle path that led us to School Road and finally back to The Dudley Arms for our meal, where three more people joined us.

Towards the end of our meal, Malcolm stood up and proposed a toast in memory of Cliff who had died the day before. We all responded – Cliff was one of the founder members of the walking group.

Toni & Bob Evans

HARVEST 2018

Harvest Festival was observed at St Mary's with a mix of tradition and an awareness of the new.

Saturday morning saw the church busy with talented flower arrangers decorating the church with attractive displays that echoed the beauty of God's creation and bountiful gifts. The occasion provided for much good fellowship, several cups of coffee and just a hint of pride and achievement when the final product was surveyed at the end of the morning. Once more, a big thank you is due to all who contribute to the church community in this way.

During the evening a group of about 40 assembled in the Church Hall for the Harvest Supper, a traditional form of gathering and thanksgiving for the generosity of harvest and a sharing of that bounty. Revd Alex French began the evening with acknowledgement of all those who had contributed, in whatever way they were able, to the preparations and the anticipated enjoyment of the evening. Alex presented a meaningful Grace of gratitude for God's harvest, a reminder of our responsibilities as stewards of His world and the need for us all to find ways of helping with the more even distribution of the world's wealth particularly for the benefit of those less fortunate than ourselves.

The Social Committee had been busy hours in advance, preparing the food that was served with a smile and enjoyed with relish as the diners puzzled over a number of quizzes set by Mike Blaxland for the evening's entertainment. As the evening passed the sense of competition grew as elusive solutions were sought, by some, from the answer sheets already completed by others; all in a sense of great camaraderie and fun, of course. When Mike eventually disclosed the answers there were expressions of disbelief at the then obvious solutions that had eluded the most competitive in our midst.

During the services of worship on Sunday, Alex called on us to reflect on the relevance of Harvest Thanksgiving in our present world where the impact of the seasons has little impact on the availability of our food and the traditions of food production and distribution are so very different. He urged us to be aware of what we might regard as our modern day harvest, to be grateful for all that we enjoy in our lives and to remember to thank God for the riches He provides for us all.

Tony Tatford

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 24th November 7.00pm



HOLY NIGHT NATIVITY play, readings & Carols in church. Come and join us for the evening as we prepare for Advent. If you would like to take part as an actor or reader please contact Chris Morgan by email: chris-nolimits@hotmail.com

LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF DUDLEY

In recent years I have often visited Top Church, Dudley, as plans have come together to make it a Resourcing Church. Meetings have taken place in a back room, as the main worship area is huge and hard to heat. When I have been involved in Sunday services, the tiny congregation have been dwarfed by the cavernous building which they have struggled so faithfully to maintain.



It was a delightful experience therefore to walk into the church one recent Sunday to be greeted with well over a hundred people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and church traditions gathered to hear the recently appointed Resourcing Church Leader, the Revd James Treasure, outline the church's unfolding vision. There was a real buzz!

Home-made cakes and good coffee were served, activities were provided for children and young people, and using an informative PowerPoint presentation, James shared the Top Church story, past, present and future, and explained about the changes planned to enable the church to be fit for purpose for the next 200 years.

Further discussion then took place over plenty of delicious healthy, vegetarian food, served in compostable trays with wooden forks. These details underlined the message James and the team he is forming want to communicate.

I came away inspired and encouraged, hopeful about what will grow in and around Top Church in the coming years, but also challenged about attention to detail. Is the message of welcome, inclusion, care for the environment and whole-life discipleship we preach in our churches also fleshed out in our actions? As Kingdom People do we model lives of integrity? What is communicated to newcomers potentially exploring faith in our churches if we serve unfairly traded coffee in plastic cups and ask for a contribution?

We don't have to be a resourcing church to be welcoming and attractive and holistic in our approach. We could all perhaps identify one small detail in our building or welcome, which if given a few moments' thought and attention, could change the experience next week for those who cross the threshold. What might it be in your place of worship?

Nikki Groarke

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