

**ST MARY'S
OLD SWINFORD
Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS
JANUARY 2019
ONLINE EDITION**

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD Parish Church MONTHLY NEWS JANUARY 2019



50p

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, BANNS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS.

Please come to the Church on Saturday morning between 10.00 am and 11.00 am for Vestry Hour. You will be warmly welcomed. Tea and coffee will be available.

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

18.11.18	Ava Louise Raffan Alexina Grace Tanner James Tanner Emma Anne Patience Lucas
2.12.18	Theo Sidney Tate Hugo William Lander

Funerals

14.11.18	Mary Ann Hill	Aged 76
15.11.18	Martyn Woodroffe	Interment of ashes
19.11.18	Peter Eric Gordon	Aged 78
23.11.18	Anne Joyce Davies	Memorial service. Aged 85
10.12.18	Douglas Roy Milne (Bill)	

DIARY FOR JANUARY 2019

Thursday 3	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 4	Clergy day off
Saturday 5	10.00 am – 12.00 Noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 6	EPIPHANY -We welcome the Revd John Fitzmaurice to our 10.00 am service
Tuesday 8	11.30 am Holy Communion at Hollycroft 7.30 pm Standing Committee
Thursday 10	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 11	Clergy day off
Saturday 12	10.00 am – 12.00 Noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 13	FIRST AFTER EPIPHANY 9.00 am Open The Book team visit OCEPS 2.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Coach House
Tuesday 15	10.30 am Holy Communion
Thursday 17	Clergy day off
Friday 18	Clergy day off
Saturday 19	10.00 am – 12.00 Noon Open Church and Vestry Hour 5.30 pm Evensong at Worcester Cathedral – Feast of St Wulfstan
SUNDAY 20	SECOND AFTER EPIPHANY 7.30 pm PCC Meeting
Monday 21	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Wednesday 23	10.30 am Holy Communion – We welcome the Revd Andrew Sillis
Thursday 24	Clergy day off
Friday 25	10.00 am – 12.00 Noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
Saturday 26	
SUNDAY 27	THIRD AFTER EPIPHANY - We welcome the Revd Sarah Northall to the 8.00 am and 10.00 am services today Graham Davies, DOM, last services today 7.30 pm Messy Church meeting in the Narthex
Monday 28	10.00 am Open The Book team visit to OCEPS
Tuesday 29	2.30 pm Tuesday Tea in the narthex



EPIPHANY

Adoration of the Magi
by
Jan Bruegel the Elder



FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS

After the excitement associated with the celebration of a New Year there can be a sense of emptiness. That busy time of preparation during Advent and the holiday festivities of Christmas is over. The New Year has been welcomed in. We have pondered over how we might keep resolutions beyond the first few weeks or days and we face the realisation that we have probably eaten too much, spent too much and must now face a time of recovery and repair.

However, there is much to raise our spirits as we look forward to the arrival of a new Rector at St Mary's; the opportunity to welcome, to share and to take part in yet another phase in the long history of Christian worship at St Mary's. To show, by our prayers, thoughts and actions how we care for and support each other.

The period of exceptional high demand on the time and attention of our worship leaders, Alex and Roger has passed and we trust they will find the time and make good use of the opportunities for some quiet relaxation and refreshment. Such rest, both physical and spiritual is important for us all, just as it was to the apostle Paul. He mentioned it in many of his letters. It is important for each of us too, if we are to continue to play our part in the Christian life we seek to lead.

As we begin this New Year we have much to focus on and to prepare for. The tasks set out as priorities for the Vision for St Mary's have been publicised and need the support of all if they are to be realised. Progress is already evident but much of this work is on-going, enduring through the coming months and years. Please familiarise yourself with what we are hoping to achieve; all details are available in the narthex. Might you be able to offer some help or perhaps know someone who can? There are many opportunities for us all to try something new, to take a part we may never have considered before or to contribute in some new way.

Graham Davies, our Director of Music, is relocating at the end of January to a church closer to his home. We thank him for his time and energy in leading our music in worship and in his recruitment of new members to the choir. During the coming weeks we will see several new young choristers take their place as members of our choir. We welcome them most warmly and encourage them in their enjoyment of singing.

During the interim, as we seek to appoint a new Director of Music, Richard Hall has generously offered to temporarily fill the void, just as many others have offered their support. How blessed are we?

To these and everyone who has helped us through the past year, thank you. May 2019 prove to be a kind and peaceful year for you all and those for whom you care.

Judy & Tony

THE CROSS OF ST WULFSTAN TO BE AWARDED TO WENDY TRANTER

With the Children's Society celebration of fifty years of Christingle in 2018 came the realization that St Mary's would also be holding its fiftieth Christingle and, most significantly, the fiftieth Christingle arranged by Wendy Tranter. The opportunity for celebration and thanksgiving was obvious, an opportunity not to be missed.

Ideas of inviting Bishop John to our Christingle were high on the list despite doubts that his busy schedule would permit this, however, it was worth offering the invitation. The Revd Stephen Agnew wrote to the Bishop on our behalf and we waited patiently for a response. When it came, the response was of great significance. In recognition of all of Wendy's devotion to the Church and especially to her work as a chorister and leader of work with children, Bishop John invited Wendy to accept the award of the Cross of St Wulfstan, the highest award available at the discretion of the bishop.

And so, on Saturday, 19 January - St Wulfstan's Day - Wendy will be presented with her award in Worcester Cathedral, at the Eucharist at 5.30 pm. Hopefully, this will be in the presence of as many people from Oldswinford as are able to attend to support Wendy and to share in this celebration of her Christian generosity.

Full details of proposed travel plans and transport availability will be shared early in the New Year.

FROM THE EDITOR

It is just a year since we changed our magazine publication to the new format of "Monthly News". Our continued aim has been to deliver important news and reports of interesting activities at St Mary's together with occasional 'general interest' features and diocesan notes in a slightly smaller style. We hope you have enjoyed the monthly read and we would appreciate any feedback, comments and contributions for future issues.

We were sorry that circumstances caused us to discontinue the subscriber delivery service last year and although one or two distributors have maintained their 'round', our readership has been reduced significantly. This has resulted in the loss of an important part of our outreach in the parish. The access to purchase copies in the narthex and the Oldswinford pharmacy continue to serve our regular readers but we would welcome suggestions for arrangements for a wider distribution.

As we look forward to publishing our "Monthly News" through 2019 there will be many changes and challenges in coming months, particularly with our clergy, and we hope to bring informed reports as soon as our monthly publishing schedule permits. We acknowledge the contribution of Tony Tatford to our committee as he keeps us up to date with latest developments and his many varied reports and articles. His experience as churchwarden and previous editorship is most valuable to our publication.

The committee extends Best Wishes for a Happy New Year to all our readers.

CHRISTMAS MARKET RESULTS

If you were unable to get to this year's Christmas Market you missed a treat. The wide variety of stalls provided some fantastic bargains – both sensible and fun – and trade was so brisk at the Bottle stall and Tombola that all the prizes had gone by the end of the day and the Christmas Hamper Raffle had sold all their raffle tickets, even from a third book! There was a regular stream of people in and out so although there was always plenty of people it remained uncrowded. The entire morning was one of laughter and smiles from both visitors and people manning the stalls and supplying the coffees and mince pies. Congratulations and many thanks to all who contributed to its success, either through gifts, donations, preparation work or manning stalls but especially thanks to those who came to the Event as without you it would have been very much a damp squib!

Also, as well as having a really good time, we raised just over £2,000. Double mince pies for all!

Katey Fletcher

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

On a darkening December day 15 members met in the Coach House for our Christmas celebrations. Four members received certificates to mark thirty years of membership of Mothers Union.

We enjoyed readings, carols and a challenging quiz followed by delicious refreshments.

Next meeting: Tuesday 8 January at 2.15 pm in the Coach House - Branch AGM

Dawn Nex

CALLING YOUNG DISCIPLES PROJECT

Messy Church – Sunday 9th December 2018



Many thanks to all who helped at Messy Church which was held last Sunday. The Messy Church team welcomed 10 families (19 children + 1 baby) to the afternoon, we explored the theme of Advent and how it is a time of getting ready for the birth of the Saviour. A report of the afternoon will appear in the next Magazine.

Anne Bachelor

SHAGGY DOG PUZZLE

The answer to last month's puzzle is - 29 people and 23 dogs

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP - NOVEMBER WALK

"Not always easy and certainly not plain sailing"

Our November walk was in the vicinity of Barnt Green with 11 of our regular walkers taking part plus 6 apologies for absence. Being close to Christmas, diaries get more and more full and clashes with other activities are inevitable. We walked from close to the Sailing Club at Upper Bittell Reservoir, currently well below the depth needed for sailing, though not preventing water fowl from enjoying themselves. The reservoir had been drained to enable construction of a new draw-down valve but was in the process of refilling. An undulating walk around the dam and over the hill brought us to the Worcester and Birmingham Canal which we followed in a north easterly direction as far as the West Hills Tunnel (2726 yard long). The last part of our route was across open pasture with many well-behaved horses. At the tunnel we turned west and followed the North Worcestershire Path via quiet lanes, fields and woods back to the cars, thereby completing an outer circuit of Upper Bittell Reservoir. We passed a large flock of Canada Geese feeding in an adjacent field, the reservoir clearly being out of favour. We were very fortunate with the weather, rain en-route to the start but only one light shower for the walk itself. We normally follow our walks with a pub lunch and it is usually easy to find a venue willing to serve a group of hungry walkers, but not always. The pub we used last time we walked at Barnt Green, had gone very up-market with sky high food prices, and the other pub near the village had an identical menu! A canal side pub on our route would not take an advanced booking without knowing exact numbers which we cannot give until the morning of the walk. The "Miller and Carter Steak House" at Marlbrook, on our route home, would only take a booking on the day. This was attempted by phone, only to encounter an automated booking system, which after pressing all the right keys, in all the right order, said we could not have a booking until 3 pm! Having finished our walk at 12.30 pm, we decided to call in as we were passing just in case they could make room for us; we were offered a table for 11 persons provided we could vacate it by 3 pm. This we did, enjoying well cooked meals attractively presented, accompanied by good company for conversation.

Arranging meals is not always easy!

Mike Blaxland

CHILDRENS SOCIETY BOXES 2018

Thank you everyone for your fantastic efforts for your savings this year. We raised the record total of £1,017.74!! So jolly well done to you all. The money has now been sent off to the Society and they will be confirming the amount in due course. I will put a poster up with the final total once I have that confirmation.

There are some boxes awaiting collection at the back of church but if you have not had yours yet let me know and I will sort them out.

Maggie Abbotts

HOLY NIGHT NATIVITY : THANKS



From the moment I saw my grandchildren's response to Nicholas Allen's book 'Jesus's Christmas Party' I thought what a great nativity play it would make. Having written the script and shared it with Alex and then others they became enthused by the idea too.

Gradually the idea took on shape with so many members of our church family willing to take part sharing their time, talents and skills to make it happen. Many people said to me that it was too early for a nativity play but the thinking was that it could focus our minds on the true meaning of Christmas and also we invited Churches Together to join us in this experience to bring us all closer together.

Sadly this was not wholly realised, although Rev Ruth Atkinson and four of her congregation came from their parish of St Michael and All Angels, Bartley Green; it was great to meet them .

Frank and I would like to **THANK EVERYONE** who contributed to its success, because although it was not as well attended as we had hoped there was a fantastic atmosphere which brought all of us closer together. We were also delighted that four little angels joined us with their parents from Oldswinford Primary School. Despite very few rehearsals they were brilliant, so well behaved and looked wonderful. It was a joy to have them.

The performance was filmed from the balcony by Abigail Hill and will be available to view on St. Mary's Church website – just look for and follow the link.

Chris Morgan

This production was much appreciated by an audience who enjoyed seeing the Nativity story told through the experiences of the inn-keeper on that Holy Night. The pulpit served as the front of the Traveller's Inn and the steps provided a convenient reminder of the discomfort of the disturbances endured by the inn-keeper and his wife as a succession of visitors called during the night with loud knocks on the door.

The inn-keeper, played by Mark Williams, repeatedly informed the callers with good-humoured irritation that the inn was full and eventually directed the travellers, then Joseph and Mary, the shepherds and the three kings, to the stable behind the inn (via the vestry!). The calls were interspersed with readings and hymns, and the play culminated with a grand tableau in the Chancel with all the visitors and angels around the baby in the crib.

Thank you Chris and Frank for a most enjoyable and clever production with splendid costumes.

Alec Beevers

ST WULFSTAN

St Wulfstan was Bishop of Worcester from 1062 AD until his death in 1095. His feast day falls on 19th January every year. He is the patron saint of vegetarians.

Wulfstan was born in Long Itchington in Warwickshire in around 1008. He studied at the monastery in Evesham and then became treasurer at Worcester Cathedral priory. It was at this time that his superiors, noting his diligence and chastity (more of this later), encouraged him to join the clergy. He was ordained in 1038 and shortly after became a monk at the priory, eventually becoming Bishop of Worcester in 1062.



After the Norman Conquest in 1066, it is said that Archbishop Lanfranc demanded that Wulfstan surrender his pastoral staff but he refused to do so. He said that he would only surrender it to King Edward the Confessor around whose tomb they were standing. So saying, he thrust the staff deep into the stonework of the tomb where it remained stuck fast. Nobody present, other than Bishop Wulfstan himself, was able to remove it, and this was taken as a sign that he must be permitted to retain his see.

Wulfstan founded Malvern Priory and undertook much large scale rebuilding work that took place at Worcester Cathedral. There had been a cathedral in Worcester since 680 AD. Wulfstan commenced his rebuilding work in 1084. The most complete part of his restoration which still remains is the crypt, which is still largely intact

St Wulfstan was said to have performed many miracles. One concerns a workman who fell 40 feet from the roof of the cathedral. Wulfstan, who was standing nearby, made a holy gesture as the man was falling and instead of crashing to his death, the man stood up unhurt, blessing the bishop as he did so.

Another story tells of how he was officiating at mass one day. As he passed into the chancel, which was quite close to the kitchen, he allowed himself to become distracted by the aroma of roast goose being prepared by the cook. Dismayed with himself that he had allowed thoughts of his dinner to interfere with his devotions, he took an oath there and then before the altar, that he would never taste meat again, and so he became a vegetarian.

With reference to his chastity, Wulfstan would in later life, tell a story about a time when he was a youth in Long Itchington. On one occasion he was engaging in sports with other young people in a field near his home. To his dismay he began to entertain improper thoughts about a young lady who was also a member of the group. His response to this was to go and roll in a thorny thicket of brambles until the thoughts left him. In later life he credited this incident with his lifetime resolve to remain celibate.

Stephen Howard

ADVENT EVENTS

As we 'go to press' we are half way through Advent and the countdown to Christmas. The 'Holy Night' play provided an appropriate introduction to focus our minds before the Advent Carol Service which gave us a spiritual preparation through the traditional 'Darkness to Light' experience. The choir were in great form with a lovely selection of carols. However a departure from the usual order of lighting the candles at the beginning of the service meant that the congregation struggled to read the hymn books but we enjoyed the music and hummed along. Perhaps it added a new interpretation to the words from John 1 v.5 – '...and the darkness comprehended it not'. However the candles were lit and the lights came on for the final hymn "Lo, he comes with clouds descending"

The second Sunday in Advent was celebrated with a Toy Service and 'Messy Church', and choral evensong led by our reader Roger King. His address drew on observations from the Curate's letter in the December 'Monthly News' on advertising and commercialism at Christmas and concluded with a reading of John Betjeman's poem 'Christmas' with the memorable verse

And is it true? and is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

Alec Beevers

CODEX AMIATINUS : The Oldest Surviving Complete Bible.



After over 1,300 years this Bible made by monks at the Wearmouth-Jarrow Monastery in the early 8th Century returns from abroad to go on display in the British Library in London . It was taken to Italy in 716 AD as a gift for Pope Gregory II .The Codex Amiatinus is said to be one of the grandest and largest manuscripts ever produced. Each double page is 27.5 inches by 20.5 inches. Closed, it measures 12 inches high and

weighs 75lbs. It took over 1000 animal skins to create the parchment needed to create it. It took many years for it to be translated from Hebrew into Latin and is an important witness to the history of Christianity.

It forms the centre piece of the culture of the Anglo-Saxon exhibition and runs until the end of Feb 2019.

From Chris Morgan

LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF WORCESTER

We live in tumultuous political times, so much so that many people are literally switching off from TV and radio news. It does indeed seem that megaphone diplomacy, which, of course, is no diplomacy at all, is playing a bigger part in our public discourse. We must not have a false sense that history automatically gets better as we learn to live better, when it is clear that human sinfulness can mess things up just as effectively today as it ever did.



So as Christians we must not be naïve about progress, but nor must we despair or give up hope either. We have a Gospel to proclaim and it is Good News. Our calling as Church in every generation is to be a community of hope, and if you look at the world in which Jesus lived, it was clearly as chaotic and seemingly hopeless as ours today. We must be realistic and yet bearers of hope.

What concerns me about today's politics is the poverty of our political discourse and conversation. Whatever else populism might or might not be, the language it uses is designed for newspaper headlines or media news feeds. It tries to give simple answers to complex questions. It feeds people's sense of unfairness. It requires an enemy and puts people down. It does not have any nuances, allow for compromise or considered thought. Twentieth-century history shows us where it can lead.

This is simply not good enough as a way of doing politics, or building a stable world order and country, nor indeed of running a church. Whenever we are tempted to caricature someone else's belief and way of living out the faith, we need to check ourselves and remember wise words from the letter of James in the New Testament: 'you must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.'

Being 'quick to listen' – what might that look like in our public life?

Archdeacon Robert Jones

We are grateful for the sponsorship of the following businesses



Rachel Clark Chiropodist
 Fully qualified and registered with the Health Professions Council CH17310
 Visiting Chiropodist - professional footcare in the comfort of your home - 20 years experience
 For an appointment call
01384 873938 or 07860771442

Chris Genner
FOREVER LIVING PRODUCTS
 Natural Aloe Vera health drinks, beauty and nutritional products. Free advice, samples, talks and demonstrations.
BUY DIRECT www.genner.net
Chris Genner 01384 371336



H. PORTER & SONS
INDEPENDENT FUNERAL DIRECTORS
Funeral Directors for over 160 years
H. PORTER & SONS
 Old Church House,
 60 South Road, Stourbridge,
 West Midlands, DY8 3UJ
01384 395048
www.hporter.co.uk

170 YEARS 1843 - 2013

ST MARY'S CHURCH HALL
 Rectory Road
 Oldswinford
 Available for hire for private functions
 Club events and meetings
 Contact the Parish Office
01384 441003

Home is where the care is
 Home Care from Bluebird care




Email the Bluebird Care team to find out more about our home care service.
Dudley@bluebirdcare.co.uk
 Or call us on 01384 297839

R B Porter Heating Ltd
For all Central Heating and Plumbing needs.
Servicing , Repairs and New Systems
 Old Mill Garage, St John's Road, Stourbridge DY8 1YS
Tel : 01384 396719

Davis Memorials Ltd
 Monumental and Masonry Contractors
 Established 1841 Suppliers of all forms of memorials.
 56A Station Road, Old Hill, Cradley Heath,
 West Midlands, B64 6NU
Tel: 01384 566958 Fax: 01384 569708
Website www.davismemorialsLtd.co.uk

J. Vernon Kendrick
Funeral Directors
 Vernon House Cemetery Road Lye DY9 8PB
01384 422123
 Greenfield House 11 Greenfield Avenue
 Stourbridge DY8 1SU
01384 442111
A positive philosophy of care

Swinford Pharmacy
 90 Hagley Road, Old Swinford.
Tel: 01384 440030. We offer a free collection and delivery service for elderly and housebound patients.



Andrew Taplin

CHARTERED SURVEYORS . VALUERS AND ESTATE AGENTS

14 HAGLEY ROAD, STOURBRIDGE, WEST MIDLANDS DY8 1PS
TEL: 01384 440466 FAX: 01384