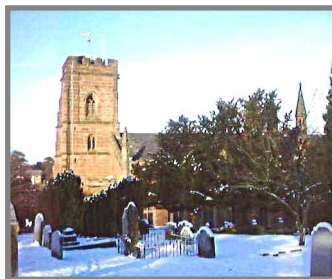


**ST MARY'S
OLD SWINFORD
Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS
FEBRURY 2019
ONLINE EDITION**

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD Parish Church MONTHLY NEWS FEBRUARY 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:	Vacant	
PCC Secretary:	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
Monthly News Editor:	Mr Alec Beevers	444229
Safeguarding Officer:	Mrs Liz Fourness	394359
Church Hall and Coach House: - Bookings:	Parish Office	441003
Parish Administrator and Publicity Officer:	Mr John Sutton	441003
Parish Office:	Open 9.00 am -1.00 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 9.00 am to 12.00 noon Friday Closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday	441003
Church website address:	www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk E-mail: st.mary.os@btconnect.com	
Facebook:	www.facebook.com/stmaryschurcholdswinford	
Magazine e-mail address:	stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk	

ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNOS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS.

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

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms

16.12.18 Stanley Rex Gwynne

Funerals

09.01.19 Raymond Oakes Aged 90

14.01.19 Christine Gwilliams Aged 72

Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.

I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt, but only more love.

Mother Teresa

DIARY - FEBRUARY 2019

Saturday 2	10.00-12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 3	FOURTH AFTER EPIPHANY
Monday 4	9.30 am Oldswinford Primary School Candlemass Service in church
Wednesday 6	9.00 am Morning Prayers and Staff Meeting
Thursday 7	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 9	10.00-12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 10	FIFTH AFTER EPIPHANY
	Worship Together
Tuesday 12	10.00 am Open the Book Team visit Oldswinford Primary School
Wednesday 13	9.00 am Morning Prayers and Staff Meeting
Thursday 14	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 16	10.00-12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 17	THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE LENT
	Revd Doug Chaplain (Mission Development Officer and Director of Reader Training) presides at the 10.00 am service
	3.00 pm Baptism
Monday 18	Schools half term holiday
Tuesday 19	2.00 pm Tuesday Tea in the Coach House
Wednesday 20	9.00 am Morning Prayers and Staff Meeting
	10.00 am Prayer Meeting at 4 Worcester Lane
Thursday 21	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 23	10.00-12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 24	SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE LENT
Tuesday 26	2.15 pm Tuesday Tea in the Narthex
Wednesday 27	9.00 am Morning Prayers and Staff Meeting
Thursday 28	10.30 am Holy Communion – Revd Andrew Sillis presides

CHURCH DIARIES FOR 2019

There are a still a few copies of the church diary available free of charge in the narthex. Do collect a copy to record your events and activities, and enjoy the notes, prayers and messages.

The famous diarist Ann Frank wrote:

Writing in a diary is a really strange experience for someone like me. Not only because I've never written anything before, but also because it seems to me that later on neither I nor anyone else will be interested in the musings of a thirteen-year old school girl. Oh well, it doesn't matter. I feel like writing.

LETTER FROM ROGER KING, OUR READER



Dear Friends,

As I write this letter the Space Race that I remember from the 1960s seems to have been reignited. China has landed a probe on the dark side of the moon and a NASA spacecraft has successfully photographed Ultima Thule, one of the most distant objects in the solar system. For some people these events reveal the wonder of universe and they see science as a way of learning more about God through understanding what he has created. However, for others achievements like these demonstrate that God is a delusion and science has removed the need for faith in anything.

There is a perception that science and religion are in conflict with each other. Yet science emerged from solid theological foundations in Christian Europe. Many of the early scientists were Christians, such as Roger Bacon, Johannes Kepler and Michael Faraday. The conflict we hear about today is a legacy of the eighteenth century Enlightenment which tended to see science as the purest expression of human reason, while any reference to God was at best redundant and at worst a descent into irrationality.

The idea of warfare between science and religion was further promoted by Victorian scientists, such as Thomas Huxley, who wanted to establish a new professional scientific community, free from clerical influence. Today this 'war' is being continued by scientists such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett.

The loud controversies about ideas such as 'creation science' have obscured attempts by theologians and scientists to find common ground in conversations about religion and science. But despite the determined efforts of some on both sides to lay sole claim to 'the truth', there is a growing consensus that there is nothing inconsistent between the scientific understanding of the universe and Christian doctrine. Some scientists would go further and argue that the more science discovers about quarks, gluons and electrons, the closer it comes to seeing the mysterious nature of matter as the unfolding of the Creator's plan.

Science and faith are important in areas that affect all of us, including education ('Why aren't there any dinosaurs in the Bible, Dad?'), medicine ('*Should* we use this new technology?'), and politics ('Why are we being told to go green – the world has to end at some point!'). During Lent I will be running some sessions for anyone who is interested in thinking about how science and the Christian faith might speak to each other. The aim is to explore questions such as:

'How did we get here?';

'Is there a purpose to life, or is life simply a result of a series of chance occurrences?';

'Am I free to choose, or am I just the sum of my brain's impulses?' .

You don't need any scientific knowledge to take part in the sessions. The main requirement is to be interested and open-minded. Look out for more details as we get closer to Lent.

Grace and Peace,

Roger

A VISION FOR ST MARY'S

Much of our work undertaken in 2018 was focussed on developing and then actively pursuing a vision for St Mary's. The Vision was developed through a Quiet Day at Holland House, the activities and discussions that contributed to the Lent Course, a series of sermons and an invitation to the congregation to contribute views.

In parallel we had to face challenges with regard to our financial situation which included a series of presentations and appeals that invited all supporters of St Mary's to consider how they might be able to add to their support in financial terms or in terms of their time and talents.

Some elements of the outcome of our combined efforts have yet to be calculated whilst the overall process can be seen summarised in the display of documents in the narthex. However, whilst 2018 may now have passed, the process of enacting and further developing our vision continues.

Three elements of the many aspects of the vision were identified as key targets for the PCC to address in our immediate future; 'Worship', 'Sent By God' and 'Blessed'. In turn, these were broken down into single, achievable projects, as shown in the display. Progress in terms of achieving these targets has been encouraging so far, and efforts continue to address the challenges that have limited progress in some respects.

It is important that we are all aware of and involved with this vision. We all have a part to play and there are always new opportunities for each of us to become involved and to find new paths for the sharing of our Christian faith and practice..

Please take the opportunity to read the information on display and to consider how you might contribute in whatever way you are able. An invitation to someone you know who currently is not aware of these opportunities is a most valuable use of your potential, especially if you are already doing as much as you can manage.

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

The AGM was held on Tuesday 8 January in the Coach House. The theme for 2019 for the Worldwide Organisation is "MULOA" - MU Listens, Observes and Acts in step with God, and members received their copies of our planned programme.

Our condolences were sent to the family of Chris Gwilliams who had died recently.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 12 February at 2.15 pm in the Coach House
"Further Sabbatical Adventures"
Speaker Revd Sue Oliver.

All are welcome.

Dawn Nex

CHRISTINGLE 2018



St Mary's held a special Christingle service just before Christmas to celebrate 50 years of Christingle and also 50 years of this annual event being arranged by Wendy Tranter.

A very large congregation assembled to pay a special tribute to Wendy for her services

and her contribution to the work of The Children's Society. We joined in singing lovely carols and a special Christingle song which reminded us of the symbolism of the different elements on the Christingle orange. Other musical items included a moving flute solo by Charlotte Anderson of "Joy to the World", a keyboard performance by Lewis Hayes and a lovely solo of "Away in a Manger" sung by Annalyn Franks.



In his address Alex talked about other events of 50 years ago – the release of the first Beatles album and Elvis Presley's success in the music world – long before many of the congregation were born - and highlighted the importance of Wendy's work in maintaining the Christingle tradition over such a long time. Beside a splendid banner which had been designed and made by Martin Hardy, Wendy was presented with with a special certificate of appreciation and a bouquet of flowers.



Following the blessing of the Christingle oranges, the candles were lit and the congregation were invited to collect them and parade round the church to symbolize the light of the world, before singing the final carol "Hark! The herald angels sing".

Thank you to Wendy and her band of helpers for making the Christingles, and special thanks to Wendy for organizing the services in aid of The Children's Society for 50 years. We wish her much joy in the future.

Cross of St Wulfstan Award

As we go to press Wendy will be attending a special service in Worcester Cathedral on 19 January to receive the presentation of this year's Wulfstan Cross Award. The award is given by the Bishop for 'Exceptional service to the Diocese of Worcester' and honours Wendy's 'outstanding contribution to the Church's ministry at St Mary's'.

A large group of friends will be attending the service to support Wendy and we hope to report the event in our next issue.

ST VALENTINE'S DAY

*Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine*

William Shakespeare

St Valentine was a third century Roman who was martyred for his faith around the year 270 AD. Since the Middle Ages he has been associated with the tradition of courtly love. His feast day falls on 14th February every year.



Very little is known for sure about St Valentine, what we do know has been passed down to us by way of legend. His Roman name is believed to have been Valentinus. There are various accounts of his life but the most likely is that he was a priest of Rome, or possibly Bishop of Terni, in Umbria in Central Italy.

It is said that whilst under arrest for preaching Christianity he was challenged by his judge to perform a miracle. The judge's blind daughter was brought before Valentinus and he was challenged to restore the child's sight. Valentinus laid his hands on the girl's eyes and her sight was immediately restored. The judge, Asterius, converted to Christianity on the spot and Valentinus was freed from imprisonment.

He was not quite so fortunate in his dealings with Claudius, the emperor. Valentinus found himself under arrest, yet again, for preaching Christianity and performing Christian marriages. Claudius at first took a liking to him but when Valentinus tried to convert the emperor to Christianity he flew into a rage and condemned him to death. Thus Valentinus was martyred on that very day and buried at a cemetery close to the Ponte Milvio to the north of Rome.

It is believed that the first association of St Valentine with courtly love in the Middle Ages was by Geoffrey Chaucer in a poem he wrote, completed in 1382. In the poem, *Parlement of Foules*, Chaucer romanticises the pairing off of birds around the time of St Valentine's day. The earliest recorded sending of a Valentines greeting was in 1415. The sender was Charles, Duke of Orleans, who sent the greeting to his wife. At the time the duke was being held in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt.

By the 18th century, lovelorn young men were penning romantic verse to be sent to those upon whom they had set their heart. For the young man that lacked the poetic flair to compose his own poetry, a very helpful manual "The Young Man's Valentine Writer" was published in 1797. This presented a compendium of romantic verse that the writer could use covertly to augment his own stumbling efforts.

Stephen Howard



CALLING YOUNG DISCIPLES

UPDATE January 2019

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to you all.

I thought it would be helpful to update you as to the work that I am presently working on at St. Mary's as part of the Calling Young Disciples project. As your Mission Enabler placed with you for between 4-8 hours per week until spring 2019, the main focus has been identified in discussion with the Learning Hub (Les, Peter, and Elaine & Chloe), Alex, Judy and Tony as Messy Church.

A meeting was held in September for those interested in Messy Church. They gathered to reflect and discuss the future of Messy Church at St. Mary's and it was felt important to try to develop a dedicated team, that would be sustainable and would work together to plan regular Messy Church events to connect to families in and around the area of St. Mary's. (Regular might mean 2 a year to start with and then building up to a more regular pattern, perhaps monthly in the future.).

After this meeting in September, the CYD Learning Hub weekend was held and St. Mary's and St. Thomas (the joint learning hub) attended. A suggestion was made that perhaps Messy Church might be something that could be a joint piece of outreach to families that could be done together. A decision was made to trial this and the first Messy Church development meeting was held in November with representatives from both Churches present.

On Sunday 9th December we welcomed 15 families to Messy Church with the focus being on Advent and how we can get ready for the Celebration of the birth of Jesus.

There was a lovely atmosphere to the afternoon, and several families commented on how good it was to have something that they could all come along to on a Sunday afternoon; many commented that they felt it important for their children to know about Advent and the Birth of Jesus.

There will be a review and development meeting for Messy Church on Monday 28th January at 7.30 pm in the Narthex. This meeting is open to any who would like to be involved with Messy Church and its future; so please do come along.

If you are not able to be directly involved with Messy Church, do please remember those who are planning as they develop a team for this ministry. Pray also for the families and children who come along that they may be inspired and refreshed, and that they may be curious and want to seek more about faith.

If you would like to find out more about Messy Church and its values/aims, there is an excellent website: www.messychurch.org.uk.

Finally, as always, do please feel free to contact me by email, phone or popping into the parish office on a Thursday morning, (I aim to be there between 9.30 – 12.30 pm most weeks) or speak to me when I am with you on the 2nd Sunday of the month.

Blessings.

Anne

abatchelor@cofe-worcester.org.uk

Mobile: 07931175448

CHRISTMASTIDE AND EPIPHANY AT ST MARY'S

In January the church celebrated Epiphany which falls twelve days after Christmas and marks the end of the Christmas season. St Mary's enjoyed a wonderful period leading up to Christmastide with a pre-Advent Nativity play, Advent carol service, toy service and many other special events during Advent. The fine weather allowed all the events to proceed without hindrance and the church was full for the school carol services.

The weekend of 22 – 23 December was a period of great activity with the decoration of the church by the Flower Guild on the Saturday morning in preparation for the major services to follow.

Full congregations enjoyed the special 50th anniversary Christingle event and the service of Nine Lessons with Carols, and the celebrations continued with the Crib Service and Communion on Christmas Eve, and Communion services on Christmas Day.

This was a very busy period for the Clergy, Choir, Wardens and many other helpers behind the scenes. Thank you to Alex, Roger, the Choir, wardens, Flower Guild and Social Committee and many others who provided such a rich period of worship.



Looking forward, Roger's letter (page 4) gives a first glimpse of the next church festival as he refers to suggestions for Lent and the approach to Easter. We are also reminded of the new season by the appearance of the first early snowdrops. Readers may recall Ruth, our previous curate's affection for this harbinger of spring and her donation of snowdrop bulbs to St Mary's which were planted in the churchyard. We look forward to seeing their flowers in coming weeks.

Alec Beevers

FROM THE DIOCESE

A new Rector for St Mary Oldswinford

The Bishop of Worcester is pleased to announce the appointment of the Revd Jonathan Flitcroft as Rector of St Mary, Old Swinford, Stourbridge.

Until the beginning of December, Jonathan was Assistant Curate in the Benefice of Four Oaks (All Saints) in the Diocese of Birmingham; since then he has been serving as an Interim Minister at Edgbaston, St George. He is married to Mary, and they have two daughters, Rebecca, aged 24 and Molly, aged 23. Prior to ordination, Jonathan was an actor.

Bishop John will institute Jonathan on Sunday 19 May 2019 at 4 pm.

Please remember Jonathan and Mary in your prayers as they prepare to move.

We look forward to welcoming Jonathan as our spiritual leader and to sharing with him all we endeavour to achieve at St Mary's.

BISHOP JOHN'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

As we embark upon 2019, our country is in an unprecedented state, one giving rise to much anxiety, in which we are faced with the most significant of decisions for at least a generation. As the Brexit debate continues, it is very unclear what the future will hold. It is not only parliament that is very divided, we are divided as a country. The referendum, which was supposed to settle the issue, seems to have given rise to hostility as well as division.

In situations such as these, I find the words of Psalm 46, which have given solace to people for thousands of years, of great relevance: 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.'

Whether or not we feel able to put our trust in God, one thing is clear: there is an overriding need for us to come together as a nation in this coming year and beyond. Reconciliation is at the heart of the Christian faith: Christ came to reconcile us to God and to one another. Human reconciliation is essential for the well-being of our society, the communities within it and ourselves. whether or not we have faith.

I hope and pray that we shall all be able to work for that reconciliation and the common good in the months ahead.

May God bless you richly in 2019.



Bishop John.

SOCIAL ACTION IS THRIVING IN OUR CHURCHES

Bishop Graham looks at social action projects that our churches are involved in.

In many churches that I visit there is a box next to a sign saying, 'For the Food Bank – Thank You'. I hear about numerous lunch groups, 'knit and natter' sessions and after school clubs, and once I saw a poster that read 'Down in the mouth? Join our Loneliness Group for a faith lift'. I still wonder whether the group is thriving.

Across the Diocese of Worcester, social action and community outreach is flourishing. The results are just in from a survey conducted at the end of 2017 which asked about how our churches are involved with activities such as food banks, night shelters, community cafes, debt advice, breakfast clubs and youth groups. 220 of our churches responded and between us we are involved in approximately 500 projects that directly support other people.

These 220 churches ran 168 projects, hosted another 64 projects and 79 projects were carried out in partnership with other organisations. We supported, in other ways, a further 202 projects. That is an incredible amount of good will and lots of commitment to loving our neighbour.

The Halesowen Welcome Group, working with refugees and people seeking asylum, are so grateful for the support that they receive from our churches. In Worcester, the food bank believes that no one should have to face going hungry and has provided thousands of food packages over the last year. In Evesham, the street pastors are out, even in the early hours of a cold February night, supporting people who are upset or vulnerable. There are countless other projects and groups quietly going on that bring life in abundance to people.

Why do we do it? First, because there is great need. We see people in our communities who are in need of support and want to respond with care and compassion. However much we would like it to, the state can't afford to provide everything and, whilst we rightly challenge political decisions, we can respond as a community as well. We know that every act of kindness is a lived out way of taking seriously Jesus' words to love God and our neighbour.

When we reach out to another, even by the act of leaving some tins for the food bank, we are seeing the face of Christ in the poor and seeking to be where he is to be found.

As a result we can bring that all important ingredient of 'joy' into peoples' lives, helping them to connect with others, and be less lonely and isolated. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, this gift of 'joy' moves beyond welfare so as to help people fare well. In such a way, we witness something of the kingdom of God in our midst.

Thank you if you are part of the 86% of our churches already involved. You might want to consider how your commitment might deepen in understanding, prayer and action, and your worship and life as a community enhanced even more, as you make these connections with the incarnate Jesus.

Bishop Graham

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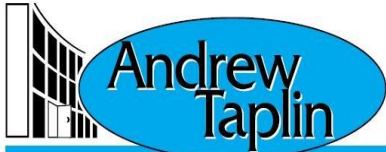
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