

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

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Parish Church
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APRIL 2019**



50p

CURATE:

The Revd Alex French
58 Arlington Court
Old Swinford
Stourbridge, DY8 1NN
Tel 01384 622400
E-mail:
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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
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

17.02.19	Sophie Rose Bishop Betsy May Bishop
03.03.19	Harry John Jones

Funerals

01.03.19	Olivia Perks	Aged 21
04.03.19	Doris Simkins	Aged 93
05.03.19	Jack Edmonds	Aged 96
11.03.19	Mary Ryder	Aged 91
14.03.19	Mabel Arnold	Aged 102
15.03.19	Ron Moulton	Aged 84

Parish Office closed for the week Monday 22nd to Friday 26th

DIARY - APRIL 2019

Monday 1	2.00 pm Lent Course 4 in the Narthex
Tuesday 2	10.00 am Open the Book visit to Oldswinford Primary 7.30 pm Lent Course 4 in the Narthex
Wednesday 3	1.30 pm St Mary's Toddlers in the Church Hall 3.00 pm Holy Communion at Oriel House
Thursday 4	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 6	10.00 am –12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 7	FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT
Monday 8	Parish Quiet Day at Holland House 7.30 pm Messy Church meeting
Tuesday 9	2.15 pm Mothers' Union in the Coach House
Wednesday 10	1.30 pm St Mary's Toddlers in the Church Hall
Thursday 11	10.30 am Holy Communion
Saturday 13	10.00 am –12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 14	PALM SUNDAY - with Passion narrative
Monday 15	11.00 am Chrism Eucharist at Worcester Cathedral 6.30 pm Meditation and Compline
Tuesday 16	2.30 pm Tuesday Tea in the Coach House 6.30 pm Meditation and Compline
Wednesday 17	6.30 pm Meditation and Compline
Thursday 18	MAUNDY THURSDAY - 10.30 am Holy Communion 7.00 pm Agape Meal and service in Church
Friday 19	GOOD FRIDAY 11.00 am Messy Church
Saturday 20	8.30 am Decorate church for Easter 10.00 am –12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church 12.00 noon Wedding
SUNDAY 21	EASTER DAY 3.00 pm Baptisms
Tuesday 23	St George's Day
Wednesday 24	11.30 am Holy Communion at Holly Lodge
Thursday 25	10.30 am Holy Communion
Friday 26	12.00 noon Wedding
Saturday 27	9.30 am Walking Group to Stanford Bridge 10.00 am –12.00 noon Vestry Hour and Open Church
SUNDAY 28	SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER 11.15 am Annual Parochial Church Meeting in the Church Hall after 10.00 am service
Tuesday 30	Parish Office open today 10.00 am Open the Book visit to Oldswinford Primary 2.30 Tuesday Tea in the Narthex

FROM THE RECTORY

Dear Friends,



You may well have noticed from the Parish Register in these magazines just how busy we have been since the turn of the year with funerals.

To be involved in funeral ministry is a wonderful blessing. There is something profoundly moving about journeying alongside loved ones as they give shape to a service which poignantly marks the life of those who they love. It is also a deep privilege to hear and explore the life story of the deceased. Every life is precious and every life story always seems to open my eyes to the wonder and amazement of God's handiwork. This wonder and amazement doesn't come so much from the experiences that a person has had during their life, rather it comes from the richness of the tapestry that God has and continues to weave through the people who God created.

Make it your mission this Easter to ask someone to talk to you about their life story and you will be amazed I am sure with its intricacy, richness and colour. Explore and you will find that we live and work alongside others who have wonderful gifts of wisdom and insight to bestow upon us, if only we would find the time to hear and listen to their stories. In the hustle and bustle of our lives it is difficult to find the space and time to find out about others but if we did so we would discover magnificent riches. Stories of adversity conquered, tales of love offered into the world, yarns of hard earned insight. Move your horizons from inward, protectionist gazes to outward, embracing contemplation and you will find life richer in so many different ways.

At Easter we remember and celebrate the most remarkable life story. The story of God's own Son who came and lived his life so that we may have life and have it to the full. This is a life story like no other, a life that witnessed through word and deed to what it means to pattern our lives how God had always intended them to be designed. Of course this wasn't the end of the story, because His life brought the possibility of life as we could never experience it for ourselves. The fullness and richness of life in the here and now coupled to the offer of life in the world to come. Just let that sink in for a minute, the story of Jesus' life gives witness to the fact that our lives can become reconstructed, re-patterned, rebuilt in ways that we could never bring about for ourselves.

All funeral services are poignant, moving moments of time, but all are held in the hope that we are marking a transition rather than an ultimate end. All of our life stories can offer hope and inspiration to others but there is only one that can radically and fundamentally change our existence. As you celebrate this Easter the redeeming work of our Lord and Saviour remember that we all have amazing life stories to offer each other, but there is only one that can truly rebuild the freedom and glory in our lives that God always intended.

THANK YOU ANNE

It is hard to appreciate that it is nearly two years since we were anticipating the arrival in Stourbridge of Anne Bachelor in the role of Mission Enabler within the Calling Young Disciples project. Now we find ourselves saying 'Thank you' to Anne as her main period of attachment at St Mary's comes to an end.

Anne began her work in Stourbridge at St Thomas' where she assisted with the evolution of a group that attracts mothers and children to church on weekday mornings, often following an activity session at the local swimming pool. Gradually, Anne's influence spread to establishing a link with St Mary's that was focussed on her encouragement of us to reflect on what we are doing in our current programme of activities involving children. In turn we have considered how this might be developed in the future. Throughout, Anne has posed the challenge for us all of considering how we make provision to focus on introducing children to the Christian faith alongside the social opportunities we make for them.

Central to Anne's work has been the leadership of and encouragement of the Calling Young Disciples Learning Hub – a learning community where members of churches on a similar journey come together to share their ideas and help focus their planning. A small team from St Mary's has committed to this, meeting regularly for a Friday evening and Saturday work session,. We look forward to the support that team may be able to provide as we continue to meet the challenge of seeking ways of expanding our congregation with young families.

Anne has assisted, since last October, with our determination to maintain our Messy Church activities, helping to lead two such events in collaboration with a team from St Thomas'. We are grateful to Anne for her commitment to this Diocese-wide project and for the guidance she has been able to provide. We will welcome Anne's on-going support, although on a less regular basis in the future, and wish her well as she develops this work further in her new location of Offchurch, Redditch.



MISSION ENABLERS

MARILYN THOMSON

It was with much sadness that we shared the news of the death of Marilyn Thomson on Tuesday 5 March. Marilyn has been a wonderfully loyal, long serving contributor to and worshipper at St Mary's. Her down to earth cockney outlook, lively and mischievous sense of humour and genuine concern for others helped to establish her as a much loved friend, someone who brought much cheer to those who benefited from her company. It was hard to resist the cheerful smile and often witty remark that accompanied her genuine welcome which she shared when undertaking her sides duty.

For over 20 years Marilyn was a key member of the Music Group that helped to lead the musical elements of our Worship Together services. Although she never sang with the choir Marilyn was a strong supporter of the music in church generally and encouraged the involvement of her children, Peter and Frances. Peter needs no introduction as he remains a very loyal and valued member of the choir, one of our deputy organists and a highly respected member of our church community. Marilyn was a very positive critic of Peter's skills as an organist. She was immensely and justly proud of his achievements and encouraged him in this pursuit. Daughter Frances joined St Mary's choir at a young age, and after doing her training with the trebles joined the altos before she went off to university to study. She now has her own family, Marilyn's much loved grandchildren, and lives in Wales.

Despite having to face serious health challenges of her own, Marilyn provided devoted care for her husband Alan throughout a long illness. Her faith has been an important and constant element of her life and has provided her with the strength and reason to face the adversity she has met and triumphed over.

In more recent years Marilyn has particularly enjoyed the company and support given by Victor Ellams as, through his friendship with Peter together they have provided for Marilyn the means to maintain a degree of independence and enabled her to pursue her life with real purpose.

With Peter and Frances and all who knew Marilyn and cared for her, we share our condolences as we reflect on a life well lived, grateful for the goodness she shared with us.

RON MOULT

As this issue goes to press we have become aware of the death of Ron Moul, a long-serving and loyal member of this church congregation.

We acknowledge with thanks all that Ron shared with us during his life and extend our condolences to his wife Margaret, Simon his son and all his family and friends.

ST GEORGE'S DAY

*Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'*

St George is believed to have been a Christian Roman soldier born around 270 AD in Cappadocia in Turkey, and martyred at Lydda in the Roman province of Palestine in 303 AD. He is the patron saint of England.

Very little is known about his life except that he was probably born to Greek Christian parents, his father dying for his faith when George was fourteen. After his mother's death a few years later, George became a soldier in the Roman army, under the command of Diocletian. It was he who ordered the execution of George for refusing to take part in a persecution of Christians. The date of his martyrdom is recorded as 23rd April 303 AD.

St George has long been associated with the legend of the slaying of the dragon. This legend is an eastern tradition which reached western Europe and England around the eleventh or twelfth century. Legend has it that a place called Silene in Libya was plagued by a dangerous dragon that dwelt in a nearby pond. To placate the beast the townspeople offered it sacrifices of children chosen by lottery. On one occasion the lot fell to the king's daughter. The child was dressed as a bride and sent to the dragon. Luckily, St George happened to be passing, and was able to save the girl by running the dragon through with his lance.

St George's adoption as patron saint of England was a slow process, and was not really completed until 1552. Edward the Confessor had been regarded as being England's primary saint in earlier times. However, it is believed the Crusaders may have regarded George as being their patron, and may have entered into battle, fighting under his colours.

Tradition has it that it was Richard the Lionheart himself who adopted the red cross on a white background as being the colours of St George. Certainly by the reign of Edward I (1272 – 1307) this had become the case. Royal accounts from 1277 show the purchase of a large amount of cloth to manufacture pennants "of the arms of Saint George" to be worn by foot soldiers.

By the reign of Edward III (1327 – 1377) St George had begun to eclipse Edward the Confessor as England's patron saint as a consequence of his supposed intervention on Edward's behalf at the Battle of Crecy. After the Battle of Agincourt (1415) when Henry V succeeded against overwhelming odds, St George's position as patron saint of England was pretty much cemented. But it was not until the revised prayer book of 1552 that his primacy as patron saint was confirmed.

Saint George's Day was a major feast and national holiday on a par with Christmas from the early fifteenth century. However, the tradition of celebrating the day had waned by the late eighteenth century after the union of England and Scotland. In more recent times there have been calls to turn the day into a public holiday, and efforts have been made to re-introduce specific St George's Day celebrations.



Stephen Howard

VACANCY NEWS

Since the announcement, just before Christmas, that John Flitcroft is to be the new Rector at St Mary's there has been a slight lull in the process and other ongoing parish matters have been the focus of attention. It has been obvious from the activity at the rectory that the Parsonages Board has taken the opportunity of an empty building to address various issues of maintenance and refurbishment. Soon we will need to ensure the gardens are tended as Spring really takes hold and, when the builders and decorators have left, we will seek a team of willing volunteers to ensure the rectory is clean and tidy, ready for John and Mary's arrival.

Already we have begun the process of preparing for John's Service of Institution at 4.00 pm on Sunday, 19 May. (There will be no 6.30 pm service that day.) These are joyous events when the wider community are invited to share with St Mary's in welcoming the new Rector as we affirm our support for him in his ministry. It will be a special occasion when we will offer our hospitality to John and Mary's family and friends from other churches and walks of life at this celebratory service and at a reception afterwards. Everyone will be very welcome.

The PCC will have met on 19 March, undertaking preparations for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting amongst many other matters. This will take place immediately after the 10.00 am service on 28 April, which will be held in the church hall. The annual report will be presented instead of a sermon in that service. Do try to attend.

Many other matters have been addressed as the PCC aims to realise the targets of the Vision for St Mary's. In a complicated process, real progress is being made with plans for the renovation of the North Porch. Several people have offered their services as we widen our team of volunteers in many aspects of church activity and we have welcomed a substantial expansion of our choir with eight new choristers. The selection process to find a new Director of Music has also been followed and an announcement is anticipated soon.

We have welcomed several visiting ministers who have supported us during the vacancy. We thank them for their assistance and ministry and acknowledge the contributions of everyone who has ensured that this potentially challenging time has been met with cooperation, consideration and mutual care.

The Churchwardens

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

At our March meeting our branch joined in with the 'Worldwide Wave of Prayer 2019' linking us with millions in our union who focus on Christian care for families. We have a direct link diocese in West Ankole in Uganda. Our speaker, Kate Oakley, told us about 'Planting for Hope' in Uganda.

Several years ago, Stourbridge was visited by Hope of Africa Children's Choir when Kate was a teacher. She was made aware of the desperate need for help for villagers and bush people in Uganda, and began to raise funds for them, in particular for a farm school. The initial aim was to provide one egg and one mug of milk per pupil per week! They started by buying 3 acres of farmland and 27 acres of bush, 200 hens (now 500), 200 pigs and 12 exotic Ankole cows.

This venture flourished and Kate was invited by a young man called Apollo to visit the group of people working in Uganda. She travelled into the bush as a passenger on a motorbike. In the bush she encountered many families that had been ravaged by AIDS. This killed most of the men, many mothers and some children, leaving many orphans.

Many of those left lived in mud huts and were clothed in rags. The emphasis was to provide clothing and food and to get basic farming established around the village of Kitiki. The people there are devout and faithful Christians but are burdened down trying to provide basic care.

Local Midlands Rotary groups heard Kate's talks and raised money to buy land. The people on the land were taught crafts, especially making paper beads and furniture. They were also given sewing machines to make clothes, especially school uniforms.

A school was a priority and a nursery for three year olds was built. The local pastor, Vincent, found a suitable building available for £5,500 and with the help of sponsors this was acquired. Friends of Kate raised £2000 for her 70th birthday, this was used for roofs, doors, a staffroom and an office for the headmaster. Later, dormitories for orphans and destitute children were built, and are now providing for 600 children. In addition to this a play area was developed.

Qualified staff are being trained and it is hoped to obtain places in secondary education for many children due to the excellent results of up to grade 7 in national exams. The direct link with these people means that Kate knows exactly where and how the funds are being used and she continues with her support of those living in Uganda.

Next meeting: Tuesday 9th April at 2.15 pm in the Coach House. "Lent Meditation, Leader Roger King. All are welcome.

Dawn Nex

Exploring Evangelism Gathering

Last month I attended a consultation meeting of churches from across the Diocese chaired by Bishop Robert Paterson, supported by Revd David Sherwin. The aim of the meeting was to hear about our insights and experiences of evangelism. We discussed the hesitations, doubts, criticisms and enthusiasms that we have about evangelism. Then we looked at where the pinch-points are in making disciples – where it isn't happening, regardless of how much effort is put in, and where it is working.

All of this is in preparation for **Advance 2020** (advance2020.org) which is a spirit-filled year of mission which aims to take the gospel to the UK on an unprecedented scale during 2020. The vision is to motivate the million regular worshippers to pray, articulate and live out their faith 24/7 through six priorities.

Every person is:

1. Equipped to be a witness in every part of their life.
2. Released, as part of the whole people of God, to live out the Good News of Jesus Christ confidently in all of life.

Every church

3. Prioritises children and young people in and for evangelism and discipleship.
4. Is a welcoming community open to all people and using life-events fully.
5. Has considered developing a new worshipping community.

Every leader

6. Is trained and equipped to be envisioned and competent to lead in evangelism and release disciples.

If you would like to provide your views or find out more about evangelism in the Diocese then the contact details for Bishop Robert and Revd David Sherwin are:

mar.erskine@me.com and davidwin56@aol.com

Or there is information on the Church of England web-site (<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/evangelism-and-discipleship>).

Roger King (LLM)

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The Revd John Flitcroft will be instituted by Bishop John as the next Rector of St Mary's, Old Swinford, at a service in church at 4.00 pm on Sunday 19 May. This will be followed by a welcome reception in the church hall. There will be no 6.30 pm service on that day.

Representatives from the benefice, deanery, other ecumenical groups and local civic institutions will be invited but the service is open to all. Please make a note in your diary so we may provide a very warm welcome to John and his family on this special occasion.

LETTER FROM THE ARCHDEACON OF WORCESTER

It seems to me that certain key truths in our lives are beyond words. Not for nothing has the Church brought poets, hymn writers, painters, artists and musicians into its life to express what words are not adequate to say. The same happens with those we love. We use signs and symbols to say what we mean - sometimes we say it with flowers. Our presents are not judged by their monetary value, indeed the smallest gift can be the most affecting: it is the love they express which counts.



I think Jesus knew this instinctively. It is worth noting that He wasn't given to delivering great lectures, but did tell an amazing amount of parables. He asked many, many questions, and actually didn't give a lot of answers. He had a way of inviting his listeners into the response required, and showed His power by acts of love. He was a sure hand in what we might call 'walking the walk', rather than 'talking the talk'. This marked him out from among the other religious teachers: it gave Him an authority 'not of the scribes and Pharisees.'

The mystery of Good Friday and Easter is one such key truth. We tell the story from the gospel accounts, and can point to the after-effects in the lives of the apostles. We journey with Jesus as He walks the walk to the Cross through the services of Holy Week, and with flowers and Alleluias our churches burst into the new life He gives on Easter Day. In doing so we glimpse the glory of the God for whom death does not have the last word, not ever. Jesus does not just tell us this: He lives it, you could say He dies it, and is raised from the dead by the God for whom the first and last word is always Love.

We are called to live the risen life of Jesus too. Christ is risen, we are risen – that is from one of our Easter hymns. George Herbert, poet, pastor and priest, expresses it so beautifully, where else but in a poem:

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With him mayst rise.
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more just.

Archdeacon Robert Jones

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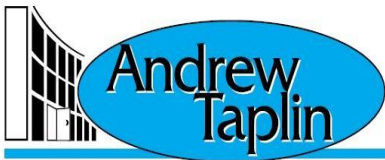
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