ST MARY'S
OLD SWINFORD
Parish Church
MONTHLY NEWS
JANUARY 2020
ONLINE EDITION

ST MARY'S OLD SWINFORD Parish Church MONTHLY NEWS JANUARY 2020

50p

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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

St Mary's Walking Group: Last Saturday of the month.

Thursday: 7.30 pm - Bell Ringing Practice

Friday: Choir Practice and Youth Groups (in term time)

Saturday: 10.00 am - 12.00 noon - Open Church – refreshments available

Clergy Day Off Friday

OTHER REGULAR EVENTS

Tel:

Depart 9.30 am

Prayer Group Third Wednesday in month 10 -11 am 393454

Mothers' Union: Second Tuesday at 2.15 pm 392951

2

CONTACTS

Reader:	Mr Roger King	379800
Church Wardens:	Mrs Judy Hall	377349
	Mr Antony Tatford	822661
Director of Music:	Mr James Bradley	07973 934177
PCC Secretary:	Miss Katey Fletcher	378182
Monthly News Editor:	Vacant –Please contact the Parish Office	

Safeguarding Officer: Mrs Liz Fourness 394359

Church Hall and

Coach House: - Bookings: Parish Office 441003

Parish Administrator and

Mr John Sutton **Publicity Officer:** 441003 Parish Office: Open 9.00 am -1.00 pm Tuesday to Thursday. 441003

9.00 am to 12.00 noon Friday Closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday

www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk Church website address:

E-mail: st.mary.os@btconnect.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stmarvschurcholdswinford

stmary.parishmagazine@hotmail.co.uk Magazine e-mail address:

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

29 November 2019

Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Michael Woodall

Please be aware that during the days after Christmas and in the early New Year the clergy will be taking some well earned time off and may not be immediately available. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience. Enquiries may be responded to initially via the Parish Office or another member of the team.

DIARY FOR JANUARY 2020

Thursday 2	10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel
Saturday 4	10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 5	SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS
Thursday 9	10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel
Saturday 11	10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 12	FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
Tuesday 14	2.15 pm Mothers' Union meet in the Coach House
Thursday 16	10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel
Saturday 18	10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 19	SECOND SIUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
	6.30 pm Joint 'Churches Together in Stourbridge' service
	at Chawn Hill Church – no service at St Mary's
Thursday 23	10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel
Saturday 25	10.00 am - 12.00 noon Open Church and Vestry Hour
SUNDAY 26	THIRD SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
Thursday 30	10.30 am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel

2019 CHRISTMAS MARKET

We are obviously getting something right because this year we again had a very successful event in which we raised very nearly £1,900. Possibly even more important though, it was an event to which many people from the area and local organizations had made a conscious decision to come and support, not from a sense of duty to the locality but because they knew from past experience that these are happy occasions. I noticed they were smiling as they came into the hall, full of good will while with us and filled with good cheer as they left. You cannot wish for more success than that.

For this result please join with me in thanking those who made and gathered items for sale or as prizes, those who made the preparations, setting up the hall and clearing afterwards, those who manned the stalls and provided the refreshments and, especially, those lovely customers who came and made all our efforts worthwhile. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Katey Fletcher

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

Have you made any New Year resolutions?

I think that I'm the sort of person who makes resolutions all the time, (usually wholly unrealistic ones!), and then feels guilty for having failed to keep to them. But I still believe that New Year's resolutions reveal a healthy and hopeful outlook. They can represent the feeling we all have that we can change, that we can become better versions of ourselves - more healthy or more connected or more sensitive to others' needs.

I think we make resolutions because we have an awareness both of our own limitedness and of the potential, the limitless abundance of possibilities for change available to us.

Christianity is about change.

'Change' is the first recorded message of Jesus' preaching when he says 'Repent', in other words 'turn around' or 'change your mind'.

But, although we desire change, we also have an aversion to it because we sense the risk it inevitably involves; change may well mean letting go of what we have so carefully built up - for example our identity, our wealth, our security. Change is uncomfortable and the thing we crave, perhaps above all things, is comfort.

If we are able truly to listen to God's word for us, who knows where we'll be taken in this New Year or the next? Which is why New Year's resolutions are good things. Because they are brave, even holy, recognitions of our need for change. They are often small, but always *hopeful* steps on the way to renewal.

Resolutions declare that we are on a journey. Like the star leading the magi, our resolutions are trajectories, they show the way our hearts are inclined and, though following them may make us travel a hard road, they can lead us to Jesus.

If New Year's resolutions are a promise we make to ourselves, the promise made between an ever-faithful God and God's (sometimes) obedient people is called the Covenant.

The Covenant brings together that faithful promise of God with the faithful obedience of God's people. But we build our discipleship in imitation of Jesus who, in the words of the collect for the Feast of the Naming and Circumcision, 'was circumcised in *obedience to the law'*. So we are bold to say that the covenant is also the bringing together of *our* faithful promise

with the faithful obedience of God. God is unwaveringly obedient to the promises of love and compassion we see in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. May we, in turn, remain faithful to our promises. St Mary's final service of 2019, (at the time of writing this early in December), was a covenanting service at 6.30 pm on December 29th in which we are invited to use these beautiful words of the Methodist covenant prayer:

Lord God, holy Father, since you have called us through Christ to share in this gracious covenant, we take upon ourselves with joy the voke of obedience and, for love of you, engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will. We are no longer our own but yours. I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing: I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, vou are mine and I am yours. So be it And the covenant now made on earth. let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

God Bless You. **John**

ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY ARE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS IN YOUR AREA!



Would you like to help a person living with dementia continue to do the things they really enjoy, but may need support with due to how their dementia is affecting them? If yes, then Alzheimer's Society would really like to hear from you!

Our side by side service is operating in your area: if you would like to help someone continue to do the things they really enjoy, and help combat the loneliness and social isolation people living with dementia can experience, then please do get in touch. You could really make a difference to someone by helping them stay in touch with their local community.

All our volunteers are given extensive training, and you will be supported by an experienced role manager.

If you would like to know more, please contact Ade Couper, our side by side coordinator on 07885 228891 or by email ade.couper@alzheimers.org.uk

RELL RINGERS' CORNER

BELL RINGERS' CORNER STILL RINGING AT NINETY

On 24th November 2019, veteran bell ringer Bob Hill celebrated his 90th birthday. Happily, this day fell on a Sunday and so we were able to mark the occasion, there and then, when we rang for morning service.

With Bob ringing on the tenor, we first rang a course of Plain BOB Doubles in honour of his day. Further cheerful ringing then ensued, interrupted only by us making free with the box of Thornton's chocolates that he had brought with him. When ringing was completed we sang a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday". This was sung with such gusto that it is only surprising that the roof of the Ringing Room did not lift off!

To be turning out still on a Sunday morning to ring the church bells at the age of ninety is surely a remarkable achievement. We salute Bob as he enters his tenth decade.

A NEW YEAR THANK YOU

We try our best to ensure the efforts and contributions of everyone who gives to and shares in the life of St Mary's is celebrated, appreciated and acknowledged. This may happen at various appropriate occasions throughout the year but, as one year ends and another begins, this time provides a special opportunity to say a very special thank you to each and everyone.

To Revd John, Revd Alex and Roger, all those who contribute to our services of worship and thanksgiving, our Servers, those who read, the Eucharistic Assistants, the wardens and sides team, the coffee makers, Frank for his technical skills and those who provide for our children's groups, thank you. Thank you also to all those who contribute so much, often behind the scenes: Glenys Bradley our cleaner, John Sutton, our Parish Administrator, those who polish brass, clean wood, wash linen, contribute to the many teams that provide floral decorations, produce the magazine, serve on the Pastoral Team, work in the churchyard, look after the church building and the church hall and, of course, to all our music makers, organists and choir members.

We celebrate the strength of community and fellowship that helps provide an identity and sense of belonging to all who look towards St Mary's as a centre for rewarding elements of their lives. We recognise all those who join the various groups meeting in the Church Hall, the Youth Club, the Scouts, Cubs and Beavers and Brownies who share some of our special services and find opportunities for service and activity in our grounds. We also celebrate and acknowledge with thanks the contributions made and opportunities provided for many by the groups who meet in the Coach House and those who administer this very important local resource.

We should also remember those who step in to help, as during a period of vacancy or clergy absence and those who attend other churches but with whom we enjoy fellowship and shared tasks. To everyone, including anyone we have omitted to mention, thank you, and may you share a peaceful New Year.

The opportunities available at St Mary's to be part of and contribute to a meaningful activity that will benefit you and others are almost countless. If you are looking for something to fill a few hours of your week, do feel free to ask and to take part. You will be very welcome.

WONDERFUL SEASONAL WELCOMES

Although the Advent and Christmas seasons are very busy times in church it is very rewarding to welcome so many people who may not visit St Mary's very often. To share this welcome is a real honour and delight.

The past few weeks have seen a variety of seasonal events. On Sunday, 8th December we held our annual Toy Service when we invite donations of new toys and toiletries which we give to the Dudley Women's Refuge. The ultimate recipients of these gifts are always extremely grateful, just as those who administer the provision appreciate your kindness. This year, perhaps even more than in recent years, your gifts displayed enormous generosity and consideration for those who are not as fortunate as us. Thank you.

Many local schools have visited St Mary's for their Christmas Concerts and Carol Services. We have been delighted to welcome Redhill School, St Mary's Pre-School, King Edward College, Old Swinford Hospital, St Mary's Toddlers and Old Swinford Primary School. The young people who took part in these events displayed wonderful talent in their singing, music-making, reading and acting and brought much joy to all who formed the congregations to listen to and enjoy the occasions. Our thanks are shared with the many teachers and others who helped to prepare and encourage these young people and to assist them in the excellence of their performances.

At the time of writing, the Christmas Tree festival is anticipated with great excitement and expectation as the work of many people and of much time and talent is realized. There is every reason for this to be another wonderful event which we trust will be well attended and much enjoyed. Thank you to Sally Frost for her enthusiastic leadership of this event.

Christingle, that very special service that traditionally features children, and focusses on children, with the needs of vulnerable children at its heart, is equally anticipated. Thank you to Wendy Tranter for her tremendous commitment to this occasion over 51 years. The early message seems to be that 2019 will bring us a specially memorable Christingle.

On Christmas Eve, the Crib Service at 4.00 pm promises, as always, to provide the celebratory opportunity for children and their families to be actively involved in the telling of the Christmas story. As the story unfolds and the crib becomes filled with the characters that witnessed this blessed

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP NOVEMBER WALK

As the injury list grew longer, and with the squad already depleted, results were expected to suffer - but not a bit of it! Last month's damaged foot had recovered sufficiently to allow its owner to lead this walk, so replacing the scheduled leader who had an injured leg. All patched up and ready to go, the eight members of this walk drove to the Woodgate Valley Country Park for a five and a half mile walk into Birmingham along the Bourne Brook Trail and Worcester Canal. The initial drizzle soon disappeared but luckily it had put off the normal free range cyclists without bells, who regularly plague that route. The mid walk break was dealt a severe blow as the petrol station shop on Harborne Lane was shut for refurbishment. Not to worry, as all portable reserve supplies were shared out evenly and the walk soon continued to the University Railway Station. From here the group walked along the canal where our life expectancies were at the mercy of a more considerate group of cyclists. Leaving the canal at the Vale we all walked along Church Road and Calthorpe Road to the bus stop where we only had a few minutes to wait for the No. 23 which took us back to Woodgate Valley Country Park.



Footbridge across the Bourne Brook, Woodgate Valley.

Lunch was taken at the The Crabmill, where the eight walkers were joined by four others. We all arrived after only a short period of notice, so the staff at The Crabmill are to be congratulated in providing us with an excellent meal very promptly and at a very reasonable price. All in all, a very enjoyable and healthy day was had by everyone.

Anthony Wakeley Walk Leader

THE FOOD BANK

Thank you for your generous support of the Food Bank throughout the past year and especially in these recent weeks as provision has been made for those for whom this time of year may be a lonely and hungry struggle. Your practical help and kindness is much appreciated and encouraged for the future as together we work to share with those in need.

ALL SAINTS TO ADVENT PRAYER GROUPS

At the Final Judgement Jesus will say to the just 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.' To the others he will say 'Now you lot, split into discussion groups!'

Discussion groups are very popular in the Church of England but they can sometimes seem like a form of torture. So I probably didn't look as enthusiastic as I should have done, when Mary Flitcroft suggested that we use the period between All Saints and Advent to have groups reflect on the appointed Bible readings for Advent.

But it was clear from our first meeting that this was not going to be the sort of discussion group that argues and theorises over a biblical text. Instead, Mary began to teach us how to use silence, stillness and sharing in order to really listen to the Holy Spirit at work in the passages we read.

In the first part of the meeting music and relaxation exercises helped us to become still and focus our attention on the goodness of God. We then used a method of prayer known as 'Lectio Divina' ('Sacred Reading') to read, reflect and respond to a Bible reading for Advent.

This is a tried and tested method of praying with the Bible. It was first developed by the earliest communities of monks who lived in the deserts of North Africa during the 4th century AD. It was then taken up by St Benedict and is still used in the monastic communities that follow his Rule.

The aim is to listen to the words of Scripture with your whole body not just your intellect. To listen in such a way that you can almost taste the words, to feel the weight of them, to better understand the full depths of their meaning. In this way, to become aware of a word or phrase in the passage that demands your attention.

The next step is to reflect on that word or phrase. Roll it around in your mind, look at it from this way and that, and let the meaning sink from your head to your heart. The final step is to respond to the thoughts and feelings that the word or phrase has produced.

For our prayer group the response was an invitation for each of us to share, in confidence, the thoughts and feelings we had experienced. The group listened to whoever spoke, without interrupting, giving advice or making judgements. In this way the speaker could begin to explore the tangle of their own mind and heart, and the listeners learnt that the same Scripture text can have a different message for each of us.

Our All Saints to Advent prayer groups helped us to see that our Bible readings are not simply accounts of God's past actions. The God who guided

Israel, and who revealed himself in the life of Jesus Christ, is the same God who guides us in our everyday lives and actions. God is always with us but in moments of silence, stillness and surrender God can speak to our hearts.

Roger King

THE PARISH GIVING SCHEME - ONE YEAR ON

January is a difficult time of year for many people, who suffer from financial hardship following the Christmas season. We pray that people are met in their need, and for the resolution of hope in the New Year.

It's also a time when parishes might be looking at their finances. Over the last year, we have received an encouraging response from churches and donors who have registered for the Parish Giving Scheme. This scheme can be easily used by anyone with access to the internet and will encourage generosity, efficiency and regularity in giving. It is very simple, working on a direct-debit system, which helps donors to know their money is being used well and enables PCCs to budget confidently.

Bishop John said: "I wholeheartedly commend the Parish Giving Scheme to every parish and to every individual." A Quick Response (QR) code is now also available, enabling people to give immediately using their smartphones.

For more information, please visit the Parish Buying website (https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/), or contact our Stewardship Officer, Alison Maddocks, on AMaddocks@cofe-worcester.org.uk

OPTING OUT

There are 100 members in our church. But 30 are frail and elderly. That leaves 70 to do all the work. But 18 are young people at college. That leaves 52 to do all the work. But 14 are tired business men. So that leaves 38 to do all the work. But 16 are busy housewives with jobs and children, so that leaves 22 to do all the work. But a further 10 have most important outside interests, so that leave 12 to do all the work. But 5 live too far away to come regularly, so that leaves 7 to do all the work. And five say they have already done their bit for the church. That leaves you and me! And I'm exhausted. So good luck to you.

With thanks to the Much Wenlock Church Magazine...and especially to the many who play their part at St Mary's.

HAVE YOUR SAY

OPEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR CHURCH



In a letter from Bishop John, the need to discern the way forward and answer the question of how we can best shape and pay for ministry across the Diocese for the growth of God's kingdom has been posed. This is a real invitation and opportunity for everyone to contribute as a series of conversations have been provided for at meetings throughout the Diocese.

Two meetings have already taken place but the schedule of further meetings in early 2020 are as shown below.

Please do consider attending one of these meetings to hear what is being proposed and to share your views. This really is a very important issue and a rare opportunity for us all to contribute to the discussion and debate of how difficult challenges may be met for the future. Transport may be available for those who wish to attend but who do not have their own means of travelling. Please ask.

Tuesday 14 January, 7 – 9.15 pm, St James' Church, Welland. WR13 6LP

Monday 20 January, 2.00 – 4.30pm St John the Evangelist, Kates Hill, Dudley. DY2 7JT

Monday 20 January, 7.00 – 9.15pm St John the Evangelist, Kates Hill, Dudley, DY2 7JT

Thursday 30 January, 2 – 4.30pm, The Old Palace, Worcester, WR1 2JE

Tuesday 4 February, 2 – 4.30pm, Catshill Social Club, Meadow Road Bromsgrove. B61 0JJ

Tuesday 4 February, 7 – 9.15pm, Trinity Methodist Church, Kidderminster, DY10 2JL

These meetings are not area specific and the content will be the same at each one – come to whichever is most convenient, but please do come! For more details go to.......

https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news/2019/11/09/open-conversations-a

THE ADVENT CAROL SERVICE

The Advent Carol Service on Sunday 1st December was warmly received and enjoyed by all present. The thanks of all who attended this service are shared with those who contributed with prayers, readings, music and song to make this a very special and memorable act of worship.

Advent is a season of anticipation of the celebration of Christ's birth, a time of preparation and expectation. The Advent Carol Service provided a much appreciated opportunity for us to reflect on our personal preparation.

This service, at the start of the New Church Year, heralds, in symbolism, the coming of light into the world in the form of God's son, Jesus Christ. As such the service began in darkness with the choir singing, as if in the distance, from the balcony. Then, the choir processed into the church carrying lighted candles, gradually illuming the church, sharing the light progressively with the congregation. As everyone's candle was lit, the focus of the service became the Advent themes of light in darkness, hope in despair, and a new relationship with God in Christ.

The first candle of the Advent wreath was lit, a purple candle representing the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Through the four weeks of Advent, each of the other candles will also be lit, in turn, culminating with the lighting of the white, central candle at Christmas.

OLD BOY, NEW YEAR

Many will remember Thomas Allery, an 'Old Boy' of St Mary's Choir. Last month, I had great pleasure in attending a glorious Advent Carol Service at Worcester College, Oxford, directed by Thomas. Thomas has spent five years as Director of Music at Worcester College, Oxford and has now been appointed Assistant Director of Music at the Temple Church, London. He enjoys a varied career as an organist, choral conductor and harpsichordist as well as being Director of Music at St Mary-le-Bow, London.

Thomas joined St Mary's as a chorister in 1997 at the age of 8, when Richard Hall was then organist and choirmaster, and became Thomas' first organ teacher. Thomas is another example of how early musical education can be nurtured and guided by membership of our choir and also by the exceptional support and encouragement of the whole of the St Mary's community.

AN UNUSUAL KINDNESS.

ROBERT JONES, ARCHDEACON OF WORCESTER.

This month sees the week of prayer for Christian Unity, taking place from 18 to 25 January, an annual initiative in which churches throughout the world are asked to pray for one another as a way of growing closer. Each year takes a different theme on which to hang



these prayers and this year it is from the Acts of the Apostles (28,2): 'they showed an unusual kindness.'

It is the story of Paul's ship, in which he is being held prisoner, being wrecked off the island of Malta. A bedraggled Paul and his companions are washed up on shore, where we hear that the locals show an 'unusual kindness' to him and his companions. To this day the Church of Malta celebrates this event as the arrival of the Christian faith on their island. Through this kindness divided people are drawn together, strangers become friends.

I'm taken by the phrase 'unusual kindness.' It is not that kindness is unusual: there's plenty of it about. But more that this sort of kindness is extraordinary - kindness to strangers, and bedraggled ones at that. How contemporary this story is as we hear about refugees today trying to reach safer countries in unsafe little boats across the Mediterranean, as unpredictable a sea today as it was in Paul's time.

Hospitality is being shown to those who are different. It is relatively easy to love those whom we know and like. It is much harder to love those we either don't know or actually don't like, and I guess I've got a way to go in that area of my discipleship. But Jesus calls us to this unusual kindness. He tells us to love even our enemies, and Holy Scripture makes a big deal out of loving the stranger.

Where do we learn this extraordinary love? By recalling the occasions when it has happened to us and when people have shown us unusual kindness. We know we grow by being loved into life. Christian unity is an aspiration for all churches, becoming one so that the world may believe. In fact, Christian unity is already a reality, not expressed so much in schemes for unity, but rather in myriad acts of unusual kindness shown by those working in the food banks, patrolling our towns as street pastors, or making space in their homes for refugee families.

Showing hospitality, especially to strangers, preaches the gospel more clearly than our documents or strategies. I rather think it is unusual kindness which makes the difference.

Selected verses from Ring Out, Wild Bells from *In Memoriam*

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky, The flying cloud, the frosty light: The year is dying in the night; Ring out, wild bells, and let him die

Ring out a slowly dying cause, And ancient forms of party strife; Ring in the nobler modes of life, With sweeter manners, purer laws. Ring out the want, the care the sin, The faithless coldness of the times; Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring in the valiant man and free, The larger heart, the kindlier hand; Ring out the darkness of the land, Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Alfred Tennyson
With thanks to Janet Peart

HAPPY NEW YEAR

All members of the magazine committee thank you for your support during this past year. We wish you a peaceful and joyful 2020.

We wish to acknowledge with particular appreciation John Sutton who undertakes the printing of the magazine each month and Janet Beevers who oversees the distribution of the magazine. Thank you both.

Contributions of articles for possible inclusion in a future edition and offers of help in order that we might continue to maintain this publication in the future are warmly welcomed. If you have any interest in contributing to the work of this group please speak to one of the team.

Carole Duff, Stephen Howard, Rod Jukes, Janet Peart, Nigel Perry, Brenda Selby, Annette Sibley, Tony Tatford.

We are grateful for the sponsorship of the following businesses

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