

**ST MARY'S OLDSWINFORD
MONTHLY NEWS
OCTOBER 2020
ONLINE EDITION**

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50p



RECTOR

The Revd John Flitcroft

The Rectory

Old Swinford

Stourbridge, DY8 2HA

Tel: 01384 395410

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

Clergy day off Friday

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:	Mrs Annette Sibley	
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:		441003

*John Sutton's hours of work are: Day off – Monday,
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 9.00am - 1.00pm, Friday 9.00am - 12 noon.*

Church website address: www.stmaryschurcholdswinford.org.uk
E-mail: st.mary.os@btconnect.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/stmaryschurcholdswinford

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Please note the copy deadline for the magazine is the 10th of the month.

**ENQUIRIES ABOUT WEDDINGS, BANNS OF MARRIAGE, BAPTISMS by
phone or email to Rev'd John Flitcroft or Mr John Sutton.**

PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms:

6.9.20 Ava-Rae Davies
27.9.20 Henry Cutler

Funerals

19.03.20 Dominic Haskew Aged 58 (Burial only)
07.04.20 Janet Daker Aged 66 (graveside funeral)

Service rota for October 2020

DATE	DAY	CLERGY LEADING	WARDEN	STEWARDS	ZOOM MANAGER	READER	INTERCESSIONS	BELL RINGERS	NOTES
4.10.20	Sunday Trinity 17	Archeaon Nikki Groarke RK Deacon	Judy Hall	Eve and John Evans	John Sutton+ Ben	Joan Ram	Peter Thomson	Ray, Jean & Chris D	Service in church which will be live streamed
8.10.20	Thursday Holy Communion BCP in church and live streamed	Fr Mel Smith		Elaine Buchan & Sue Wakeley	John Sutton	Marjorie Ferguson			Service in church which will be live streamed
11.10.20	10.00am Sunday Trinity 18 In church and streamed	JF RK Preaching	Tony Tatford	Sue Tatford & Barbara Grainger	Les Timms + Ben	Jill Finney	John Sutton	John and Stephen	Service in church which will be live streamed
11.10.20	Baptism 3.00pm Ivie-Leigh White	JF		Di de Souza + Sue Clark					
15.10.20	Thursday Holy Communion BCP in church and live streamed	JF RK Preaching		Elaine Buchan & Chris McCullagh	Colin Roberts	Marjorie Ferguson			Service in church which will be live streamed
18.10.20	10.00am Luke The Evangelist	JF JF Preaching	Malcolm Frost	Sally Frost + Merl Roberts	Colin Roberts+ Ben	Christine Day	Mike Blaxland	Tony and Georgie	Service in church which will be live streamed
22.10.20	Thursday Holy Communion BCP in church and live streamed	JF		Sue Wakeley & Chris McCullagh	Les Timms	Marjorie Ferguson			Service in church which will be live streamed
25.10.20	10.00am Sunday Trinity 20 Bible Sunday (Clocks change)	JF Preaching RK Deacon	Judy Hall	Merl Roberts + Richard Hall	Colin Roberts+ Ben	Merl Roberts	Roger King	Ray, Jean & Chris D	Service in church which will be live streamed
29.10.20	Thursday Holy Communion BCP in church and live streamed	JF		Elaine Buchan & Chris McCullagh	John Sutton	Marjorie Ferguson			Service in church which will be live streamed
1.11.20	10.00am All Saints/All Souls	JF RK Preach	Tony Tatford	Avril and Stan Williams, Sue Tatford	Colin Roberts	Stan Williams	Roger King	John and Stephen	Service in church which will be live streamed

FROM THE RECTORY



Dear Friends,

It is now six months since our last St Mary's Parish Church magazine was published. I have a draft copy of the April 2020 edition which our Editor, Annette, and the team so nearly brought out! Poignantly, there are so many things described in that edition which were subsequently curtailed or cancelled: Frank and Alex's plan to walk the Great Glen Way, fundraising for No Limits; the VE Day Anniversary celebrations and the Worcester Passion Play. There was also a prescient article on the early coronavirus restrictions in church and a letter from Bishop John outlining '4 Golden Rules for Christians' in response to the pandemic. All, of course, before the full lockdown was imposed.

You have to go back a further month to find a 'Letter from the Rectory'! Back in March I wrote about the approaching season of Lent. Taking a lead from our national Church of England leadership, we had decided to focus on the challenge to our environment, including the climate crisis. 'Care for God's Creation' was the title of the 'Live Lent' series of reflections and actions mapped out for us to follow over the 40 days before Easter Day. It seems a very long time ago but, of course, the challenge to our environment remains and once again it has been our focus during the season we celebrated throughout September: 'Creationtide.'

During this month we reflected on different aspects of Christian Mission in relation to the 5th Mark of Mission of our church: 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.' We have thought about what it means to be 'sentinels', 'stewards' and 'sowers' in relationship to creation and we ended the season by celebrating our Harvest Festival.

The Covid - 19 pandemic has dealt a devastating blow to many people across our world. Apart from the stories of personal loss and grief many parts of the economy are experiencing terrible struggles to remain viable and many people are fearful for their future employment. As the government begins to talk of a return to a more rigorous lockdown, it seems clear that the effects of the fight against the virus are going to be felt for many months to come.

The two crises humanity faces, the pandemic and the climate crisis, can be connected. Pope Francis has said that the pandemic should lead us to a renewed focus on the environment:

‘The health crisis that humanity is currently experiencing reminds us of our fragility. We understand to what extent we are linked to one another, part of a world we share, and that mistreating it can only have serious consequences, not only environmental but also social and human.’ (Church Times, 11.09.20)

As we work towards the full restoration of the life of St Mary’s following the pandemic, I pray that we may also work towards fulfilling our Christian calling to work to renew and sustain all life on earth and to safeguard creation. We are made in the image of God ‘endowed with intelligence and love’. As the Body of Christ, ‘drawn by the fullness of Christ we are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator’. (Pope Francis)

Blessings and peace,

John

REFLECTIONS

Revd John asked if we had discovered any positives during lock down. After giving this some careful thought I came up with a few. Though I did no panic buying we didn’t go without anything that mattered. As a keen baker I soon ran out of flour but a lovely friend supplied me with some and even delivered it to my door. A true friend. The positive I wanted to share happened in the Climate service. Whilst we were praying and considering this issue I became aware of the birdsong outside. In all the years of worshipping at St Marys I have never tuned into this outside. The birds seemed to be joining in a reminder of our fragile world and how we must treasure it in all the ways we can.

Ann Jennings

On the return of the Monthly News, the Magazine Committee are pleased to take this opportunity to say a huge **‘THANK YOU’** to **Tony Tatford** who took on the role of Editor with his customary generosity and dedication. We are very grateful, Tony, for all your work, your skill and your great sense of fun!

SERVERS IN LONG SERVICE, (VERY LONG LONG SERVICE!)

What were you doing in 1959? That was the year St Mary's server Brian Wootton was confirmed. Later that same year Brian was asked by the Curate of the time, Revd Ford, if he would help out by serving at the midday Communion (which had been a recent innovation for the first Sunday of each month). Brian agreed and that was how he began his astonishing career of 60 years.

Brian says he always had a special fondness for the curates as they came and went at St Mary's. He enjoyed seeing how they grew and flourished before moving on to incumbency when the time came. He remembers serving at Alex's first 8 am service and knew then what a good priest he would be.

Brian had been a choir boy and remembers the choirmaster Don Lambert getting the boys to carry the harmonium into the middle of the sanctuary for choir practice. Brian also remembers how exciting it was to become a server and wear a purple cassock instead of the chorister's usual blue.

Serving involved being part of a team which Brian enjoyed, carrying the cross to lead in the choir at 11 am Mattins and learning how to assist the priest with preparing the altar for Communion.

Not long after Brian began, another boy in the choir began getting stern looks from the Rector of the time, the Venerable Alfred Vincent Hurley. This boy was Alan Roden and the reason for the fierce glances was that Alan's voice was breaking and so the sounds he made became rather unpredictable. Around 1963 he too became a server and joined Brian in the team.

Like Brian, Alan served at all the regular services and saw them change with the needs of the time or the changed focus on mission. When Revd Canon Owain Bell became Rector he saw the need for a family service which at first happened at the new time of 10 am but only twice a month. Alan soon also took on the task of creating the server's rota and discovered that new recruits tended to want to serve at the 10 am family service. So, with Brian, Alan eventually gravitated towards serving for the 8 am Communion service.

Alan also trained new servers and, around 1976, he began to train a 12 year old boy who had just been confirmed by Rev'd Canon Henry Lewis Davies and asked by him to be a server. As with the others, Martin started by covering all the services and it was only when there were more than enough servers that he began to serve exclusively at the 8 am Communion, a service he describes as 'serene' and full of time for contemplation. (That is unless you have a priest in a hurry like the retired ex-Cathedral clergyman who used to race around the church and could distribute the bread to a whole altar-rail-full of communicants before Martin had given two or three the wine).

Being a server means being part of a team but it is also a rather solitary role, especially when you are sitting way up in the sanctuary whilst every other member of the congregation is sitting in the body of the church. But the solitude and the quiet are part of the pleasure of an early morning Communion service and all the 8 o'clock servers appreciated that.

Alan remembers showing two more recruits the ropes around 2007 when Ray Drew and Dorothy Gibson joined the team. Dorothy seems to have been the only woman to have regularly served at the 8 am service. Ray remembers enjoying the role early on in his time but, as the years rolled by, a sense of pressure grew and, when he turned 75, he hung up his cassock. Dorothy had had to give up due to increasing ill health in about 2012. So, when I arrived as Rector the rota was staffed by Brian, Alan, Martin and Roger King.

Now, after their extraordinarily long service, Brian and Alan have decided that the time has come for them to retire. They do so with our immense gratitude for their extremely dedicated and faithful commitment to St Mary's. Between them, Martin, Alan and Brian have served at the altar for over 160 years! For all that their service has meant in enabling worship, assisting priests and praying with, and for, this community we thank all of our servers very deeply.

Revd John

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A SERVER AT ST. MARY'S

Alan Roden (junior) is known to many of you as our main contact with our band of servers and is regularly seen in both serving and administering the Chalice at 8.00 am Communion. Now, at age 72, he has finally decided to “call it a day” but, as a parting gesture, has given us below an insight into the role and personalities involved over the last 60 or so years:

“I grew up in the area and St. Mary's always was the Church of choice – my father, (Alan senior), had progressed through both boy's and men's choir as well as being a keen bell ringer, tower keeper and vergier for many years so I guess my path was predetermined. I attended Sunday School where my Sunday School teacher was one Wendy Tranter – yes the same one - so that dates both of us!

I was duly persuaded to join the thriving boy's choir in the 1960s (as directed by well-known legend, organist Donald Lambert). Some will remember the personalities of the choir in those days - including Harry Raybould in the senior men's bass section who took all the choirboys under his wing and frequently rolled a packet of “POLO mints” across the chancel steps during services as he was determined to share them with the boys on the other side. Our most long-standing current server Brian Wootton was also in the boy's choir.

Over time I was even entrusted to sing some of the soprano solos in the weekly anthem at evensong and that led to my forcible induction into serving. I say “forcible” as the Rector was the formidable Canon Hurley whose stern glares over his half-moon spectacles when I hit strange notes after my “voice broke” told me it was an invitation to leave the choir!

I was trained in servers' duties (probably in 1963) by the curate at the time – a lovely chap called Tony Buckler – and servers then were expected to be called upon to serve at all Sunday services as required – 8 am Communion, 11 am Matins and Evensong – so my singing voice was still heard at times, (probably unwelcome), unofficially within the choir stalls area but this time with a poor attempt at the “bass” scores.

The servers' rota was constructed by dentist Geoffrey Wells – the assistant organist – who persuaded me to take on that additional duty when he took a job in London about 50 years ago - and I have been doing it ever since.

Over the years / decades I got to know and befriend all of the clergy. Especially at 8 am Communion, the only people in the vestry are the clergy and the server and this provides excellent opportunity to get to know each other very well. Of course they all had their own personalities and ways of doing things – Lewis Davies, Owain Bell, Greville Cross, Stephen Agnew, and now Jonathan Flitcroft (If you have heard the excellent, almost “performance” way he delivers various addresses, it is clear that his previous acting career has uniquely equipped him to deliver the messages in a memorable way).

So what has changed over the years? It was Owain Bell who firmly proposed a trial to replace half of the poorly attended Matins services by a new format “family service” to attract younger people against the wishes of some of the more traditional congregation members.

The rest is history – an incredible success which has increasingly seen such concepts woven into the fabric of how St. Mary’s operates and proven to attract younger families. It also increased the need for servers as the Family 10.00 am Communion became a firm favourite.

This had immediate impact on the mix of servers. Those who volunteered no longer wanted to just lead the choir in and out and take collection at Matins and Evensong. They preferred to engage with the new style family Communion and made it clear that was the basis on which they were prepared to consider serving. They had little interest in the more old fashioned and poorly attended 8 am Communion and its quaint “Thee” and “Thy” and “Thou” terminology.

Decisions were thus made to cease serving support of 6.30 Evensong and normal Matins. The more established servers - Brian Wootton, Martin Hardy and I agreed to focus on 8 am Communion only so that new younger recruits could be attracted to the more popular Family Communion. As a consequence there has been hardly any success in recruiting servers of any age to the 8 am service still attended by only a faithful few in the congregation.

But 8 am Communion does have its charms for servers. There is quite a lot to do, it is a focused and quiet session with more opportunity to get to know the clergy far better than in most other services.

My memories over the years: the satisfaction of helping out and being a significant part of the process; the terror of leading choirs and a Bishop or two in an important church procession and timing to arrive in the stalls at the correct time; the embarrassment of not knowing the correct responses to vestry prayers of visiting clergy or responding to their way of conducting the Communion services; the wonderful Richard Hall who transformed a choir of just one boy at one stage and motivated many to form the basis of the excellent mixed choir of today; the antics of a few at the "midnight Communion" congregation when at the rail after a night of celebratory drinks; the pleasure and camaraderie of getting to know clergy, regular congregation and servers alike.

I will miss you all but I am sure "We'll meet again". Meanwhile, over to some of you to replace or supplement the serving fraternity into the future in support of St. Mary's. If anyone wants to stay in touch or seek more my email is alanjroden@gmail.com "

Alan Roden

With a special PS of thanks for the late Mrs Ivy Bridge who personally funded all the white cassocks for the servers many years ago.

MASKS FOR ST MARY'S

It all started with an innocent remark to our neighbours about the fact I had made some masks for my husband and myself. Would I be able to make some for them? That was fine. Our neighbours wanted to make a contribution, that wasn't necessary I said. In that case we could give you something for church funds. Tony, my husband, said he would match fund anything I made.

That was just the beginning. The neighbours mentioned it on Zoom after one of the church services. I did very well from our neighbours and people they knew. It was a bit slower elsewhere. Then someone bought a couple of masks, their friends saw them and wanted to know where they could get some, and so it went on. I made some with ties, thinking of people with hearing aids who had problems with loops of elastic.

From time to time I have put a cheque into church funds and thought I had finished. Last Sunday I sold five more after the service and another two on Thursday. I thought Tony might be thinking twice about his offer, but no he says he will continue to honour it. To date we have made £440 and I have lost count of the number of masks I have made.

I must thank people who have supplied me with more elastic when my supplies ran low and shops had sold out.

Sue Wakeley

BISHOP MARTIN. BISHOP OF DUDLEY

2020 has been such a strange year. Autumn has arrived, yet in some ways the year never seems to have got started. I feel I am still living with so many uncertainties, and trying to make plans on the constantly shifting sands of guidance and advice based on ever evolving Covid realities. We are all learners in



this, and pioneers too as we discover new ways of being church. Tiredness and fatigue are very natural too and sometimes the weight of it all can press very heavily. I'm so encouraged by the prayerful determination in our churches to be to be people of hope, even in the darkest times.

Traditionally we celebrate Harvest at this time. Its been a tough year for farmers, with heatwaves, droughts and floods. Sowing seed in a wet winter was almost impossible, and many grain harvests have been poor. Nevertheless lorries and trailers filled with bales of straw and hay are testimony to the resilience and grit of our farmers, who just had to 'carry on carrying on', pandemic or not. I salute all those who work on the land, who produce our food and tend our environment. Brexit will affect them all, though it's still not clear how. They deserve our traditional harvest thanks and prayers.

We give thanks too for the harvest of Kingdom Values that have been so evident in parishes up and down our diocese this year, for every glimpse of love, every act of compassion, every shout for justice and every step into freedom. May the Lord of the world, the Lord of the harvest, bless you and keep you. One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

OPEN CONVERSATIONS

Throughout September the Diocese moved its 'Open Conversations' meetings online using Zoom. The context for these discussions were based on statistics: 25% decline in church attendance since 2006, 46% of church members over 70, £1 million deficit in 2018, 60% of church builds judged difficult to sustain. Despite the gloomy premise I found the discussions encouraging. If you missed the conversations you can read about them on the Worcester Diocese website; click on the 'About us' tab then the 'Open Conversations' tab. The booklet can be downloaded at the bottom of the page.

Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocation, John Fitzmaurice writes about this year's ordinations:

This year's ordinations will be like no other!

Candidates to be ordained as deacons and priests are usually ordained towards the end of June, around the time when the church commemorated the ministry of St Peter. This year of course we were in the midst of lockdown and ordinations have to be postponed and rescheduled for the end of September.

This of course was a crushing blow to those who were hoping to be ordained and who had been working towards this point for so long. Those who were hoping to be ordained priest simply carried on their ministries as deacon, while those hoping to be ordained deacon were licensed as lay workers by Bishop Martin (on Zoom!) pending their ordination as deacons.

The Ordination of Deacons will now take place at three separate services (three candidates at each) on Saturday 26 September at Worcester Cathedral, while the four priest candidates will be ordained in their parish churches the following day. Prior to the ordination services the candidates will gather at Holland House for a socially distanced Retreat, this year led by the Revd Catherine Williams who is a Christian Writer, Retreat Leader & Spiritual Guide and a former selection secretary at Ministry Division.

For the candidates themselves this has unsurprisingly been a really difficult time. Their forbearance has been remarkable, and is indicative of the fabulous people that they are. Some have just wanted to get on with it and be ordained and are not too put out by the severe restrictions on the number of guests and others who can attend; others are saddened that this great gift of God to them cannot be celebrated in grand style. Either way they have committed themselves to a patient waiting, while getting on with the day-to-day tasks of ministry that present themselves in this most extraordinary of times, and they can draw hope from the words of the writer of the letter to the Philippians:

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. [Philippians 1.6]

Do please pray for all those in any kind of ministry, lay and ordained, at this time, and especially for those to be ordained.
To be ordained Deacon

- Claire Billington to serve in Peopleton and White Ladies Aston w Churchill & Spetchley & Upton Snodsbury & Broughton Hackett
- Lindsey Coulthard to serve at St Stephen's Barbourne, Worcester
- Foluso Enwerem to serve at Top Church, Dudley
- Jon Evans to serve at Christ Church, Lye
- Jess Fellows to serve at All Saints, Worcester
- Chris Henson to serve at St John's, Kidderminster
- Rosie Moss to serve at St Nicholas, Warndon, Worcester
- Kim Topham to serve in Clent and Hagley
- Carol Weston to serve in Brierley Hill

To be ordained Priest:

- Sarah Bardell serving in the benefice of Dudley
- Victoria Barlow serving in St Matthias & St George, Astwood Bank and St Luke, Headless Cross
- Jonny Gordon serving at Great Malvern
- Francis Moloney serving at Holy Trinity, Redditch

John Fitzmaurice, Director of Ordinands and Vocation

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THE SOUND OF CHURCH BELLS

But what's this? The sound of church bells? Yes, after a break of nearly six months the sound of church bells has once again been heard ringing over Oldswinford.

In common with all churches in England the bells fell silent during the worst of the lockdown. With the tentative easing of the restrictions some churches, those with capacious ringing rooms, were able to accommodate sufficient socially distanced ringers, to ring some of their bells.

Not so St Mary's; with our bijou ringing room only a couple of socially distanced bells could be rung at best. However, we do possess a carillon. For those that don't know, a carillon is a device that enables a single ringer to chime all of our bells on their own.

It's quite a few years since the carillon had last been used and we are much indebted to Ray and Jean Drew who stepped into the breach and spent many hours working on the device to bring it back into use. The mechanism has been overhauled and new ropes fitted so that it is now in good working order.

The main benefit of this of course, is that it only requires one or two socially distanced people to be in the ringing room at any one time. It is pleasing to record that the first proper ringing of the newly refurbished carillon was the Sunday of Alex's last service at St Mary's. Ray and Jean rang for 15 minutes before the service and then again whilst Alex was saying his farewells to people outside the church.

Stephen Howard.

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

Revd John Flitcroft led our March meeting with a Lent meditation which was linked to our annual worldwide service and wave of prayer. The theme was building hope and confidence with God's word as our foundation. We shared a relaxed technique of quiet reflection. During the service we especially prayed for our worldwide diocesan links in South Africa, Uganda, Nigeria and the Philippines. John also blessed items of children's knitted clothing and other gifts and toiletries for those in need who are helped by CHADD in the borough of Dudley. Special delicious refreshments were served and we celebrated our branch leader Anne May's 80th birthday.

FUNDRAISING FOR OUR CHURCH WINDOW REPAIR



Following the vandalism of one of our church windows our Thursday Morning Communion Fellowship decided to organise a fundraising Coffee Morning on Sat 8th Feb. Chris McCullagh galvanised us into action and everyone united to undertake various tasks with the view of raising as much cash as possible. There was an abundance of amazing cakes, generously donated raffle prizes, an array of fine crafts & bric-a-brac, and beautifully decorated tables. It was a truly remarkable morning, so many people helping, supporting and attending. Thanks to everyone who got involved and who came, some old faces, and delightfully some new. We are a very friendly group, so please feel free to join us on a Thursday for our service at 10.30 You will be made most welcome..

Out of disaster came an uplifting experience of love, hope and spirit. The remarkable sum raised was £600 and with donations and online funding we have raised £1500. A brilliant result. THANK YOU everyone.

Chris Morgan

ST MARY'S WALKING GROUP

Due to the Corona Virus epidemic we have decided to cancel all future walks until Government / Health advice on group meetings is changed. Whilst walking is still encouraged, to walk as a group we would have to be in single file at least 2M / 6ft apart. This would make conversation next to impossible and we would have to queue 2m apart at stiles and gates. Our usual practice of a pub lunch at the end of the walk would not be possible due to the need to avoid close contact plus many pubs may well be closed. We hope and pray that they will still be there for us when we can walk freely again. Picnic lunches were considered but the 2m clearance would still apply and with the recent weather conditions soggy sandwiches would be quite likely!

Mike Blaxland

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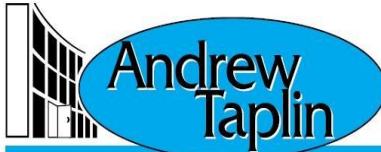


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