

# St Swithun's Church Newsletter

For information and inspiration

January/February 2012

## Praying for each other

As she arrived in the parish, Chris Wright (the wife of Kevin the curate) started a prayer shawl ministry in our three parishes.

The prayer shawl group (currently all women - by default, not design!) meet once a month to pray over and knit or crochet shawls. Once the shawls are finished, they are blessed and then given out to individuals. The label attached to the shawl reads:

This shawl was made just for you  
To bring comfort  
To know you are loved  
To share in your joy  
This shawl is to wrap you up  
When you're cold  
When you're hurting  
When you need to snuggle  
This shawl was knitted or crocheted  
With blessings  
With love  
With prayers.

A few days ago I was given one of these shawls. It is different shades of blue with yellow and orange flecks, chosen to reflect the creation of the world - bright colours of stars and planets against a background of dark space. It was Ellie's idea to put it at the end of our bed, which is where it now lives. Every time I see it, I am reminded of the majesty of our creator God, I am reminded of the love of this community, and I am reminded of the power of prayer. It came with a verse from the Psalms: "whoever goes to the Lord for safety, whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty, can say



to him, 'you are my defender and protector. You are my God; in you I trust.'" Psalm 91:1-2

We have an opportunity at the start of Lent this year to commit ourselves to praying for one another through the prayer partnership scheme and I hope we will make the most of that opportunity. We are asked as a church to pray for individuals who appear on our pew sheet, and we are aware of many more people in need of prayer. And we all have our own needs, aspirations, reasons for joy and thanksgiving. So may we recommit ourselves to prayer this season. May we be touched and inspired by the Creator God who hears and answers us. May we turn to him as our defender and protector, trusting his power and faithfulness.

*Em Coley*

## A Day in the Life of Lisa Scott-Russell

Writing about a typical day is not easy. For a start each day has its challenges and each day makes you feel different. To write about a 'typical day' feels too run of the mill and there is a great temptation to pick a day which is busier or more exciting in some way. I remember when my children were young they occasionally brought home a toy from school with a diary and had to write about the evening the toy spent with them. While this was no doubt a good way to get the children to write and to improve home-school links, I couldn't help feeling terribly inefficient as one of the girls completed a few lines explaining dinner, TV, bath, book and bed, in among the pages of 'swimming', 'cinema', 'McDonalds', baking, making and all sorts of other more exciting pastimes. However, by child number three I had worked out that these were probably not typical evenings, but more for the entertainment of the toy...With this in mind here is my normal type of day:

For those that do not know I live in Kennington with my husband Simon and three children Harmony, Patience and Joy who all attend St Swithun's School. I work at Kennington Playgroup and so do not even leave the village most days. Today is Wednesday. The alarm clock wakes me at 6.15, I force myself to get up by 6.30, and arrive in the kitchen ready for the day just before 7.00. I then pack lunches, fill water bottles (for the children) and have breakfast. At 7.15 I start getting the children out of bed and dressed. We are ready to leave by about 7.40 and check that we have what we need for the day. On a Wednesday this means clarinets for Harmony and Patience, a cornet for Joy and recorders for Harmony and Patience (music lessons at school). Harmony needs her dancing kit as she helps a younger dance class after

school. Just before we leave I usually end with... 'and have you got your lunch, water bottle, homework...?'. They always say yes, even if they haven't. The first challenge of Wednesday is carrying all that lot to school as Wednesday is 'walk to school day'.

We arrive at Playgroup at 7.45 along with two other staff members and their children and start getting ready for breakfast club. Children arrive from 8.00, have breakfast, clean their teeth and are walked to school at 8.45. We have 22 children for breakfast on a Wednesday ranging from 2.5 years to 11 years, so it is a busy 45 minutes. After seeing the children safely to school I return at a fast pace to Playgroup. There are always lots of people to say good morning to which makes me feel happy.

Playgroup doors open at 9.00 to receive 24 children (aged 2.5 to 4 years). The morning session starts and I spend the next two and a half hours playing with the children, observing them, supporting them when needed, talking to staff and parents. I talk a lot to the children, change a lot of clothes (we have messy and water play), change nappies and say 'have you washed your hands?' a lot. The morning includes snack time, group time and on Wednesdays we are visited by Mel who plays the piano while we all sing our favourite nursery rhymes. At 11.30 some children leave and others arrive for lunch. This is another hectic hour of opening lunch boxes, various packets, wiping up spills and chatting to the children. At 12.30 more children leave and others arrive for the afternoon session. This is another two and a half hours of similar activities. The whole day is really busy and for the most part really happy. There is a more formal side, where we are constantly considering and planning for the children's welfare and development while they are

at Playgroup. At 3.00 the children are collected and we spend half an hour cleaning and preparing for the next day. During this time my children arrive from their day at school. On Wednesdays we stay until Harmony joins the dance class at 3.45. I then rush home with Patience and Joy.

At home I strap Joy into her ice hockey pads and uniform and at 4.00 Simon arrives home to take her to ice hockey. Harmony gets home at about 4.20. I wash lunch boxes, prepare for the following day, put a load of washing on and cook dinner. Simon and Joy return at about 6.00 and we eat dinner – quickly as Joy has to be at Scouts for 6.30. So a quick uniform change and off she goes. I then fit in a few jobs, today it was a trip to Sainsbury's, peg out the washing, and bake a cake for a friend's birthday. Oh, and write this.

Nearly 11.00, the cake should be cooled by now so I'll pop it in a tin and be off to bed. Here I have peace and quiet, will say a prayer and probably fall asleep. The day has been full of challenge after challenge – to comfort a child, arrive on time, keep the peace at home, and remember what sometimes seems like a hundred things at once. But they will all be little challenges, and if they are not met the consequences will not be too far reaching. So while it may not be the most exciting of days, when I check on the children before going to bed I have a lovely sense of all being well, and know how lucky I am.

*Lisa Scott-Russell*

# Pause for Prayer

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever.

(Isaiah 55:12-13)



## Give thanks:

- For our God who longs to see our hearts full of joy
- For everything in your life that brings you joy
- For our beautiful surroundings - mountains, hills, trees - which lift our spirits and remind us of our Creator God

## Please pray:

- For those whose hearts are full of grief, not joy
- For those living in bleak surroundings
- For those whose disability means that they cannot get out and about to enjoy the outdoors
- That we would be agents of spreading God's renown in our community

## The Nativity according to my class, 2011

Once upon a time a girl was jolly happily playing when an angel came. The angel said: "You should have a baby." So Mary was finding a wife. Finally Mary found Joseph.

Mary was just washing when Angle came and said: "Are you having a baby? Yes."

Suddenly Mary was surprised. It was angel Gabriel! "I've brought you good nyooz. Tonight in Bethlehem you will take beth to a baby."

Once in a town a lady and a man were living in peace, but an angel appeared. The angel said, "You have been chosen to give birth to the son of God. And he will be the king forever." Mary looked surprised. She thought she was too young to have a baby. Nothing is impossible with God.

The inn was humongously full.... Suddenly a pack of angels came, singing and praising God..... The sheep bowed to the baby.

The tree kings were coming. They gave gowld, mure and franc sins. King Herod dighd and Jeesis saivd the world.

(By Year 1 and 2, St Barnabas' School)

**Emma Partington**



## Money Matters

As we have just reached the end of the Church's financial year I thought now would be a good time to let you know what the Church's finances are like.

First of all I would like to all thank all of you who contribute financially either on a regular basis or make one off donations to the Church. To have a regular reliable income makes a huge difference. I would also like to thank those who give of their time and talents in and around the Church. Your work means we do not have to pay tradesmen to do the jobs you do thereby saving the Church a considerable amount of money.

This year our unavoidable costs came to more than £40,000. I am preparing a budget for 2012 which will show our projected costs and income and hope to have this available for you before the end of this month.

At the moment we are just about meeting our costs and, for the second year running, we have managed to pay our way without dipping into our not very substantial reserves.

With extra resources there is so much more we could and should do in the village to further the work of the Church rather than just paying our way. For instance new initiatives to reach out to our community so that the Church has a much higher profile in the minds of as many people as possible and making the Hall an attractive building for both church and community events.

Therefore, so that we can look to the future with confidence on a firm financial footing, we would like you to consider your giving and if at all possible increase your regular donations. If you are not a regular giver and

would like to start I will be more than happy to have a chat with you. Regular giving is the best way of supporting the church since it provides a reliable income but if you feel unable to do so and would like to make a one off donation then that would be more than welcome. I know that this is a difficult time financially (unless you happen to be a banker) but any help you can give would be most appreciated.

*Brian Baggott (Treasurer)*

### Christmas Collections

Thank you to all those who contributed our charities at Christmas.

We have sent a cheque to the Children's Society for **£307**. This was the collection at the Christingle Service and included money collected by the children at St Swithun's School.

A cheque for **£374.20** was sent to the Oxford homelessness charity Emmaus - this money was collected at the Christmas services.



## Prodigal Blessing

May you always know where the road home begins

and have the courage to walk the first mile.

May you never be too far from a lifeline

and never too far gone to dial.

May you know that the God who pursues you is a hunter

whose bullets bleed mercy.

May artful accidents of grace explode at every turn of your journey.

May you trip over truth and fall headlong into hope.

May redemption rain down all around you.

May God's glory catch you napping and God's story catch your breath,

And God's gratuity perpetually astound you.

May choices you thought you'd made at random turn out to be the key to moving on.

May the darkness that sometimes surrounds you prove to be the moment before dawn.

May you bathe in the light of a prodigal sun and be nourished by a generous earth.

May struggles make you stronger

And even old wounds bring new wonders to birth.

May the unplanned kindness of strangers

Bring to mind a long forgotten song.

May the unexpected kisses of a star-filled sky

Remind you of where you belong.

And even if you never return to find peace amongst those

Who have so loved and so hurt you,

May you seek your souls redeemer

And connect with your creator and make your home with the father who waits for you.

May you trip over truth and fall headlong into hope.

May redemption rain down all around you.

May God's glory catch you napping

And God's story catch your breath,

And God's gratuity perpetually astound you.

**Gerard Kelly**

## Recycling ink cartridges and mobile phones

Don't forget that your old ink cartridges (and mobile phones) can be recycled to raise money for anti-poverty campaign group World Development Movement. Simply pass cartridges, toner or old mobiles on to me and I'll send them off for recycling on your behalf. The profits from recycling are passed on to WDM.

Unfortunately, single-colour cartridges (except black) cannot be recycled - cartridges need to be either black or multi-colour-in-one. You can find out more about World Development Movement at [www.wdm.org.uk](http://www.wdm.org.uk). If you'd like to ask me more about the collection scheme, ring 327575 or e-mail me on [sam@samsolutions.co.uk](mailto:sam@samsolutions.co.uk). Thanks!

**Sam Partington**



What would have happened if it had been three wise women instead of three wise men? They would have asked for directions, arrived on time, helped to deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, brought practical gifts and there would have been peace on earth...

## News from the Harmons



'Harmon signed by Aston (Villa)' would have been a more eye-catching headline as well as the fulfilment of a boyhood dream, but not completely accurate. The 'true' bit is that I am going to Aston in June and Aston Villa football ground is in the middle of the parish. But the football fantasy must stop there.

The Parish of Aston and Nechells lies just to the north of Birmingham city centre. If you've driven into the city from Spaghetti Junction on the M6 the big spire on the right belongs to the church of Ss Peter and Paul, otherwise known as Aston Parish Church. There are two other churches in the combined parish: St James in Aston and St Matthew's in Nechells.

You may have a mental picture of a post-industrial inner city landscape,

but that's not the whole picture. There's history: Aston Parish Church is mentioned in the Domesday Book; there are six soldiers from the Civil War buried in the churchyard; and Aston Hall, a beautiful Jacobean house with its own parks and garden, lies in the centre of the parish. There are the people. The population of the parishes is diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture and

religion. The congregations of the churches reflect this rich mixture.

Lynne and I will move to Aston in late June 2012 in order to take up duties after ordination on 1 July. Although moving from St Swithun's will not be easy we are already being welcomed into the warmth of the Aston and Nechells family. We are excited at the prospect of the new opportunities ahead.

*Mike Harmon*



## We can be extraordinary in ordinary times

I once saw a notice outside a church in Florida which said: 'Come in and meet us. We can change the lives of ordinary people like you'. I thought indignantly, 'how dare they, how do they know I am ordinary?'

When God became human he embraced us all in our 'ordinariness'. Now is a good time to consider this issue as we are in what is called 'Ordinary Time' in the church calendar. The church's liturgical year focuses on dramatic moments in the story of our faith: the birth of Jesus, the coming of the Magi, the last days of Jesus on earth, followed by the resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Between these events there are sections called 'Ordinary Times', which are in fact far from ordinary.

At this time Jesus walked towards Jerusalem and some *extraordinary* events marked the start of his ministry. He called on his disciples to reach out to those people on the edge of society: lepers, prostitutes and even tax collectors. So 'Ordinary Time' is when God created communities, where everybody belongs. This time is about knitting together the human family and being responsible for all in it.

It was during this time that Jesus wanted to make a big splash. He wanted to change the course of world events. So he called in some fishermen to be his disciples. They had no technical training but they spoke to whoever would listen, and they gossiped. The choice of the fishermen was a canny one when one considers the characteristics required to be a good fisherman. They must have patience, perseverance, and courage and be able to recognise the correct moment to cast their nets. They have done their task in attracting us to Jesus.



What does the notion of 'ordinary' mean to you? You may remember the caterpillar in *Alice in Wonderland* saying, 'Who are you?'. 'That was not an encouraging opening for a conversation', Alice replied rather shyly, and went on: 'I hardly know, Sir. At least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.' What has this got to do with 'Ordinary Time'? I suppose we need to know whose we are before we know who we are. 'Ordinary Time' is a time for self-examination.

We cannot all be celebrities. Indeed some celebrities are famous for just being famous. We may not be famous, but we are more than that, we are *extraordinary*. Let us reflect during this 'Ordinary Time' before the next big part of the drama of our faith and let us tell others about it. We can become God's publicity agents. Let us be extraordinary in ordinary times.

Gerry Bowen-Thomas

## Prayer Partnership

St Swithun's prayer partnership started in 2004 when we were looking for guidance for the way forward for God's Church here in Kennington. The partnership gives each of us a focus as we pray for the whole church by praying for the role each one of us has to play in our church's growth.

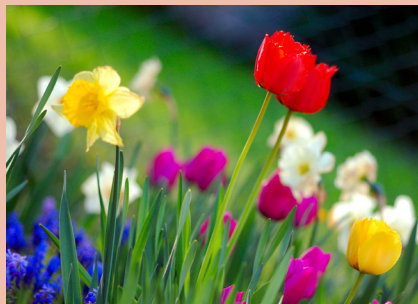
Our church is growing and it would be lovely if this network of prayer could grow with new members too so that our growth may be covered with prayer. Would you like to be part of this network? We will be changing our partners (by lottery) to be announced by the first Sunday of Lent. There is a box at the back of the church with a bag of name slips: just write your name on a slip and put it in the box. If your name is in the scheme your name will be in the draw unless you let me know otherwise. I hope you will feel able to join this prayer partnership.

**Margaret Smith**

## Spring Gardening

On **Saturday 11 February**, I will co-ordinate a spring garden working party. We hope to sow Pictorial Meadow seeds at the entrance where a 'Contemplative Garden' may come into being. Also there will be general tidying jobs to do. Come along to the church grounds anytime between 8.30am and 1.00pm, even just an hour will help. Please bring your own tools.

**Rosey Hollinrake**



## Songs of Praise



A tradition of holding a combined parishes Songs of Praise on the last Sunday of a five-Sunday month has evolved since the coming together of Kennington, Radley and Sunningwell.

This month it will be at St Swithun's at **6.30 pm on 29 January**. The hymns are chosen by a group who choose a theme, and this time Epiphany, Church Unity, Thomas Aquinas, and Candlemass will be stirred into what is hoped

will be an enjoyable occasion. St Swithun's is represented by Gill Cox and Roy King who are always open to suggestions or ideas for different ways of presentation. Hope to see you there.

**Roy King**

# Candlemass

It is now widely documented that the end of January and early February are the most depressing times of the year. This is something to do with credit card bills with Christmas expenses on them, the lack of sunshine and so on.

In the midst of this difficult time falls the feast of Candlemass. It focuses on Jesus' presentation in the temple, and the liturgy looks back to Christmas, and forward to Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday.

Over the last few years we have celebrated Candlemass at our Thursday 10.30am Holy Communion service and have enjoyed the opportunity to recommit ourselves to God using the symbolism of candles at the end of the service. This year, Candlemass falls on Thursday 2 February. Please do come along.

## *Liturgy of recommitment at Candlemass:*

Father, here we bring to an end our celebration of the Saviour's birth.

All Help us, in whom he has been born, to live his life that has no end.

Here we have offered the Church's sacrifice of praise.

All Help us, who have received the bread of life, to be thankful for your gift.

Here we have rejoiced with faithful Simeon and Anna.

All Help us, who have found the Lord in his temple, to trust in your eternal promises.

Here we have greeted the light of the world.

All Help us, who extinguish these candles, never to forsake the light of Christ.

Here we stand near the place of baptism.

All Help us, who are marked with the cross, to share the Lord's death and resurrection.

Here we turn from Christ's birth to his passion.

All Help us, for whom Lent is near, to enter deeply into the Easter mystery.

## Making Sense of Faith

This Lent, the Churches Together in Kennington will be looking at some of the seeming contradictions the Christian faith has been accused of, in a course loosely based on Alister McGrath's book 'Why God Won't Go Away.'

My mum, Rev Liz Johnson is leading the course which is called 'Making Sense of Faith', and the sessions are:

1. Faith and Reason
2. Faith and Science
3. Faith and Conflict
4. Faith and Suffering
5. Faith and.....?

They will be held every Thursday evening in March in St Swithun's Church Hall from 8pm.

Whatever your view is about what the Christian faith may or may not conflict with, you are more than welcome to come and join the discussion. Please do invite friends and neighbours. I look forward to seeing you on Thursday 1 March.

**Em Coley**

## St Swithun's Christmas Tree

For many years the Christmas tree in church has kindly been given to us by St John's College. Usually in mid November I get a phonecall asking me to collect the tree from the Bagley Wood Sawmill. When I first started doing this it was with George Mundy, who made the box that we still use to hold the tree in church. George was an amazing man, and he always has a joke to tell us after we had finished the decoration. Now I usually collect it with Eckhard Groth, David Jones or last year for the first time Bill Hunwick. Our job now ends with erecting the tree and putting on the lights, as another team do the decorations, hanging the baubles, tinsel and the silvery rain, which looks so attractive. They also choose which decoration to put at the top. There are three, (in true Blue Peter style) a cardboard star covered with silver paper, an angel, and a metal screw on star which can only be used if the top of the tree is fairly strong, as it is quite heavy. After Christmas the tree is taken down, its branches removed, and the 'trunk' recycled to be used again at Easter as part of the Easter garden.

*Mark Horseman*



## From the Editor

I would like to use my space this week to promote an event run by Stillpoint (an Oxford-based project focused on nurturing spiritual practice).

I have been to several Stillpoint events and can heartily recommend their gentle and thought-provoking style.

'Soil & Soul' is billed as a mini-festival and it is taking place on **Saturday 28 April** just along the river from Kennington, at the Isis Farmhouse near Iffley Lock.

The aim is to celebrate the earth and contemplative spirituality through music, art, and poetry. Peter Owen-Jones, a vicar who has presented several BBC documentaries in recent years, will be there for the day.

See [www.thestillpoint.org.uk](http://www.thestillpoint.org.uk) (it costs £20 if you book before the end of February).

*Jacqueline Smith*

**SOIL & SOUL**  
A ONE DAY FESTIVAL CELEBRATING THE EARTH AND  
CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY IN THE JESUS TRADITION

**PETER OWEN-JONES  
+ OTHER SPEAKERS**  
ART CREATION  
WORKSHOPS  
FOLK MUSIC  
POETRY READINGS  
MEDITATION & YOGA  
FOOD & DRINK

**SATURDAY 28TH APRIL**  
THE ISIS FARMHOUSE PUB & BOATHOUSE  
OXFORD | 10AM - 10PM | £30/25/20

TICKETS : ONLINE AT  
[WWW.SOILANDSOUL2012.EVENTBRITE.CO.UK](http://WWW.SOILANDSOUL2012.EVENTBRITE.CO.UK)

stillpoint  
[www.thestillpoint.org.uk](http://www.thestillpoint.org.uk)

## Dates for Your Diary

### Monday 23 January

8.00pm PCC

### Thursday 26 January

11.30am onwards Winter Warmer Lunch. All welcome. There is a list to sign at the back of church if you would like to come.

### Sunday 29 January

6.30pm Songs of Praise at St Swithun's Church.

### Thursday 2 February

10.30am Holy Communion:  
Candlemass

### Sunday 5 February

6.30pm Refresh (a half hour service of quiet reflection)

### Wednesday 8 February

7.30pm Prayer Shawl Ministry in the Church Room at St James Radley.

### Saturday 11 February

10.00am-12.00 Craft Morning

### Friday 2 March

2.00pm Women's World Day of Prayer, in St Swithun's Church. The theme is 'Let Justice Prevail'. The service has been written by Christians in Malaysia. All are very welcome to attend.

### Sunday 4 March

6.30pm Refresh (a half hour service of quiet reflection)

### Saturday 10 March

10.00am-12.00 Craft Morning

### Saturday 17 March

Jumble Sale in the morning in the Village Centre. If you can offer any help to collect, sort, sell or clear up, the fundraising team would be very grateful. Please speak to Mary Dennett.

### Sunday 18 March

9.30am All Age Communion,  
Mothering Sunday

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## Something to Say?

Please send any contributions for the St Swithun's Church newsletter to the Editor, Jackie Smith. We welcome text and/or pictures (in particular it would be good to build up a bank of pictures reflecting church life, so if you have any please do send them in).

Don't worry if writing isn't your thing – Jackie can help you with the right form of words.

**Deadline for copy: 20 Feb 2012**