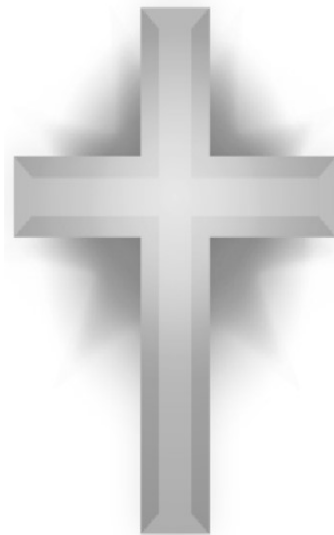
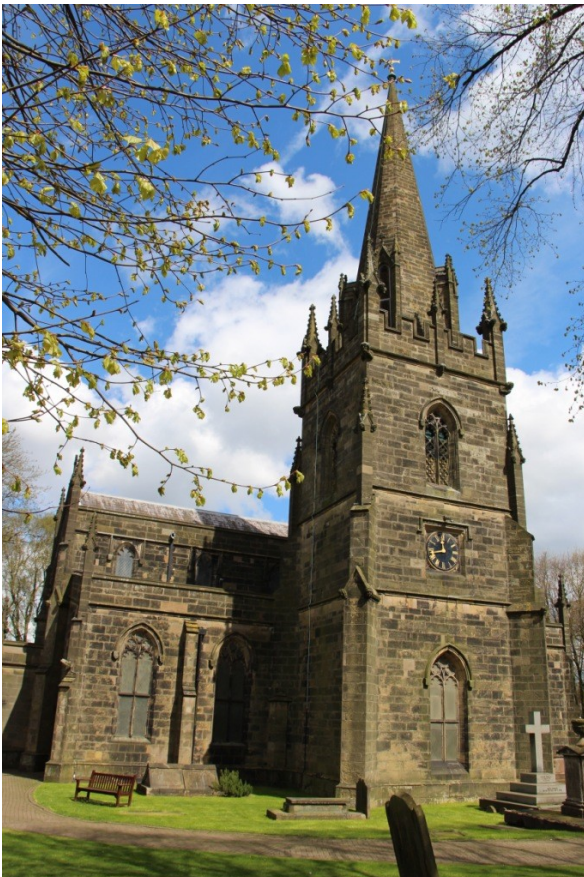


THE BEACON

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS, SEDGLEY
ST. ANDREW'S THE STRAITS & ST. PETERS UPPER GORNAL

Registered Charity Number 1179471



Kingdom People
love • compassion • justice • freedom

50p

February 2021

PARISH WIDE WHO'S WHO

Team Rector	Revd Guy Hewlett	01902 295164
Team Vicar	Rev Catherine Mitchell	01902 677897
Licensed Lay Minister	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Ordinand and ALM	Claire Cox	07812 010108
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Barbara Baker	01902 882847
Pastoral Care	Tracey Bate	01902 880727
	Jackie Hewlett	01902 295164
	Sarah Parker	01902 885570
Worship Leader	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
Youth Leader and Youth Group	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
Singing Angels		07812 010108
	Claire Cox	
PCC Secretary	Kath Apperley	01902 663253
PCC Treasurer	Sheila Moss	01902 893570
Parish Office	Gail Griffiths	01902 540289
Web Editor	Martin Jones	01902 884461

St Peters

Who's Who

Parish Warden	David Moss	01902 893570
Parish Warden	Edward Grist	01902 682786
Treasurer	Sheila Moss	01902 893570
Children's Advocate	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
DCC Secretary	John Powell	
Uniformed Organisations	Please Contact David Moss	01902 893570

St Andrew's

Who's Who

Warden	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Children's Advocate	Carol Haynes	
Treasurer	Alan Turner	01902 670938
DCC Secretary	Rosemary Reed	01902 679007
Little Angels Baby & Toddler Group	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Singing Angels	Claire Cox	07812 010108

All Saints Who's Who

Vestry Clerk	Chris Williams	01902 672880
Parish Wardens	Keith Tomlinson	01902 673366
	John Anderson	01902 677666
Treasurer	John Anderson	01902 677666
DCC Secretary	John Anderson	01902 677666
Caretaker	Pam Pugh	07860 256535
Junior Church	Barbara Price	01902 676591
Bell Ringer	Keith Williams	01902 672585
Organist	Martin Platts	07941 173252
Youth Leader	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
Brownies	Heather Churm	01902 674709
Ladies' Society	Geraldine Baker	01902 674608
Men's Society	Roger Berry	01902 881374
Mothers' Union	Liz Williams	01902 672880
Rainbows	Liz Naylor	07827 629648
Web Editor	Martin Jones	01902 884461
Server/Verger	Len Millard	01902 676339
	Steve Castle	07971 899072
Noah's Ark		
Parent & Toddler Group	Linda Edwards	01902 672556

Funerals In December and January

11th December – Brian Ivor Cox – Gornal Wood
 15th December– Doreen Rose Mary Naylor – Gornal Wood
 17th December – Frank William Wilkinson – Gornal Wood
 22nd – December— John Thomas Stone – All Saints
 23rd December– Florence Winifred Hampton – All Saints
 24th December– Hilary Claire cliff – Bushbury
 31st December– June Jones – Gornal Wood
 4th January– Derek Hanson – All Saints
 11th – January Barry Bayliss – Gornal Wood
 18th – January—Peter James Marsh – Gornal Wood
 20th – January—Trevor Samuel Hollies – All Saints
 27th – January—Margaret Probin – Gornal Wood
 27th – January—George Kenneth Noble – Gornal Wood
 29th – January— Margaret Breeze – Gornal Wood

THE BEACON

If you are interested in having the magazine delivered to your home on a regular basis please contact:

Karen Evans: 01902 678056

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admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

by

Friday 26th February

and needs to be in Arial typeface, size 18.

Do not send files in pdf format

WEBSITE: **www.gornalandsedgley.org.uk**

To Magazine Deliverers

Could you please get email addresses for all the people that you deliver to and please let either Gail Griffiths or Karen Evans know .

St Peter's District Church magazine

St Peter's also publishes a magazine which is more particular to Upper Gornal. If you would like to receive that magazine (which is not available electronically), in the first instance please contact a St Peter's Church warden details on page 2 of this magazine.

You will have seen in the Press that all our churches are closed for services for the foreseeable future. This means there will be no Vestry Hour at All Saints' to deal with wedding and baptism enquiries. We are having to re-arrange those weddings and baptisms disrupted by the current situation so, regretfully, cannot consider any enquiries for baptisms until further notice,.

If you wish to enquire about a wedding for 2021 or 2022, please contact
Chris Williams chriswilliams550@btinternet.com.

All Saints Flower Policy

Our thanks go to the two Margaret's and Rosemary who have over many years done a sterling job sourcing and arranging weekly flower displays. Covid, and the associated restrictions has prompted a review of future arrangements.

Future Arrangements

Commencing at Easter 2021, and following a discussion with flower donors, DCC have agreed that,

If a number of people would like to fund flowers in memory, one flower display a month to be arranged by a florist. Clearly the life of flowers would mean a display lasting a short period. To be set out on a preferred Sunday and subsequently removed.

As previously donations will be sought for Easter and Christmas real flower displays.

The previous arrangements continued if a new volunteer comes forward.

Weddings will carry on as the current arrangements.

Linda is happy to co-ordinate receipt of donations and make any necessary arrangements.

High Days & Holy Days for February

- 1 Brigid of Ireland – Abbess of Kildare, c 525
- 2 The Presentation of Christ in the Temple/ Candlemas
- 3 Anskar – Archbishop of Hamburg, missionary in Denmark/
Sweden
- 3 Blaise – bishop of Sebastea
- 4 Phileas – Christian bishop/martyr of Egypt
- 6 The Martyrs of Japan – courage amidst persecution
- 8 Kew – or how to tame a wild boar
- 10 Scholastica – or how to get your brother to listen to you
- 11 Caedmon – the poetic shepherd
- 14 St Valentine's Day
- 14 The very first Valentine card – a legend
- 14 St Valentine's Day: a poem
- 15 Thomas Bray: founder of SPCK
- 16 Shrove Tuesday: Who's for pancakes?
- 16 Shrove Tuesday: Pancake Day
- 17 Ash Wednesday: my memory of the Passover in Jerusalem
- 17 ASH WEDNESDAY: mourning our sins
- 17 ASH WEDNESDAY: a good time to admit you are sorry
- 18 New Fra Angelico, patron of artists
- 17 Janani Luwum, Archbishop of Uganda, martyr, 1977
- 22 Margaret of Cortona – sad search for acceptance and love
- 23 Polycarp – the faithful servant who would not deny his Lord
- 24 Matthias the Apostle
- 27 Gabriel Possenti – and the enjoyment of romance
- 27 George Herbert, priest and poet
- 27 The Vicar's a Poet
- 29 Oswald of Worcester

From Revd Guy Hewlett.

As I sit in my study and write outside the sun is shining on a rather cold Friday in January. But the sunshine is warming, and it is thawing the snow on our cars and a heavy frost on the grass. Despite the dark days of winter, the sun is always there and somewhere in the world it is summer!

As we travel through the early part of this year, I find it difficult to process that it was March the 23rd last year that the 1st full lockdown began. Very soon it will have been a year since the Corona Virus pandemic started.

It has been a very difficult 10 months and has become something of a marathon for all of us. Physically, emotionally and spiritually many of us are very tired. This is normal in such abnormal circumstances and we yearn for renewed freedom and the ability to live with others without having to have restrictions on how we live our lives. Being able to hug and be hugged and to share social time together is a human need. We are created by God to love and be loved. At the moment and over this last year we are learning how to love from a distance.

When I think of the staff in our hospitals, especially in the intensive care units, I am humbled by their determination their care and compassion their expertise and their commitments to save the lives of others. They are living lives of real sacrifice as of course are many others at this time.

This year Ash Wednesday falls on the 17th of February and there begins the season of Lent. Lent is a season of preparation when we look forward to Easter and the celebration of the glorious resurrection of Jesus.

Traditionally many people give something up. I suspect that most people feel that they have given up enough over this last year!

We cannot know at the moment the situation we will find ourselves in when we get to Easter and therefore, we cannot know how we will celebrate this year. But I do encourage you to take time in a deliberate and focused way to read your Bible and to spend time with God each day through Lent. As Samuel said to God “speak Lord, your servant is listening”.

And as we continue to journey through this pandemic be kind to yourself. Remember Aesop’s Fable? Slow and steady is just fine! Be kind to yourself! Remind yourself that you are loved by God and that all things will pass. Keep going and know that Jesus is walking with you. Rest when you need to rest. Know that the resurrection of Jesus is a truth for all time and that God sent his only son so that those who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life. Jesus did not come to judge the world but to bring the world back to himself.

Aesop’s Fable – the Townsend version

A Hare one day ridiculed the short feet and slow pace of the Tortoise, who replied, laughing: “Though you be swift as the wind, I will beat you in a race.” The Hare, believing her assertion to be simply impossible, assented to the proposal; and they agreed that the Fox should choose the course and fix the goal. On the day appointed for the race the two started together. The Tortoise never for a moment stopped but went on with a slow but steady pace straight to the end of the course. The Hare, lying down by the wayside, fell fast asleep. At last waking up, and moving as fast as he could, he saw the Tortoise had reached the goal, and was comfortably dozing after her fatigue.

Moral

Slow but steady wins the race.

Remember despite the Pandemic wherever you are on your journey through life, God is with you. May His light shine upon you.

Whatever the coming weeks and months may bring, may you and your loved ones live in love.

I pray that you will all be able to take some time to reflect on the love of God who travels with us wherever we go, and who became just like you and me in the Christ child, born of Mary on that first Christmas day in the mess and smell of a lowly stable. God in Jesus came into the mess of this world over 2000 years ago and by His Holy Spirit He is still here with us.

With my love and prayers,

Guy

Vicars Ponderings – February 2021

Hope, what do you hope for?

I've have had many conversations over the past 12 months, through the challenges of this pandemic. Many of the conversations have centred on hope, I hope we can get back to normal soon; I hope we can see family and friends soon, without the restrictions we're living under; I hope my family are safe and well; I hope we can get back to meet together in church soon. I hope I can get my operation soon. I hope I can get my tests and results soon. I hope the children can go back to school soon. I hope I won't lose my job.

These are real and important things to hope for, this pandemic has changed so many lives, and so many lives have been sadly lost around the world.

In recent months, these conversations have turned in their emphasis, with a real tangible sense of hope that things will get back to normal

with the roll out of the vaccines.

I am thankful that so many of our church members and community are having or already had at least the first of their vaccine jabs.

The vaccines, have a lot to live up to, we are pinning all our hopes of getting back to normal through them, to be able to hug our loved ones, to be able to go on holiday, to be able to gather together again as church families, and to save lives.

I am in awe of what the scientists have been able to achieve over this past 12 months, designing, developing and testing of the vaccines.

We all want to live with hope, especially at this time, don't we?

The essential quality of hope is that it is orientated to something in the future that is expected but not yet here.

It very much feels like that doesn't it at the moment?

Hope for something in the future that is expected but not yet here.

I too, have hoping in the vaccine that it will bring us to some form of normality. I also have hope in a new eating regime, and my hope, that it will bring me to a new and healthier lifestyle, going on holiday, that is what I am expecting, but it's not here yet, I have a long way to go!

Hope is a theme that transcends the life of faith, with the word hope appearing in the Bible more than 150 times.

Hope in the Bible comes in many forms including a hope for God's salvation and a future, now and in the life to come.

Hope in the Bible is also something that is eagerly waited for and seen as an anchor for the soul and something that is firm and secure; something that is inside the believer, the hope that is in and of God and Christ and

God's salvation.

There is a well-known hymn that expresses, I think, many of the biblical aspects of hope, a hope that we all need at this time, hope in God and God's transformation, I'm sure many of you will know it, the hymn *All my hope on God is Founded*.

Sometimes we can centre hopes in our lives on earthly things rather than centring our hopes on God and his saving power. It is in him that our hopes can be truly found.

In these challenging times, it is of course natural to seek a future that the vaccines promise us and the normality we seek, but the hope that transcends our hope in the vaccine, is hope in God and a life that is transformed and renewed when we come in faith and trust in Jesus, the way, the truth and life, and the hope and eternal salvation He brings.

Blessings

Catherine

North Korea

In **North Korea**, one of the harshest environments in the world for Christians, believers have viewed the coronavirus as an act of God that opens new opportunities for them, states Release International's partner.

"This has been the most creative year we have witnessed in the underground church to date." During 2020, despite the Covid restrictions,

Bishop

An exam for R.E. asked the following question: "What does a Bishop do?"

Came one answer: 'Move diagonally across the board.'

Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union theme for 2021 that focuses members' prayers and actions on particular aspects of our work and faith is:

'Rebuilding Hope and Confidence'

The Mothers' Union recognises that the effects of the pandemic will continue to be felt across the world throughout 2021. As people seek to come to terms with loss of all kinds, from bereavement to loss of livelihood, relationships, wellbeing and other challenges, our work of rebuilding hope and confidence will be vital. We will continue to support and pray for our members and projects, to help us to sustain our confidence in the sure and steadfast hope of God, as we reach out to a hurting world.

It was with sadness that we heard of the death of Margaret Probin, before Christmas. Margaret was a dedicated member of the Mothers' Union for 35 years. She will be sadly missed by all our members and by her church family at St Andrew's. We hold Sarah, Chris and their family in our prayers at this time.

By now you will have all received your 2021 Prayer Diary through the post. In addition to this valuable prayer resource a new publication entitled 'Connected' will be sent to you twice a year. This new magazine will bring an exciting mix of news from across the whole movement with regular updates about Mothers' Union projects across the globe, and the difference they make to people's lives.

News to make you smile.

I spoke to Kathryn Osborne the other day who was telling me about her cat, Benny. He is a 'Government's Dream'. Benny gets up, goes out for his exercise, returns and isolates on the bed for the rest of the day!

~~~

Judy Clements was looking online at the John Lewis sale where she saw a Radley handbag she liked and thought she would treat herself ... then another bag caught her eye ... needless to say that went in the basket as well. When she got off the computer she thought, 'Well I've bought two handbags and I'm not going anywhere to use them!!' You'll have to walk around the house with one on each arm, Judy!

~~~

The Williams' household have had a visitor throughout the winter. Most nights, around teatime, a wren nestles into a small plant house on the wall by our dining room window, where he stays until early morning. On the odd occasion he does not appear we wonder whether he has gone to visit relatives on the Wren's Nest estate!

Signs of Hope

Many of you have already had your vaccinations and what a wonderful sight it was to see pictures of Lichfield Cathedral, at the heart of the community, opening its doors to welcome people in for their 'jab'.

For a welcome assurance that the brighter days of Spring are on their way, look no further than the Galanthus the snowdrop to you and I. Varied in size, height, flower and shape these delicate plants are a sign of hope in this difficult time. We have some sixty varieties in our garden thanks to our Galanthophile, Jonathan, with names such as 'Scrooge' and 'Three Ships', that flower at Christmas, to 'Little Ben', 'Fly Fishing', 'The Shard' and 'Hercule' (after Hercule Poirot) and, of course, 'Jonathan'.

Our Wave of Prayer will be on Friday 12th March, 10.30am, on Zoom and I shall make sure that everyone has a copy of the service, so that whether on Zoom or not we will all be able to do this together.

Take care,

Liz

Which Carol?

Not a bad monarch	Good King Wenceslas
A small community -	O Little Town of Bethlehem
Ceasefire carol -	Silent Night
I spied a trio -	I saw Three Ships
Small carrier -	Little Donkey
A call to be loyal -	O Come All Ye Faithful
Listen to the Holy messengers -	Hark the Herald Angels
Sacred evening -	O Holy Night
Decorative greenery -	The Holy and the Ivy
Stargazers from the East -	We Three Kings of Orient are
Observe in the cold weather -	See Amid the Winter's Snow
Isaac Watts' happiness -	Joy to the World
They were working in the dark -	While Shepherds Watched
Bells -	Ding, Dong Merrily on High
Sent here for this one! -	Coventry Carol
A small musician -	The Little Drummer Boy
Christina Rossetti gave her heart -	In the Bleak Mid-Winter
Ultimate children's carol -	Away in a Manger
It was an astronomer's delight -	It was on a Starry Night
20 Since 1919 opening carol in 9	
Lessons and Carols -	Once in Royal David's City

Christian persecution in 2021 is set to rise in China and India

That is the forecast of Release International, which has recently published its annual Persecution Trends survey.

“Our partners tell us that attacks are on the rise under Communism in China, Islam in Iran and Malaysia, and under militant Hinduism in India,” says Release CEO Paul Robinson.

“Yet despite persecution and pandemic, we see clear evidence of the boldness, courage and trust in God of Christians under pressure around the world.”

Launch of Rural Teaching Partnership

The Church of England, the education charity Teach First, and the Chartered College of Teaching have recently launched the new Rural Teaching Partnership.

The partnership will run in ten pilot regions across England, and will see trainee teachers, trained by Teach First, start two-year placements with Church of England primary schools by September 2021

By coming together, these three organisations hope to tackle teacher recruitment challenges currently faced by schools in poorer rural areas, with evidence showing that rural school leaders face greater difficulties with staff recruitment and retention compared to urban schools.

With more than half of its 4,644 schools situated in rural areas, the Church of England is the majority provider of rural schools nationally. Within ten pilot regions, schools serving areas of rural deprivation will be selected for placements either in Church of England schools, or non-Church of England schools which are part of a Church of England federation or multi academy trust.

The ten pilot dioceses are Leeds, York, Truro, Salisbury, Chelmsford, Norwich, Oxford, Hereford, Derby, and Bath-and-Wells.

Beware hand sanitiser!

Don't let vulnerable members of your family accidentally poison themselves with hand sanitiser. It can kill them.

Poisonings from swallowing alcohol-based hand sanitiser have more than doubled in the past year, to nearly 400. Doctors from the Centre for Evidence Based Medicine at the University of Oxford urge that more needs to be done to protect children, the elderly or anyone with mental health issues, from mistaking the sanitiser for a drink.

Margaret Probin

People associated with All Saints, St. Andrew's and St. Peter's will have been deeply saddened to hear of Margaret's passing on 22nd December last. Margaret served the Lord in the Gornal and Sedgley area for many years including filling the post of Churchwarden at St. Andrew's.

She was particularly active – as were her mother and father – on behalf of the Children's Society. She was in fact Chairperson and Treasurer and of the Sedgley and District Committee at the time of her death. She was always a very positive supporter of the activities of the Committee despite that fact that in recent years her limited mobility made it sometimes difficult, and painful, for her to attend meetings and events. Regardless of the mobility problems she was almost always present.

For many years the Children's Society has relied on the enthusiastic support of people like Margaret to enable them to help children (and now young people) in distressful situations. What was it that Jesus said 'In that you do it unto the least of these little ones you do it unto me'.

May her sweet soul rest in the arms of the Lord that she served so faithfully for so long.

Anne Hart Hon. Secretary

On behalf of Sedgley and District Children's Society Appeals Committee

Let your teenager sleep

It may help them do better at school.

According to a recent study, teenagers should be allowed to sleep in longer in the mornings, as this could help them to be healthier and perform better. A study, published in *Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain*, suggested that some secondary pupils just have a natural body clock that means they naturally go to bed later and get up later.

Depriving them of sleep could even lead to them developing migraines

How to handle temptation

“I can resist everything but temptation” (Oscar Wilde). During Lent we remember Jesus’ experience in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), when *‘He was led by the Spirit.. to be tempted by the devil.’* (1). Temptation is a test of obedience, whether we do things our way or God’s way. After 40 days of fasting Jesus was tired, hungry and vulnerable. Like Him, the Devil will attack us at our most vulnerable moments, especially during this pandemic.

The first temptation was to turn stones into bread: Jesus’ ministry was not about meeting His own needs, but being nourished by God’s Word. *‘We do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’* (Deuteronomy 8:3). Like Jesus, we are called to make God our priority and trust Him completely.

The second temptation was to put God to the test: Jumping off the Temple pinnacle would have been a dramatic way for Jesus to gain popularity, but this is not God’s way! *‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’* (Deuteronomy 6:16). We too need to learn this lesson!

The third temptation was to worship Satan: Finally, the devil took Jesus to a mountain to offer Him worldly power. In contrast, His calling as Messiah was marked by suffering and honouring God. *‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only’* (Deuteronomy 6:13). This is often our experience in living for God.

Jesus stands with us in our temptations. As we claim the promises of Scripture, we will find strength in the power of the Spirit and the victory of the Cross.

‘If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you’ll be at rest!’ (Corrie Ten Boom).

Describe what love is

J R Miller (1840-1912) was considered by many to be the most gifted devotional writer of his generation. His book 'In Green Pastures' was much loved. Here is J R Miller's paraphrase of the famous 'love' passage in 1 Corinthians 13:

Love thinks no evil. It does not suspect unkindness in kindly deeds. It does not imagine an enemy in every friend. It does not fear insincerity in sincere professions of esteem. It does not impugn others' motives nor discount their acts.

On the other hand, it overlooks foibles and hides the multitude of faults that belong to every human being, even to those who are the holiest and the best. Love believes in the good that is in people and tries to think of them always at their best, not at their worst.

It looks, too, at the possibilities that are in people, what they may become through divine love and grace, and not merely at what they now are. It is wonderful how seeing through love's eyes changes the whole face of earthly life, transfiguring it. If the heart be filled with suspicion, distrust, and doubt of people, the world grows very ugly. But love sees brightness, beauty and hope everywhere.

Mountains make you feel better

The natural environment can make a real impact on your mood. Mountains can leave you feeling more optimistic, while the ocean can help boost your inspiration.

A recent study at Goldsmiths University of London found that water is most effective at increasing positive emotions, such as happiness and inspiration. Woodlands can help you forget your worries, and fields and meadows can enhance your energy levels.

Christmas 2020

'We missed having our family together this Christmas, but so grateful I could visit my Dad (Stan) at the care home just before Christmas. Thank you for all the care home staff who do such a great job.'

Kath Apperley

Church Doors Close – Zoom Opens A Window

No one could have predicted the difficulties faced across the world in 2020. With Christmas plans changed overnight, families could no longer share in their traditional celebrations. Reflecting on my family's challenges, being 5,000 miles apart, we could no longer spend the festive season with our son and family in the UK. Miraculously, this Christmas, we felt closer to family and the local community even across the miles. The church doors may be closed, but adapting to online worship, the boundaries have become endless. No longer reaching just the local community, but extending opportunities of fellowship to friends, family, and all further afield. Outreach has become global, touching the lives of people within their homes, breaking the isolation regardless of where in the world they may be. This Christmas my family could be a part of All Saints congregation enjoying Christingle and Midnight Mass alongside our family in Sedgley. The distance has never felt shorter. This was only possible because the church doors had to be closed and Zoom, the online video conferencing platform, was opened.

Although online church will never replace the ability to worship in person, it has thrown a lifeline, bringing people together through innovation and creativity. It has broadened the meaning of community and who is included as part of that community. Moving into 2021, here in Arizona, we are fortunate to be a part of the extended family of All Saints Church.

See you online!

The Bolland Family
Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

Taking a mature look at Valentine's Day

You do not see many Zimmer frames, wheelchairs or hearing aids on Valentine's Day cards. They mostly seem to be full of young love, hearts and roses.

Young love is wonderful and beautiful, full of optimism, and plans and hopes for the future.

But love in later life is precious too. It is a love that has been forged through years of shared experiences and joy, maybe raising children together, perhaps enjoying grandchildren.

It's a love that's stood the test of time, and deeper, much deeper, than any shop-bought Valentine's Day card can describe.

That long-term love can also be shown by the devoted wife or husband who visits their spouse in a care home each day, gently talking with them when they are, perhaps, deep into dementia. Or sitting for long hours by a hospital bed. Or dutifully caring for them at home.

Love is a marathon, not a sprint. It starts with white lace and promises and grows over the years.

Mature love is about the commitment that spans decades and is seldom shown on the cards on sale in the High Street this Valentine's Day.

As a priest, when I marry a couple and take them through their wedding vows, I hear them make their lifelong commitment "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part..."

It's so wonderful to see the bride and groom smiling, and enjoying this precious moment, making vows that will, hopefully, span the rest of their lives. I love taking weddings – it's an immense privilege to be part of a couple's special day.

And I find myself pondering what the future will hold for them. I wonder what shape that lifelong commitment will take, as I pray a blessing on

their marriage.

How much wealth or poverty will come their way? Will it be sickness or health that will accompany them through the years? How will they support each other as the years go by?

‘Love is patient. Love is kind.’ These are familiar words from the popular wedding reading in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. That patience, that kindness are qualities that can develop over years of marriage.

Just how much patience will be needed in the years ahead cannot usually be known on the wedding day.

So, this year, as I look at the rows of red or pink Valentine’s Day cards on sale in the shops, I shall look out for cards that have a deeper message.

I shall seek out cards that celebrate long-term love. Cards that say something about the joys and challenges of growing older together.

Cards that go beyond hearts and roses to the deeper love that transcends love’s first blossoming. I just hope I can find some...

What happened to your New Year’s resolution?

If you are already struggling to keep it, here is something that might help you.

Psychologists advise that it is useless to say you are going to quit anything. Instead, make your resolution to change into something positive. For example, instead of “I will give up sweets,” say “I will eat fruit twice a day.”

It seems that people with an ‘approach goal’ score greater success than those who see themselves quitting something they still like. As one Swedish doctor explained: “You cannot erase a behaviour, but you can replace it with something else.”

The most popular resolutions regard physical health, weight loss and change of eating habits. The research was done at Stockholm University

Signs of Aging

When one door closes and another door opens, you are probably in prison.

To me, "drink responsibly" means don't spill it.

Age 60 might be the new 40, but 9:00 pm is the new midnight.

The older I get, the earlier it gets late.

When I say, "The other day," I could be referring to any time between yesterday and 15 years ago.

When you ask me what I am doing today, and I say "nothing," it does not mean I am free. It means I am doing nothing.

I finally got eight hours of sleep. It took me three days, but whatever.

When someone asks what I did over the weekend, I squint and ask, "Why, what did you hear?"

When you do squats, are your knees supposed to sound like a goat chewing on an aluminium can stuffed with celery?

I don't mean to interrupt people. I just randomly remember things and get really excited.

When I ask for directions, please don't use words like "east."

Don't bother walking a mile in my shoes. That would be boring. Spend 30 seconds in my head. That'll freak you right out.

Sometimes, someone unexpected comes into your life out of nowhere, makes your heart race, and changes you forever. We call those people cops.

My luck is like a bald guy who just won a comb.

Covid 19

A number of members of our congregation have volunteered as Covid Champions. Our role is to share information and to ensure that we all know what is happening and what help is available as we live through the pandemic. I hope this information may be of some use to you.

The facts and figures

Dudley Council updates the information about Covid 19 daily on its website.

Between 11th and 17th January 2021 there were 85 cases in Sedgley ward. This is a rate of 708.10 cases per 100,000 of the population.

Looking after yourself during the pandemic

Dudley Council sets up a number of initiatives to support people during the winter every year. In addition, there are currently a number of schemes in operation which may help you if you are not going out as much as usual because of the pandemic.

Please pass on these contact numbers to anyone who you feel would benefit from some help. They are all telephone numbers at Dudley Council and they are safe sources of help.

Winter Warmth – helps people keep their homes affordably warm over winter. A home energy advice visit can help you to reduce your energy bills, find cheaper suppliers and apply for things like the cold weather and winter fuel payment. Call the winter warmth service on 01384 817086.

Money support – if you are struggling to obtain food and essential supplies and medication, or would like to use the befriending service or discuss benefits then call 0300 3302 152.

Transport – if you need help to get to appointments or to go shopping or to collect medication then NHS responders, a group of volunteers, may be able to help on 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm).

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For more information follow us @humbugscoffeeandcraft!

Cont page 23

Lonely or isolated – the “Pleased to meet you” helpline offers a friendly chat and a chance to find out about help in the local area – including help to deliver shopping and medicines to you. Call 01384 812761 on weekdays between 9am and 4pm.

Safety and security – the Council's Living Well Feeling Safe service offers free home safety and security checks. The home visit will look at the security of your doors and windows and assess any fire risks. If you would like a free check then ring 01384 817743.

Further information about all of these services can be found on the internet at www.dudley.gov.uk/coronavirusolderpeople or call 0300 555 2345.

Karen Evans



Kevin Weston Decorating

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Fall down

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If they panic and start running
toward you, you're old.

Seen on a birthday card:

Forget about the past,

You can't change it.

Forget about the future,

You can't predict it.

Forget about the present,

I didn't buy you one.

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THE SEDGLEY EDUCATIONAL TRUST

The Sedgley Educational Trust is established to advance education, including religious education, in accordance with the doctrines of the Church of England in the area of benefit: that being the ecclesiastical parishes of All Saints', Sedgley, St Mary the Virgin, Sedgley and St Chad's, Coseley.

Application for grants are invited from individuals or organisations resident in the area of benefit. Application forms are available from the incumbent of any of the parishes mentioned above, or alternatively from:

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The Rectory

St James the Least of All



My dear Nephew Darren

I appreciated your recent concern when you heard one of our parishioners had slipped on a gravestone. Your desire to help was entirely commendable, and I do know that sending your own church's health and safety officer to give us some advice was kindly meant. But the 200-page report was not welcome. If we implemented even half of your officer's suggestions, life would become unbearably safe.

St James the Least of All has survived perfectly well for the last 600 years without gutter cleaning inspections, path degreasing and electrical safety certificates, so I think we may survive a little longer without them. As far as I am aware, the only disaster to hit us was when Cromwell's soldiers stabled their horses in the nave – which I suspect a few of our oldest members still clearly remember.

The shock the sidesmen sometimes get when switching on the lights occurs only occasionally, is relatively mild and soon over – and if it happens when preparing for the 8am Service, helps to wake them up. The weight of the Duke of Clumber's marble sarcophagus is slowly detaching the south aisle from the rest of the church, but it is very slow – and the pews in that area are used only once a year when his relations visit from America to commemorate his death at Agincourt – which is probably just beyond remembrance of the oldest of our congregation.

Leaks from the ceiling in the north aisle are solved with a row of buckets – and even you must concede that the fungi on the oak beams look really rather attractive when the sun catches them. The sapling growing out of the spire is certainly an issue – although it looks so attractive in Spring when in blossom. As for our fire extinguishers, they were serviced when my predecessor-but-two was in office, and I have the certificate to prove it.

So, do thank your health and safety officer for all his work and tell him we will bear his recommendations in mind. Also tell him I was so sorry he slipped and broke his leg in our choir stalls while he was with us. But that bit of floor has been out of alignment since 1748, and it seems a shame to disturb it now. If only he had arrived encased in bubble wrap, it would never have happened. Perhaps you could put that on the agenda of your next health and safety meeting.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Welby takes a holiday

Harry Mount reported in the Daily Telegraph on 9 January 2021:

“....., the Archbishop embraced Black Lives Matter and the removal of controversial statues from churches – as he Zoomed from his kitchen.

He’s even taking a three-month sabbatical this May, when the country is dealing with its worst crisis since the war, attracting considerable criticism.

‘The Archbishop seems to be saying that his personal well-being is paramount and that the anxiety, suffering, fear and grief of a country in the grip of a deadly pandemic and an economic crisis is, at best, a secondary concern,’ says Karen Armstrong, a religion writer and author of *The Lost Art of Scripture*.

The Telegraph’s Tim Stanley adds, ‘This does not look good. We are in the middle of a national crisis, and it’s a crisis about death. This should be the Church’s big moment because the central message of Christianity is that while death is bad – and we will accompany you through it – it’s not the end.’ “

Do your days rush by at a hectic pace?

Have you ever stopped to think that your mobile phone and emails have not given you *more* time? Just *more things to do* in the same amount of time.

We leave our messages in one place while we take our bodies elsewhere. Instead of doing one thing after another, we shoot out a variety of tasks, and then swoop down on them later, needing to deal with them all at once.

In a four-minute clip from a street scene from an old Orson Welles film and a similar clip from a more recent film, you will see an amazing difference. In the early film, the camera records ‘real time’ – people get out of their cars, walk across streets, wait for lights, speak to other people, enter a bank. In the more recent film, a similar sequence was reduced to a half a dozen quick cuts. Transition time was eliminated.

Modern life teaches us that ‘down time’ is wasted. Time is money. So mobile phones, emails, etc, enable us to ‘waste’ less time. The tempo of cultural life picks up, the heartbeat of daily life races, and our own body rhythms respond with adrenaline, cramped muscles and heart attacks.

To take time out for daily prayer, for a quiet walk that is not to the next meeting, for daydreaming or for Bible study becomes a cross-cultural act. Following Christ, waiting on Him, is a countercultural act.

One lovely biblical phrase is ‘in the fullness of time, it came to pass’. This suggests four things: that time crests like a wave; that there is a right moment for things to happen; that it’s not ours to plan that moment, but to recognise it; and that we are not the primary agents of what happens in the world.

So, feel free to accept God’s offer of rest when you are weary; receive each moment of your life as a gift from God’s hand; pray to discern what each new encounter you make requires of you, and freely entrust everything else to God’s care.

Chatting with Gail our Parish Administrator

What is your guilty pleasure? - Flavoured gin

What simple thing sparks joy in you? - Helping people

What advice would you hand down? - Always have a go at things, even if you don't succeed you've tried.

What do you do to relax? - Read

What household item could you not do without? - A kettle

If you could meet a famous person (alive or dead) who would it be and why? - Doris Day. I always remember watching her films as a child. Loved her as an actress, but also her work with animals.

What is your helpful daily mantra? - Never give up.

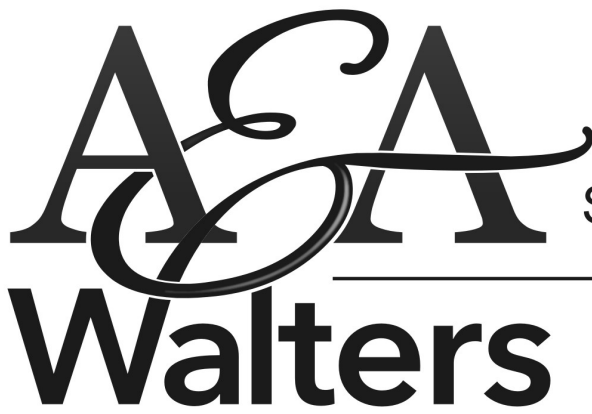
Remembering John Keats

It was 200 years ago, on 23rd February 1821, that John Keats, the Romantic poet, died in Rome of tuberculosis, aged 25.

Keats was a generous, likeable and hard-working man who had much experience of suffering in his short life. He also had a love of civil and religious liberty. Most of his best work was done during the year 1819, when he was already sickening after an exhausting walking tour of the Lakes and Scotland the previous summer.

In that same year he had also been nursing his brother Tom through tuberculosis – the disease that killed their mother. But in 1819, after Tom's death, he moved to Hampstead and fell in love with a neighbour, Fanny Brawne, who was 18.

By this time Keats was devoting himself to poetry, having originally trained as a surgeon following his mother's early death. He is most famous for his Odes, all of which (except the one to Autumn) were composed between March and June 1819. All of them ponder the clash between eternal ideals and the transience of the physical world.



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SERVICES FOR THE MONTH

Following the recent dramatic rise in Covid 19 infections and the new more contagious corona virus variant the decision not to open our church buildings for our normal Sunday and weekday worship has been made by the Parish Standing Committee. We do understand that this is not easy for some people but believe it is the right decision at the moment. We will keep this decision under regular review.

We will however continue services online as detailed below. For Zoom services and meetings an invitation will be sent to all 3 email News Groups.

SERVICES ON SUNDAYS

10.30am	All Saints - Holy Communion (also on Zoom and Facebook live.)
11.45am	Coffee Morning on Zoom
6.30pm	Compline - only on Zoom

SERVICES FROM ALL SAINTS WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE ON FACEBOOK LIVE AND ZOOM.

This link will take you to the Church of England online resources:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/church-online>
This includes a weekly Sunday service and other prayer resources.