



st swithun's

bathford

GROW CARE SERVE SHARE

Church Family News

November 2014

This term is always a very busy one in the life of the church and this year has been no exception. I'm delighted to be fit and well and to be actively back in the midst of it all.

A highlight for me this term has been preparing six young people for confirmation. We are so blessed to have a committed children's and youth team who run an excellent programme which helps to bring young people to the point when they are ready to make a public declaration of their faith. The confirmation service at Wells was very moving with 116 people of all ages from across the diocese being confirmed. We will have a chance to celebrate with these young people when they receive their first Communion on 30th November so please do come along to this church family Communion.

We had a full and inspirational PCC away day in September when our PCC reflected where we are with our vision to 'grow deeper in our Christian faith, to care for each other, serve the community and to share the good news of Jesus locally and beyond'. We thought about the areas where we need to increase our efforts and where we need to think about things afresh. We are so fortunate in having a PCC that reflects the breadth of our church family and a PCC who are committed to unity and willing to listen to one another's view points .

There were several strong themes that came out of the day. These included:

- The need for more prayer

Hence we are having some 'seasons of prayer' and seeking more opportunities to pray together. During the Advent season of prayer there will be prayer in church each morning at 9 AM from Monday to Thursday. On December 13th the church will be open between 9:30 AM and 12:30 AM for a quiet morning, a time to step out of the Christmas frenzy and draw aside with God. There will be some prayer stations to help focus our thoughts and prayers. Something we have not done before in an organised way is prayer walking. On 9th of December there will be an opportunity to meet in church either at 2 PM or 7:30 PM. I will give a short talk to guide us and then we will go out across the village in two's or three's to pray. The aim will be to pray blessing on our village. The Bible gives us strong mandate to bless others and a number of people in our church have been feeling that God is calling us to simply pray blessing on our village and on those around us. Do join in it will be new to most of us!

- The need to grow as disciples of Jesus

It was felt that the best way of doing this was by being in a small group in which there is the opportunity to interact, share experiences, ask questions and to challenge each other. We aim to increase our number of small groups in the future. Given the success of the recent Start course the PCC felt the wider church would benefit from the opportunities of doing this or a similar course on a Sunday morning. The PCC therefore agreed that from February, on a 3rd Sunday for 6 months the 10 AM service will have a very different format. It will be interactive with people engaging with material in small groups in the church. The material will be equally suitable for those who may be encouraged

by a refresher in Christian basics, including those who may have been Christians for a long time, and those still seeking. We hope to serve bacon butties and coffee before the service and hope those who would not usually come to this service from both inside and outside the Church family will come. It will be suitable to invite those who may find the usual format of church difficult.

Progress has now been made on the final part of our South aisle project and the plans are now available to be viewed for a platform to be erected at the front of the church. The aim of the platform is twofold: firstly for health and safety reasons we want to remove as many of the steps causing trip hazards at the front of the church as is possible. We recently had an unfortunate incident of somebody tripping at a wedding and several other lesser incidents. The plans level out the front of the church and there will be a removable hand rail which will allow people to access the steps when going up to the altar for Communion. Secondly the platform will elevate those taking part in services. This will be especially of benefit when we have children involved, either during services or when the school use the church, enabling children to be better seen by the congregation. The platform will also help to provide a better venue for concerts and will enable the church to be more widely used.

The fabric team will be available in the North aisle after Sunday morning services in November to discuss the plans with anybody who would like to. The costs of this project will be met from capital put aside for this and the estimate if it is done in-house is £2000.

As we are coming to our year end, in spite of increased giving by members of the congregation we will have a shortfall of about £6000. Some of the reasons for the shortfall is the drop in giving from members who have either died or left, our parish share unexpectedly went up by £3000 and this is the first year we have paid full year salaries to both administrator and youth worker. The situation is obviously not sustainable. We have therefore applied to the Church Growth fund and St John's fund for grants to support the youth work. The young people gave a presentation to the Parish Council asking that the precept be increased to fund the youth club and we are in the process of writing to some local businesses for sponsorship of the youth work. We do ask for your prayers as these requests are all currently pending. If you are new to the church and are not yet giving to the ministry here and would like to, the giving forms are available at the back of the church or on the website.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gill Heeley and Brenda Field for faithfully organising the flowers in church for nearly twenty years and who are now stepping down from this responsibility. The church always looks beautiful for special occasions and it is lovely to have flowers in church week by week. Judy Sharman will take on the weekly rota for flowers but we are looking for somebody who will organise decorating the church for Christmas, Easter and Harvest. Perhaps three people could take responsibility for organising the decorating for one festival each?

As we approach December may I encourage you to use all the opportunities that our range of services over Christmas will offer to invite family, friends and neighbours to church. The best Christmas gift we could give anybody is to introduce them to Jesus.

May we all find time and space this Advent to make time to prepare our hearts to receive afresh the wonder of God coming to be among us.

With love and prayers

Jane