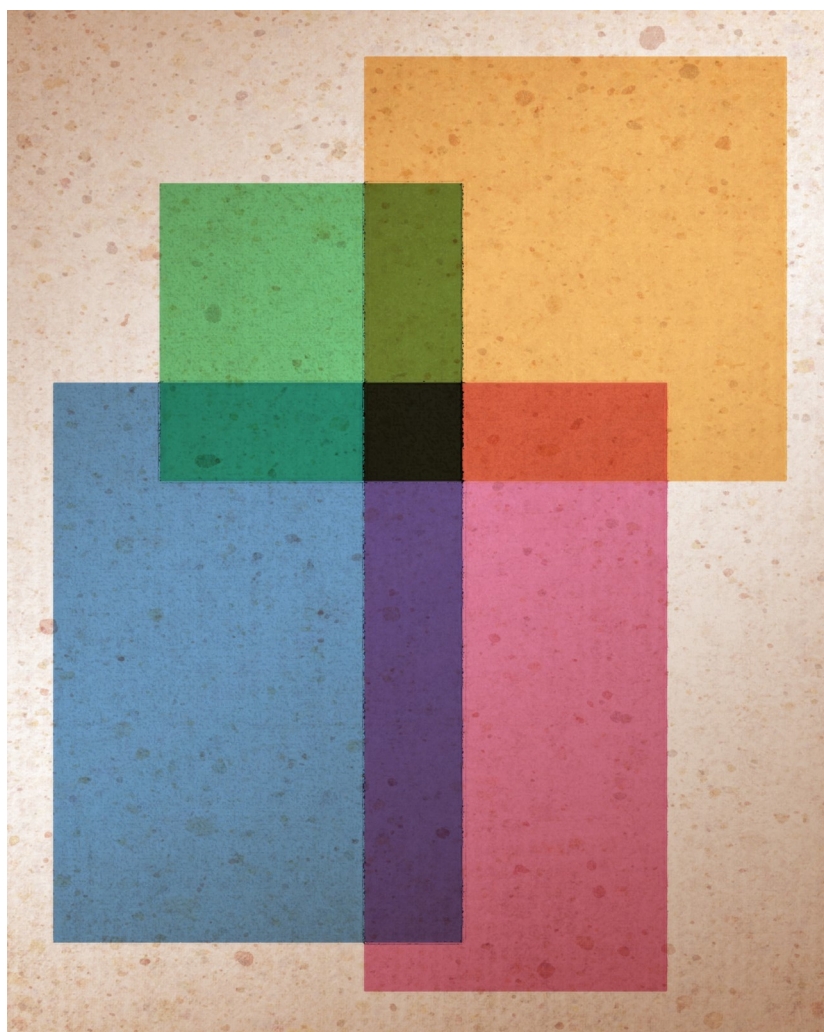


# *St. Thomas' Church, Wednesfield*

## *Church News*



*Picture by Billy Alexander*



*50p*  
*February / March 2016*  
*[www.wednesfieldteam.org.uk](http://www.wednesfieldteam.org.uk)*

# ST THOMAS' CHURCH, WEDNESFIELD

In the Wednesfield Team Ministry

## Sundays

8.00 am Holy Communion  
10.15 am Family Eucharist  
(with Junior Church and Tots Church)  
6.30 pm Evening Worship

## Weekday communion services

Wednesdays: 10.00 am  
Fridays: 10.00 am  
Baptism: Sunday afternoon, monthly

## Clergy

**For enquiries relating to St Thomas' please contact:**

### Team Rector:

Rev'd Nick Watson  
Wednesfield Rectory, 9 Vicarage Road  
E-mail: revnickwatson@gmail.com

**01902 731462**

### Curate:

Rev'd Ness Tobin  
E-mail: revnesstobin@aol.com

**07854 773432**

**For enquiries relating to St Alban's please contact:**

### Team Vicar:

Rev'd Sam Leach  
St. Alban's Vicarage, Griffiths Drive, Ashmore Park  
E-mail: revsamleach@gmail.com

**01902 732317**

## Officers

### District Wardens:

Mrs Norma Thompson, 17 Frome Drive, Wednesfield  
Mr Clive Postle, 118 Amos Lane, Wednesfield

**01902 305170**

**01902 733169**

### Parish Wardens:

Mrs Kathryn Godwin  
Mrs Veronica Griffiths

### Organist and Choirmistress:

Mrs Gillian Edwards, 16 Greenfield Lane, Fordhouses

**01902 783264**

### Parish Office: St. Thomas' Church

Secretary: Margaret Walker  
E-mail: wednesfieldteam@gmail.com

**01902 723310**

*The office is normally staffed 9am-12noon on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday*

**Requests for Baptisms and Marriage at St Thomas' – please come to St. Thomas' Church at 6.30pm on a Friday evening or telephone Reverend Nick Watson on 01902 731462.**

*Do you have an article for the magazine? Or any ideas of what you would like to see included? If so please have a word with Joanna Watson at Church, leave articles in the parish office, or email them to joannawatson@hotmail.co.uk.*

## Letter from the Rector



### ***The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying (your life)***

The Rectory is in a bit of turmoil.

At the moment, Lizzie's room (while she's away at university) is full of bags of clothes waiting to be sorted. Warm clothes will go to the Brothers of the Good Shepherd, to be given to those in most need in Wolverhampton. Other clothes which they can't use will go to local charity shops. The living room floor has piles of books all over it, waiting for us to work out which are worth selling on Amazon, which we can get something for in bulk and which will go to the same charity shops.

On the other hand, our bedroom drawers are beautifully tidy, with clothes neatly folded and actual *space* in wardrobes for things to hang up! Because it's not that we're getting rid of things because we have to move house, or to recover from flood damage, or because we *have* to sell possessions to make ends meet. We're privileged to have the opposite problem – of having been settled somewhere for a while and just having *too much stuff*. Most of the world might dream of having that problem, but it's one we need to deal with.

The title of this article and the mention of drawers of folded clothes may have given you a hint that, yes, we have read the self-help book of the moment, Marie Kondo's *The Life-changing Magic of Tidying*. And yes, she's mad. But mostly in a good way.

#### **Not too little storage, too much stuff**

Marie Kondo's approach is that, if your house is cluttered, then you won't solve the problem by trying to find a more organised way of storing everything. If your house is cluttered, you have too much stuff – and probably, you've even forgotten half of it exists. So her starting point for tidying your bedroom drawers is to get everything out, put it in a pile, and be astonished by how big the pile is. Then, rather than deciding what to get rid of, you decide what to keep – those things that 'spark joy', a bit like William Morris' old saying, 'Have nothing in your house which you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful'. The next step is to get rid of the rest, in whatever way is most appropriate.

Then organise those things you're keeping, and appreciate them – after all, they are the things you have *chosen* to keep in your home and life.

#### **Lent – Spiritual Tidying**

There are a lot of echoes in all this of the traditional Christian spiritual discipline of *Simplicity* – of not having more than you need, and of appreciating more fully all that you do have – whether physical things or activities you are involved in. It's a way to make life calmer, and to cut down the things that distract us from God.

Lent is often called 'God's Spring cleaning time' and that's not a bad image. It's an opportunity to get the house of our lives into order before Easter. But often we're trying to jam too much into our mental and spiritual sock drawers, because we haven't decided which are the key things we value and want to keep and appreciate. So the good habits and practices get jumbled up with all the things we do just because we've always done them, and the relationships that really matter to us get squeezed out because we're watching telly or surfing the internet – just because they're there.

This Lent, why not find some time to look at your life in the Marie Kondo way? Of course, there's a lot that may not 'spark joy' but still be important and worthwhile. But if you get everything out on the table and have a good look at it, you might find a few habits, expectations or old leftover bits of guilt and regret that you really don't need any more.

But hang on. The chances are that you've tried before to give things up, or to stop doing the things you no longer find joy or usefulness in. If that hasn't worked, try the opposite – pick out the things that really *do* matter and concentrate on appreciating and using them.

I'm an Englishman, not Japanese, and perhaps that's why I do prefer William Morris' quote to Marie Kondo's. But how would your life look if you had in it only those things you know to be useful, or to believe to be beautiful?

And what are the steps you can take towards that simpler, more ordered and more joyful life this Lent?

*The Rev'd Nick Watson*



## How do we handle the Bible?

That's the theme of our Lent groups this year, on Wednesdays at 10.45am (after the 10am communion service) and at 7.30pm (followed by Compline at 8.30pm).

The *Pilgrim* course is the Church of England's key resource for learning and growing in faith and belief. The sessions will last no more than an hour, and include hearing and responding to the Bible, video and audio clips and the chance for short discussions.

Everyone is welcome! It will help if you have a copy of the resource book. These are available at the back of church. If you're able to make a donation towards the cost that will be very welcome, but the books are already paid for, and are a gift from church to anyone willing to put in the time to learn and grow together.

If you'd like to know more about *Pilgrim*, or if you're interested in hosting a group at another time of the week, please ask one of the clergy.



A COURSE FOR THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

[www.pilgrimcourse.org](http://www.pilgrimcourse.org)  [@pilgrimcourse](https://twitter.com/pilgrimcourse)

### Offering the hand of friendship.



Our new social group is aimed at anyone who likes a chat and a cuppa. We provide the cuppa, you bring your friendship. This is an opportunity to get out of the house for a couple of hours, a chance to catch up with old friends and to make new friends, an opportunity to share and care about each other.

We meet on the first Monday of each month, from 2pm until 4pm in the St Thomas Centre. Future dates are:

- Monday 1st February
- Monday 7th March

Everyone will be made most welcome.

### Can you help with our holiday club?

Following the success of holiday club last year, we will be running it again, in the mornings of 1st to 5th August. We need volunteers to help lead art and craft, games and worship - or to help with refreshments, setting up, clearing away etc. This was such a positive link to the community last year.

If you are able to help in any way, please see Rev Ness.



### Women's World Day of Prayer

St Thomas Church, Wednesfield  
Friday, 4<sup>th</sup>. March 2016 at 2.30 pm.

Planned by the Christian Women of Cuba

#### "Receive Children – Receive Me"

Please come and join us and enjoy a couple of hours with us. Everyone is welcome.

Refreshments will be available. For more information please speak to Vi Blackmoor or phone 01902 735277

### Stewardship Envelopes

If you are a regular at St.Thomas's and do not currently have weekly stewardship envelopes, may I interest you in a box for the new tax year to start in April?? Alternatively, if you prefer to give the same amount each month via direct debit this can be arranged for you by Roger Poole who will be more than happy to talk you through the process. If you are a member of "the taxman's club" a gift aid declaration form needs to be completed with just a few details for us to gain an extra 25% on your gift.

You do not need me to tell you the importance of regular giving for the upkeep of our church, I can assure you that every penny given is gratefully received. I would ask that if your personal circumstances will be changing in the new tax year i.e. you are not paying tax at the moment but will next year and vice versa please let me know so that we can amend our records accordingly.

Last but not least please look out for your new box of envelopes from Sunday 13th March 2016 and thank you again for your support over the last twelve months.

Jo Nicklin

The  
Children's  
Society

February-March is when I empty Children's Society boxes and so I should be grateful if they could brought to me during this time.

Ann Poole

Wolverhampton Christian Aid Committee

# Quiz evening

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

7.30pm  
at

The Goodyear Pavilion  
Stafford Road, Wolverhampton, WV10 6AJ



**Tickets: £2.50.**  
**Available from Roger Poole**

Refreshments available at the bar.

*Come as a team of up to six or help make up a team on arrival.*

**All proceeds for Christian Aid**





# Wedding Fayre

On Saturday 20th February 2016  
11am - 3pm  
In the St Thomas Centre  
Free admission

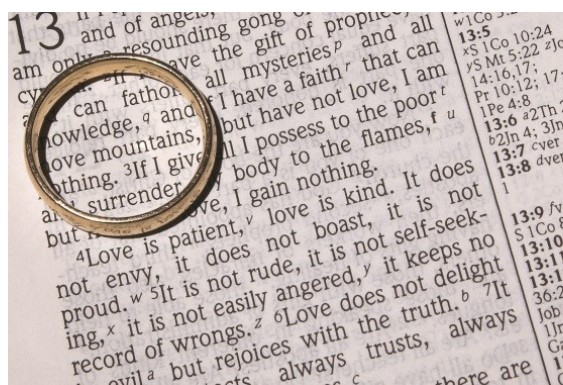
Find out about getting  
married in church, and  
'walk through a wedding'

See a range of local  
businesses



Are you a local business  
providing services for  
weddings? For just £10 you  
can be an exhibitor at our  
Wedding Fayre - a limited  
number of spaces are still  
available.

Call Joanna on 01902 731462  
or email [weddingfayre@wednesfieldteam.org.uk](mailto:weddingfayre@wednesfieldteam.org.uk) to  
find out more.





This year is very special for Mothers' Union as we celebrate 140 years since the founding of The Mothers' Union in 1876 by Mary Sumner. Also too our patron Her Majesty the Queen celebrates her 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

Mothers' Union is the world's largest lay-Christian charity with 140 years of faithful outreach to families of all faiths and none. Since 1876 when Mary Sumner first brought together families in her own Hampshire parish to build their confidence in bringing up their children, it has grown to an organisation of over four million women - and men - in over 80 countries of the world.

Why celebrate 140<sup>th</sup>, rather than wait for 150<sup>th</sup>? In the first book of Samuel he marks an unlooked for victory against the mighty Philistines by erecting a stone, naming it "Ebenezer" meaning "stone of help" as a permanent reminder of the leading and guidance of God "Thus far has the Lord helped us".

Over the past 140 years, the Mothers' Union has faced, and will continue to face, many challenges. Family life is under increasing pressure and the call on charitable resources is higher than ever before. But we can look at how we are meeting these challenges and say, like Samuel, "Thus far has the Lord helped us".

Mothers' Union is holding special services throughout this year, including in Winchester Cathedral, returning full circle to where Mothers' Union was founded. Alongside worship and thanksgiving the charity aims to help over 500,000 people through its practical action work during the year.

All branches in the Lichfield Diocese have been asked to hold a special event or service, so all members can be part of this memorable year. We will be asking if Short Heath Branch and some of the deanery members would like to join with us too, for a special service to celebrate this occasion and hopefully arranging this to take place possibly in early July. More news about this later.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 10th February, which is Ash Wednesday, so we will be attending Ash Wednesday evening service. Mothers Union notices will be available before the service.

Mothers' Union meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March, we will be attending a Lent worship.

Further information about Mothers' Union is available, from Jill or Margaret. Non-members are always very welcome to join us at any of our meetings.

*Jill Ellson, Branch Leader*

## Add a prayer to the tree...

You may have noticed that a tree has taken root on the altar in the Gregory Chapel at the back of church, and that from time to time it sprouts paper leaves! If you've had a closer look, you'll have seen that the leaves have short prayers written on them.

The idea of the prayer tree is to give us a way to leave a note of our prayers in church, so that others can share in them. The clergy use these prayers at Morning Prayer, and they will be gathered together each Sunday evening for offering as part of our worship. If there's someone you'd like to pray for, or a situation for thanksgiving or prayer, please add a leaf to the tree!

If you have a moment to pray in church, why not read a couple of the leaves and pray as requested?

Thanks to Jill Ellson, Kathryn Godwin and Margaret and David Glover, whose idea and craftsmanship provided the prayer tree for us!



## Many thanks.....

We do not have contact details for the person who gave St Thomas' £500 in December, but we are most grateful to them for this generous gift.

*Roger Poole*

## From the Church Councils

### District Church Council (DCC)

The DCC met on 25 November and 21 January.

In November,

- We began the review of our 'Mission Action Plan', the document which expresses our aims and objectives as a church. This was scheduled to be followed up in January.
- We discussed and agreed plans for Christmas worship and events.
- We reviewed the church's end-of-year finances, and were glad to see that we have been able, thanks to a legacy and the completion of the Appeal, to pay off last year's arrears on the Parish Share. We expect to be able to pay 2015's share by early in 2016. We agreed to celebrate this good news and to remind the congregation that we still need to keep building on our giving.
- We agreed after some discussion to continue our tradition of giving 2.5% of general income to support the work of other charities and mission agencies, locally and globally.
- We accepted the advice of a diocesan consultant that the boiler did not need to be replaced, and agreed to act on his recommendation of a specialist engineer familiar with this make and type of boiler, avoiding major capital expense.
- We considered the advice of Neil Harvey-Smith, the Diocesan Communications Officer, on our communication and publicity. This will feed in to the review of the Mission Action Plan.

In January,

- We spent most of the meeting reviewing the Mission Action Plan. We decided to focus on the three areas identified as priorities in 'Leading your Church into Growth', and working in smaller groups began to establish particular objectives and timescales for those
  - ◊ Focusing our church life for 2016 on growth in numbers
  - ◊ Reviewing and renewing our worship
  - ◊ Moving from being a 'welcoming' to being an 'inviting' church
- We welcomed the news that after paying our arrears on the 2014 Parish Share, we were able to pay all but £2,325 of 2015's share within the year, and that weekly giving has increased for the first time in some years. We resolve to keep building our church finances.
- We noted that there is still a problem of damp in the Southeast corner of the Church, and agreed to investigate this further.

The next meeting of the DCC is the Annual District Church Meeting at 7.15pm on Sunday 10 April.

### Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The PCC met on 1 December.

Apart from reports from the churches and prayer together, the main business included

- Approval of building plans at St Alban's, to
  - ◊ Replace rotten window frames in the main church
  - ◊ Renovate and update the kitchen
  - ◊ Convert the large storage area off the main church to be a useable and flexible room.
- Agreeing fees for weddings and funerals in 2016 – the main part of these is set by the Church nationally, and has not changed significantly this year. We took the opportunity to increase slightly the fees paid to organist and vergers. We also took the decision to charge at cost for heating from next winter, where the heating would not otherwise be in use.

The next meeting will be on 3 February. Please note that the Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be on Thursday 14 April, rather than Tuesday 12 April, which is the date of the Rev'd Gennie Evans' licensing as Vicar of St Gregory's and the Epiphany.

## SHOPPING?

If you feel like a nice cup of coffee (or tea) and a breather, (and a biscuit), why not call in at **St. Thomas' Room**.

Coffee is served from 10.00 –12.00, every Friday and Saturday morning.

*Everyone is welcome – just pop in*





**You're invited to a**

# Pancake Party



**In the St Thomas Centre,  
7pm Saturday 6th February 2016**

Come and eat a pancake for your pudding!  
Everyone is welcome! Bring your neighbours, friends and relations!

**Bring your own toppings!**

**Raffle**

**Bring your own drinks**

**£1 per pancake**

**Games and races**

Please sign the list in the St Thomas Room if you'd like to come.

**QUIZ  
NIGHT  
&**



**£3 Entry / £5 Entry  
+ Fish 'n' Chips**

**FRIDAY 18<sup>th</sup> MARCH –  
Doors open 6.45PM  
@ The St Thomas' Centre,  
Church Street**

**Sign up in church/call 01902  
723310 and pay by  
Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> to order food  
(fish/sausage/pie+chips)**

**PRIZES TO  
BE WON!**

**TEAMS OF 6**

## What's on in...

## February

1	Monday	2.00pm	'Hand of Friendship' tea and chat in the St Thomas Centre
2	Tuesday	9.15am	Tom's Tots meet in the St Thomas Centre
3	Wednesday	7.30pm	PCC meeting
5	Friday	2.30pm	Holy Communion at Woden Resource Centre
6	Saturday	7.00pm	Pancake Party in the St Thomas Centre
7	Sunday <i>Sunday before Lent</i>	8.00am 10.15am 4.30pm 6.30pm	Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Holy Baptism Holy Communion
9	Shrove Tuesday	9.15am	Tom's Tots meet in the St Thomas Centre
10	Ash Wednesday	7.30pm	Eucharist for the beginning of Lent
11	Thursday	1.00pm 7.00pm	Charities Committee in the St Thomas Room <i>Wednesfield in Bloom</i> meeting in the St Thomas Centre
13	Saturday	12:30pm	Marriage of Donna Peebles and Alex Cooke
14	Sunday <i>Lent 1</i>	8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm	Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Evening Worship
17	Wednesday	10.45am 7.30pm	<i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church <i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church
20	Saturday	10:00am	Wedding Fayre in the St Thomas Centre
21	Sunday <i>Lent 2</i>	8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm	Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Evening Prayer
23	Tuesday	9.15am	Tom's Tots meet in the St Thomas Centre
24	Wednesday	10.45am 7.30pm	<i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church <i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church
28	Sunday <i>Lent 3</i>	8.00am 10.00am 6.30pm	Holy Communion (said) Parish Eucharist Evening Worship

**What's on in...**

March

1	Tuesday	9.15am	Tom's Tots meet in the St Thomas Centre
2	Wednesday	10.45am 5.00pm 7.30pm	<i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church Schools Federation Governing Body meeting <i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church
4	Friday	2.30pm	Holy Communion at Woden Resource Centre
5	Saturday	10.00am	Portrait and family group photography in the St Thomas Centre
6	Sunday <i>Mothering Sunday</i> <i>Lent 4</i>	8.00am 10.15am 4.30pm 6.30pm	Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Holy Baptism Holy Communion
7	Monday	2.00pm	'Hand of Friendship' tea and chat in the St Thomas Centre
8	Tuesday	9.15am	Tom's Tots meet in the St Thomas Centre
9	Wednesday	10.45am 7.30pm	<i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church <i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church
13	Sunday <i>Lent 5</i>	8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm	Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Evening Worship
15	Tuesday	9.15am	Tom's Tots meet in the St Thomas Centre
16	Wednesday	10.45am 7.30pm	<i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church <i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church
18	Friday	7.00pm	Quiz and Chips evening in the St Thomas Centre
20	Sunday <i>Palm Sunday</i>	8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm	Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Evening Prayer
21	Holy Monday	7.30pm	Meditation and Compline for Holy Week
22	Holy Tuesday	9.15am 7.30pm	Tom's Tots meet in the St Thomas Centre Meditation and Compline for Holy Week
23	Holy Wednesday	10.45am 7.30pm	<i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church <i>Pilgrim</i> Lent session in Church
24	Maundy Thursday	7.30pm	Eucharist of the Last Supper
25	Good Friday	10.00am 12.00pm 2.00pm	Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament Readings and silence before the Cross (until 2pm) Worship before the Cross
26	Easter Eve	8.30pm	Lighting the fire – first Eucharist of Easter
27	Easter Sunday	8.00am 10.00am 6.30pm	Holy Communion (said) Parish Eucharist Evening Worship

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# Holy Week...



<b>Palm Sunday</b> <i>20 March</i>	8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm	Eucharist (said) Palm Sunday procession and Eucharist Evening worship and reflection
<b>Monday—Tuesday</b> <i>21-22 March</i>	7.30pm	Meditation and Compline for Holy Week
<b>Wednesday</b> <i>23 March</i>	7.30pm	'Pilgrim' session and Compline
<b>Maundy Thursday</b> <i>24 March</i>	7.30pm	Eucharist of the Last Supper and vigil
<b>Good Friday</b> <i>25 March</i>	10.00am 12-2pm 2.00pm	Holy Communion Prayers before the Cross— <i>silence and readings in half-hour blocks; please come and go on the hour and half hour</i> Good Friday worship at the Cross
<b>Easter Eve</b> <i>26 March</i>	8.30pm	Lighting the fire - <i>silence, prayer then the first Easter communion</i>
<b>Easter Day</b> <i>27 March</i>	8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm	Eucharist (said) Parish Easter Eucharist Easter Praise



# ...and Easter

## A report from the Treasurer

### HOW FULL IS THE COFFER?

A year ago, I expressed concern over the fact that we were not paying our way. Specifically, we were not receiving enough income to enable us to pay in full our £49,825 annual parish share – that portion of our financial obligations that funds clergy training, housing, salary, insurance and pensions. At almost £1,000 per week, the Share commitment makes a major demand on our resources.



Happily, the present situation is a little rosier. Not only have we been able to pay our 2014 Share arrears, but also we have been able to pay all but a couple of thousand pounds of our 2015 Parish Share. There are various reasons why this has been possible. We are no longer fundraising for the Centre or the church clock and so income from events and activities such as the Christmas Fayre and the Grand Raffle can go into church funds. In 2015 we received more from wedding and funeral fees, and also from general donations. For once, our house in Duke Street incurred no heavy costs, so that net rent income was higher.



But (oh dear, that dreaded word!) even so, we were able to make ends meet only by using a £9,000 legacy and a £6,000 windfall, both of which would have been useful additions to that part of our reserves from which we will probably need to finance a new (and inevitably expensive) boiler in the next few years or embark upon much-needed interior redecoration. Then, too, there is the unforeseen, the rainy day of costly repairs and emergency spending. And, with a building like St Thomas, parts of which are over 265 years old, there is always the need to consider the rainy day factor seriously.

Average income from regular giving has remained fairly stable over the past couple of years – which means it hasn't risen at all. In fact, it was about £40 a week more ten years back.

So, although there is less urgency about our situation than there was a year ago, we really can't afford to be complacent, and the usual annual plea is surely justified.

Please:

- think prayerfully about your giving;
- increase it if you're able;
- give on a weekly basis, even if you don't attend services every week; and
- gift-aid your giving if you pay tax (making it worth 25% more to our church without it costing you any more) by contacting Jo Nicklin (T: 01902-731060).

As always, it's a case of priorities: how much do we really value St Thomas'? If our love for our church were reflected in our giving, the coffers would be brim-full and we should have far more money than we needed.

*Roger Poole  
DCC Treasurer*

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## Looking for a special present for Mothering Sunday?

On Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March, professional photographer Steve Elliot ([www.steveelliottimages.co.uk](http://www.steveelliottimages.co.uk)) will be setting up and running a photographic studio in the St Thomas' Centre, in aid of church funds.

Steve will be taking both family portraits and individual shots and with 7" x 5" prints available on the day, you need look no further for that unique Mothering Sunday present!

For further details, including prices, special offers and pre-bookings, please look out for information in the noticeboards in the St Thomas Room and the St Thomas Centre, or call the church office on 01902 723310.



## Seven Years, no itch...

On 31 March, I will have been Team Rector here for seven years. The licensing was originally scheduled for 1 April, so I'm quite glad that it was moved...

In some ways 31 March 2009 doesn't seem very long ago, though in other ways it feels like we've been here forever! Back then, I was appointed for seven years, like previous Team Rectors, but in 2011 the Church of England changed the terms of clergy licences so that we don't have a fixed time limit any more. I'm very relieved, because otherwise we'd have to be booking a removal van!

From the beginning of our time here we've felt very welcome at St Thomas' and our sister churches, and we're still clear that this is where God wants us to be for a while yet. Of course, things haven't worked out quite as we expected in many ways, and we've shared in some ups and downs of the churches along the way. But there've been many things that have been encouraging, and I believe that St Thomas' is getting healthier and more ready to serve God in the community year by year. Wednesfield is a good place to live, worship and serve God. And I don't think that my chapter in its life is finished yet.

So we're here for a while to come. I'm still reading the cartoons in the *Church Times* rather than the job adverts. The removal van isn't booked, and we may need to think about redecorating. During February I'm going on a 'Celebrating Ministry' course for those who are about half way through their ordained ministry, and I'll be thinking and praying hard about how I serve Wednesfield, St Thomas' and St Alban's now that I'm going into extra time here.

I look forward to seeing where God leads us together in the coming years, and I have one more sincere hope; that if I stay for long enough, then the next Rector may not have to get used to being called 'John' by large numbers of the congregation...

Thank you for sharing the last seven years – let's see what God has ahead of us!

Yours in Christ,

*The Rev'd Nick Watson*

I suggested to Nick that it would be good to write something as we reach the seventh anniversary of moving to Wednesfield, came up with the title, and suggested we both contribute. And now I'm wondering why I thought that was a good idea!

As Nick says, in some ways time has flown but much has happened since then. More than anything else it's been a time of great change for our family - when we came here one of the first things Lizzie did was choose her GCSE options and she's now nearly half way through university. Imogen was in her last year of primary school and is now in the middle of university interviews. Thomas was about to move up to juniors and it's now his turn to choose his GCSEs!

When we came here, then as with all clergy jobs Nick had been interviewed, and had met several people, and had read every word of the parish profile - he had at least some idea what Wednesfield might hold for him, even if the reality has turned out differently in a number of ways. Meanwhile I came briefly for a look round, and met Norma and Roger (and possibly some others, I can't remember now!).

It's never clear, in any move we have made, what I might end up getting involved with. It was lovely for me to be welcomed so warmly into the choir (let's just say that hasn't been the case everywhere we have been...), and I'm sad that my voice problems won't let me sing now. Little did I know how much the appeal would take over family life, and especially how many cakes I would end up making! And in 1996 I thought I must be mad starting a church toddler group with a small baby; 18 years later I knew I was mad to be starting another and it's great to see how Sarah and others have taken that on. It is fantastic to have the St Thomas Centre now, and to see how that has changed how we work as a church and in the community - it's hard to remember what we did before we had it!

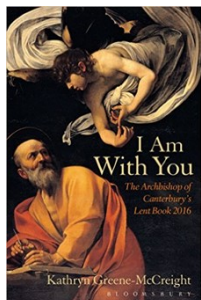
I agree with Nick that it doesn't feel as though this chapter is finished yet, and we look forward to all that is to come. The parish of Wednesfield has been great for all of us; we came tired and worn down in a number of ways, and whilst we are still often tired then that's because we are busy - sometimes far too busy. I feel we have (surprisingly!) more energy and enthusiasm for life now, even though we are seven years older! Thank you for everything you have given us, and thank you for letting us share our lives with you.

*Joanna Watson*

PS we can't possibly move for a while yet, I haven't finished unpacking from the last time....

## Reading and viewing for Lent

One good thing to take up for Lent is some reading, listening or other way of learning and growing in faith. We have our 'Pilgrim' sessions each week during Lent, but you might also want to try something at your own pace, so I'll recommend a couple of books and some other resources.



### *'I am with you' by Kathryn Greene-McCreight – the Archbishop's Lent book*

Each year, the Archbishop of Canterbury recommends a book for Lent reading. As usual, this year's looks like it'll need some work to think through, but I'll be reading it and happy to talk about the ideas that come up. It's written as an exploration of the theme of 'Light' through the Bible, and of how light shines in the darkest bits of our experience of life.

### *'How to Pray' by Stephen Cottrell*

I've recommended it before, but it's worth mentioning again in case you haven't read it! Bishop Stephen is very down-to-earth and realistic about prayer, and if you've ever wondered how to pray more deeply, or just wondered how to pray in the middle of a busy life, this is the best book

I've found for getting started.



### *justpray.uk*

You probably heard the controversy before Christmas about the Church of England's advert for this website being 'banned' from cinemas. Have a look! It's got advice on prayer, links to apps, videos and podcasts, and the opportunity to ask for prayer or be prayed for by others using the site.

### *Apps for your mobile phone or tablet*

If you like to listen to prayers rather than reading them, or to have a daily theme for your prayers, then try some of these. All of them will work on Android or iPhone, and all are free.

**Count your blessings** by Christian Aid gives a vivid image, a reflection and an opportunity to donate a small amount each day – all to make a difference to the world's most vulnerable people.

**Pray as you go** is my standard first thing to listen to while I'm at the gym or in the car. Music, a theme for reflection and a short talk on the gospel for the day's eucharist in 11-12 minutes. It's excellent, and often has extra seasonal meditations if you've got a bit more time.

**Abide** is another app which brings you spoken prayers to listen to and pray with, and some longer meditations. It's quite US-focused, and 'premium' features need a subscription, but you can try it and see what you think.

**Prayers on the move** by SPCK has a very short prayer for each day of the month which you can read or listen to in just one minute each day, and

**Daily Prayer: from the CofE** will help you to join in the Church's regular prayer morning, evening and night. It saves a lot of page-turning and bookmarking!

### *Anything else?*

If there's anything in Christian life and faith you'd like to read about, do ask Nick or Ness for some suggestions. Or if there's something you'd like to recommend to others, let us know and we'll see how we can pass on the advice!

*The Rev'd Nick Watson*

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## **Bishop of Wolverhampton's Pastoral Letter - February 2016**

A recent feel-good story, widely reported in the National press, concerns the village of Congresbury in North Somerset, which has been dubbed 'Britain's friendliest village'. This all stems from a brilliant initiative launched by the parish church, to celebrate the 800th year of its founding. The Church challenged members of the village to achieve 800 Acts of Random Kindness during 2015, recording their kindly words or deeds on cards, which were posted in a box at the Church.

The response to the idea was magnificent, with ARKs being carried out by young and old throughout the year, and ranging from delivering aid to refugees in Calais to paying a neighbour's Vet bill. With wonderful timing, notification of the 800th ARK was

received on Christmas Day. Interviews with residents confirm that the ARKs have brought the village together and deepened relationships across the generations.

This great idea, sponsored, promoted and facilitated by the parish church, can only have strengthened the church's mission within its local community. There must also have been numerous opportunities during the year, whether in schools, in church, or in radio stations, to relate the ARK campaign to its theological root, the ultimate ARK, God's gift of Jesus Christ.

My hunch would be that speaking of Jesus off the back of such a self-evidently good and life-enhancing campaign would gain a more attentive audience than speaking of Jesus in a religious vacuum. My evidence for that is part research based and part experiential.

Last year the Church of England, with other partners, sponsored a piece of research into contemporary perceptions of Jesus, Christians, and evangelism in England. The research was published under the title 'Talking Jesus'. It made, as the press were quick to point out, pretty sobering reading for the churches. Although the data, inevitably, is subject to many different interpretations, a pretty unavoidable conclusion is that simply talking about Jesus to non-Christians may well have a negative effect on their desire to know more about Him.

It would however be interesting to know how much more receptive people might be if they had just experienced an ARK. I remember going out with the Street Pastors in Wolverhampton on Halloween night. Our role was not to evangelise but to, in effect, carry out targeted acts of kindness, providing care in various ways to those who seemed vulnerable or in particular need. However on more than one occasion those who had received our gifts of water or flip-flops or friendship, themselves initiated conversation about our motivation for doing what we were doing, and conversations about faith and discipleship seamlessly opened up.

In previous years, the 'Love Life, Live Lent' campaigns have encouraged us to act out our devotion to Christ through daily acts of kindness and generosity. I encourage you to do likewise this Lent. Equally, might your church incorporate into its mission action plan an idea similar to that used in Congresbury? You don't have to live in a village or wait for an 800th anniversary to find ways of blessing your parish, and in so doing opening up opportunities to speak of God which may gain greater traction in 21st Century Britain.

+Clive Wulfrun



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01902 723310 or email [wednesfieldteam@gmail.com](mailto:wednesfieldteam@gmail.com)***

## Wednesfield in Bloom

In early January Simon Archer, editor of *Wednesfield Magazine* organised a meeting for people who might be interested in being part of Wednesfield entering the *Heart of England in Bloom* competition.

There was a great mix of people there, with many Wednesfield groups represented, including the history society, the scouts, the Lich Avenue community organic garden, Hands on Wednesfield and many more - including a few of us from St Thomas'.

I had always assumed that the 'in bloom' awards were all about lots of flowers by the Council parks department, but the success of Bilston in Bloom last year - who won a silver-gilt medal, showed that it's just as much, if not more, about working together as a community and thinking about flowers innovatively, such as using knitting, crochet and recycled materials to make flowers and decorate the village. Heart of England in Bloom is about "transforming communities in the region, making them greener, cleaner and instilling a sense of local pride".

There's already plenty going on in Wednesfield, so this is about co-ordinating activities, and perhaps doing that little bit more! There was a huge amount of enthusiasm at the meeting, and since then we have been thinking about what we do at St Thomas', including moving the Village Show to July, and perhaps making a bit more of the weekend of St Thomas' Day (the first weekend in July) as that's likely to be just before the judging!

If you'd like to be involved, either with what we are planning at St Thomas' or what's going on in Wednesfield, then why not come along to the next meeting, which is on Thursday 11th February at 7pm, in the St Thomas Centre. It's going to be great!

Joanna Watson



## Holy Baptism

*'Shine as a light in the world, to the glory of God the Father'*

- 6 December **Lilly Elizabeth Thomas**, daughter of Amy Alsop and Lewis Thomas  
**Josie Elizabeth Aston-Cook**, daughter of Emily Aston and Reece Cook  
 13 December **Martin Anthony Bridgman** (adult)  
 10 January **Rachel Elizabeth Jones**, daughter of Jennifer and Gary Jones

## Confirmation

- 13 December, by the Bishop of Wolverhampton, at St Gregory's Church, Wednesfield  
**Brian Gittings**  
**Stuart Lister**  
**Martin Bridgman**

## Funerals

*'God will show us the path of life; in his presence is the fullness of joy.'* (Psalm 16:10)

- 1 December **Carl Donovan** (88)  
 10 December **Doreen Mills** (79)  
 11 December **Graham Seaman** (75)  
 14 December **Joan Poole** (85)  
 21 December **Lily Jones** (81)  
 4 January **Reginald Westbrook** (89)  
 5 January **Dorothy Todd** (87)  
 8 January **Edith Rogers** (99)  
**Cissie Wharton** (88)  
 14 January **Sarah Jones** (44)  
 19 January **Betty Cartwright** (81)  
 21 January **Michael Cunningham** (66)  
 22 January **Iris Mason** (78)  
 26 January **Raymond Russell** (82)  
 27 January **Brian Rogers** (78)  
 29 January **Ivor Brinsdon** (85)



Left to right: Martin, the Bishop of Wolverhampton, Brian and Stuart after the confirmation service

## In Memoriam

*In loving memory of Graham John Smith  
 from Maureen, Wendy and Debra.*

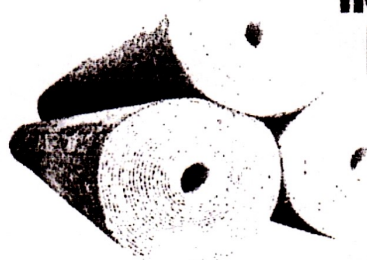
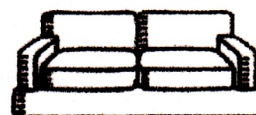
*In loving memory of Sandra  
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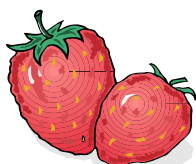
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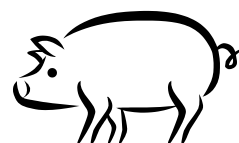
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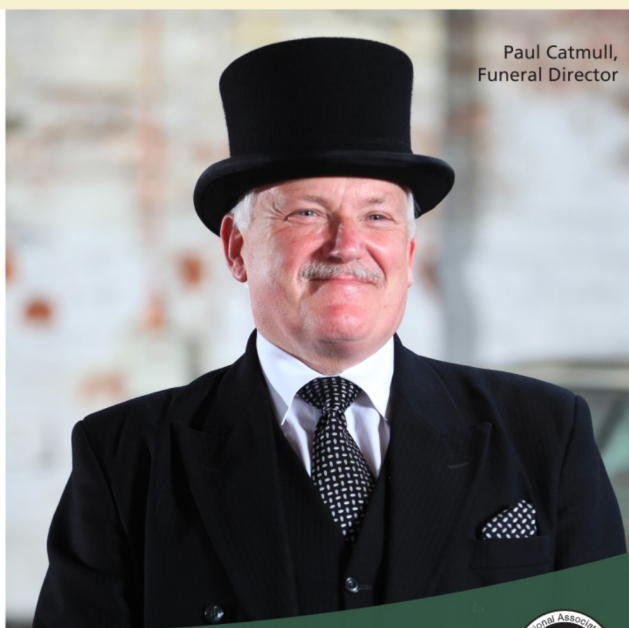
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