

CHURCH NEWS AND VIEWS

Easter 2014

Easter in Birdingbury was marked by two special services. The Palm Sunday walk with donkeys was blessed with good weather and two very well-behaved donkeys (thanks to Peter and Sue).



In Holy Week Karen led a well attended Good Friday service in Stretton with activities for children and families, and Dick enjoyed a quiet service of reflection in Frankton on Good Friday afternoon.

There were some innovations for Easter at St. Leonard's this year. During Holy Week, Eira and Aileen quietly created an outdoor Easter garden nestled at the foot of the large beech tree near the lychgate.



Easter Sunday's joyous service was led by Revd David Shaw, who very successfully involved all the children around the altar during the communion.

Afterwards Karen arranged an Easter Egg Hunt in the churchyard, which culminated around the Easter garden. The children

pooled their findings together in one basket and at the end there was a fair sharing of the booty so that they all had some chocolate to take home - or perhaps they stuffed their tummies on the way back!

Nature is now taking its course in the garden: the path to the tomb is quietly being obscured as the grass and wild plants grow and will hopefully flourish for the foreseeable future.



Photos: Matt Markham and Eira Owen

Altogether it was an Easter to remember: new beginnings all round.

Aileen and Dick Withington

St. Leonard's news and updates from Dick and Karen

Church Fete – Saturday 21st June from 2.30pm to 4.30pm

Plans are progressing well for our annual Church Fete in June. We would really appreciate your help and support. We are busy collecting items for stalls so if you have anything to contribute, please let us know. We can collect or you can drop off at Karen Armbrister's house (Davenport Cottage, Back Lane – leave in the front porch). Specifically we'd be grateful for donations of:

- Tombola and Lucky Dip prizes (unwanted gifts or new / nearly new items suitable for children or adults or bottles / tins – all the usual items!)
- Cakes (large and small) and preserves
- Books – fiction or non-fiction, but please, ones which may appeal!
- Plants or miscellaneous garden items

Raffle tickets will be circulated soon and we have some super prizes again. We hope you will buy some and also take some extra books of tickets to sell to family, friends, work colleagues, Uncle Tom Cobley etc.

Lastly, please do come up and join us during the afternoon. We are usually blessed with good weather but the stalls and delicious refreshments will be available whatever the weather. We really appreciate your support.

Churchyard Mowing

Due to a lack of enough volunteers, the PCC decided to employ a contractor to mow the churchyard every other week from May to September. The cost of this is £45 a mow. Several people suggested that we offer an opportunity for people to 'Sponsor a Mow' or a contribution to a mow. If you would like to help us in this venture, then please contact Daphne Chippendale, our Treasurer (Lyndhurst, Marton Rd) who will be very happy to accept your donation. Thanks to those who have sponsored mows so far. Thanks also to Simon Davy and Richard Davies who had the difficult job of mowing the churchyard after the winter prior to the contractor starting. It's lovely to see the churchyard looking tidy.

Interregnum news

PCC members from Draycote Benefice recently had a meeting with our Archdeacon Missioner, Morris Rodham, to share thoughts and views about our interregnum and

the process of appointing a new Vicar. It was encouraging that around 40 members attended. The real challenges which we have to face can be summarised as:

Affordability: The reality is that we cannot afford a full-time vicar. We believe we could consider a part-time incumbent, but some parishes (including Birdingbury) do not have the income to support this on a medium to long term basis, based on present levels of giving. Our Parish Share would double as we are unlikely to secure a non-stipendiary (self-supporting) Minister as previously. So how do we increase our income?

Growth: How can we enable our church community to flourish? We are thinking about what makes people want to be a part of a worshipping church community and, conversely, what turns them away. We are already working on ideas to create services and activities that are more inclusive and inspiring, that will encourage people of all ages to be involved and committed to St Leonard's. We hope to implement some of these ideas in the near future.

Attraction: How do we make ourselves attractive to a potential clerical candidate? We are looking at our structure and how we can manage ourselves more effectively, in the knowledge that multi-parish benefices are administratively challenging (4 PCCs are a test for anyone!).

The Diocese has indicated its willingness to support our endeavours but we have to show them a credible plan and evidence of early successes. These are exciting but challenging times for us all. So if you want Birdingbury to have a viable church, please support us and help us to keep it thriving and welcoming for everyone. Small village parish churches are very vulnerable and it would be very sad to see St Leonard's decline.

If you have comments on this, feel you'd like to talk things over or would like to make a financial pledge to support St Leonard's, then do please talk to us.

Thank you.

Karen and Dick

David Westcott's ashes were interred in St. Leonard's churchyard on 15th May in a short, moving ceremony.

Myrtle Shepherd's funeral service is at St. Leonard's on Monday 2nd June at 10 am, followed by cremation at Oakley Wood.

Letter from Kevin Downham, Lay Reader in our Benefice

Sitting in the sunshine at this moment suggests that summer may have arrived. But before too long the longest day will be here and then the nights will start drawing in. This period of 'after Trinity' in the churches calendar is the seemingly endless period of 'green' Sundays that merge into Harvest and Advent. The danger is that we become so focused at looking forward, that we fail to value each day.

Psalm 118 tells us, 'This is the day that the Lord has made; we will be glad and rejoice in it'. Think of a day in your life that was supremely wonderful and joyful. It may have been the day that your child was born, the first day in a new job or a wedding day. There are many possibilities for our supreme day – a day we might think was made in heaven.

However, every day is made in heaven; a gift from God given afresh for us to value and to invest in, to love God and our neighbour as ourselves. Each new day is an opportunity, a fresh start and its challenge can be taken with renewed strength and resolve. Each night brings stillness and letting go of work and worries.

Psalm 95, the Venite, heralds the start of each day and reminds us where the day came from: 'O that today you would hear his voice, and harden not your hearts' but to face it with thanksgiving. We do this safe in the knowledge that he is our God and we are the flock cared for by his hand.

May each and every day be a blessing.

Kevin Downham

Please feel free to contact your churchwardens, Dick or Karen, anytime if you would like to talk to us. If you would like to talk to a priest, we will happily put you in touch with one. Our contact details are on p.8 of Church News.



Francis Carter, who died recently, had visited several places associated with St. Leonard on his many travels.

These photographs show a wooden statue of St. Léonard, Abbot of Noblac, near Limoges and the tomb of Saint Léonard at the church in Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat in Haute-Vienne, Limousin, France.



JUNE and JULY SERVICES in Draycote Benefice Churches

Date	Place	Time	Service	Readings
Sun 1st June	Frankton Bourton Stretton	9.15am 11.00am 6.00pm	Holy Communion BCP Morning Praise Holy Communion	
Sun 8th June	Birdingbury Stretton Bourton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Morning Praise Holy Communion	<i>Acts Ch2 vv1-21</i> <i>John Ch20 vv19-23</i>
Sun 15th June	Bourton Stretton Frankton	9.15 am 9.15 am 11.00 am	Holy Communion Pet Service Songs of Praise	
Sun 22nd June	Stretton Birdingbury Princethorpe Frankton	9.15 am 11.00 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Morning Praise Morning Worship Holy Communion	<i>Romans Ch6 vv,1b-11</i> <i>Matthew Ch10 vv 24- 39</i>
Sun 29th June	Birdingbury	10.00 am	Benefice Holy Communion	<i>2 Timothy Ch4 vv 6-8 + 17 - 18</i> <i>Matthew Ch16 vv13- 19</i>
Sun 6th July	Frankton Bourton Stretton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion BCP Morning Praise Holy Communion	
Sun 13th July	Birdingbury Stretton Bourton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Morning Praise Holy Communion	<i>Romans Ch8 vv 1-11</i> <i>Matthew Ch13 vv 1-9 + 18-23</i>
Sun 20th July	Bourton Birdingbury Stretton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Holy Communion Evening Worship	<i>Romans Ch 8 vv 12 - 25</i> <i>Matt ch13 vv24 + 36 - 43</i>
Sun 27th July	Stretton Birdingbury Princethorpe Frankton	9.15 am 11.00 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Morning Praise Morning Worship Holy Communion	<i>Romans Ch8 vv 26 - end.</i> <i>Matthew ch13 vv 31 - 33 + 44-52</i>

David Westcott Treasurer and Secretary to St. Leonard's PCC

I believe that David became Treasurer in 1980 following the retirement of Jock Donaldson, who lived at Kilncroft, next door to me on Marton Road. In those days (the 1970's & 1980's) the Church Accounts were handwritten in a large ledger. So it was David who transferred the work to computer documentation. As with everything David did, the accounts were neatly and meticulously kept.

David decided that after 20 years, the year 2000 was an appropriate time for him to leave the post of Treasurer and instead took on the role of PCC Secretary.

At this point I was asked to consider becoming Treasurer. WOW, what a hard act to follow! David, bless him, then became my mentor for the first 12 months and in his calm and gentle way nursed me through the sometimes vague and often peculiar ways of keeping C of E Church Accounts. I fondly remember our Monday morning discussions accompanied by the delicious smells of Jackie's baking.

Thank you David for everything you did for St. Leonard's Church over many years.

Daphne Chippendale (Current PCC Treasurer)

Altar Guild AGM and Supper

This year's Altar Guild AGM took place at Aileen Withington's home. The Guild is a new thing for me and as a newcomer to the village, it has been a good opportunity to meet other women and to understand how Birdingbury 'works'.

After the general business of the evening we had a very jolly time aided by some delicious food and wine. Jacky's Chocolate and Chilli Tart was a winner for me!

Jenny Preston (Old Stone Cottage)

Benefice events for June and July

- Thurs 5 June 2.30 pm **Service and Tea**, Bourton, Frankton and Draycote Village Hall
- Wed 11 June 10.30 am **Home Communion** at Valerie Smith's, The Brambles,
Leamington Hastings
- Thurs 3 July 2.30 pm **Service and Tea**, Bourton, Frankton and Draycote Village Hall
- Wed 9 July 10.30 am **Home Communion** at Jackie Westcott's, Loen, Main St,
Birdingbury
- Wed 9 July 2.00 pm **Soul Space** at Elizabeth Kirk's, Eglantine, Fair Close, Frankton

The 20th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women to the priesthood

Memories of the day from Rev. Jo Stevinson, one of the first women ordained in Coventry Cathedral

The date and place: **Saturday, 23rd April, 1994, Coventry Cathedral**

The occasion: **The ordination to the priesthood of 35 women** (most of whom had been deacon, and therefore wearing clerical collars, for 7 years)

Finally, we could preside at Holy Communion Services and in God's name bless and forgive people. This joyous celebration was in the Cathedral where we were surrounded by families, friends and parishioners. Symbolically we had walked through ruins into Basil Spence's replacement cathedral and at the end of the service we emerged into sunlight and smiling faces. The following day I presided at the Eucharist for the first time in Leamington Hastings church and then we went to the Village Hall for a splendid buffet meal provided by Maggie Bartmanis and her family. A week later I had the privilege of marrying Dianne Witherford and Mike Powley in St. Leonard's, Birdingbury.

I have been fortunate in my ministry. Most of my time as a priest has been in supposed retirement where John, my husband and my incumbent priest, has always been supportive, along with many of you in Birdingbury and Leamington Hastings. However, I know that some of my contemporaries faced opposition in their parishes. Now it won't be long before the first female bishop is consecrated.

Celebrations of the 20th Anniversary have been high-key, starting with the national festivities in St Paul's Cathedral on 3rd May and then followed a week later by those in Gloucester Cathedral in my diocese. In Winchcombe where John and I live, we celebrated the occasion on the 15th at a service in St Peter's, our local church.

Some friends from Leamington Hastings and Birdingbury who had been most supportive of me at the start of this stage of my ministry, came to share in the Gloucester Celebrations with John and I.

I look back on our time in Birdingbury and Leamington Hastings as the climax of my full-time ministry. Thank you for allowing me the privilege to share in your lives.

Jo Stevinson

Rev. John Stevinson was vicar here and in Leamington Hastings some years ago. Realistically, John and Jo shared their ministry here but Jo was able to take a fuller part once she was ordained into the 'official' priesthood. Many of you will remember that wonderful occasion in Coventry Cathedral. Is it really only 20 years since women have been allowed to be ordained priests?

The newly ordained priests in the Cathedral ruins after the 1994 ordination.



On May 10th 2014 a celebratory service was held in the Cathedral for the 20th anniversary of the ordination of women to the Church Of England priesthood.

Bishop Christopher presided and the celebrant was the Dean of Women’s Ministry, Rev. Canon Katrina Scott. Also taking part were representatives from 1994 to 2013, each wearing a stole created for the occasion by the Rev. Naomi Nixon.

Three Roman Catholic women held up the same placards at this 2014 service as at the 1994 ordination: ‘Congratulations to C of E women from RC women’ and ‘.... And the women astounded us’. Food for thought!

On this photograph taken after the service, you may be able to pick out Rev. Christine Pollard (2nd row, 1st left) and Canon Barbara Clutton (3rd row, 2nd left), both former priests in Draycote Benefice.



Aileen Withington

Photographs: www.coventrycathedral.org.uk

St. Leonard’s contact information

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