

CHURCH NEWS AND VIEWS

Christmas 2015



Photo: Eira Owen

Carols, Candles and Crib Service

I attended the Christmas carol and crib service on the Sunday before Christmas with my husband and 2 boys (aged 14 and 11) and a friend visiting from London. It was lovely to walk down the path to the church with the lanterns with a tea light in it: it really marks the start of Christmas for our family.

The service, as ever, didn't disappoint – it is very informal and welcoming to all. We particularly liked the use of technology this year to show the Christmas story through the eyes of social media – very relevant to modern day life. Everyone appeared to be concentrating hard to keep up with the pace! A wonderful mix of modern and traditional. The children who did readings were fantastic - a very confident Erin Flint and I'm biased about my boys!

At the end of the service the congregation participated in Birdingbury's version of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', ably led by Liz Ellis. This was lots of fun with people having to stand up and sing dependent on the month of their birthday. With two of my family having January birthdays, they were up and down quite a lot.

After the service we all enjoyed a lovely glass of mulled wine and Christmas food.

Thank you Karen and Dick for a lovely start to Christmas. Our friend from London has asked to come back next year so that he can come again.

Paula Whitfield

Christmas Eve at Rugby Night Shelter

Homelessness gets a lot of publicity. We could easily think it is confined to cities but there are many homeless people in Rugby and other nearby towns. We decided to offer to help on Christmas Eve as we thought we would like to support those facing a more difficult Christmas than we could imagine. Rugby Night Shelter operates from the beginning of December to the end of March, with seven churches each taking guests on one night a week. In a loving and non-threatening environment they have dinner, overnight accommodation and breakfast.

We arrived at 6.30pm, and then vacuumed and tidied the room before laying a long table for 20 people. We helped to prepare dinner: that night's menu was chicken casserole with jacket potatoes, followed by mince pies and ice cream. There was no shortage of food as people had been very generous, delivering cakes and other goodies during the day.

Guests arrived with a pass issued by Hope4 that afternoon. At 7pm we served hot drinks and then they made up their own camp beds, while we checked each person's pass. Dinner was a lively and talkative affair and all ate well. After dinner, board and card games were played, there was more chatting and some guests settled down to sleep. We left at 10pm to return for Christmas communion at St Leonard's, ready to give thanks for our own homes, warm beds and loving family and friends. During the next morning we found ourselves thinking of those we had met and wondering how they were passing their time before gathering at The Benn Hall for a Christmas lunch hosted by Hope4.

In our busy lives we, as a family, get little time to spare. A little more would be a luxury that we would love. However, the way time drags for the homeless gives real pause for thought: for them it is not about what might happen tomorrow, next week or next year, but 'how do I get through today?'

The Night Shelter welcomes more volunteers. If you feel moved to help, contact Karen and she'll put you in touch with someone.

Jess and Andrew Armbrister

Churchwardens news and updates from Dick and Karen

It was lovely to see so many people at our three main services over Christmas. You are always welcome at St Leonard's, but Christmas is a time when we know we will see many more of our village friends, so we really look forward to those services.

If you are a reader of the 'Church Times' (and who wouldn't be!?) you will have seen our advertisement at the end of January. At long last, we have advertised for a 'House for Duty' priest, meaning someone who wouldn't receive a salary, but would have free use of our benefice vicarage in Thurlaston. Sadly, with our present income levels, we have not been able to provide the diocesan authorities with evidence that we can pay a salary (known as a stipend), so we have had to take this route. Many urban and rural parishes are in the same position, so we hope and pray that our advert will attract the eye of a good leader wishing to minister in this part of lovely rural Warwickshire. In these difficult times, many priests now need to earn a salary, so there are less looking for 'House for Duty' posts, but we are determined to remain optimistic that God will nudge someone in our direction! We are seeking a committed, experienced spiritual leader who wants to help us continue to develop our own skills and leadership across our parishes. This is very much in keeping with what is happening across the Church.

Our own lay led service 'Celebrate@4' (which is a monthly, late Saturday afternoon, 40 minute, very informal style of worship in a village hall) is a good example of this. It has been running for a year now and has brought a number of families and individuals of all ages together, who wouldn't normally attend more traditional Sunday services, so creating a new church community. New faces are always warmly welcomed and there are plenty of interesting, engaging activities for children. Details are on our 'Services' page if you feel like giving it a try.

This year will hopefully see our long-awaited toilet and servery facilities come to fruition. At present we are having detailed plans drawn up so that we can ask builders to tender for the job. It's likely to be expensive to convert the vestry, but to a large extent we hope to raise the money through personal pledges and some fund raising events, which we hope you will feel able to support.

Finally and importantly, Wednesday April 13th is our Annual Church Meeting in church at 7.30pm starting with refreshments. Everyone welcome. If you do not normally receive and would like a copy of The Annual Report, please contact either of us.

Karen and Dick

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2016 SERVICES in Draycote Benefice

Date	Place	Time	Service	Readings
Sun 7 Feb (Lent begins on Wed 10 Feb)	Frankton Bourton Stretton	9.15 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion BCP Holy Communion Evening Worship	
Sun 14 Feb	Stretton	10.30 am	Benefice Communion (Bishop John)	<i>Romans Ch 10 v 8b—13</i> <i>Luke Ch 4 v 1—13</i>
Sun 21 Feb	Birdingbury Bourton Frankton Stretton	10.30 am 10.30 am 10.30 am 10.30 pm	Holy Communion Morning Praise Morning Praise Morning Praise	<i>Philippians Ch3 v 17 - Ch 4 v 1</i> <i>Luke Ch 13 v 31— end</i>
Sat 27 Feb	Stretton Village Hall	3.45 pm	Celebrate@4	
Sun 28 Feb	Birdingbury Stretton	10.30 am 6.00 pm	Morning Praise Holy Communion	<i>1 Corinthians Ch 10 v 1— 13</i> <i>Luke Ch 13 v 1—9</i>
Sun 6 March Mothering Sunday	Birdingbury Bourton Stretton	10.30 am 10.30 am 10.30 am	Morning Praise Frankton and Bourton Joint Holy Communion Morning Praise	<i>2 Corinthians Ch 5 v 16—end</i> <i>Luke Ch 15 v 1—3 + 11b—end</i>
Sun 13 March	Stretton	10.30 am	Benefice Family Communion	
Sun 20 March Palm Sunday	Birdingbury Bourton	10.30 am 10.30 am	Benefice Holy Communion (10.30am at War Memorial for donkey walk to church) Morning Praise	<i>Philippians Ch 2 v 5— 11</i> <i>Luke Ch 22 v 14—23</i>
Thurs 24 Mar Maundy Thurs	Stretton	7.30 pm	Passover Supper + Communion + Vigil	
Fri 25 March Good Friday	Stretton Frankton	11.00 am 2.00 pm	Hot Cross Bun Service Devotions	
Sun 27 March Easter Day	Birdingbury Bourton Frankton Stretton	9.15 am 9.15 am 10.30 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Holy Communion Holy Communion Holy Communion	<i>John Ch 20 v 1—18</i> <i>Luke Ch 24 v 1—12</i>

A reflection on Lent and Easter

We have just put away the Christmas decorations and suddenly Easter is just around the corner! This year Easter Day is 27th March. One of the questions I am often asked is why the date of Easter changes, and how is it worked out.

This is my brief answer. The original dates referred to the actual events which could be fixed in relation to the time when Christ was crucified, which was the time of the Jewish Passover celebration. As the Christian Church emerged it had a natural reluctance to having the significant time of their faith tied to this Jewish festival and so variation began to occur. A fixed Easter was first created in 325 AD as the first Sunday after the Spring equinox. Fine, of course, for a time when the natural phenomenon of the sun and the moon was what governed the calculations.

However when the calendar moved on to fixed dates it gave significant variations. Easter can be anywhere between the 21st March and 29th April: explained by the fact that the revolutions of the earth and the sun do not synchronise. There has been talk for some years that Easter should become a more fixed time in our calendar and Archbishop Justin Welby has just offered his thoughts on the matter, but as yet it is speculation.

For Christians, however, the “when” of Easter is not the crucial factor; it is the “what” of Easter that is important. Christians of all persuasions and practices are in agreement that on that first Easter, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross because God loved us so much. It is the beginning, the heart and the end of our faith. We may disagree about how we should live out that faith, or the doctrines we use, but on that basic premise we are united. Easter is about God’s love for us, and the price that was paid for that love.

Lent began when Christians realised that they needed time to take in the wonder of God’s love. Originally it was a time of preparation for new Christians who were baptised at Easter. Now it is a practice undertaken by many as a way of preparing for Easter. It takes many forms, from simply giving up something for Lent to undertaking a programme of Bible study or contemplation beyond the realms of faith as we realise that the gift of Easter is a gift for the whole world. The ‘giving up’ of Lent is increasingly becoming a time of ‘taking up’, when people move their thoughts and actions into those for others rather than themselves.

David Shaw

A HAPPY EASTER TO ALL OUR READERS
from St. Leonard’s PCC and Church News and Views

Special services and events during Lent and Easter

The Lent 'York' Course theme for this year is 'The Psalms'. We will meet at Ian and Margaret Francis', The Firs, Main Street, Frankton at 10.30am, for 5 weeks starting Wednesday February 17th. The meetings are informal with time for discussion. You do not have to commit to all sessions; just come when you can.

Mothering Sunday March 6th 10.30am at St Leonard's. If possible, please can you bring a photograph of your mother to the service.

Palm Sunday March 20th Benefice service at Birdingbury. We will meet at 10.30am at the War Memorial when two well-behaved donkeys will lead us to church for the rest of the service. This will be followed by refreshments.

Maunder Thursday March 24th 7.30 pm Passover Supper with Holy Communion followed by a vigil at Stretton Church led by Revd David Shaw.

Good Friday March 25th. 'Celebrate' will meet at 9.30 am at Stretton Village Hall for Easter Craft activities for the young and young at heart, followed by a short 'Celebrate' style Hot Cross Bun service in Stretton church from 11 to 11.45 am. There will also be short quiet Good Friday reflection at Frankton church at 2pm.

Easter Sunday March 27th 9.15am at St Leonard's, Holy Communion led by Revd Hugh Priestner. If you haven't met Hugh before he is an excellent speaker. We look forward to welcoming you to this important service in the church's calendar..

Altar Guild notices

- ◇ Apart from Mothering Sunday, pedestal flowers are not required in Lent.
- ◇ Mothering Sunday: Barbara Munro is looking for volunteers to arrange baskets of spring flowers. Please contact her on 019266 632026 if you can help her.
- ◇ Easter flowers: Aileen Withington will be grateful for volunteers to arrange flowers for Easter. Donations towards lilies will also be appreciated. Please call 01926 632644 or text 06980 467629
- ◇ We would also like some offers of help to clean up after the flower arrangers for these church festivals.
- ◇ Our Annual General Meeting and Supper will be in April. Watch your email box or post box for the date, venue and time.

Events in Draycote Benefice in February and March

Shrove Tuesday Lunch
at The Friendly Inn, Frankton
on Tues 9th February, 12 noon for 12.30pm
Cost £8
Please contact Margaret Francis on 01926 632918 to book your place

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| Thurs 4 Feb | 2.30 pm | Service and Tea, Bourton and Frankton Village Hall |
| Wed 10 Feb | 10.30 am | Home Communion at Valerie Smith's, The Brambles,
Leamington Hastings |
| Wed 10 Feb | 12.30 and
7.30 pm | Ash Wednesday services at Coventry Cathedral |
| Thurs 25 Feb | 10.30 am | Coffee and Chat in The Birbury |
| Thurs 3 March | 2.30 pm | Service and Tea, Bourton, Frankton Village Hall |
| Fri 4 March | 7.00 pm | Women's world Day of Prayer Service, Stretton Church |
| Wed 9 March | 10.30 am | Home Communion at Jackie Westcott's, Loen, Main Street |
| Thurs 24 March | 10.30 am | Coffee and Chat in The Birbury |

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THANK YOU BIRDINGBURY

Thanks to your generosity £67.46 was sent to Rugby Night Shelter from Carol Singing and £161.30 was sent to The Children's Society from the Carols, Candles and Crib Service.

Daphne Chippendale, PCC Treasurer

Déjà Vu?

In the course of a three-way conversation between Karen, Dick and myself about this issue of Church News and Views, the subject of dates for Easter services and events quite naturally came up. 'When is it this year?' 'On the last Sunday in March?' 'That's very early!' 'So, we need to get Lent and Easter events into the Feb/March edition: I'd better get a move on then!'

Then we had a bit of a discussion on the difficulties caused by the moveable festival and feast of Easter. We agreed that it really was time that Christian churches acted pro-actively and fixed the date of Easter in this, the 21st century.

How surprising then, on the very next day, to read in the newspapers and hear on television news Archbishop Justin Welby offering his thoughts on this very matter!

Knowing how slowly the wheels of the C of E work, I can't imagine that this will come in my lifetime.

I am sure though, that there will be a toilet and kitchen area in St. Leonard's well before the Christian churches worldwide have even agreed on a fixed date for Easter, let alone put it into action!

Aileen Withington

St. Leonard's contact information

Priest in Charge	(vacancy)		
Churchwardens	Dick Withington	01926 632644	dick@special-time.co.uk
	Karen Armbrister	01926632030	karen.armbrister@btinternet.com
Parish Office	Wendy Driscoll (Mon and Thurs, 9 - 11 am)	01926 632370	draycotegroup@tiscali.co.uk
Ch. News Editor	Aileen Withington	01926 632644	awchurchnews@hotmail.co.uk

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 with a priest, we will happily put you in touch with one.