

St. Thomas' Church, Wednesfield

Church News



Photo of the skate park in Wednesfield Park by Tina Johnson, one of the winning photos in the 2016 Wednesfield Calendar



50p

December 2015 - January 2016

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.



Keeping Christ in Christmas

I remember reading a letter to a newspaper a few years ago, in which a Wiccan (pagan) priest was complaining that Hallowe'en was becoming too commercialised, and people were forgetting its original meaning. I remember thinking, with a bit of satisfaction, 'Now you know how we feel about Christmas'.

Every year there seems to be a media story about someone complaining that Christmas is being hijacked, whether by the shops, the council or someone else. Some years it's the (mainly invented) story that either Birmingham City Council or someone else are 'banning' Christmas and insisting that it should be called 'Winterval' or something like that. One year it was the complaint

that more and more people and adverts were using 'Xmas' instead of 'Christmas' – missing the point that 'X' is an ancient abbreviation, from the Greek word Χριστός – 'Christ'.

This year's manufactured argument, at least on the internet, has been about the coffee chain Starbucks 'banning Christmas' from its stores. Apparently, unlike previous years, this year's special Christmas coffee cups don't have Christmas images on them, but are plain red. An American rabble-rouser has had his five minutes of fame by ranting on YouTube that 'Starbucks hate Jesus'. In fact, previous years' cups have had on them images as a Christmas tree, a robin or a snowflake – never anything to do with the Christmas story. Even more 'in fact' – it doesn't matter. But lazy journalists who like to show Christianity in the worst light gave this non-story headlines saying 'Christians angered by Starbucks'.

I'm angered by Starbucks, but it's not over the design of their cups. It's over their tax-avoidance strategies. I think that asking them to contribute fairly to the economy of the places where they make their profits is probably a bit more important than demanding that they print a snowflake on their cups to prove they love Jesus.

Whose Christmas is it anyway?

In the end, the Church doesn't 'own' Christmas. I'm fully behind the advertising campaigns 'Christmas begins with Christ' – and if you want to watch a much better video on YouTube than a fundamentalist ranting about a cup, try searching for 'Baby Jesus handbagged.' But the point of those good videos and adverts is that they don't try to stop people celebrating in their own ways at this time of year. They try instead to remind them that there's something better to celebrate – the birth of Jesus.

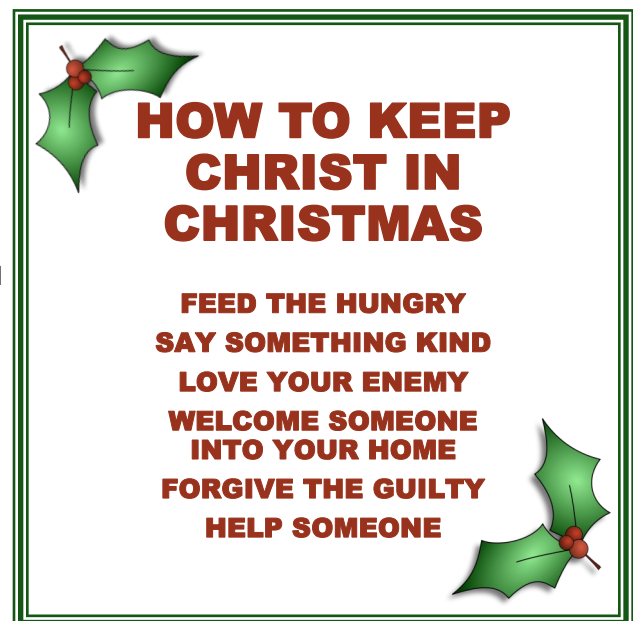
The reason that Christmas takes place at this time of year at all is because the Church was offering pagan people something better than the celebrations they already had. We don't know when during the year Jesus was born. So the Church chose a date when people were already celebrating the passing of the darkest day of winter, just after the winter solstice, and pointed them to the birth of a greater light, Jesus. This time of year is about God coming into the messy, confused world of humanity and transforming it with love and truth – at the same time transforming God by becoming one of us. Our challenge is not to insist that no-one should enjoy Christmas without coming to church, but to show them that the good news of Christmas is far greater than all the eating, shopping and partying.

Keep Christ in your heart, not just in Christmas

That will only happen if we let the same Jesus be born into our lives and actions. I don't often share posts on Facebook, but in the middle of the Great Starbucks Cup Controversy I did share one, with the text on the right.

Have a wonderful Christmas – and keep Christ at the heart of it by keeping Christ at the heart of your life and home.

The Rev'd Nick Watson



Rejoice!

Christmas Worship

at St Thomas' and St Alban's

Saturday 12 December

7.00pm Christmas Carol Service, mulled wine and mince pies St Alban's

Sunday 13th December

10.00am Christingle, celebrating God's light St Alban's
 2.30pm Messy Christmas - worship, stories and crafts for all St Thomas Centre
 4.30pm Christingle, collecting gifts for the Hope Community Project St Thomas'

Tuesday 15th December

7.30pm Ashmore Park Choir Concert, supporting Christian Aid St Thomas'

Saturday 19th December

10.30am Christmas Crib Service at St Alban's - songs, craft and fun St Alban's

Sunday 20th December

6.30pm Service of Nine Readings and Carols
 - music, candles and prayer St Thomas'

Christmas Eve 24th December

4.30pm Christmas Crib Service, with the Nativity Pantomime! St. Thomas'
 11.15pm Midnight Communion with candles and carols St Alban's
 11.30pm Midnight Mass - as traditional as Christmas gets! St Thomas'

Christmas Day 25th December

10.00am All-age Christmas Celebration St. Alban's
 10.15am All-age Christmas Communion St. Thomas'



Come and enjoy Christmas at your local churches

St Alban's Church, Griffiths Drive WV11 2LJ

St Thomas' Church, Wednesfield High Street, WV11 1SS

St. Thomas' Church, Wednesfield
Christmas Fayre
in the St Thomas Centre
Saturday 5th December
10.30am onwards
Family Festive Fun!
Come and see Santa!
Refreshments
Stalls
Entry: 20p

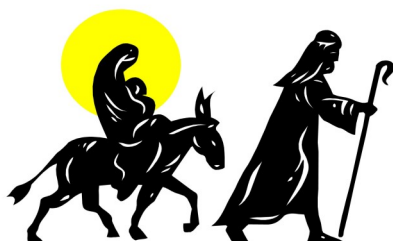


The Ashmore Park Choir

present their annual

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Tuesday 15th December, 7.30pm
Tickets: £5 (children £2.50)
Seasonal refreshments



All proceeds go to support Christian Aid

Wednesfield Calendar 2016



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Rounds News – Blackhalve Lane

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Offering the hand of friendship.



We are about to launch a social group. It 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 will be meeting monthly. Our first group meeting will be on **Monday 7th December 2015 at 2pm until 4pm** in St Thomas Centre,

In the New Year we will continue to meet on the first Monday of every month 2pm until 4pm.

Everyone will be made most welcome by Jill Ellson and myself.

Jayne Rogers



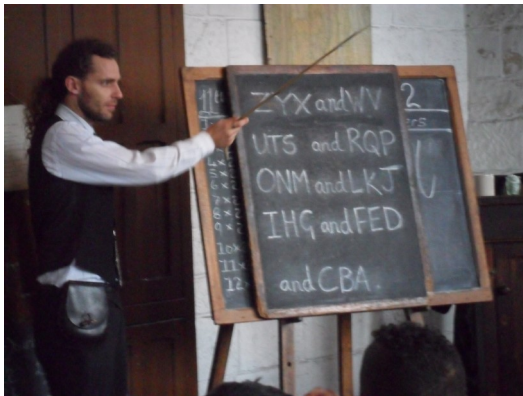
News from St Thomas' School

From Mr. J. Spicer, Head of School, St. Thomas' C of E Primary School

The Autumn Term has been busy at St. Thomas' - we have celebrated lots of fantastic work completed by the children at our weekly celebration assemblies. The Year 4 pupils also entertained the school and all of their parents with a fabulous celebration of Harvest. This year we donated lots of food to the Wolverhampton Food Bank which was given to school by the children.

Over the term the children from Years 1, 4 and 6 have been out on trips linked to the curriculum they have been learning. Year 1 have been to Cannock Chase, Year 4 have been to the Birmingham Art Gallery/ Museum and Year 6

have visited the Black Country Living Museum. Below is an account of the visit to The Black Country Living museum by one of our Year 6 pupils:



Year 6 Visit to The Black Country Living Museum

On Wednesday November 11th, Year 6 pupils set out for a visit to The Black Country Living Museum with four members of staff. We went of this visit because it linked in with our history topic about Victorian Britain in our local area.

We finally left school at about 9.15am and after a thirty minute coach ride to Dudley we arrived at our destination. We were met by our guide Derek and led into a room full of artefacts produced in the Black Country during Victorian times. Derek gave us a short talk and then we watched a video about the ways the industrial revolution changed lives in our local area. After that, we went outside and split up into three groups - each group finding out about a child who grew up in the Black Country during Victorian times. One group investigated the life of Rose Bradley, one looked at Lillian Hodgkiss and a third group researched the life of Samuel Webb. Each child came from a different background; Samuel and Lillian were quite poor and Rose was very privileged. During our investigation trails we looked at everyday life for these children.

We visited a mock Victorian school room and participated in a lesson. We learnt how to write on slate using a special writing style, we rehearsed our times tables by rote, our hands and nails were inspected for cleanliness and our behaviour had to be excellent otherwise we would be severely punished.

Following the school room visit it was time for lunch and fish and chips from the chippy!! Scrumptious!!! After that it was time to tour the Victorian shops: the pawn brokers, E Langston Hardware Store, Veal's Bakers Shop, T Cook's Sweet Shop and The Bake House.

After a long day we arrived back at school. Our trip helped us to learn a lot about Victorian Britain in our local area. A very enjoyable experience for everybody who took part.



From the Church Councils

District Church Council (DCC)

The DCC has not met since the last magazine, though it will meet on Wednesday 25 November, after the magazine has gone to press.

Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The PCC met on 22 September.

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

- Update on Parish finances, particularly with the completion of the sale of the St Chad's building and the closure of the St Chad's DCC account.
- Agreement to go ahead with the appointment of a part-time children's and families' worker, funded by the Diocesan Growth fund, the sale of St Chad's and the Wood End School Educational Charity.
- Ratification of the St Alban's DCC's plans for building work, to improve the kitchen facilities, convert the large storage room into a more flexible space and replace dilapidated windows.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 1 December.

Deanery Synod

The Synod met on 20 October at the Church of the Epiphany, Oxley.

- The main business was of presentation and discussion on developing the prayer life of the parishes.
- We followed up discussion of the purpose of the Deanery, with feedback from PCCs and DCCs. We agreed that the key role of the Deanery was to ease communication and support the work of the individual churches.
 - ◇ We will encourage people exercising similar roles in different churches to build networks, to share ideas and good practice, and to encourage one another.
 - ◇ We will establish a Deanery prayer letter, to be distributed to parishes bimonthly.
 - ◇ We will establish a Deanery website, mainly as a central point for information and contact between the churches of the Deanery.
- We prayed in particular for the appointment process at the Epiphany and St Gregory's – since then we are pleased to announce the appointment of the Rev'd Gennie Evans as Vicar.

'Living Faith' – the Bishop's Certificate

If you'd like to spend an evening a week learning about Christian faith with people from other parishes in the Deanery, you might be interested in *Living Faith*, a year-long course run by Ian Myatt, the lay chair of the Deanery, at Emmanuel Church in Bentley. The course follows the pattern of the Christian year, and as well as being a complete course in itself, it's also the foundation for anyone who might wish to explore any of the recognised church ministries.

If you'd like to know more, contact Ian on 01902 609571 or talk at church to Ruby Riley, who's recently completed the course.

SHOPPING?

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

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What's on in...

December

| | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Tuesday | 9.15am 7.30pm | Tom's Tots in St Thomas Centre – Christmas Cards Parochial Church Council Meeting in the St Thomas Centre |
| 2 | Wednesday | 7.30pm 7.30pm | Mothers' Union Christmas meal at Pavilion Restaurant Coffee, Cake and Craft Group in the St Thomas Centre |
| 3 | Thursday | 7.30pm | 'Life to the Full' evening in the St Thomas Centre |
| 4 | Friday | 2.30pm | Holy Communion at Woden Resource Centre |
| 5 | Saturday | 10.30am | Christmas Fayre |
| 6 | Sunday <i>Advent 2</i> | 8.00am 10.15am 4.30pm 6.30pm | Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Holy Baptism Holy Communion |
| 8 | Tuesday | 9.15am 2.00pm | Tom's Tots in St Thomas Centre – the Christmas Story St Thomas' School Carol Service |
| 9 | Wednesday | 2.00pm | St Thomas' School Carol Service |
| 10 | Thursday | 2.30pm 3.00pm 7.30pm | Coffee, Cake and Craft Group in the St Thomas Centre St Thomas' School Christingle Service 'Life to the Full' evening |
| 11 | Friday | 7.30pm | Wassail! Carols, readings, Christmas cake and mulled wine |
| 13 | Sunday <i>Advent 3</i> | 8.00am 10.15am 2.30pm 4.30pm 6.30pm | Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Messy Christmas! Christingle Service Deanery Confirmation Service at St Gregory's Church |
| 14 | Monday | 10.00am | Deyncourt School Christmas Concert |
| 15 | Tuesday | 9.15am 7.30pm | Tom's Tots Christmas Party in St Thomas Centre Ashmore Park Choir Christmas Concert, supporting Christian Aid |
| 16 | Wednesday | 2.00pm | Young Ones Day Nursery Nativity Play |
| 17 | Thursday | 7.00pm | Coppice Performing Arts College Christmas Concert |
| 20 | Sunday <i>Advent 4</i> | 8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm | Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Service of Nine Readings and Christmas Carols |
| 23 | Wednesday | 5.30pm | Carol Singing at Sainsbury's |
| 24 | Thursday <i>Christmas Eve</i> | 4.30pm 11.30pm | Crib Service – The Pantomime Nativity! 'Midnight Mass' – First Eucharist of Christmas Day |
| 25 | Friday <i>Christmas Day</i> | 10.15am | Christmas Family Communion Service |
| 27 | Sunday <i>Christmas 1</i> | 10.15am 6.30pm | <i>No 8am communion service this morning</i> Morning Worship Evening Worship |
| 31 | Thursday | 8.00pm | New Year's Eve party in the St Thomas Centre |

What's on in...

January

| | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Friday | | No 10am communion service this morning |
| 3 | Sunday <i>Epiphany</i> | 8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm | Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Holy Communion and New Year Covenant service |
| 7 | Thursday | 7.00pm | 'Wednesfield in Bloom' planning meeting in the St Thomas Centre |
| 8 | Friday | 7.30pm | Events Committee in the St Thomas Room (with chips) |
| 10 | Sunday <i>Baptism of the Lord</i> | 8.00am 10.15am 4.30pm 6.30pm | Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Holy Baptism Service of the Festival of the Baptism of the Lord |
| 12 | Tuesday | 9.15am | Tom's Tots in St Thomas Centre |
| 13 | Wednesday | 7.15pm | Mothers' Union AGM with Holy Communion in Church |
| 14 | Thursday | 2.30pm 7.30pm | Coffee, Cake and Craft Group in the St Thomas Centre Start! Evening on the basics of faith in the St Thomas Centre |
| 16 | Saturday | 10.00am | CakeFest in the St Thomas Centre |
| 17 | Sunday <i>Epiphany 2</i> | 8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm | Holy Communion (said) Family Eucharist with Junior Church Taizé-style Evening Worship |
| 19 | Tuesday | 9.15am | Tom's Tots in St Thomas Centre |
| 21 | Thursday | 7.30pm | Start! Evening on the basics of faith in the St Thomas Centre |
| 24 | Sunday <i>Epiphany 3</i> | 8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm | Holy Communion (said) Parish Eucharist Worship and prayer for Christian Unity |
| 26 | Tuesday | 9.15am | Tom's Tots in St Thomas Centre |
| 28 | Thursday | 2.30pm 7.30pm | Coffee, Cake and Craft Group in the St Thomas Centre Start! Evening on the basics of faith in the St Thomas Centre |
| 31 | Sunday <i>Candlemas</i> | 8.00am 10.15am 6.30pm | Holy Communion (said) Morning Worship Eucharist of the Light of the World |

EAT CAKES!

Saturday morning 10-12,
have a homemade cake
with your tea or coffee.

BUY CAKES!

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BRING CAKES?

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Saturday 16th 2016

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Sing to the Lord a New Song (or a very old one...)!

That (without the bit in brackets) is a quote from Psalm 149. Singing has been part of worship for as long as anyone knows. In fact, I gather from Lizzie (who has a university course called 'ethnomusicology' which sounds impressive) that there's no known religious tradition that *doesn't* include music, usually singing, as part of its worship.

There are loads of great hymns (and some really dreadful ones!) which have been written over the last thousand years, and lots of great and dreadful ones being written now. More and more, churches are giving up on hymnbooks, and using screens or sheets printed specially for each service, so that they can use more of the riches of our tradition in music, rather than just those which have been chosen by the editors of their particular hymnbook.

There's a great value to a good hymnbook, though. In one book we have a manageable number of hymns we can get to know well, while giving us enough variety – if they're well chosen - to see us through the year. But hymnbooks have to leave out some good old hymns, and can't keep up with those written after they're printed – in the case of our hymnbook, that's 1996.

What we're planning to do is to print a small supplement to stick into the back of the hymnbooks, with just a few of the songs we *wish* were in there. The worship committee has already discussed a list, with some classics which aren't in the book and some more recent hymns and songs. But this is your chance to suggest a song which the church should learn to sing! If you've got a favourite, old or new, please let Nick or Gill know.

On the other hand, you may have spotted something which is *in* the hymnbook but which we never sing. Point it out to us and we'll see if we can work it in to a service!



The Rev'd Nick Watson

Any Questions?

With Christmas coming, and pictures of the Holy Family still featuring on some Christmas cards alongside the robins, snowmen and winter villages, this one seems timely!

Did Jesus have brothers and sisters?

Simple answer – yes!

Technically they were half-brothers and sisters, but Jesus grew up in a fairly typical Galilean family, at least once he'd been brought back to Nazareth after his time as a tiny refugee in Egypt.

Jesus' brothers and sisters are mentioned a few times in the gospels, and his brothers are named in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 as James, Joseph (or Joses), Simon and Judas. Unfortunately, his sisters aren't named, but are just mentioned as 'all his sisters'.

When his brothers are mentioned in the gospels, it's not always in the best light. In Matthew 12:46-50, his brothers try to persuade him to give up preaching and healing, and to come home. In John 7:3-5, they seem to be a bit fed up of him, and challenge him to go south to Judea if he thinks he's so holy...

By the time of Pentecost, though, his brothers have joined his disciples (Acts 1:14) and the eldest, James, has a distinguished place in the early church. He led the church in Jerusalem when the apostles travelled as missionaries, and was respected by non-Christian Jews as well as by the church for his wisdom and his care for the poor. He has the deciding vote in Acts 15 at the great meeting where the church leaders decide to welcome non-Jewish people into the Church. He also wrote the letter of James, one of the most practical and down-to-earth bits of the New Testament – which I recommend you read carefully and prayerfully!

I mentioned that your Christmas cards may still have a picture of the Holy Family on, with their firstborn son in the stable. Often you'll see that the picture shows Joseph as an older man. That tradition seems to start in the late second century, with the *Protevangelium of James*, one of several books that try to fill in the gaps of what we know about Jesus' childhood. The book is supposedly by James, though it's certainly much later and probably written in Syria, not Jerusalem. The tradition became popular because as respect for Mary grew, people began to believe that she remained a lifelong virgin, and therefore Jesus' brothers and sisters were explained as being Joseph's children by a first marriage from which he'd been widowed. There's no evidence for this in the first 170 years after Jesus' birth.

So it looks very much as though Jesus grew up in a quite normal, large Jewish family – imagine what it would have been like to be his brother or sister!

The best news in the whole story, of course, is that you *can be* Jesus' brother or sister – look again at that passage from Matthew 12:46-50.

The Rev'd Nick Watson



Wassail!
Friday 11th December
in the St Thomas Room

Join our very own organist, Gill Edwards, for a relaxed evening of Christmas music, readings and food.

Mulled wine, Christmas cake and more.
 Not to be missed!



Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Looking on Mothers' Union website I came across an article about the Mothers' Union branch in Iraq. There are 3,000 members and 500 are active. Mothers' Union in Baghdad has the largest single group in the world. They daily face persecution for their Christian faith, but despite this have continued to flourish and work under the most difficult situation. Violence is never far away in Baghdad, they have suffered many frightening years. However through their prayers and their strong Christian faith, they have been able to slowly build up their local community. The Mothers' Union has built up a nursery school alongside their church, where local children have the chance to enjoy a safe place to play and also various activities taking place there. The church has established a health clinic alongside the nursery school, and the clinic provides free help for 2,000 people a month. Mothers' Union continues to provide food relief to hundreds of families, an outreach which is particularly vital when women were too frightened to go markets, as they were frequently bombed.

Mothers' Union comes together after Sunday morning worship, or on a Saturday and groups often meet in the evenings for prayer, the members say their prayer ministry is vital for their work. They say that it has ensured God's protection in these very difficult times.

At the time of writing this article I am looking forward to our annual Mothers' Union Christmas Meal. I hope it is successful and you all have an enjoyable evening.

The Mothers' Union subscription for 2016 is £20. Of this £11.50 is central membership (being sent to Mary Sumner House in London) and £8.50 is sent to Lichfield Diocese Mothers' Union. Please could you pay subscriptions by, or at, the AGM, as we have to send them off to Lichfield Diocese in January.

Our next meeting will be our AGM, which will take place in Church on Wednesday 13th January 2016, at 7.15pm, when the accounts will be produced. It will be preceded by a service of Holy Communion.

Thank you to Mothers' Union members for all your support in 2015, which makes a big difference to the lives of many families who are supported by Mothers' Union in many countries worldwide. A thank you to Margaret Glover for all she does for our branch.

Wishing you all a very peaceful and holy Christmas and a Happy New Year.

All welcome at our meetings.

Jill Ellson, Branch Leader



Christmas Appeal 2015

Malaria kills a child every 60 seconds. It leaves parents bereaved and orphans children. It is so common that people can catch it several times a year. Mothers, pregnant women and children are most vulnerable, and are dying needlessly from a disease that is so easily prevented.



Nigeria has one of the highest rates of malaria deaths in the world. Approximately 250,000 Nigerian children under the age of five die every year from the disease, a rate of 124 per 1,000 live births.

Women in particular suffer, not only as mothers or during pregnancy, but economically, socially and politically. They are the main carers, sometimes the core breadwinners, the ones who juggle home and work life whilst caring for sick relatives.

Christian Aid says: "We will never tackle malaria just by giving nets. It's about education, it's about inclusiveness, it's about empowerment and it's about rights. It's more than nets."

This year, we are invited to help Christian Aid to support this vital work, and, as usual at St Thomas', we shall have an appeal this Christmas. Please take home one of the special envelopes that will be available from Sunday 20th December and return it with your gift to one of the Christmas or New Year services.

Getting the message across...

A lot happens at St Thomas', and we try to let people know about it in all sorts of ways – apart from this magazine and the pewsheet, we use posters, leaflets, invitation cards, Facebook, Twitter, a website, press releases and anything else we can think of! Most important of all, we rely on *all* of us to spread good news by word of mouth to anyone who might be interested. But we'd never sat down to look at the big picture, and think about how it all fits together.

So...

Those of us involved in producing the magazine, with a few others, met Neill Harvey-Smith, the Diocesan Director of Communications, to start the ball rolling. He was very positive about what we're already doing, and with him we thought of a few ways to make our publicity and communications more effective.

Why should they care?

The first challenge to how we think about publicity is that most people don't know what church is, what it's about or why it might have anything to do with them. We tend to treat publicity as just letting people know about things in ways that get their attention – in fact we need to get people to see why they should be interested in what we're doing before we get as far as telling them about where, when and so on.

A picture is worth a thousand words

People read less than they used to, and respond more to images. We've found this on our Facebook page – if we post something with a picture rather than words, it gets a lot more interest. We need to have and use more pictures of what's happening at church, to get people's attention and show them who we are!

People are interested in people

As well as pictures, people are interested in stories of other people – so we need to tell our stories more widely and more creatively. If we're publicising a 'Start!' course, then a quote from someone who found it helpful last time will do more good than an explanation from the Rector of why it's a good idea to come. If it's a social event, then some good (and honest!) reviews from people who came last time will encourage people to take part.

More importantly, and part of the bigger picture, we need to do more to tell our stories of how faith in God has touched our lives and made them better. In the end, that's what all our communication has at its heart.

What can you do?

First of all, if you have ideas for how we can improve our communications and publicity, please talk to Nick or Ness – no idea is too daft or too 'obvious' to be considered!

Second, if you're interested in being part of a group to try to improve our communications, please see Nick – it doesn't have to be a long-term commitment, or a heavy one!

Third, look out for good photos or stories which those involved are happy for you to share, and which help to tell the world what we're about here – and pass them on to Nick or Ness.

Fourth, we do need practical help with all sorts of things, from producing the magazine to delivering invitations, from designing posters to keeping the Facebook and Web pages up to date – if you could commit a bit of time and interest to any of these, please let us know!

Fifth and most important – tell people what's going on, and why you're a part of St Thomas'! People you know will pay more attention to your opinions than to mine, or to all the posters and tweets we can manage. So talk about church, invite people to worship or to events, and tell your own story. After all, no-one else can tell your story as well as you can!

The Rev'd Nick Watson

Harvest Thanksgiving
Sunday 27 November
St Thom

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 9 June 2015
LOOKING FOR A UNIQUE GIFT? A TREAT FOR YOURSELF? OR HAND-MADE DECORATIONS FOR YOUR WEDDING? THEN JOIN US AT OUR CRAFT FAIR ...

On Saturday 20th June the St Thomas Centre, opposite St Thomas' Church in Wednesfield, will host its third Craft Fair. A variety of local makers, designers and crafts-people will be exhibiting a wide range of items including cakes, hand-crafted toys and bunting, hair accessories, jewellery, photographs, prints, candles and wedding decorations.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Wednesfield Team Ministry

Home | Calendar | St Alban's | How can we help? | Prayer | Links | Audio | Search | Photos | Magazine | St Thomas Centre | Village Show | Children and Youth

LyGC | Prayer for beginners

Welcome to the Wednesfield Team Churches

Welcome! Whether you're looking for information about our worship and church life, for help in arranging a baptism or marriage, or about local or family history, we hope that you will find what you need here – the pages are indexed at the top of your screen. If you can't find what you need, please [contact us!](#)

St Thomas' and St Alban's Churches serve the town of Wednesfield (North-East of Wolverhampton) together with St. Gregory's parish as part of the [Church of England](#) in the [Diocese of Lichfield](#).

We believe that God loves and accepts us all as we are, and that he calls us all to grow together more fully into our humanity with him. We'd be delighted to meet you in person at any of our [services](#) or [events](#), and hope that we'll be able to help you in that growing to which God calls you.

The Rev'd Nick Watson, Team Rector

This Week

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Tue 24 Nov | 09:15 Tuna Tots in St Thomas Centre 19:30 St Thomas Centre Management Committee in St Thomas Centre |
| Wed 25 Nov | 10:00 Holy Communion 18:00 Princes Trust Presentation in St Thomas Centre 19:30 DCC Meeting in St Thomas Centre |
| Thu 26 Nov | 14:30 Coffee, Cake and Crafts in St Thomas Centre 16:00 Christmas Lights Carol Service 19:30 Life to the Full evening in St Thomas Centre |

New Year, New Role?

January is a natural time for trying something new – whether it's a new hobby, a new discipline or finding a new way to contribute to the life and work of the church! One of the best ways to feel more fully a part of church is to take on one of the many roles in church life. There are different ways to serve, and most of them are open to anyone – so feel free to give something a try. We won't mind if you decide after a couple of months that it's not for you after all!

Whichever way you decide to contribute your gifts and time, we'll make sure that you're given any training and support you need, and that you're not called upon more often than you're comfortable with. So please give something a try!

Welcoming

If you remember the first time you came to church, I hope you remember being greeted by someone friendly who made sure that you felt at home, had all the books you needed and knew what was going to happen during the service. I also hope that someone chatted to you afterwards, especially over coffee!

Now you can help someone else to find a welcome at St Thomas' – it's not just about giving out books, it's about being a person who helps someone to feel at home here. It involves a bit of time before and after the service, especially on Sunday mornings. If you can help, please talk to Nick!

Bible-reading

As part of our worship, we hear from the Bible. If you're a confident reader and happy to read out loud, we'd love you to be part of the rota, and we'll make sure that you're given the chance to read. Please see Nick or Vi Blackmoor.

Leading Prayers

Each Sunday we rely on someone to help to focus our prayers as we bring the world's needs before God. It can be done in the 'traditional' way, with formal prayers and responses, or in other ways if you're feeling creative! If you would like to give it a try, please see Nick or Vi. If you'd like to try at one of the smaller services first, we can arrange that!

Presenting the Offertory

The offertory procession isn't just a practical matter of getting the collection, the bread and wine to the front of church. It's a symbol of our offering of all we have to God for his blessing and service. If you'd like to help with this, please see the churchwardens.

Serving in the sanctuary

Our servers help with the practical arrangements for worship, setting up before the service and clearing away afterwards, and they also add to the dignity and reverence of our worship by assisting the clergy through the service. You'll need to be confirmed, and to be able to walk while carrying a cross or candle! Please see Nick, Linda Storr or Alf Vaughan if you're interested.

Singing in the choir

Music is an important part of our worship, and our choir help to lead us in song. You don't need to be able to read music, or to be an experienced singer, but you do need enthusiasm and a willingness to practise and to learn new things! Choir practice is at 6.30pm on Friday, and members can join from Year 3 upwards – with no upper limit. Please see Gill Edwards or Immy Watson if you're interested.

Junior and Tots Church

Our children's church groups have great fun while they learn about God and worship together. If you could help practically, or lead some sessions for small groups, please see Kathryn Godwin or Sharon Peake.

Making tea and coffee

We need people to help with refreshments after services, on Friday and Saturday mornings and at events in church and the Centre during the week. If you could help, please see the churchwardens and let them know when you're available!

Pastoral visitors

Our team of visitors keep in touch with people from church who are at home through illness or any other reason, and some also visit those who have been bereaved. They need more visitors to care for our church community as we'd like. Training and support is given! See Sue Vaughan if you can help.

Anything else?

If you can think of any other way that you could help with the work and worship of church, please suggest it! Nick is always glad to talk about how you can grow as a Christian and as a church member.

**You are invited to St
Thomas' Church**

New Year's Eve Party

**8 'til late
In the St Thomas
Centre**

Bring food to share,
and bring your own
drinks.

And if you'd like to,
bring along your
favourite CD and a
board or card game!

Please sign up in the
St Thomas Room.

Christmas is for giving....

Each year at our Christingle service we collect gifts for children - and adults - who might otherwise have a gift at Christmas. The gifts are given to the Hope Community Project, in Heath Town. Here's a little bit about them, and the work they do.

The Hope Community Project supports people in need in Wolverhampton through youth intervention, family support, women's empowerment, older people engagement and volunteering programmes. Its strength lies in outreach work. Every activity undertaken at Hope comes from door-knocking and listening to the community's needs.

It began in 1985 when the Infant Jesus Sisters moved into the Heath Town estate in Wolverhampton and started visiting people in their homes. Heath Town suffered from the stigma of being a no go area. Gradually, by building relationships with the people, the Sisters identified the needs of people living there.

In 1994 a partnership was formed between the Sisters and Father Hudson's Care (a charity of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham), and Hope operated for nearly 12 years as one of Father Hudson's projects.

In 1999 Hope Family Centre opened in empty shop units, following a successful grant application. Hope workers continued to knock on doors and visit people in the area and gradually the Sisters moved from the estate.

Hope now has a team of five staff and a large team of volunteers, based in Heath Town, who provide support to the most vulnerable and isolated families, children, young people and older people by encouraging family life, confidence, cohesion and integration.

Project activities include:

- Outreach for older people and telephone support for older people who are isolated;
- Support and opportunities to promote independent living;
- Facilitation of youth groups, workshops and structured information sessions for children and young people;
- Support for young people at risk of exclusion, and activities for children outside school hours and during school holidays;
- Support group for families experiencing difficulties;
- One-to-one and group support for women experiencing relationship difficulties and isolation;
- Door-knocking and home visiting service;
- Classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (individual and group sessions);
- Volunteering opportunities for people from the local community.



For more details see their website hopecommunityproject.org.uk

If you are coming to our Christingle service, and you are able to bring a gift with you, please bring wrapped gifts, labelled with boy/girl/family and the suitable age range. Gifts are welcome for adults too. Thank you for supporting this worthwhile cause.



Merry

Christmas!

Crafts, songs and stories for all the family to get ready for Christmas!



St Thomas Centre
Sunday 13 December, 2.30pm
Christingle Service 4.30pm

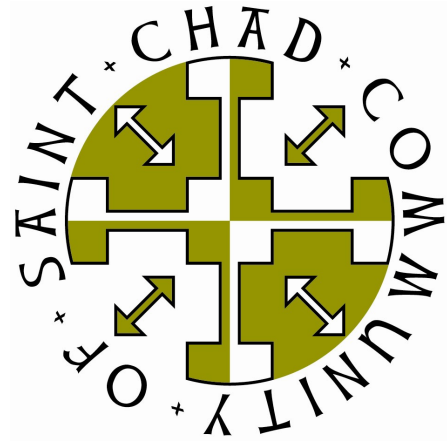


The Community of St Chad

Would you like some help to pray and to grow as a Christian?

The Community of St Chad is an open religious community within Lichfield Diocese, open to all Christians. It's based on a shared commitment to 5 Rhythms of Grace:

1. By God's grace, I will seek to be transformed into the likeness of Christ.
2. By God's grace, I will be open to the presence, guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.
3. By God's grace, I will set aside time for prayer, worship and spiritual reading.
4. By God's grace, I will endeavour to be a gracious presence in the world, serving others and working for justice in human relationships and social structures.
5. By God's grace, I will sensitively share my faith with others and support God's mission both locally and globally.



The Rhythms of Grace are not rules, but a series of things to aim for, ideas that when put into practice will help to nurture spiritual growth and foster Christian discipleship.

The Community booklet sets out a pattern of daily prayer for personal use, both for morning and evening prayer, giving a structure to follow for personal prayer. It also contains ideas on Bible reading, examining your conscience and setting up a Spiritual Companionship Group, usually meeting up once a month to share prayer and thoughts, which remain within the group.

If anyone would like to become a member of The Community of St Chad, we could form a group, maybe meeting informally once a month in one of our homes with tea, coffee and cake (of course!). We believe that this could be a great way to help us growing spiritually, not just individually but as a Church.

The Community of St Chad comes together as a group to worship once a year in Lichfield Cathedral. There are also retreats, talks and quiet days available if anyone would like to go along.

To find out a bit more, or if you'd like to see a copy of the Community booklet, please see Jill Ellson or Rev'd Nick.



St Thomas Centre, Wednesfield

***Are you looking for a venue to hold your party or community project?
Then why not come and have a look at the St Thomas Centre***

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contact Margaret Walker on
01902 723310 or email wednesfieldteam@gmail.com***

BISHOP OF STAFFORD'S PASTORAL LETTER DECEMBER 2015

I enjoy traditions surrounding Christmas but it is a pity if sentimentality hides the meaning of the Incarnation – God coming to live on earth because of love for each and every one of us. Not a 'gushing' or 'goosey' kind of love but love that is for the whole of creation and based on mutual honour and respect. A love that is not about maintaining the status quo but about regime change (as Bishop Gordon reminded us at our 'Goodness of God' Celebration).

Mary, for all her meekness and humility and willing obedience to God, understood the earth-shaking consequences of the Incarnation when the powerful would be brought down from their thrones and the lowly lifted up – the hungry filled with good things and the rich sent away empty! No wonder a child once wrote in an exam: 'When Mary heard she was to be the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta!'

This summer the political commentator Owen Jones was made an Honorary Doctor of Staffordshire University and delivered the most inspiring speech to new Graduates that I have ever heard on such an occasion. Irrespective of whether you agree with his political views, he made the important point that social change and improvement comes not from government but from people sharing a vision and working together. To quote a famous 'left wing' politician, Tony Benn: 'Social change is a combination of two things: the burning flame of anger at injustice, and the burning flame of hope for a better world'.

That so many people elected Jeremy Corbyn as the new Leader of the Labour Party indicates a dissatisfaction with how things are in our country where a small percentage are getting wealthier but the majority are getting poorer and many people in work are still unable to manage on their low wages. This is not a party political point but a reality – if you don't believe me, spend a morning with some of the wonderful members of our churches across the Diocese running the ever increasing number of food banks.

The media tells us that this sense of dissatisfaction is greatest among the young like those to whom Owen Jones was speaking at the Graduation. Yet they are missing from many of our Churches. It is important that this Christmas when we know we have people of all ages in worship whom we do not see at other times of the year, that they are helped both to enjoy the traditions and nostalgia but also to be given some understanding of what it actually means to have the 'Word made flesh' and the 'true light that enlightens everyone, coming into the world'.

Christians have those twin 'burning flames' of anger at injustice and hope for a better world and are called to be witnesses to the Goodness of God by working together to create a more loving and caring society that is focused on the needs of all people. This is not about the policies of political parties but starts with you and me – how we relate to one another and our willingness to acknowledge that the love of the baby of Bethlehem is for ALL people. This means something more than just candles and carols – it means the Church DOES have something to say to 21st Century Britain and CAN be a home for all who want to see a fairer society and more justice in the world.

The meaning of the Incarnation is so powerful perhaps people need to cloak it in sentimentality because otherwise it is a radical message too hot to handle!

A Happy, Peaceful and Challenging Christmas to you all!

*The Rt Rev'd Geoff Annas
Bishop of Stafford*



Jar of grace

UNICEF's Jar of Grace appeal has been supported at St Thomas' each Christmas for several years past, and once again there is an opportunity to participate in our church's response in 2015.

UNICEF's aim is to reach out to the world's most vulnerable children – children like Mame Koroma (4) who receives life-saving nutritional food in Sierra Leone or Metab and her son Khalil, who live in a refugee camp in northern Iraq, where UNICEF provides life-saving services.

Please take from the back of church a label which can be stuck on an empty jar. During Advent and the Christmas period, put a coin in the jar each time you give thanks for a meal. In January, or at a time to suit yourself, let me have your jar's contents for sending to UNICEF.

Roger Poole



Start!

Between New Year and the beginning of Lent we are starting a short series of four sessions at St Thomas' Church to watch a DVD together and think about life as a journey, about God, and how it all fits together.

Whether you're new to the church, preparing for a baptism, getting married or would just like to find out more, you'll find it a great, relaxed way to think through the basics of what Christian faith can mean to you and how it can help in your life.

The sessions are on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the St Thomas Centre:

- 14 January *Life is for living*
- 21 January *Oh my God! Jesus!*
- 28 January *What's gone wrong? How can we put it right?*
- 4 February *Into the arms of love*

We hope you will be able to join us at these sessions - and you are very welcome to bring a relative or friend if you would like to! If you'd like to book a place or to know more, please call me on 01902 731462 or email me on revnickwatson@gmail.com.

Rev'd Nick Watson

St Thomas' Church, Wednesfield

Wedding Fayre



On Saturday 20th
February 2016
11am - 3pm
Free admission

Find out about getting married in church

Range of local exhibitors

See the St Thomas Centre decorated for a wedding reception!

Are you a local business providing services for weddings? For just £10 you can be an exhibitor at our Wedding Fayre.

Call Joanna on 01902 731462 or email weddingfayre@wednesfieldteam.org.uk to find out more.

From the Parish Registers

Holy Baptism

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

- 4 October **George James Rutter**, son of Zoe and David Rutter
Logan Christian Cooper, son of Kerry and Michael Cooper
Dale Brian Ratcliffe, son of Lisa and Luke Ratcliffe
- 1 November **Alarna Violet Samuels**, daughter of Laura and Leigh Samuels
Isla Mae and **Katherine Grace Whittaker**, daughters of Rebecca Bickerton and Craig Whittaker
- 15 November **Scarlet-Marie Raw**, daughter of Emma-Jayne Cowley and Surinder Raw
Tobenna Favour Brandon Anerobi, son of Vivian and Onyeka Anerobi

Funerals

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

- 1 October **David Haynes**
- 9 October **David Philips**
- 12 October **Sharon Harper**
- 13 October **Barrie Cook**
- 15 October **Jean Markland**
- 20 October **Michael Wootton**
- 28 October **Christopher Leggett**
- 2 November **Annie Hodgetts**
- 5 November **Vera Ray**
- 9 November **Sandra Woolley**
- 17 November **Martin Astbury**
- 19 November **Leslie Pitt**
- Barry Roberts**
- 27 November **Terence Hill**

In Memoriam

In memory of our dearest friend Jean,
from Norma and family

In loving memory of Ken Smith from
his wife Kath

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Wolverhampton WV10 0QP

Text - 07807 539789

If your Group would like us to mention any event "on air", please contact us with details.

Essington Fruit Farm

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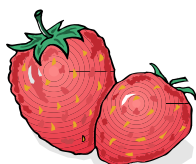
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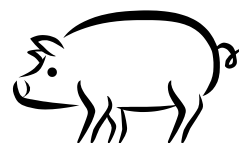
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