

Parish News

For Malpas, Threapwood and Bickerton
April and May 2021



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"St Oswald's with St John's Threapwood & Holy Trinity, Bickerton"



@st_oswaldmalpas



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Angela Latham 01948 860544

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Julian Prayer Group (monthly, first Monday)

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HOLY TRINITY BICKERTON

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PCC Secretary:

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Rachel Hall

Note from the Editor

I am pleased to enclose the April/May issue of the Parish News which has an emphasis on the retirement of our rector after some 10 years working in our community. Ian announced his retirement from the full Ministry commitment on 13th December 2020 to take effect from 30th April 2021. He will continue for another 4 years as Chaplain to HM the Queen This issue contains a special letter from Ian and a number of tributes from our Churches and the Communities he worked with. He will be missed as many of us owe him a profound debt of gratitude for his selfless commitment to the whole community.

I do hope that you find this issue of some value and that we can continue to produce the magazine in the coming months. If you have any comments or wish to submit a piece for the June issue please get in touch.

The deadline for inclusion will be 10th May.
Please send details or questions to nigelbriers@btinternet.com

Nigel Briers (Editor)

Letter from the Rector

Dear All, This is the last time that I shall have the privilege of writing to you all. I came here to Malpas and Threapwood just over 10 years ago and it is 9 years since I became Incumbent of Holy Trinity Bickerton and the new benefice was created. It has been a privilege to serve as first Rector of the United Benefice . We have adventured together and I will always remember my years in this most lovely part of the Cheshire border country with much affection. I have enjoyed living in this area and as I commented soon after I arrived it has been a joy to travel around between visits and services as there is always a lovely view to see and appreciate and this at all times of the year. I have been truly blessed in every way and I take with me many happy memories. I have been made to feel at home in our communities from the very beginning and this helped me to settle in and to join in the various activities and events and as you will recall I even had a go at learning to ride a horse to take part in the Queens Diamond Jubilee Parade of 2012!! I thank those who have served with me in the 2 parishes and the running of the 3 churches as Church Wardens, PCC Members and Secretaries and Treasurers and all Church Officers, Leaders of Groups, the wonderful editors of this marvellous Parish News and the “army” of people who quietly make sure week by week that “the church is kept for you and me” and Margaret and Karen by helping me over the years here in the Parish Office at The Rectory and also my colleagues Fr Antony and Revd Helen who have enriched all our lives and my ministry with their friendship, special gifts, insights and ideas.

I thank Canon Peter Lee who has been so much a part of my ministry here and the other clergy of the deanery who have helped out as well in these parishes. I have been greatly blessed to be part of the worshipping life of the parishes and so I salute The Late Bob Carter Verger, and Ann the new Verger, Stewart and the superb choir at St Oswald's, to Shelia for playing the organ for Evening Prayer each week so sensitively, to Ben Kellett and the excellent team of Tower Bell Ringers at St Oswald's and to all the team at St John's and to Gill at St John's and her wonderful choice of hymns that reflects not only the season of the churches year but also how we all feel and to all the team at Holy Trinity and to Rachael at Holy Trinity whose choice of hymns brings to life the lovely mixture of styles we use and who treats us to the tunes of my favourite film "The Sound of Music" as well before many services! We have also been greatly blessed by being part of the wider church in our communities in High Street Church and Brown Knowl Church and (until is sadly closed) St Joseph's Malpas and our special link with Tallarn Green Methodist Church.



It has been a great privilege to work alongside Mr Sweetnam and the team at Holy Trinity Church School and Mrs Worthington and the team at Malpas Alport School as a governor and also to be able to go into both schools to take assemblies. I have been enriched and enlivened by being allowed to be a part of these truly great places of learning for life in every way. It has also been a privilege to be invited into Bishop Heber High School across the years and to welcome them to St Oswald's for their most impressive Carol Service each year and to be present at the most moving Remembrance Tide Assembly in school each November. It has also been a privilege to be Chaplain to 617 ATC Squadron and I thank them and wish them well for the future.

I also record the privilege of being involved in the life of Prospect House and so being a small part of the wonderful team who offer such care there as I was also at Old Hall Residential Home. Amongst the most precious memories are the ones from those who I have met across these years be that at Craddock Court where we have had our monthly Communion Services or at the many clubs and society's in the area or on the High Street in Malpas or at village gatherings in Malpas, Threapwood and Bickerton. Each community is so special and it has been a privilege to work with the Parish Councils and I go with so many happy memories. Sadly some of those I have met and known have now passed to glory but to those who read this letter right across these villages I want to say a heartfelt thank you for your support, your friendship and fellowship. I leave you to retire from full time ministry much enriched by the years amongst you.

I was ordained in 1987 and served my title in Blacon Chester with Canon Tony Boyd to whom I owe a debt of gratitude in the wonderful training that he and the folk of Holy Trinity gave me that has been at the centre of all I have tried to do in West Kirby Wirral from 1991 to 1997 and then in Oxton, Birkenhead in both church and in Birkenhead School from 1997 till I came here in 2010. The years seem to have gone very quickly!!

It has also been a privilege to serve as Rural Dean of both Birkenhead and Malpas and in both deaneries I have been a part of wonderful teams of clergy and laity in our service to Our Lord and Saviour. My thanks to Marion Randles Lay Chairperson and The Revd Tim Hayward Chapter Clerk and all colleagues both clerical and lay for all their support, fellowship and friendship which has enriched my life. I remain a Chaplain to the Queen till I am 70. I know that there is more ministry in store for me in Gods good purposes but in a new way now. Very soon you will all be entering a new phase in the life of the churches, school's and communities around here and that is right as God's plan is an enfolding of that greater plan that we can all be part of as we seek His will for our lives. I ask His blessing on you all. I will miss you and will never cease to pray for you with gratitude and thankfulness for all you have given to me.

This last year of Covid 19 has been a very difficult time for us all and so I salute all those who have made it possible to open our churches and for worship when it has been possible or felt right to be open and to those who have made possible the videos/weekly sheets/Wednesday Wave of Prayer/ Julian Group Letter/Social media and Website as a means of keeping in touch and to those who have done that by telephoning others.

In farewell, where I have been able to do any good may The Lord's name be glorified, where I have failed or acted clumsily I ask your forgiveness and pardon.

May God bless us all. Ian, Rector.

Tributes to Ian

As our Rector, Ian shares his love and enthusiasm to unite our communities. A friend to everyone, Ian is kind and generous with his time, his caring spirit has supported us in changing times, and we wish him much happiness in his retirement.

Bill & Angela Witter & Family

We were standing in Church Street waiting excitedly for the procession to begin. Then we heard the Cavalcade coming . All of a sudden there were shouts "It's the Rector..... OUR RECTOR !, Ian was heading up the whole Cavalcade fast approaching, riding a striking bay. How did this happen? Our Rector was an Urban Man from the bright lights, still new to the rural way of life.

Ian has immersed himself in every aspect of country life here at Malpas. He is to be found taking Assembly in the Alport school or visiting the Heber School, Prospect House or taking communion to the residents of Craddock Court. He has worked with High Street Church and with St Joseph's before the rebuilding.

Ian has created an environment in the Church where the music has been able to flourish; and the choir, concerts and organ recitals have been enjoyed by everyone.

There is only space to mention a small amount of what Ian has really done for our village. It is with immense sadness that we will see him retire at the end of April.

We are arranging a Special Day for Ian on Sunday 27th. June, 2021. when everyone can celebrate with him(Covid -19permitting.).

Angela Latham Church Warden

When Nigel, I and our boys moved in to Malpas in 2013 we had a wonderful view of the Church living next door and on our first Sunday living here we went to have a look and we were hooked first becoming Sides Persons, then members of the PCC and then Nigel joined the Choir and I became a Church Warden and all because of Ian.

Ian has a magical way with him, you only have to see him walk down the street and chatting to everyone, a smile and a cheery wave. His dedication to his job and position in the community is second to none, he works so hard, nothing is too much trouble.

Every year without fail Ian would turn up to the Malpas Village Fair in his Panama Hat and compare the whole show, with both ease and grace he truly is a showman.

Ian's devotion to St Oswald's has given amazing life to the Church through the choir and the bellringers. He has been an instigator in the building of the toilet block, kitchen and children's area, he has been the power behind those given the task to get the job done.

I am honoured to have been part of your team Ian and I wish you a very long and happy retirement with plenty of travel. Nigel and I will miss you greatly, and hope that we will see you often therefore we say this is not Goodbye but Au revoir

Beverley Dobson (Church Warden)

Tributes to Ian

‘Ian came at a time when the attendance at St John’s was at an all time low. he came with such enthusiasm and humour that soon we had a flourishing congregation and a renewed sense of fellowship. He gave us the incentive to refurbish St John’s (including his request for heating!!!). We will miss him enormously.’

Sir Jonathan Clark

PCC rep St St John’s

Who among us can credit the Rev’d Canon Ian Arthan Davenport has been our Rector at Holy Trinity, Bickerton, for a decade! Where has the time gone? And, of course, it is only when faced with the imminent departure of his familiar presence that you begin to realise what you are losing. So, it is time to assess what Ian has come to mean to us over the years; to pay tribute and give thanks to a man who has devoted ten years of his life to the spiritual life of our Parish.

Ian came to us through change, when Holy Trinity became newly bound to the benefices of Malpas and Threapwood. Ian has looked after us all, as well as his other responsibilities as Rural Dean and Chaplain to her Majesty. But, despite his many and various commitments, he has proved even-handed and unstinting in all his duties throughout the three parishes. He has made us feel connected to the other parishes, but understood we are also individual. We will remember and smile fondly at the innumerable occasions when Ian took the early service (9.30am) at Holy Trinity: at the end of the service he would wave his farewells, trot briskly up the aisle, swerve at the door to pick up a biscuit (guiltily) and drive off to Malpas to arrive in timely fashion for the 11 o’clock service there! We have sat and listened to his many illuminating sermons, giving us pause for thought and reflection of course, but often giving us cause to smile and raising our spirits. Ian has led us through the cycles of the Church year – the highs and the lows – ministering to a packed church or a quieter congregation – but always welcoming and engaging.

Ian is very well known in the wider community too which is testament to his devotion, caring and kindness. How many thousands of private visits has he made during these years among us, not just in times of sorrow and grief, but also to give thanks and share the good times too? There have been so many parish get-togethers down the years – outside and inside – at the Church, in the Village Hall and in private houses. Whatever the cause, whatever the weather, there haven’t been many Ian has missed!

Each one of us will have a special memory of Ian. Co-vid will not shadow those memories. We have been blessed to have him among us for so long and we thank him from our hearts for his ministry and for being our friend. May he have a long and well-deserved retirement.

Colin Capewell

Warden on behalf of the PCC and Congregation at Holy Trinity

Tributes to Ian

It has been a real pleasure and privilege to work so closely with Ian at St Oswald's for the past ten years. From our first meeting at the Rectory with the Church Wardens and Ian, I was made to feel very welcome and at home at St Oswald's. Ian has respected and supported my love of the Choral and Organ Sacred repertoire and equally I have enjoyed supporting him in his liturgical choices. It is only through his support that we have benefited from a Choir of over 25 which has sung in Chester and Hereford Cathedrals which I know has made him very proud. He has always been welcoming to new choir members and to the many artists who have given performances and recitals in St Oswald's. Concerts have been encouraged by Ian and to help these, he has supported ongoing improvements to the Organ and the purchase of a grand piano. I hope he will continue to enhance his enjoyment of Church music through his continued Canonric at Chester Cathedral and his role as Queen's Chaplain as well as other places of worship which I am sure he will attend. I have encountered and worked with numerous clergy since the age of 8 and it is very rare to meet such a kind, considerate and hospitable friend as I have been privileged to find in Ian.

‘May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.’
(Irish Blessing)

Stewart Smith Director of music St.Oswald's

A tribute and farewell to Ian Davenport.

Our community is facing a great loss, and I am sure all the community will be sorry to see him go.

Since Ian came to the post of Rector for St Oswald's Church at Malpas, he has worked tirelessly for the local community.

I discussed his arrival with a fellow Parish Councillor, and we agreed that we should try to engage our new rector in community events; this to refresh and boost our community spirit that we felt was drifting apart.

Ian has certainly not disappointed us, and right from the start he was keen to engage with the local community.

I first met Ian when he attended, as St Oswald's Church representative, at the inaugural meeting of Malpas Community Links which was held on 18th May 2010 in the Malpas Alport Primary School.

Tributes to Ian

Whilst Ian declined to join the committee did offer his support at the meeting, and he has kept that promise at every community event I have been involved with ever since.

There are many to speak of, but the major ones have included:

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in 2012.

Every Malpas Village Fair since 2013.

Over the ensuing years, Ian has been a very strong supporter of all our community activities.

Looking back over the years and the events there have been some challenging times

But under Ian's guidance the congregation at St Oswald's has increased considerably.

St Oswald's Church is now renowned as "the place" to host your rural wedding and the town has seen an increase in our cultural spectrum through the excellent concerts that Ian and his team have organised.

Despite his increased workload, when he took on the leadership of the United Benefice of St Oswald's, St John's at Threapwood and Holy Trinity at Bickerton, he has continued to be involved in organising of major village events.

In March 2016, I meet Ian in the Fire Station Café for a coffee. It was here that the idea to stage the hugely successful Malpas "100 Years On" event to commemorate the 100th anniversary of end of World War One was hatched.

Ian accepted my offer to join the organising team, to take on what was a huge challenge of being able to strike the correct balance between creating an enjoyable community event and marking the sombreness of the occasion. However, Ian accepted the challenge and rose to the occasion by masterminding alongside Rachael Reeves and Janet Blake, the spectacular concert and poppy display in St Oswald's.

He was fully on board with our plans to stage a similar community event to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the end of World War 2 in Europe, but sadly national events overtook this one.

Nothing was ever off the agenda for Ian, and Rachael Reeves and I made him lead a 5 mile group walk from St John's at Threapwood to St Oswald's as part of the June 2019 Rector's Ramble; this raising some £4,000 for Church funds

Over his time in Malpas, nothing has been too much trouble for Ian.

One reward I think he is proud off and is an indication of the esteem is regarded by his colleagues by, was his appointment as Chaplin to Her Majesty the Queen.

Ian will be sorely missed by everyone in the local community, I would wish him a long and health retirement

My sincere best wishes,
Chris

Chris Whitehurst
Chairman Malpas Community Links
Malpas Parish Councillor

Tributes to Ian

Former Churchwarden's Appreciation of Ian

I first met Ian 11 years ago at the time of his interview as our potential future vicar. Our first impressions were of someone who we felt would bring something special to our parish. He certainly did not disappoint having well exceeded all our expectations, spiritually and socially, leaving us with a closer, stronger family. His first impression of Bickerton's rural community however did not get off to such a good start. While sitting in his car along our lane, having arrived a little early for his interview, he was challenged by one of the locals, as looking rather suspicious and asked to move on.

I feel we will all agree Ian has been an outstanding Rector who we are going to really miss for his spiritual guidance, enrichment of our worship, involvement with the children in our school and his friendship across the parish. He has worked tirelessly participating in all aspects of community life including his active involvement in governing our school and in numerous local organisations and committees. He has gone far beyond the call of duty and has been much valued by the many families who he has supported at times of need. Despite his heavy work load he has always been able to find time to help others. On so many occasions he has gone out of his way to visit someone seriously ill in hospital late in the evening or changed his holiday arrangements to provide them with support and comfort. His talent in conducting distinctly personalised baptisms, weddings or funerals and the effort he puts into preparing them has made these such memorable occasions for many local families.

We as a parish were immensely proud, as we know he was, when he was appointed as a chaplain to the Queen. Being a strong royalist he has rightly been proud in this role conducting services in royal chapels and attending a number of garden parties at the palace. Occasions he will still be able to enjoy for a few more years in his retirement.

As a churchwarden during his time here, I have got to know Ian well and very much valued his friendship and support. We have had some really good discussions during which it has been refreshing that he has always been willing to listen to alternative views and together reached good compromises. Our regular warden's meetings and those of the PCC which could have been rather formal, dull occasions he has always made relaxed and friendly while business like, almost occasions to be enjoyed.

While we are all going to be sorry to see him retire he now deserves time for himself to relax away from the demands and politics of parish life. We wish Ian every happiness and good health for a long retirement, sharing time with friends around the country, enjoying holidays and lots of reading. For us it will be a period of change which will take time getting used to.

Brian Jeffcoat

The United Benefice of St Oswald Malpas and St John Threapwood
and Holy Trinity Bickerton Services for March and April 2021
Morning Prayer is said from Monday to Thursday at 8 30am at St Oswald's.
Holy Communion is celebrated on Wednesdays at 10am at St Oswald's

Please book in for those services marked below by phoning the Rectory or Val and Colin on
01829 782345

Sunday 28th March Palm Sunday

8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
9 30am Parish Communion at St John's
9 30am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity please book
11 00am Service at St Oswald's followed by The APCM please book
4 00pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

Friday 2nd April Good Friday

10 30am Good Friday Service at Holy Trinity
2 00pm Good Friday Service at St Oswald's
4 30pm Evening Prayer at St John's

Sunday 4th April Easter Day

8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
9 30am Parish Communion at St John's please book
11 00am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity please book
11 00am Parish Communion at St Oswald's please book
4 00pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

Sunday 11th April The Second Sunday of Easter

8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
9 30am Service at Holy Trinity with APCM please book
11 00am Parish Communion at St Oswald's
4 00pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

Sunday 18th April The Third Sunday of Easter

8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
11 00am Parish Communion of Farewell to The Rector at Holy Trinity please book
11 00am Parish Communion at St Oswald's
4 00 pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

Sunday 25th April The Fourth Sunday of Easter

8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
9 30am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity please book
9 30am Parish Communion of Farewell to The Rector at St John's please book
11 00am Parish Communion of Farewell to The Rector at St Oswald's please book
4 00pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

The United Benefice of St Oswald Malpas and St John Threapwood
and Holy Trinity Bickerton Services for May 2021

Holy Communion is usually celebrated on Wednesdays at 10am at St Oswald's.

Please note that services may be cancelled or type changed if a celebrant or officiant
cannot be found

Sunday 2nd May The Fifth Sunday of Easter

- 8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
- 9 30am Parish Communion at St John's
- 11 00am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity
- 11 00am Parish Communion at St Oswald's
- 6 30pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

Sunday 9th May Rogation Sunday

- 8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
- 9 30am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity
- 11 00am Parish Communion at St Oswald's
- 6 30pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

Sunday 16th May The Sunday after Ascension Day

- 8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
- 9 30am Parish Communion at St John's
- 11 00am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity
- 11 00am Parish Communion at St Oswald's
- 6 30pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

Sunday 23rd May Pentecost- Whit Sunday

- 8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
- 9 30am Parish Communion at Holy Trinity
- 11 00am Parish Communion at St Oswald's
- 6 30pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

Sunday 30th May Trinity Sunday

- 8 00am Holy Communion at St Oswald's
- 9 30am Parish Communion for The Patronal Festival at Holy Trinity
- 11 00am Matins at St Oswald's
- 6 30pm Evening Prayer at St Oswald's

High Street Church Malpas

Methodist & URC



We are sorry to announce, that due to the current situation and uncertainty of government



guidelines, the High Street Church remains closed for Sunday Worship, Cheeky Monkeys and any group meetings. When we re-open we will welcome you all to

'Come, just as you are to Worship'

Contacts: Rev. David Hamblin 01270 625789, Rev Rob Weir 01948 663936



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Easter Julian Meeting

We are occasionally invited momentarily to step outside the taken-for-granted reality of everyday life. It would seem, then, that not only am I capable of being open to mystery, but the mystery appears to have given us some tiny element of its own essential nature so that we can speak both of our need to search and of a sense of being met. In the words of the poet Rilke, 'everything beckons to us to perceive it'. Now I am not about to take off into some mystical flight of fancy. On the contrary. What I am speaking of could not be more common in the experience of earthbound people like us. It would seem - and the evidence is overwhelming - that many, perhaps most, people have experiences of the transcendent, numinous experiences which may or may not be recognised by those concerned as authentically religious. Some are quite commonplace, others more striking. Sometimes these moments are so unexpected and revealing that people remember them all their lives: moments of transcendence which John Taylor calls 'annunciations', and which usually take the form of a brief heightened perception of reality. He writes: 'Experiences of God are experiences of the ordinary seen in the context of an otherness which enfolds them all and lies within them all. . . . The secularisation of the human outlook may have banished the supernatural from the day-to-day conversations and calculations of millions of people, but that is no reason for supposing that the beyondness at the heart of things discloses itself any less widely or frequently.'

Two common features of such recorded experiences are that time seems to be temporarily suspended and that you are in harmony with the whole creation. You lose your sense of self, you are united with a greater whole. The two commonest triggers for such times of heightened perception are nature and music: and almost all those questioned felt the experience to be life-affirming and good. Like Julian of Norwich, the medieval anchoress who had a series of mystical 'visions' of Christ which resulted in her deep conviction that, despite much that was painful and destructive in her life, in the end 'all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well', many who write of their experiences use very similar words to describe something that is positive and strengthening.

What such beguiling and unshakeable experiences suggest is a kind of momentary lifting of the veil between a seen and an unseen world, sudden moments of illumination which are gratuitous and unsought for, when things seem transfigured. But they are glimpses of a destination that we shall never know fully until we reach it.

Let me sum up what most would recognise to be the characteristics of these rare, life-changing moments of seeing or hearing things with heightened perception. They seem to have a rightness and inevitability about them; they feel like an experience of reality, though of a different order from what we normally perceive; there is a sense of communion: for a moment you feel you are one with what you see or hear; they appear to transcend time as we know it; and they leave you with a joyful sense that ultimately 'all will be well'. There may also be in them what some have felt bound to describe as a sense of recognition. They almost always happen when a person is alone, and they come when they come and cannot be created.

God knows we need some moments of reassurance at this moment in time as we strive to remain positive and faithful to our God as we journey again through Passiontide to Easter.

At the end of April we say farewell to our Rector Ian. Ian has been a stalwart supporter of our Julian Meetings. We shall always remember him as a very generous host at the Rectory, putting all of us at ease as we grappled with the demands of contemplation. He often referred to the Meetings as 'being the powerhouse of grace in the parish' and frequently encouraged parishioners to join the group. We hope to continue the Meetings when the world returns to some sort of normality. So, many thanks Ian for your inspiring leadership and good wishes for a happy retirement.

Brian Fletcher

Beeches Pre-School

Edge Village Hall,
Edge, Malpas,
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The Church Calendar April 2021

April begins this year with Maundy Thursday. The drama that began a few days earlier on Palm Sunday unfolds Act by Act as it continues through Holy Week – Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Eve – until it reaches its climax on Easter Day. This is one story - the story of God's purposes of salvation. Each of these days deserves a page if not a chapter of its own so I apologise for flying through them! I hope however that you will take time – in real time – to reflect on their significance and enter into the story. Because if we only pick up the story at Easter Day, if we only celebrate Easter, not only do we miss out on the rest of the drama but the true significance and the joy of Easter is lessened. On Maundy Thursday we are with Jesus in the Upper Room where he ties a towel around his waist and washes his disciples' feet. He breaks bread at the table in anticipation of his betrayal and death. We go with him to the Garden of Gethsemane where, before his arrest, he bids us keep watch and pray but so often, like his closest disciples, we find it hard to stay awake. On Good Friday we travel to the foot of the Cross. Our churches are barren. Jesus is crucified. His body is laid in a stone-cold tomb. His mother's heart is broken. The End? No, there's another Act - Easter Day! What a morning! Jesus is raised from the dead. So what? Is there a sequel to this drama? A rather less glorious event perhaps - Bank Holiday Monday? Christians believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything. Easter Day was the day the world changed forever because it means that Jesus is alive today! As a consequence, Easter Day can sustain us every day of our life, long after the glorious morning is over. The resurrection is the basis of our hope for life before death as well as beyond it. May we know the joy and hope of Easter not only on Easter Day but every day of the year.

Prayer:

Father God, we rejoice in this season of hope. So often we have doubts and fears and we lack faith. But you bring us new life and lasting hope. We thank you that Easter is about your love and your salvation for all who confess with voices, hearts and lives that Jesus is risen. Renew and strengthen our faith at this Easter time, we pray. Amen

Revd Helen Molesworth

The Church Calendar May 2021

The month of May has two very significant events in the Church calendar. Firstly, Ascension Day celebrated this year on the 13th May, and secondly, Pentecost (otherwise known as Whit Sunday) on the 23rd May. The Day of Pentecost marks fifty days since Easter Day and brings the Easter season to an end. It is a major feast of the Church's year when Christians recall how God's Holy Spirit was given to the disciples after Jesus' ascension, empowering them to begin the task of making disciples of all nations.

At the Ascension of Jesus, the Risen Jesus and his disciples are gathered together when before their very eyes Jesus is lifted up to heaven. This is Jesus's last earthly appearance. The disciples are left, gazing wistfully up into the sky. Imagine being one of them - you meet an amazing man who changes your life and you embrace his vision for the world. He dies in dreadful circumstances and you grieve, only to have your hope miraculously restored when this man rises from the dead! But then he takes you up a mountain and leaves you. Nothing left to do now but to gaze up into the sky. But Ascension is not the end of a story but instead marks a new beginning. Jesus had promised his followers that, although they would not see him after his Ascension, they would receive the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire them. And that is what we celebrate at Pentecost. Christians believe that the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in every believer. The Holy Spirit comes to help us and guide us, in every aspect of our lives. In this way the experience of the one day of Pentecost is not just a historic event but can become a reality for each of us and prepare us for a lifetime. We cannot do everything in our own strength. This past year has been a test of endurance for all of us in many different ways. As we celebrate Pentecost may we remember the availability of God's power with us today equipping us, comforting us and enabling us to do things we never thought possible.

Prayer:

God of power,
Grant us the power of your Holy Spirit as you have promised.
May the gifts of your Spirit enable us,
May the comfort of your Spirit encourage us,
And may the joy of your Spirit be our strength,
now and always. Amen.

Revd Helen Molesworth

Music at St Oswald's – A Reflection

Where does the time go? I cannot believe that at the end of December 2020 I will have been Director of Music at St Oswald's for 10 years. During this period we have consolidated a choir with a membership exceeding 25. The Choir has been and still is, a great team. There have been changes in membership as youngsters have moved on and older members have sadly passed away. Most recently these include, Kath Gill, Marjorie Barlow who were so loved by us all. The repertoire of the choir has grown vastly with a wide variety of the Mass settings ranging from Palestrina to the 21st century composer Philip Stopford. The choir sings a range of Motets during communion each week according to the Church's calendar. When there is a 5th Sunday in the month we sing Matins. This is always a big sing leading the congregation in the singing to chants of the Venite, Psalm and Benedictus. The Te Deum is sung to a setting, most popular being Stanford in C. The choir has sung Evensong in Chester Cathedral several times, and two years ago enjoyed singing Evensong in the beautiful Hereford Cathedral. We have established a tradition on Palm Sunday Evening of performing a major choral work for Passiontide. These have included Stainer's Crucifixion and Faure's Requiem.

During the Summer months the Rector has set up a series of Choral Evensongs on the 2nd Sunday of each month. This has been an opportunity to invite visiting choirs which have included Chester Cathedral Choir, The Borders Singers, Vox Vocavit, Abbey Gate College and several others in addition to our own choir of St Oswald's.

Concerts have become a regular feature at St Oswald's with support from the Entertainments Committee providing refreshments. Each Easter and August Bank Holiday we hold a coffee morning followed by a recital lasting 45 minutes. Admission is free with a retiring collection in aid of the Church. In 2021 we hope to start up these concerts again with Opera Singer Peter Edge being featured in April. Evening Concerts are now a well-established feature at St Oswald's and have varied from Orchestral/Choral Concerts featuring local choirs to small ensembles and soloists. In 2016 we were honoured to have an Organ recital given by Roger Fisher, former Chester Cathedral Organist, in celebration of his 80th birthday. At the opposite end of the spectrum, in February 2020 the Church filled for a 'One Man Show' by 17 year old Henry Smith who entertained with comic sketches as well as solos on piano, Organ and Tuba. Henry is Deputy Head Boy at Abbey Gate College and a member of the Junior Royal Northern College of Music. The evening raised £1300 towards the pew cushions appeal.

Over the past 10 years I have been keen to have investment made into the maintenance of the historic Lewis Organ. The current organ builder is Brian Jones from Liverpool who has a lifetime's experience in organ building in the north west. The organ is now at Concert pitch meaning it can be used with an orchestra. Most recently, thanks to a generous financial donation, Brian has been able to re-new all the leathers on the bellows and work on some of the air leaks in the pneumatic action. More money still needs to be spent, but we are getting there.

So to the present time. 2020 has been a very difficult year and it has not been possible to have the whole choir together until recently. However, during the first lockdown we were able to provide some singing and organ for videoed services. Once Church opened in July, a soloist sang at each Sunday Communion Service. From September, we were allowed a group of 6 to sing. Now, the RSCM has said that provided we follow social distancing and keep singers in bubbles of 6 when not singing, we can increase the choir size. We recorded an Advent Carol Service which went on You Tube and we will be signing 2 Christmas Carol Services with the full choir.

Hopefully 2021 will be a time of returning to normality when we can get our concerts up and running as well as having the whole choir at every service.

Stewart Smith (Director of Music)



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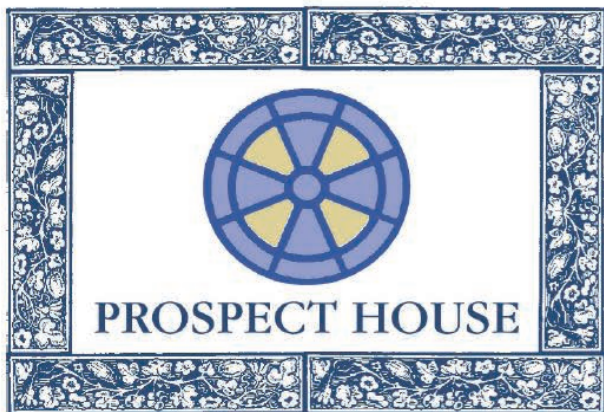


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Our Parishes 100 Years Ago

In January 1921, in the three parishes which make up the present-day benefice, the incumbents were Rev. Lawrence Armitstead (Malpas), Rev. Charles Robert McKee (Bickerton) and Rev. C R Pembridge (Threapwood). Nowadays there are just the three Anglican places of worship serving the benefice, plus two nonconformist churches (Malpas High Street URC/Methodist and Brown Knowl Methodist). In 1921 there were many more: the three parish churches, also with Anglican mission rooms at Edge and Stockton (both in Malpas parish) and Bulkeley (in Bickerton parish); and 13 nonconformist churches/chapels, these being Primitive Methodists in Agden, Bickley, Broxton (Brown Knowl), Bulkeley, Hampton, Malpas, and two in Wigland (Higher and Lower Wych); Wesleyan Methodists in Hampton and Malpas; and Congregationalists in Chorlton (Lane), Malpas and Threapwood – a total of 18 churches, chapels or mission rooms. Today, 5 are still open for worship, 3 have been demolished or are derelict, and 10 have been converted to other uses, mainly residential.

JANUARY – JUNE 1921

Many of the postwar generation of children were given names which are back in fashion today. In the lists of baptisms in the three parish churches can be found: **GIRLS:** Gladys, Eileen, Annie, Rachel, Jean, Mesby, Dorothy, Phyllis, Winifred, Eleanor, Molly, Kathleen, Helena, Lucy, Violet **BOYS:** Dennis, Sidney, Ronald, Cyril, James, Thomas, Ernest, Noel, William, George, Edward. Hopefully they would have later attended one of the Sunday Schools, of which there were six associated with the Parish Churches and the Mission Rooms (Edge, Stockton and Bulkeley). Some of them, although baptised in the Church of England, may well have attended Sunday School at one of the nonconformist chapels. In February it was announced that Mr Arthur Callcott had resigned the post of Superintendent of the Malpas Sunday School, having worked in it as a teacher and as Superintendent for sixty years, during the incumbency of six Rectors. Mr Callcott was the Malpas clock and watch maker and repairer, whose former shop is now occupied by 'My Father's Moustache'.

There was a perception that standards of morality had fallen during the war, leading to a national 'White Crusade for Purity Campaign', to be conducted in Chester Diocese in February and March. Malpas Deanery was asked to take part. In March the vicar of Threapwood commented in the magazine, 'There is sadly too easy public opinion about the lusts of the flesh and it is to stir up a greater abhorrence of these sins ... that this Crusade is put forward'.

Other news from the three parishes included: **MALPAS:** There was to be a confirmation service, attended by the Bishop of Chester, at St Oswalds on March 11th. The death was reported of Mr John Graves Walgate, one of the partners in the Church Street draper and outfitter 'Walgate and Leake', which many older readers will remember (premises now occupied by Malpas Takeaway). Nurse Williamson (the District Nurse) appealed for old linen for use as bandages. During 1920 the amount collected for Waifs and Strays had been £12.3s.3d (£12.16p) to which was added £6.4s.3d (£6.21p) 'being part of the proceeds of an Entertainment organised by Miss Wilson and given by her Girls' Club'.

BICKERTON: Total collections for the four weeks from the end of November into December had been £6.7s.7d, against a weekly target of £2.5s.0d (£2.25p). The vicar's comments have a familiar ring: 'Buck up Churchpeople! In going over your accounts for 1920, just reckon up how much you spend on religious objects.' Having heard that Helen Ravenhill is giving up distributing the modern Parish News, there is a familiar ring to the news in January that 'Miss Gerrard is giving up the work of Magazine distribution.

We thank her for the help she has rendered for many years'. The Institute (now known as Bickerton Village Hall) had been the scene of much activity – whist drives, dances, billiards handicap, dancing class, badminton and a 'very first-rate and highly enjoyable concert'. Another concert was announced for April, in the church, with Miss Clegg on the organ, joined for trios by Lady Tollemache and Miss Wigham on violin and 'cello, plus singing by Miss Tong and the Vicar. Vicar's comment: 'It has been suggested that it should be a "silver" collection. We don't like the idea of laying down any precise rule as to the colour, but we hope it will be rather less brown than it sometimes is!' Good news for the girls of the area was that : 'A movement is on foot to start a company of Girl Guides in the parish and neighbourhood.' The first Guides were enrolled at a ceremony in Bickerton School on April 9th. A joint rally with Handley Guides was held on May 21st. Nationally, Guides had been founded in 1910, following the foundation of the Scout movement two years earlier. The Comrades of the Great War had a 'pleasant gathering' and supper at the Institute in May. The Tennis Club was showing 'signs of vigorous life'. **THREAPWOOD:** The Sunday School teachers were Mrs Jones, Miss Griffiths and Miss Passey (surnames which are still found in the area). There was to be a Parochial Gathering, Sale of Work and a Dance with the Whixall Silver band in August. The Diocesan Finance Committee had allotted the amounts to be paid in by the different parishes, with the Threapwood quota being £2.10s (£2.50p). 'Some may like to give a penny (0.4p) per week and others a lump sum, all can do something'. The Malpas parish quota had been raised from £13 to £20.

David Hayns



Although we have not been able to hold meetings during the pandemic Mothers Union members have nevertheless kept in touch with each other by phone calls and emails. MU magazines and literature have been regularly sent out along with greeting cards. Many members have also been busily knitting blankets and scarves for refugees. It is our hope that we will be able to meet together again later in the year.

We would also like to thank the Rector for all his support, and wish him a long and happy retirement.

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option for those who find it hard to speak about how they are feeling.

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The quickest way is to google 'Cheshire East mental Health services'.

You will find details of several sites eg 'Mental Health for Adults and Older People.

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There is also a web site 'Covid 19 Mental Health Information point'

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OUR CHURCH AND ITS HISTORY

THE BUILDING

Holy Trinity Bickerton was built of stone in 1839/40, on land donated by Sir Philip le Belward Grey Egerton and from subscriptions of 7 local Estate owners of the area. It was originally built as a chapel of ease within the larger Parish of Malpas to enable the local farm workers and their families to worship without the long walk/ ride to Malpas.

At this stage it was a simple chapel structure designed by the architect Edmund Sharpe who practised some distance away in Lancashire. The total cost of building the chapel was in the region of £700 and the small organ cost £26.15.0.

In 1869 the district of Bickerton became a Parish on its own, separate from Malpas and its first Vicar was Revd F.W. Parry, living in the large Vicarage adjacent to the church yard. The congregation grew and the church was enlarged in 1875/76, the small chancel; sanctuary; vestry and organ chamber were added, necessitating the removal of the existing gallery from the West end of the church and a wooden porch was added there. Further alterations were made over the years and in 1911 the baptistry was added necessitating the relocation of the church door and porch to their present location.

The congregation of Holy Trinity expanded during this period and in 1891 proposals were put forward to build a Mission Room in nearby Bulkeley, an appeal for subscriptions was made and the Mission room opened in 1893 having been licensed for Public Worship. Records remain silent from 1970 and it appears to have closed and been decommissioned around that time.

Records also show that following the end of the First World War when 32 of the local men and boys lost their lives, the oak furnishings were added in 1919/20 along with the installation of a new Conacher piped organ.

The church yard ceased to be used in 1881 and the burial grounds opposite the church continue to serve as the local cemetery and within which is the War Memorial, and these continue to be maintained by the Bickerton Burial Board.

The church and its grounds are beautiful in its simplicity and emanates a sense of peace and the presence of the Lord to all who enter.

Holy Trinity has had many changes over the years, initially built as a chapel of Ease, becoming a Parish in its own right, amalgamating with the other 3 rural churches on the Sandstone Trail, Burwardsley, Bickley and Harthill, to share a minister. This grouping of these rural parishes ceased in 2011 but their closeness continues to this day with members of Burwardsley, Bickerton and Bickley joining together to form a flourishing Home Group. Holy Trinity Bickerton returned to its close association with St Oswald's becoming part of the Benefice of St John's Threapwood and St Oswald's Malpas once again sharing a Minister in 2011.

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