

NEWS FROM ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH

January 6th Epiphany

A very Happy New Year to all readers. I hope that you enjoyed the festive break and feel ready to meet the challenges of 2016. To turn back the clock slightly I would like to thank Vanessa and David for generously hosting their second event of 2015. Their home was beautifully decorated for the December Coffee Morning and although the weather was dreadful, the welcome was warm and a super £154 was raised. Thank you to everyone who helped in any way and especially to our hosts. There will be no Coffee Morning in January but the Burn's Night is something for us all to look forward to.

I enjoyed the Christmas Play performed by the junior school aged children of our church school; the village Carol Service was well attended as always and the Christmas services reminded us all about the real reason for the celebrations. Thanks to all who contributed towards the cost of the flowers, to those who helped prepare the church or cleaned up afterwards - some new helpers in 2016 would be very welcome indeed!

Gillian put in a lot of work with the Christmas Hamper Raffle and this year more people offered to take tickets to sell. **Almost 100%** of the tickets distributed were sold and delicious items donated for the hamper and other prizes. Your tremendous efforts generosity and raised a splendid **£418**. (PS I found the Hamper List at the back of church on Dec. 13th - apologies to those whose names were on the list still waiting for it!!) As I was on holiday at the end of November and there was no Esh service early December, I have no idea how long it languished in the darkness of the church! Hmmm!

CHRISTMAS RAFFLE WINNERS:

Christmas Hamper	The Sewell Family	white 616
Christmas Cake	Christopher Smale	Green 542
Bottle Whisky	Judy Gordon	White 597
Bottle Red & White Wine	Rev. Michael Peers	Blue 995
Large Box Chocolate Biscuits	Gayle Sumbly	Green 893
Bottle White Wine	Ethel Baldwin	White 373
Box Chocolate Biscuits	R. West	Green 650
Box Chocolate Liqueurs	Sheila and Keith Veer	Pink 775
Box Christmas Crackers	Ann and Bruce Hollamby	White 820

Judy' one of our talented 'craft' ladies kept her sewing and knitting needles busy during Advent' Judy knitted 105 mini- Christmas Puddings and sold 25 containing Ferrero Rocher chocolates'. Alex took 80 to Malvern, placed a Lindt chocolate inside, (no nutty products on allowed on display!) and sold them for double the price at her school - the NE/SW divide! These delightful, fun chocolate puddings will bring pleasure to the recipients for years to come' (place your order early for 2016!) and raised €105 for church and for the school's orphanage in Malawi.

Carol is busy making lovely little pouches in pretty printed cottons in which to hold a small packet of tissues in a handbag or pocket or on a dressing or bedside table. If she can source a small pattern tartan material there may be some for sale at the Burns' Night. Keep an eye open for them (or place an order with Carol), they make lovely little gifts at just £1.50 complete with paper hankies. Thanks are also sent to '3 M',s'. Vicar Michael prepared an attractive leaflet for the launch of the Friends of the Church. Maurice Sewell is delving into the complicated Gift Aid situation. You may previously have signed a Gift Aid Form but everyone is being asked to sign a new one as Maurice, understandably, wants to get everything in good order. Please ask for another form if you have not signed one very recently. Malcolm Gordon has set up a fantastic church web site and will regularly update it. Take a look at:

<http://stmichaelandallangelsesh.btck.co.uk/>

Please pass this www to family and friends (via a phone call, email or even social media!) or to anyone at all worldwide you think may be interested, perhaps people who have connections with Esh but live further afield, especially those who have held special services such as weddings baptisms and funerals at St Michael and All Angels. News of 'The Friends' launch will be available on the web site. We are all very grateful indeed to Michael, Maurice and Malcolm for their hard work and for their commitment to help the church through a very difficult period.

The launch of The Friends introduces a new dimension to the church. people can now choose two different financial routes. Money received via service collections and fees goes towards the running costs, such as insurance, oil, electricity, water, share of Vicar's expenses, Parish Share to the Diocese, fire extinguisher servicing wafers, candles, communion wines and minor repairs etc. These bills could not be covered without the various fund-raising events and donations from individuals from sales of craft work and so on. Funds donated to 'The Friends' will pay for repairs to the fabric of the church as detailed in the literature - to ensure that the Historic Listed Building and permanent fixtures are preserved for the future. There are two separate banks accounts in which to deposit funds, so please decide which account (or both!) you wish to contribute to and ask Vicar Michael or any PCC member for bank details.

Matters raised at the public meeting back in September are ongoing and although progress appears to be very slow I would like to assure everyone that a great deal of work has been, and is being, done not only by those in charge, but also by others within the church community' could I ask everyone who paid cheques into the collection {regularly or if just visiting or as a donation, from April 2014 to March 2015 to make a list of the dates and amount and pass it on to me or Michael. This could be very helpful.

Please ask yourself (but not if you're already doing lots of jobs, for the church!), if you could help - a church warden and a Treasurer are still desperately needed - the Diocese requires that these posts are filled. There are suitable people in and around the parish - we just need them to volunteer ... or perhaps a knock on the door is all that is needed! Practical help with cleaning, churchyard tidying minor repairs etc. is always much appreciated.

The Burn's Night celebration takes place on Friday January 29th in the Parish Hall at 7 pm. See the poster for details and get your tickets for friends and family now! Gillian and her team have prepared a list of food and drinks and other items such as napkins, paper plates that are needed. Raffle prizes would be much appreciated as would any Scottish themed Tombola Prizes.

The few who have attended the new 4 pm service once a month have found themselves rather lonely due to the low turnout. Those who have commitments with children dependents or elderly and are unable to get to church at 9 am, (made all the more difficult in Esh in winter time with ice or snowfalls), appreciate the opportunity to join the congregation, but find themselves in a virtually empty church. If you enjoy a Sunday morning, lie-in, then the once-a-month 4 pm service is for you too! The PCC will keep reviewing the services and it may prove sensible to hold just a 4 pm service, rather than two services one Sunday a month, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to come together for Evening Prayer, Evensong or Eucharist. Check the diary at the back of the magazine for the next 4 pm service, come along and let Michael know what you think.

Many will have learned of the death of our former neighbour, the church's good friend Bunty Whitfield in November. Bunty left hospital and spent three weeks recuperating at Shotley Bridge then went to a Residential Home in Durham. Upon return from holiday I picked up 'phone messages from Buntys daughter Jill keeping me informed. Unfortunately very few of Bunty's Esh friends were aware of the sad news until after the funeral. Bunty and her late husband Bobby enjoyed a few very happy years together in Esh, relishing the views from their bungalow and enjoying life within the community. Bunty, a former nurse and GP's wife, was full of sound common sense, with a wonderful sense of fun and good humour, always interested in people and hearing their news. Although frailty prevented her attending services she was a most generous supporter of the

church and loved returning to Esh with Jill for coffee Mornings. She often recalled her staunch, no nonsense Presbyterian upbringing' we will remember Bunty with great affection and send our sincere condolences to her daughters Jill and Alison and their families.

We also send our condolences to Carole and Maurice Sewell and all their family following the loss of Carole's mother in December. Please remember both families in your prayers.

Good wishes are sent to Vanessa and Malcolm who seemed not to let surgery slow them down in any way; to former neighbour Mary Pearce who unfortunately has had post-op difficulties; to lay reader Tony who is recovering from recent surgery; to Margaret and Denis O'Conelley and to Audrey Wilkinson.

I cannot remember how many years I have been writing the news for St. Michael and All Angels', but it is certainly not as many as Audrey and Ken have been editing, printing and stapling the magazine together on behalf of our group of churches. Just finding time in a busy life to write the article can be difficult, so I applaud their commitment every month on behalf of us all- without their dedication over so many years I wonder if the magazine would reach you each month.

Perhaps at the beginning of 2016 a new contributor might like to take over writing the Esh news' someone who could bring a fresh approach to the articles? Anyone interested please step forward! And please don't forget Audrey is always glad to receive additional material from anyone who would like to share news or an interesting experience with readers.

Hope to see you at the Burn's Night - the next coffee Morning will be hosted by Malcolm and Judy, Craiglyne' Front Street in February (and dare I ask that any unsuitable Christmas gifts or attractive/useful January sales items be retained for the February Tombola!)

With best wishes,

Kay