

# SEVERN STOKE AND CROOME D'ABITOT NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2008

40 Pence

## Forthcoming Events

### Severn Stoke & Environs

#### Friends of St Denys

### Severn Stoke & Croome d'Abitot Parochial Church Council AGM –

Sunday 6th April at 11.30 a.m.  
after the Morning Service.

#### Join the

### Bird Competition starting on 14th April.

See inside for further details.

## Kempsey

### **Saturday 12th April St Mary's Church Save the Children PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION**

See inside for details

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**Please submit Copy by 2nd  
Monday next month**

## The Rector's Message

Dear Friends,

This month's Pastoral Letter is a copy of a sermon I preached on Sunday 9th March at 10.30 a.m. at St Mary's Church and it concerns finance and in particular our individual giving to the work of the church. It was a sermon largely directed at those who regularly attend and worship at St Mary's but it does have broader implications for the whole of our communities throughout our United Benefice including Kempsey and Severn Stoke.

The fact is that St Mary's and St Denys' churches are not able to pay their way with all the financial pressures that are put upon them in terms of general running costs, upkeep of ancient buildings and payment of our annual Parish Share to the Diocese of Worcester. This is a scenario that is being repeated across the nation and throughout the Church of England and ultimately it does threaten the life of the church and the parish system. It is no exaggeration to say that the next 10-20 years could see the end of the parish system and the demise of the Church of England as we have known it for centuries. This means that we shall see the closure of thousands of churches and the ministry of an "ordained minister", such as myself, will no longer exist.

Some people might ask "well, what difference would it make?", whilst others may well applaud. Yet I believe that for those who are professed Christians and for those who are not, it will have a significant effect and will severely weaken the social support system of this country. The fact is that I and others like me are here for everyone whoever and

## Reverend Peter Holzapfel

country lives within a parish and has a parish priest/minister who is available to them in times of joy and celebration and times of trouble and sadness. I personally minister to and support many people who have nothing or very little to do with the churches and I do this with complete willingness and good grace because I am here for everyone including you. The question to ask is "if people like me no longer existed or became so over-stretched that they were not effective, then who would fulfil the pastoral and spiritual role in our society?" The conclusion that I reach is no one and this would be a huge blow to the morale and social and spiritual fabric of our society.

The next question is "are you prepared to do something about this rapidly deteriorating situation?" There are two major ways in which you can play a vital role in maintaining the life and ministry of our churches. The first is by making regular financial contributions and the best way to do this is by standing order and covenant (which means that we also gain the tax relief from the Government) and, if this is something that you would like to do or find out more about, **please ring either Sally Linsey (St Denys' Treasurer on 820476) or Trevor Lloyd-Adams (820611) or David Hassell (828096) for St Mary's Kempsey.**

The second is by actually attending church yourself on a regular basis whether it be St Denys' or St Mary's and becoming a part of the church's life. The Church in this country doesn't just need money; it needs you and your personal involvement. St Denys', for example, has a regular congregation of under 20 largely elderly

**The Severn Stoke Fellowship and Study Group meets fortnightly on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month and to coincide with school terms (roughly!) at 2.30 p.m. at the homes of various Members.**

**Next dates: 24th April at Maureen and Stan Watkins' and 8th May (to be arranged).** Everyone is most welcome to join this group, which is informal, very welcoming and stimulating. Please contact John and Cara (W/ 371 218) for details.

### **United Benefice of Kempsey and Severn Stoke with Croome d'Abitot – Church News**

**United Benefice Prayer Meetings** – Welcome to our meetings (usually every other Monday) for an hour, from 8.00 p.m. on Monday, 14th and 28th April and 12th May, We meet each fortnight at the homes of those taking part.

**Contact John and Cara (W/ 371 218) for the next ensuing venue.**

We give thought and prayer for people and projects around us and for the health and enhancement of the Churches' work. You don't have to say a word unless you wish, but just be with us.

### **SEVERN STOKE SCOUT & GUIDE GROUP**

After eighteen years of voluntary service, Severn Stoke Guide leader, **Liz Stallard will be retiring in July, 2008.** It leaves the much-loved old Group in a fix – with Liz's departure **and the assistant Guider, Tina Homer due to retire in 2009,** the seventy year old Group may have to close if new leaders cannot be found.

In recent years, the Guides have taken part in a host of activities, to which otherwise, many would not have had access, such as outdoor adventures at the Worcestershire County Campsite at Blackmore, the Big Gig pop concert in London's Wembley Arena and the Birmingham NEC. In 2007, they visited the Guide National HQ next to Buckingham Palace and even did an enrolment on the London Eye. This is on top of their normal activities, which include outdoor cooking, camping, challenges, crafts, games and theatre trips. They meet at their HQ at Earl's Croome on Wednesdays, from 7.00 to 8.30 p.m.

Liz Stallard says:” We would be devastated to see the Group close after so long and really hope that someone will be able to take over the mantle. It is a rewarding role for someone looking for a challenge. This would be an exciting time for a new Leader to join Severn Stoke Guides as the Guide Movement prepared for its centenary in 2010”.

Anyone interested should please contact Liz on 01684 594 376.

### **The National Trust - Croome Park**

**Sunday 20th April – The Croome Dogathon!**

For more details: Contact W/ 371 006 or e-mail: [croomepark@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:croomepark@nationaltrust.org.uk)

## **CHURCH SERVICES at ST MARY'S, KEMPSEY**

Every Thursday 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel  
 Every Friday 11.00 a.m. Mothers and Toddlers Service

### **APRIL**

Sunday 6th: Easter 3: 8.00 a.m.: Morning Prayer BCP, 9.00 a.m.: Holy Communion BCP: Kerswell Green,  
 10.30 a.m.: Family Service, 3.00 p.m. Holy Baptism, 6.00 p.m.: Holy Communion BCP  
 Sunday 13th: Easter 4: 8.00 a.m.: Holy Communion BCP, 10.30 a.m. Informal Family Communion, 6.00 p.m.: Evensong  
 Sunday 20th; Easter 5: 8.00 a.m.: Morning Prayer BCP, 10.30 a.m.: Family Service (including Holy Baptism),  
 6.00 p.m.: Holy Communion BCP  
 Sunday 27th: Rogation Sunday: 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion BCP, 10.30 a.m. Family Communion,  
 6.00 p.m. Evening Praise at Walter-de-Cantaloupe

### **MAY**

Thursday 1st: **ASCENSION DAY 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion in The Lady Chapel**  
 Sunday 4th: Sunday after Ascension: 8.00 a.m.: Morning Prayer BCP, 9.00 a.m.: Holy Communion BCP: Kerswell Green,  
 10.30 a.m.: Family Service, 3.00 p.m. Holy Baptism, 6.00 p.m.: Holy Communion BCP

## **SOMETHING TO NOTE CAREFULLY IN YOUR DIARIES**

### **Sunday 11th MAY: PENTECOST (BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH)**

This is a very special and important date in the life of the church, when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the first followers of Jesus. It was when the Church really took off and came into existence and hence it is known as The Church's Birthday.

10.30am: To mark this special day our young people, the members of our active youth fellowship, will be taking a leading part in the Family Service sharing with us what their faith means to them. There will also be a special drama production organised by Avril Kemp who has given us some thought provoking dramas in the past. The service will be followed by another BRING & SHARE LUNCH so that we can truly celebrate the Church's Birthday together.

**It will be a tremendous morning and one of real blessing and encouragement and I do hope that as many of you as possible will come along and give it your support.**

## **HAPPENINGS at KEMPSEY**

**The Cornflower Club** - Meets on Wednesday, 2nd (trip to Blenheim Palace), 16th and 30th April and 14th May at 2.30 p.m.

in Kempsey Parish Hall.

**Age Concern Coffee Morning** - meets every Thursday at 11.30 a.m.. Please note that for the foreseeable future this will take place in St Mary's Church because of recent flooding affecting St Mary's House.

**ALPHA COURSE 2008:** It is very likely that, following the great success of our first attempt, our next ALPHA COURSE will begin in April. This is a wonderful and enjoyable introduction to the Christian faith. It will also serve as the main part of our **CONFIRMATION COURSE** for this year. If you would like to be confirmed then this is the course for you. The course will last over a six or seven week period. IF INTERESTED PLEASE SPEAK TO PETER (Vicar) or CHRIS & CAROL COOKE (W/820838)

**Saturday 12th April: SAVE THE CHILDREN PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION & JUDGING** in St Mary's Church, Kempsey.

Do pop in to church for this annual event and see the wonderful images that people have submitted: have some refreshments and a good chat as well as raising funds for a very good cause.

**SEVERN STOKE AND CROOME d'ABITOT PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Sunday 6th April -The Annual General Meeting** will be held following the 10.30 a.m. Matins service at approximately **11.30 a.m.**

**Please support the work of the PCC by attending and do consider putting your name forward for election to the Council. We need help to manage the life, work and maintenance of our beautiful, but fragile medieval Parish Church of St Denys.**

**OPENING THE CHURCH**

As one of the conditions of Grant Aid from English Heritage towards last year's major repairs, we undertook to keep the Church open for six hours on Sundays (except 5th Sundays in the month) from March to October, each year. This will involve the Church being attended, during those opening hours and **volunteers are sought**, so that we can work out a Rota. The Church is a lovely quiet place to be and such visitors as there may be, are likely to be pleasant and interested. If we can get enough volunteers, a two hour stint will be the norm.

Opening times this year will be:

Easter Sunday, 23rd March from 11.30 a.m., when the Church Service ends, to 5.30 p.m. These times will apply on the 1st Sunday in each month, as well.

On the 2nd and 3rd Sundays from 10.30 a.m., to 4.30 p.m.

**Please could you give your name to Bryan Hadley (W/ 371 383).**

**SEVERN STOKE and CROOME d'ABITOT PARISH COUNCIL**

Already, the work of the Lengthsmen is apparent, with grips being cut and maintained to dispose of road water.

Brief news of the April Council Meeting will appear in the next Issue.

**SEVERN STOKE PARISH HALL**

The refurbished Parish Hall has been awarded three stars for hygiene under the Malvern Hills District Council's coding scheme. Congratulations!

**Saturday 19th April at 2.00 p.m. – SPRING FAIR – a grand start for the “new” Hall.**

**All the usual Stalls, we love to see: Cakes, Tombola, Bric-a-brac, Teas and many more!  
Please contact Pam Hartland about items you wish to donate – Tel. No. W/ 371 430.**

**EARL'S CROOME WOMEN'S INSTITUTE**

Tuesday, 8th April 7.30 p.m. “Flower Arranging Demonstration” - by Maureen Gillman.

**MOTHERS UNION – Upton Deanery**

Thursday 24th April at 12.45 p.m. at Upton Church Room – Bring and shared lunch. Speaker: Gwen Taylor on “Make time for relationships”.



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**CHURCHWARDEN: Mr. Bryan Hadley Severn Stoke 01905 371 383**

## CHURCH SERVICES at St Denys' Church, Severn Stoke

### APRIL

**Sunday 6th: Easter 3 10.30 a.m.: Morning Prayer BCP: This will be followed by The PCC Annual General Meeting of St Denys' Church.**

**Sunday 13th Easter 4 9.15 a.m.: Holy Communion CW**

**Sunday 20th Easter 5 9.15 a.m.: Holy Communion BCP, 3.00 p.m. Holy Baptism**

**Sunday 27th Rogation Sunday 10.30 a.m.: Morning Prayer and Praise (including Holy Baptism).**

### MAY

**Sunday 4th Sunday after Ascension 10.30 a.m.: Morning Prayer BCP.**

**Sunday 11th: 9.15 a.m.: Holy Communion CW**

### CHURCH CLEANING – SEVERN STOKE

#### APRIL

4th Mrs Joan Price and Friend  
11th Mrs Hanmer and Mrs Ewins  
18th Mrs Gaywood and Mrs Linsey  
25th Mrs Bedwell and Friend

#### MAY

2nd Mrs Henderson and Mr Henderson  
9th Mrs Helen Cox and Mr Cox

### CHURCH FLOWERS – SEVERN STOKE

#### APRIL

5th and 12th Mrs M Foulds  
19th and 26th Mrs J Westwood

#### MAY

3rd and 10th Mrs Merab Opie

**Church Cleaning:** We desperately need more volunteers, who would be able to give a couple of hours, every two or three months, to help clean the Church on a Friday or Saturday, vacuuming, dusting and mopping. If you can, or would like more information, contact John Henderson.

**Flower Arrangers:** Please will you show your talent, by joining the Rota – Every help will be given to new volunteers. Please contact John Henderson (W/371 218)

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loved and valued, will not be able to sustain the life of St Denys' into the future. Where will St Denys' Church, its life and ministry, be in five years time? Quite possibly non-existent unless you're prepared and willing to actively attend and support it. The same is true of all our churches.

They say that you value something that you're willing to support and pay for: the question is "are you, is this nation, prepared to support and pay for a church that has rendered it such invaluable service?" This question will only be answered in time but there isn't much time left.

Please read the following prayerfully and carefully.....thank you.

*Peter Holzappel (Revd.)*

## THE PASTORAL LETTER

"We love because God first loved us" This could be re-translated to read "We GIVE because God first GAVE to us." "All things come from you, O God, and of your own do we give You."

There are three things that are not generally spoken of: political preferences, sex lives and money. But, I'm afraid that this morning I have to break that rule and the one I'm going to address is money and specifically the amount that you give to the work of God here at St Mary's Church. Because both politics and sex will not directly impinge on the future of this church but money, or the lack of it, most certainly will.

I don't know and have never known what any individual gives to this church nor do I ever need to know and so in no way is this address aimed at any particular person. Nor do I speak on this subject very often and, therefore, I like to think that I have the right to be heard when I do.

Firstly, why do we need to look at it? The fact is that St Mary's is in considerable debt and is not paying its way. Each year, as hopefully you know, we are obliged to pay a Parish Share to the Diocese of Worcester which is currently set at £46,000. This money is largely passed on to central Church funds to cover the costs of clergy wages, pensions and provision of clergy housing. It is the duty of each church to pay this share because you're effectively paying for your minister and without a minister the life and witness of any church would be severely jeopardised.

At this time our church owes the Diocese £14,000 from 2005: £4,000 from last year 2007 and we have yet to start paying anything towards the £46,000 that we owe for this year (2008) This totals £64,000 at present.

In addition to this are the day to day running costs of St Mary's including repairs, lighting and heating and insurance. This excludes the extensive work that needs to be done on the Lady Chapel side of the church for which estimates are in excess of £200,000. We hope to be able to gain a grant from English Heritage to cover the cost of these works because there is no other way that they can be contemplated.

We are in significant debt and the Diocese of Worcester are inevitably and understandably putting pressure on myself and the PCC to come up with the money because they themselves are under an obligation to pass it on.

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This is currently the situation and without a substantial increase in congregational giving not only will we fail to meet our obligations but year by year the debt will increase and the situation become worse to the point that eventually this church's right to have a minister will be questioned. I emphasise that there is no financial help whatsoever coming from the National Church or from any other body. We stand alone with our debt but if it isn't paid then we will not stand forever.

Secondly, what is the current state of our giving and what remedy is necessary? On an average Sunday the collection amounts to between £350 and £450 and although this may seem a large amount most of it comes through the envelope and covenant scheme which give good rates of interest and tax relief. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for our regular givers to covenant their giving so that we gain additional financial benefits. All you have to do is to seek the advice of the Church Treasurer ( Trevor Lloyd-Adams or David Hassell) and they will point you in the right direction. **OUR COVENANT GIVERS MUST INCREASE** and this will be at no cost to anyone except the government who will give us increased relief.

The remainder is loose cash on the collection plate and this, I'm afraid, at all services, is often in one or two pound coins. I am reluctant to speak like this because we are genuinely grateful for every penny that is donated towards this church but to put £1 on the plate each week is simply not enough and is, in fact, derisory. It is interesting to see what you can buy for £1 in Tesco's....hardly anything! And the church will not survive on the cost of a bar of chocolate each week!

The fact and the truth is that we need at least £5 from each person per week if St Mary's is going to pay its way and survive. Nothing less will be sufficient to keep it going and that is a minimum. And so whether you covenant, use the envelope scheme or give on the plate this is what everyone needs to consider. Some people will give more than this already and some will give less but all of you need to prayerfully consider the amount you give for the work of God here in this parish considering and comparing what you give to the church with what you give to other aspects of your life. This is the situation and this is the only solution for nothing less will ensure our future.

And so, finally, why give? The reason seems fairly obvious: to secure our church finances, to pay our debts and meet our obligations, and to safeguard the future life and ministry of this church. But, of course, there is an even better reason and that is because of what God, in Jesus, has done for you and so, prayerfully considering financial giving, is a real test of our faith. Is this something that we really believe in and appreciate enough to pay for? I know that some of you have compared yourself with the new Baptist Church on St Peter's and wondered why their giving is in the thousands each week: could it not be that God has so profoundly touched their hearts with gratitude for His love and sacrifice that they willingly sacrifice what they have to Him? So much so that many of them will adhere to the old Biblical principle of tithing: that is, giving a tenth of all that they earn to the work of God. It's always been different in the Church of England but I'm afraid that it can't afford to be different any longer and time is running out.

God so loved the world that He GAVE His only begotten Son. God's giving knew no limits: He gave until it hurt: should that not inspire us to give in return? If the lights of Christendom go finally out in this country I would not like to think that it was because we failed to give at the time when it was most necessary. That time is now and the decision is yours remembering that; "All things come from You, O Lord, and of your own do we give you".

Amen