

Old Malden News



The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist, Malden

October 2023

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Old Malden News

**The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist Parish Church Malden
Church Road, Worcester Park KT4 7RY**

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Copy date for the magazine is the 15th of the month and
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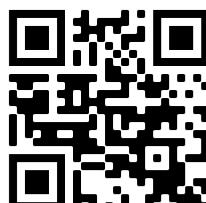
Details from the Bookings Secretary – Pat Sutton
Tel: 020 8942 8321

St John the Baptist Parish Church, Malden

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Parish Website:	www.stjohnsoldmalden.org.uk	
Parish Office:	administrator@stjohnsoldmalden.org.uk	

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QR code with your smart phone camera



Services for October



St John's is OPEN

St John's is open for worship so please see the Parish Mailing for details Live Streaming of services will continue so you will be able to see services live via our YouTube Channel.

Sunday 8am - Said Eucharist

Sunday 9.45am - Sung Eucharist

Wednesday 11am — Said Eucharist

Coffee hosted by Mothers' Union after the first Wednesday service of the month.

Please make sure you are signed up to our mailing list to get up to date information regarding the services.

<http://eepurl.com/gNz4Tf> or scan the QR Code

Vicar's Letter

As many of you know, my paternal grandfather was a Baptist minister. He came to his vocation a bit late in life, being well into his middle-age. My father used to tease him by saying it was a pretty good gig to only work one day a week. I have to say he's never said that to me! Most likely because my father has enough insight now into what a vicar's life is actually about. Although our Established Church's influence and role has waned considerably, there is still a larger community presence and role than would be typical of a Free church parson in Carolina. The connection to schools is a case in point, something beyond the pale of the separation of church and state guaranteed under the American Constitution. This community aspect was the great attraction when I began ministry, an opportunity to have an impact as a community figure and help others who weren't churchgoers or even people of faith. As Archbishop Temple reminded us, the Church exists for those who aren't members of it. Our duty is to worship God, but also to serve others. In practical terms it means turning up to community events and taking an interest, of using one's place at the table to include other faith groups and work with people of any and no faith for the good of the wider community. So far I have found this most effective through my involvement in Malden Parochial and its increasing diversity as our community evolves into a more multi-faith and secular community.

No two days in a vicar's working life are exactly the same. Circumstance and the task at hand ensures an endless variety, something I have always enjoyed. More importantly has been working with people. I am a people-person and not one to be chained to a desk or computer monitor. I think working in a call centre or large anonymous office would do my head in. It is meeting and talking to people that makes it all worthwhile. It is especially meaningful to help others at moments of need, funerals come to mind, being able to help the bereaved navigate this new and painful landscape through the funeral service and the gradual recovery from grief that follows. These are all gift and add meaning and purpose to my life.

I remember asking Fr. Stephen, my Rector back home in Chapel Hill, about what was the most difficult part of his job. As a potential candidate for ordination I had imagined that his answer would be dealing with deaths or being alongside people who were dying. What words and actions were there in such instances? I was surprised at his answer. It wasn't anything like these at all. The hardest

thing was “keeping everybody in the same boat!” He said he’d spent his whole 30 years of ministry struggling to keep the congregation on board. There were endless divisive issues, competing personalities, and a myriad of opinions to hold together. In short, he said it had been an impossible task. At the time I nodded, but didn’t really understand what he was talking about. That had not been my experience in the pews at all, but experience has taught me that he was absolutely correct.

The vicar’s job is to be a juggler, a visionary organiser, fundraiser, manager of change, and comforter-in-chief. To be an anodyne personality, relevant across the different generations, with the negotiating skills of a senior diplomat and psychological insight to help people work together. In order to help a church flourish and have an impact beyond its four walls, a congregation of busy people are pressured to give of their time, energy, and money to make that happen. There isn’t a fixed skill set that vicar’s can be taught or acquire, though a wide range are desirable and many required. I haven’t been personally gifted with the full set, which makes it a challenge at times.

St. John’s has within itself all the requisite pieces to make a significant impact, to reach out beyond itself and become the beating heart full of the love of God for Old Malden. It could be the centre of community life, a full participant in what’s going on in our neighbourhoods across the Parish. Each one of us is a piece of that puzzle. Will you bring yours to the table?

Confirmation marks a significant milestone post-pandemic in St. John’s life with a dozen or more taking this step in their own faith journeys. We are making disciples for Jesus as he has commanded us to do. So many of you have supported our recent stewardship campaign and we are now on a much better footing financially. The Restoration Project is beginning to take shape with preliminary works almost completed so we can obtain the faculty (planning permission) needed to unlock grants to fund the project. This is a long-term exercise, there is no easy fix or shortcut, but there are opportunities to offer your skills and insight to further this ahead. It will take all of us to make it a reality and preserve our historic building. The future depends on whether or not we can work together, to lay aside our differences for the greater good and come together. I believe we can do this and more, but we all have a crucial part to play.

With every Blessing , Michael.

Johnson Grass

The Book Club has recently read the Harper Lee book “To Kill A Mockingbird”, and the group really loved it. There are two references to Johnson Grass in the book, firstly in respect of a neighbour’s unswept yard and secondly to the overgrown garden of another neighbour. In both cases the grass is described as a weed. Coincidentally, as part of my Kew Gardens volunteering and in preparation for a tour of the Grass Garden, I found some Johnson Grass plants.

What is Johnson Grass?

The botanical name of Johnson Grass is *Sorghum halepense*, and it is a fodder crop for animals. The plant originates in Asia and North Africa - not in Alabama where “To Kill A Mockingbird” is set. It is named after Colonel William Johnson who, around 1840, sowed its seed in a river bottom. It reproduces by seed and rhizomes (underground stems). I’m sure the Colonel would have sown the seeds with the best intention but it has been so successful that it is now considered to be one of the ten worst weeds in the world, and found itself in Harper Lee’s book. No doubt where it originates, it would have controls including animals, pests and diseases but freed from these constraints it spreads uncontrollably. Plants like these are known as “invasive” and can overwhelm indigenous flora and thereby be a threat to biodiversity.

Whilst Johnson Grass doesn’t pose a threat here in the UK, probably due to the colder winters, we do have our own own Invasive specie, Japanese Knotweed, which as the name suggests comes from Japan. Japanese Knotweed’s roots can lift foundations of buildings and should be removed as soon as possible.

Keith Marshall

A new charity!

Kingston Inner Wheel President for 2023/24, Valerie Winsor, has nominated as her charity one that is new to us, and in fact pretty new itself. It is Dignify, a charity started in 2017 over concerns with the sexual exploitation of children due to the normalisation of pornography – this is an issue which many of us never even realised existed. We have been horrified to learn of several frightening statistics such as an Ofsted report that young boys were collecting nude pictures and trading them like gaming cards, that most school children had been sent explicit images at some time and that sexual harassment is normalised in secondary schools, and to realise the inevitable consequences of children believing that what they see is normal behaviour and then act it out themselves. The charity's mission is "to engage with, equip and empower individuals and local communities to build and share a new narrative for healthy relationships so that children and young people can thrive, free from the sexual objectification that porn can normalise". They work with children, teachers and families in schools to promote healthy relationships. This is a project that needs to be spread out to the whole country, so I wanted to share it with you, so that the charity can become better known and continue to carry out and develop its good work.

Bobby Child



What is a Volunteer? by Penny Hall

In life we occasionally get to do something that really comes from the heart, and for me, it's volunteering. My introduction to volunteering came whilst my husband was being cared for in St Raphael's Hospice, where he sadly died in July 2022.

Each patient's room has a private patio overlooking the garden, and one afternoon we were sitting there watching the birds flying around and I began to chat to one of the volunteer gardeners attending the roses, it then hit me that this was something I could do too.....the volunteering seed was sown (please forgive the pun).

Within weeks I was a part of the gardening team and I now spend one day a week helping to keep the gardens neat and tidy. It didn't take long before I was looking to help out in other roles at the hospice, so I'm now part of their Compassionate Neighbour scheme, and also helping out on reception.

Clearly I now had the volunteering bug, and with so much spare time on my hands, I felt that I now should spread my wings to The Royal Marsden in Sutton, as the volunteers had helped Steve so much during his treatment there.

Needless to say I was enrolled in December and I haven't looked back. I'm part of an initiative called "Eat, Drink, Move" which is exactly what it says in the title. I encourage the patients to take on hydration, which is

important during chemotherapy. I help them when it comes to meal choices, as the appetite of a patient on chemotherapy can be reduced to nothing, and anything else that I can help with on the ward.

I do believe that one of the most important parts of my role is that of tea maker. The patients' faces light up when I arrive on the ward, as I'm straight in with who would like a hot drink? Then when I offer biscuits, their delightful expressions are wonderful to see.

The other side of my role isn't in the job description, it's that of a listener.

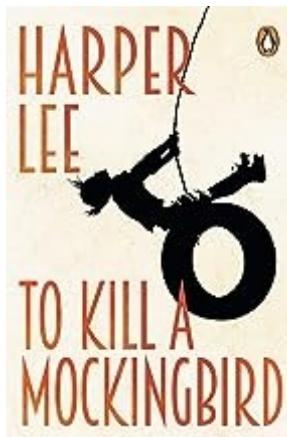
Most evenings when supper has been served and cleared away, I'll sit and talk with the patients. This can be either in their room or sometimes I'll be in one of the four bedded patients bays. We close the door and all chat away and I let them talk away about whatever they want to talk about. This is such a wonderful time and it helps to lighten their anxieties and hopefully sleep a little better.

The patients are not normally aware of what I've been through, but I did have a patient recently ask "have you loved and lost"? I did admit to it, but only in a very gentle way, so as to not upset her. She gave me a knowing smile, held my hand and said that she could tell this, as I had such a way with the patients that would only come from someone who understood what a journey with cancer was like...

I'm now able to spend many hours each week in the wonderful world of volunteering, it is a privilege to be able to say yes, I am making a difference, which is what I set out to do following the death of my husband.

St John's Reading Group

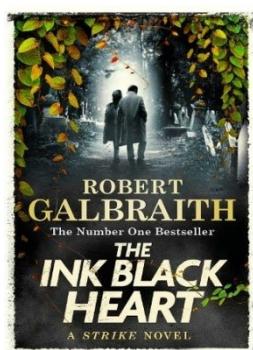
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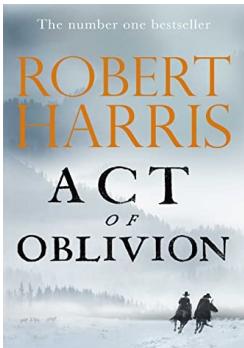


For the first time ever, those present at the last meeting of the Reading Group and those who had selected **To Kill a Mocking Bird** were unanimous in their score of 10/10. (Twelve straight tens.) Difficult not to see Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch in our mind's-eye but several of us were waiting to finish reading before embarking on the DVD. A brilliant story – so well told with wonderful moments of humour as well as sadness. The novel is set in three years of the Great Depression, 1933-35 in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama. The novel revolves around racial injustice when Tom Robinson, a young black man, is wrongly accused of the rape of a white girl. Atticus, a lawyer, defends Tom although the jury, comprised of local white men who are steeped in prejudice and hypocrisy, find Tom guilty. Themes of tolerance and forgiveness, compassion and courage feature in this excellent novel. However, although widely read in schools all over America, it has been banned in parts of Mississippi as it makes 'uncomfortable reading for some of the parents'. It is one of those novels that everyone needs to read at some stage in their life – and even re-read it. We come to love Jean (Scout), her brother Jem and friend Dill and their escapades have all the innocent exuberance of youth.

Five members of the group read Robert Galbraith's **Ink Black Heart** which was much more of a challenge, scoring 6/10. At over 1,000 pages, it is a 'tour de force' to read and described as fiendishly clever.

Another tome is on its way soon: The Running Grave. Will that also be 1,000 pages plus?





For our October meeting we shall be discussing the historical novel, **Act of Oblivion** by Robert Harris. This is the story of a 17th century manhunt for two regicides who signed the death warrant of King Charles I. It is now 1660, and the hunt for the two fugitives continues across the Atlantic. Under the new Act of Oblivion, the two men have been found guilty of high treason. The stakes are high!

If you are a fan of Charles Dickens novels and would like to find out where they were set, then maybe **Dickensland** by Lee Jackson will be of interest. The Old Curiosity Shop and Nancy's steps have become part of Dickens mythology – and are certainly not where you think they are (if they exist at all).

Our next Reading Group meeting will be on Thursday 5th October at 8.00pm in the Church Coffee Lounge.

Marilyn



Thank you to everyone who helped to make the four days of Heritage Open Days very successful. Details next month.

Pat.

St John's Knitting & Crochet Group will be meeting on the last Thursday afternoon of the month, 26th October in the Church Coffee Lounge. Beginners welcome. Would you like to learn to crochet? Or knit?

Bring your knitting or crochet and enjoy a cup of tea (or two) with cake and biscuits.



Marilyn

Getting It Right

Thinking about funerals is not something we may wish to dwell on. However it is something we all have to face and a little thought as to the content of the service could be time well spent. As an organist I frequently have to guess the mood of the service and the items of music that would be most suitable. An outline of the music and other items in the service would make the task of those who officiate a lot easier. With this in mind there is now a file in the Parish Office where a written record of such wishes can be stored.

Barry Eaton.



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The Men's Thing

Following our re-launch meeting a few weeks ago, we can now announce a programme of talks which will be held on the 2nd Saturday of each month in the Church extension.

Tea, Coffee and biscuits etc will be available from 10.00am.

14th October we have a talk on our Heritage, more details to follow.

11th November - Tony Pullen will talk about the history of cameras.

December 9th - Gerry McBride an ex army veteran and member of the British Legion, will give a talk on the ex servicemen graves in St John's churchyard.

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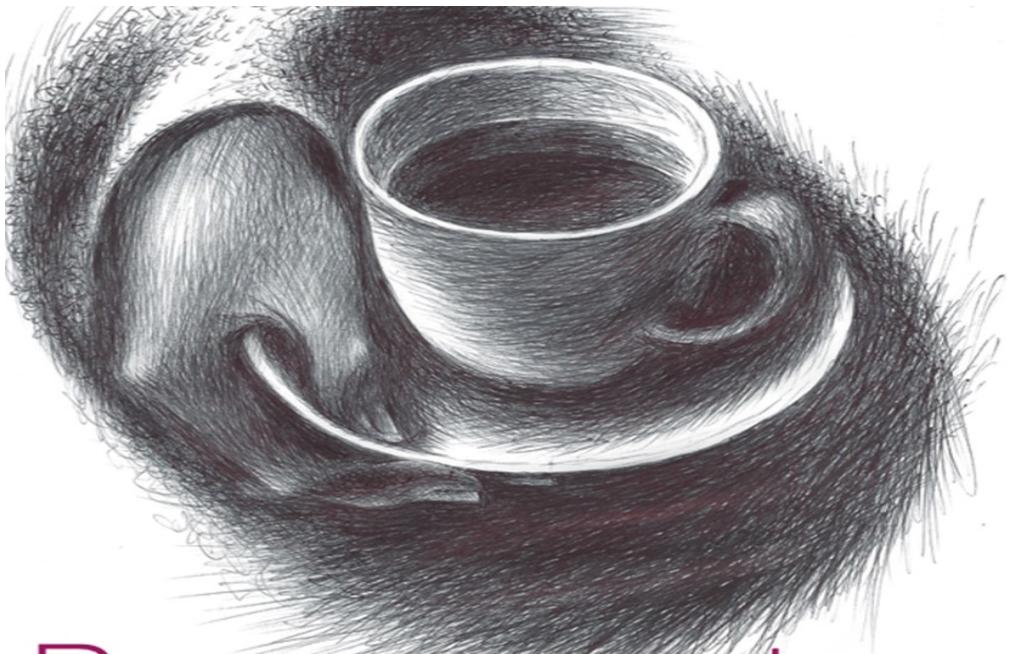


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Bereavement Café

Thank you to everyone who supported the Bereavement Cafe through the Co-op community Charity scheme! You raised over £1,100! The next meeting will be in the coffee lounge at St. John's on Tuesday 17th October 2:00- 3:30pm. We have been very fortunate to be trained and supported by Princess Alice Hospice, who will continue to work with us to provide this needed service for our community.



With things opening up again please help raise much-needed donations for St John's Old Malden - Repairs Fund when you plan ahead and arrange things to do! From booking staycations and getaways to tickets for concerts or other fun activities, remember to use #easyfundraising to raise FREE donations for us. Book now: <http://efraising.org/fx3w1QPP7u>

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