

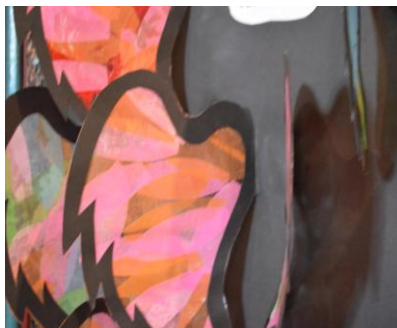
Angels at St Mary's Church, Runwell
29th September - 3rd October 2014



An Exhibition of Art Work

On 29th September, the Feast of St Michael and All Angels, the Church of St Mary in Runwell opened its doors at 3pm and welcomed in its first visitors to an eclectic mix of artwork.

Prompted by the Centenary Year suggestion of a "Mission Event" we, the



DCC and people of St Mary's Church, reflected that it was a pity that our beautiful Church would stay locked for most of the week, opening only for school visits, impromptu visitors, rites of passage and, of course, our weekday and Sunday Worship.

We realised opening the Church, although a great draw to many, was not going to call people across the increasingly busy A129 on the edge of the Runwell part of Wickford and Runwell.

Towards the latter part of the summer term, local schools and art clubs were approached. The theme would be "Angels" - nothing more or nothing less. We then waited, following up at the start of the new academic year. The large part of the advertising was carried out by Lyn Bear (with excellent help from Val Harris). Enthusiasm was growing and very soon Runwell art Club offered to lend screens, as did Runwell School.

Slowly we realised that people were talking about their own preparations. People were intrigued and excited.

The whole task was quite risky too. We weren't sure exactly what, if anything, would arrive at the church. But arrive it did!



Lyn, Paula and Jim "setting up"

Lyn was busy collecting some of the art. Large pieces were collected from various schools, a large pair of wings arrived in the post and two art clubs delivered framed paintings.

We received contributions from:

Runwell Art Club
Wickford Art Club
Runwell pre-school
Peter Pan pre-school
Rainbow pre-school
Runwell Community Primary School
Wickford Junior School
Grange School
St Andrew's Church "Meet and Make"

Many individuals also provided photos, translucent prints, cross-stitch and paintings. The displays were diverse, some abstract and some realistic. There were complex paintings and simpler paper plate angels.

A leaflet to introduce the event was waiting at the door and a bowl of feathers was there for visitors to take away a white feather as they left.





A CD played during the evenings, blending the classical "Sanctus" from various composers with ethereal ambient sounds and popular "angel" songs (mainly, it turned out, by Annie Lennox!).



Having filled the Church with artwork and stood back to look, we were very pleased. As 3 pm opening approached on the Monday, the real test began.

Would anyone be interested?

Our volunteers who staffed the exhibition recorded 142 visitors (and one dog!). The reaction was immediate. Written comments ranged from simple one word - "fantastic", "fun", "creative", "peaceful" "inspirational", "beautiful" - to the following selection:



- It has been wonderful to come and explore the interpretation of an "Angel"
- Thought provoking and so inclusive
- Wonderful to see so many angels and that the children have been so involved
- An enlightening experience - how wonderful
- beautiful work from the pre-schools
- Well done to all involved. Much beauty in many ways and unusual and intriguing ideas of angels

The most common thread in the comments focussed on the inclusiveness of the exhibition. Often art exhibitions show only a few clean-cut pieces but here we wanted to (and managed to) reflect the diversity of art.



The Tuesday evening mass took place amongst the visitors and the Wednesday morning mass was longer than normal as the congregation looked at the exhibits before during and after! The intention of both the weekday masses were in honour of Michael and his angelic companions .

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The challenge will be to see if we can accommodate more of these events. The beauty of the creativity and the enthusiasm for filling the space with exhibits and people will, we hope inspire us to do this again.

We would want to thank Lyn Bear for inspiring and carrying out this exhibition. Lyn would especially like to thank Val Harris for clearing up, along with Yvonne Branson and Pat Watson (as well as others). However a special "thank you" must be offered to Paula and Jim Sloane who generously gave of their time in putting up the displays, showing great patience as Fr Jo then moved them all around, for filling in gaps to ensure the Church could be kept open AND for making sure screens and paintings were taken away.

We hope that this same local enthusiasm will be seen in our Christmas Tree Exhibition in December and in future exhibitions.

Some more images from the exhibition:











And this was the leaflet that each visitor received:

Welcome to St Mary's Church, Runwell

ANGELS!



We hope that you enjoy your visit to this angelic exhibition.

Angels have always been a part of the world of Church but their history reaches back further than that.

The Old Testament - the first part of the Bible - is full of stories about guardians and messengers - some of them fierce and some of them gentle, some other-worldly (with wings and flaming eyes) and others very human looking. The only real constant is the awe they inspire in those who meet them.



The New Testament has some important visits - the Archangel (important title!) Gabriel meets with Mary and announces the beginning of the story of Jesus. John the Baptist's parents have a similar meeting. Joseph (just like his Old Testament name-sake) is constantly seeing angels in his dreams.

Jesus talks of angels and his birth and resurrection are both announced by them.





Then into the latter part of the Bible we hear about angels in the book of Revelation. The Archangel Michael leads the attack and subsequent destruction of the Devil (all the malcontent gone from humanity at last). Angels are seen as a part of heaven.

Winged guardians have a much older history than just the Bible - Babylonian and Greek myths, Norse stories and even Mesopotamian tombs reveal this to us - HOWEVER we are focussing more on the type that we imagine in our generation.

Due to the artwork of the church, modern films and the hugely influential Victorian Christmas story, angels have taken on a particular shape for us today.

As you look around you will see amazing art work from a couple of our local art clubs, dynamic images created by our pre-schools and schools. There are also some individual pieces too. Take some time as you go round to seek the message that the artist wanted their image to give you. As with all art work, that is tricky.

Make sure you don't miss the three angel windows in the Church or the huge painting by the font. Sometimes we miss them without realising.

In the West (the opposite end to the altar) a fiery red Angel Gabriel holds the lily in his hand (his message to Mary).

In the North the two angels announce Jesus' rising from the dead - "He is not here"

By the font three angels wait on Jesus as he is baptised by John - an icon painted at Walsingham

And in the quire (beyond the screen) Gabriel announces to Mary - and the writing on the scroll and book tells the story.



Above all we hope that you will enjoy this exhibition and we hope that it will help you look to the angels in our midst, rarely with wings but always promoting God's great message of Love in word and in action

If you are interested our Sunday Service is at 9:30 am every week and we have two quieter services at 7:30 pm on Tuesday and 11:30 am on a Wednesday. Your presence would be very welcome!

PLEASE TAKE THIS LEAFLET HOME WITH YOU