

# Mike's message .....

## 2015

Happy New Year, and I hope that you had a holy and peaceful Christmas!

A New Year dawns and I'm sure many of you will be putting dates year into new diaries or onto wall calendars. Our friends down at Holy Trinity, West Bromwich have once again produced an excellent calendar and their 2015 theme is 'Notable West Bromwich People'. There's a wide range of characters, from the highest paid Hollywood Star of her day, Madeleine Carroll, to members of heavy metal band Judas Priest, from the founder of Hudson's Soap empire to John Woodward who fiddled (or whatever the verb is for playing the cello) as Titanic sank.

One of the people featured in the calendar is being remembered both in 2015 and 2016 as both see significant anniversaries. The man is Francis Asbury and although born in Hamstead spent many of his formative years and early adult life here in West Bromwich. You can still see what was the family home down at the bottom of the Newton Road, next to the Malt Shovel.

Francis Asbury was born 270 years ago on 20th August 1745, and next year 2016 will see the bicentenary of his death on 31st March 1816. Asbury is a significant figure in the history of Christianity in the USA but his influence started right here in West Bromwich. His family were regular worshippers at All Saints' before Francis became inspired by the preaching of John Wesley. At just 18 years of age Asbury became a local preacher and was the 'First Class Leader' of what would become Wesley Church, West Bromwich. There's a plaque at Wesley recalling this. From the age of twenty-two Wesley appointed him as a travelling preacher. Then, aged just 26, Asbury travelled to America, then still a British colony, where he was to have a successful ministry over the next 45 years. He preached in court houses, pubs, town squares and fields, anywhere that a crowd would gather to hear him. He travelled on horseback and his journals revealed he averaged 6000 miles a year. Even today there are more Methodist churches in the USA bearing Asbury's name than Wesley's.

Asbury, and the others commemorated in the 'Notable People' calendar, remind us that although - with the exception of football - West Bromwich rarely features in the national news, remarkable people have started off here and still do. That's because all of us are, in different ways, remarkable individuals. We are loved by those closest to us and - whatever we do, we are loved by God.

Let's make 2015 a year to proclaim the message of God's loving acceptance of us as remarkable individuals too.

