

All Saints' Flower Ladies



Margaret Woodhall is one of a small band of ladies who arrange the flowers at All Saints'. Here she gives us some background to the flower ladies' work.

"There are normally four of us (me, Pam, Rosemary and Christine) who come in on Friday mornings to arrange the flowers in church for the weekend and the following week.

First we discuss what can be recycled from last week, whether we need any new arrangements doing and if so, what we need to buy.

All of us bring in greenery from our own gardens. Should there be no flower sponsors that week, we are allocated money by the churchwardens from general church funds to buy new flowers. These are usually purchased from Concord Market or Poppies Florists - for special items we use a 'flower warehouse' in Wombourne.



Rosemary tends an altar display



Christine works on the Lady Chapel display

In most cases each week's altar displays are paid by individuals and families who wish to remember a family member who has died. They may specify the colours they want, or the flowers they want used. It is very well supported - in fact there is only one unsubscribed Sunday between now and December.

In addition to the two altar pedestals, other pedestals in front of the pulpit or at the back of church may be requested by donors. While these two locations are optional, there is almost always one provided in the Lady Chapel area - a nice feature for those attending Midweek Communion."

Step by step - creating an altar arrangement...



1. A stock of greenery, kept in church during the week, is brought out to create the displays on Friday; this is replenished from time to time from the ladies' gardens. Some leaves, such as the aspidistra and the palms are specially bought from the florists' warehouse in Wombourne.



2. Oases are soaked in water, for use in the arrangements.



3. First the 'mechanics' are sorted out, consisting of the pedestal, the oasis and the wire mesh that helps to segregate and keep the flowers in position. The old oasis is removed, and the wire mesh straightened out.



4. A new oasis is inserted on the pedestal.



5. Often the cells of the plant stem heal over once the stems are cut and prevent it taking up water, so when stems are recycled the tips of the greenery are first cut off so they can absorb water.



6. The arrangement begins. Margaret has brought in greenery from her garden - she tends to favour 'things that flow' in her arrangements. She begins by establishing an outline for the arrangement: in this case it is a basic triangular shape.



7. New flowers, including carnations bought at Concord Market, are unwrapped for use. This week they cost around £6.00 - that's because some flowers have been recycled. The usual cost of a full altar display is £12-£15.



8. Carnations are inserted. In most cases Margaret will use her own creativity to put the display together, based on years of experience. Her father was a very keen gardener and she derived her interest from him. She used to attend Wolverhampton Flower Club in the early sixties and has exhibited at various shows and won prizes for her arrangements.



9. Red chrysanthemums are inserted alongside white spray carnations. As the arrangement takes shape it's important to ensure that enough flowers are left to fill the shape on the inside.



10. Pink carnations are added.



11. Alstromeria flowers, recycled from last week's displays are added to brighten up and add variety to the arrangement.



12. All done! A matching pedestal arrangement is then added on the opposite side of the altar.