

# SOLIHULL PARISH NEWS

**800**  
YEARS OF  
CHRISTIANITY  
IN SOLIHULL  
**2020**



## TEAM CHURCHES

**St ALPHEGE -** The Square, Solihull B91 3RQ  
**St HELEN -** St Helen's Road, Solihull B91 2DA  
**St MICHAEL -** Bryanston Road, Solihull B91 1BS



### **All church services are currently suspended until further notice.**

**In light of Government guidance around non-essential contact, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have issued advice that public worship is suspended until further notice.**

**Our usual pattern of Sunday services and other mid-week gatherings have therefore been put on hold at St Alphege, St Helen's and St Michael's until further notice.**

**St Alphege church is open for private prayer and reflection.  
St Helen and St Michael chapels will also be open.**

**The Parish Office is also still available on 0121 705 5350 or [office@solihullparish.co.uk](mailto:office@solihullparish.co.uk)**

**We are currently looking at ways in which we can provide spiritual support and pastoral care during this time of great challenge.**

***Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy.  
Sustain and support the anxious,  
be with those who care for the sick,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may find comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us  
from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

**The Revd Canon Jane Kenchington  
The Revd Simon Marshall  
The Revd Helen Greenham  
The Revd Dr Sam Gibson**

# C o n t e n t s

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Roundabout</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>News from Team Churches</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>St Alphege</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>St Helen</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>St Michael</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The Guardians of St Alphege</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Music Matters</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Pioneer Diary</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Youth Stuff</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Let us Pray</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Matters of Faith</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>For Your Diary</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Address Book</b>	<b>40</b>



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

*Cover picture*

**'The Easter Vigil:  
Set us aflame with the fire  
of your love'**

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# H e a d l i n e s

<b>Public Worship Put on Hold</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Staying Connected - join Facebook</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Bellringers' AGM</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>800 Years Cook Book</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Thursday Refreshments and Fellowship</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>800 Acts of Kindness Project</b>	<b>24</b>

# ***Editorial***

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

**I** am writing this on 18 March – a day after we were told by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York that all church services must be suspended until further notice. We have never known such a time – when we won't be able to worship together - especially with Holy Week and Easter coming very soon. It feels quite desperate. We truly are in unknown territory.

But this is a time of desperation for many people – they have friends and relatives dying, they are frightened that they may become ill; they're fearful about their income because they are no longer working for the time being (or have they lost their jobs permanently?); parents struggle to try to work when they have children off school and elderly parents to care for; they're fearful about what they can do when they find they can't buy essential items from the supermarkets; others are fearful about the prospect of staying at home on their own and suffering from depression due to their isolation; many of us are fearful that the NHS will collapse. The list could go on and on.

In these dark and uncertain times, hold onto God. God is our anchor. Psalm 46 reminds us that God is our refuge and strength and a very present help in trouble. God is our stronghold.

The ministry team here (clergy and lay licensed ministers) are here to serve you all. Our main concern is to ensure that you receive the pastoral care and help you need.

We would encourage you to think about developing a telephone ministry so that you speak to people who you normally worship with at Church so that we can all continue to feel in touch as a church family.

If you or someone you know is feeling isolated or in particular need then do contact the Parish Office or a member of the Ministry/Staff team, whose details you will find at the back of the Parish News or online, and we will do our best to provide support in these uncertain and unsettled times.

## **A prayer for us all:**

Loving God, bless us all, particularly now.  
Particularly when we are comforting others,  
particularly when we are offering hope,  
particularly when people are isolated,  
particularly when we feel overwhelmed ourselves,  
particularly when we are afraid.  
Help us to remember that you are right here,  
now, in the midst of us  
calling us by name. Amen.



*With my love and prayers,*  
**Jane Kenchington**

Looking at the many challenges facing us, it would be easy to despair. The climate crisis threatens to displace hundreds of millions, uproot entire communities, and permanently impoverish the natural world. Despite some improvements in living standards, inequality persists, as does abject poverty and hunger. The current coronavirus epidemic, meanwhile, reminds us all of our vulnerability to illness and death, as well as the profound interconnectedness of human society; as W.H. Auden wrote, "we must love another or die."

A feeling of hopelessness can pervade us if we dwell exclusively on the very real dangers facing our complex, interwoven global society. I have encountered this, perhaps less directly expressed, in my day-by-day interactions with people in our town, who often express a sense that the world is getting worse. Perhaps there is a healthy dimension to confronting our own frailty and failure; perhaps after many centuries of believing in the inevitable victory of progress we are now having to confront reality. We have grown rapidly in terms of technology, but our bodies and souls remain the same: finite, flawed, destined to decay.

What is the gospel response to all of this? If we can't ignore the problems facing the world, if we are to listen to the anxieties people express, how can we Christians respond? Pope Francis, in his 2015 letter on climate change *Laudato Si* offers this encouragement:

*"All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning.*

*We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours."*

Pope Francis reminds us that Jesus could be completely present with people in their suffering, loss and pain without being overwhelmed, because he was full of God's love. He writes of *"an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full."* What would this look like for us, in our daily lives, in light of the local and global challenges we face?

Jesus died on Good Friday and was placed in the tomb. According to the ancient teaching of the church (1 Peter 3:9), on Holy Saturday Jesus descended into Hades, the depths, the lowest and darkest place humans inhabit, what we would call hell. Jesus was there in the worst moments humanity could produce: the death of God's beloved Son on the cross; the pit of despair which we opened up for ourselves.

Crying out in abandonment on the cross, Jesus enters the despair of our condition. And yet, he emerges from the other side. All is not lost. As an Easter hymn of the Orthodox church says, "by death he trampled down death"! Jesus rose from the dead and emerged victorious over even the deepest darkness. It is this hope, this victory, which we invoke and live out as we approach the difficulties of our times. It is this which is the source of compassion, care, and dignity, as well as the possibility of new life and radical change.

**Sam**

## **Public Worship Put on Hold**

### **Letter from the Archbishops**

**To All Church of England Clergy, dated 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We wanted to write to you today to offer you advice and encouragement at this very difficult time for the whole of our country. We write this letter having consulted with the bishops across the Church of England and are grateful to them for their wisdom and help.

Thank you for all that you do and will continue to do as disciples of Jesus Christ and ministers of the Gospel. We recognise what a very unusual and painful time this is for everyone and we want to stress that we are praying for you all and are very grateful for all that you are doing.

It has always been the historic vocation of the Church of England to be the church for everyone. William Temple, one of the great Archbishops of Canterbury and York of the last century, is often quoted as saying that we are the one organisation which exists for the benefit of its 'non-members'. As the challenge of the coronavirus grips the world, and as the Government asks every individual and every organisation to rethink its life, we are now asking the Church of England in all its parishes, chaplaincies and ministries to serve all people in a new way. Public worship will have to stop for a season. Our usual pattern of Sunday services and other mid-week gatherings must be put on hold. But this does not mean that the Church of England has shut up shop. Far from it.

We need to look at new ways of serving everyone:

1. Where you can and where it is prudent, we encourage all clergy to continue their pattern of daily prayer and, if it is your practice and can be done within the constraints as set out, a daily Eucharist. It is vital to observe strictly the protocols of hygiene and, where necessary, self-isolation and social distancing. This will not be public worship that everyone can attend, but an offering of prayer and praise for the nation and for the world.

Please do of course keep the church buildings open for private prayer wherever possible as we know so many do all the time.

2. If churches and worshipping communities have the resources to live stream then they should do so. This will enable the people of God and anyone and everyone who looks to God for support and meaning in this time of crisis to participate in the life of worship at home. At the same time, both nationally and in our dioceses, we will produce and provide resources for prayer and worship in the home. This will be especially important for those who are self-isolating, but also for the benefit of everyone.





3. Many people are going to suffer during these coming months as the coronavirus reaches its peak. Tragically there will be deaths and so many will be grieving and fearful. We, the Church of Jesus Christ, with our sisters and brothers from other Christian churches, must be in the forefront of providing practical care and support for the most poor and the most vulnerable, and we offer our services to all those who are beginning to think through how best to provide for those in need.

Being a part of the Church of England is going to look very different in the days ahead. Our life is going to be less characterised by attendance at church on Sunday, and more characterised by the prayer and service we offer each day. We may not be able to pray with people in the ways that we are used to, but we can certainly pray for people. And we can certainly offer practical care and support. Please do carry on supporting the local foodbank and buy extra provisions for it. Ensure the night shelters wherever possible are kept open. There are many very encouraging schemes happening right across our country in communities to focus on caring for the most vulnerable, so do continue to play your part in those.

Then by our service, and by our love, Jesus Christ will be made known, and the hope of the gospel – a hope that will counter fear and isolation - will spread across our land.

We have called, along with our fellow church leaders, for a day of prayer and action this coming Sunday - Mothering Sunday (22nd March). Mothering Sunday has always been both a day of celebration for many and a sensitive and emotional day for some. Wherever you are this Sunday please do join in this day of prayer and action and remember especially those who are sick or anxious, and all involved in our Health Service. As one action, we are calling on everyone to place a lighted candle in their window at 7.00 p.m. as a sign of solidarity and hope in the light of Christ that can never be extinguished.

This is a defining moment for the Church of England. Are we truly a church for all, or just the church for ourselves? We urge you sisters and brothers to become a different sort of church in these coming months: hopeful and rooted in the offering of prayer and praise and overflowing in service to the world.

Please, therefore, join us in this great challenge; and pray for our Government and nation, for each other, and especially for those who work in our health and emergency services.

With every blessing,

**+Justin Cantuar**

**+Sentamu Eboracensis**

## **800<sup>th</sup> Prayer**

Gracious God,  
we praise you for eight centuries of good news  
for the people of Solihull;  
inspire our hearts and ready our hands,  
that together we may continually proclaim in word and deed  
the gospel of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## **The Grove Residential Home (Solihull)**

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## Staying Connected – join Facebook

Over the coming weeks, we hope to use computer social media platforms such as Facebook to help people stay connected whilst they are at home due to the Coronavirus outbreak. We are intending to share pictures, prayers, videos and other news, which we hope will appeal to members of the congregation even when we can't get together at church.

If you are not already using Facebook, here are some instructions on how to get connected:

- Go into the internet. This might be Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Internet Explorer: you will probably have one of the icons shown here.
- Type [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) into the search bar at the top of the page.
- The page will look like the picture below.
- Create your account – fill in your details, then click on the green 'Sign Up' button at the bottom of the page.
- You will then be asked to confirm your details. If you've included a mobile number, you will be sent a verification code to complete. If you've included an email address, you'll be sent a link to click to verify your account.



Once you have got into Facebook, you can personalise your page with a photo if you wish. Importantly, you can connect to friends and organisations of relevance to you, so that you can see their news on a regular basis.

We'd like to suggest you connect with the parish and the choir pages. To do this, type 'Solihull Parish' into the search bar at the top of the page. Click through on the Solihull Parish page search result. Underneath the picture, there is an option to click 'Like', which will then mean that posts from the Parish will automatically appear on your news feed. You can do the same to follow the choir page, by typing 'Friends of St Alphege Music' into the search box, which then links to the Friends of St Alphege Music & St Alphege Church Choirs Facebook page. Again, click like so that choir posts will automatically appear on your Facebook feed. You can also search for friends and family members in the same way and 'like' their pages so that you see their news.

**Isabel Baumber**

## Bellringers' AGM

The bellringers' AGM was held on 21<sup>st</sup> January, chaired by the Rector with her usual efficiency. All our normal business was concluded in just over an hour, including a few items that may be of wider interest.

- We intend to support the national initiative to ring bells for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day at 7pm on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May.
- We intend to arrange some special ringing on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May for the celebration of 800 years of Christianity in Solihull.
- A new Ringing Master – Malcolm Paulson – was elected.

Malcolm's predecessor, Clive Day, filled the post of Ringing Master from 2001 to 2014 and again from 2015 to 2020. He will be a hard act to follow. Clive was particularly good at keeping everyone who turned up involved and informed and welcomed all visitors. He concentrated on ensuring the progress of all band members even if this held up his own progress. For him, the band came first. A highlight of his nearly 20 years in charge, both personally and for the band, must be the peal in which he rang in 2012 to commemorate the millennial anniversary of the martyrdom of St Alphege. He kept the parish informed of our activities via regular articles in this magazine, spent hours looking after the clock mechanism and traditionally rang the 11 chimes for the two-minute silence on Remembrance Sunday. He was also largely responsible for the creation of a band of local ringers at Rowington after we rang for a wedding there and sparked local interest.

Our new Ringing Master, Malcolm, is from a ringing dynasty. His father, uncle, grandfather and great-grandfather were all ringers and his niece Roberta and his daughter Sara have taken it up in the last few years too – with Sara being a member of the Solihull band. We wish Malcolm well in the task he has undertaken. The picture shows Malcolm second from right with Sara next to him. Malcolm's father Michael is also third from left and Roberta is on the left. The picture was taken following a quarter peal which was the first to include three generations of Malcolm's family.



**Keith Whitehead**

## 800 Years Cook Book

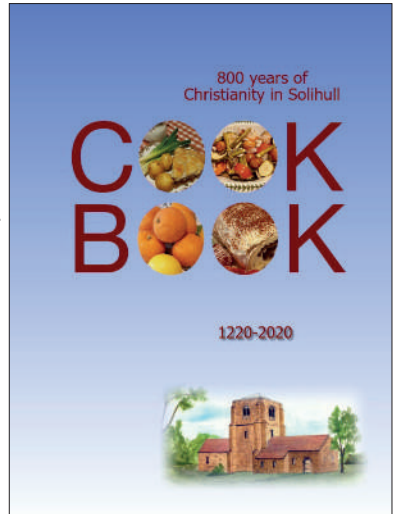
The Cook Book is now ready for printing and will be on sale when the Coronavirus social distancing measures are relaxed.

The majority of the recipes are new to this edition but we've included some of the favourites from the 2012 Cook Book. There are 100 pages, most with colour pictures of the dishes, so it makes a useful addition to your kitchen as well as being a wonderful souvenir of '800 Years of Christianity in Solihull'. Don't just buy one for your own use, buy a few as gifts for your friends and family as well. Profits will go to charity.

Thank you to everyone who submitted their favourite recipes. There is a really good balance of dishes from starters to desserts, cakes, jams and preserves and even wine suggestions.

We will let you know when the Cook Book is on sale.

**Susan and Philip Leach**



## Thursday Refreshments and Fellowship

**E**ach Thursday following the 10.30am service at St Alphege, the congregation have been invited into the vestry for refreshments.

For the past 12 years, Evelyn Berry has organised the supply of tea, coffee and biscuits, and arranged a rota of volunteers so that, for a small charge, these refreshments could be provided. Over that time, profits totalling £1,616.52 have been raised and donated to Marie Curie, Macmillan Cancer Research and St Alphege church, which is a wonderful achievement.

Evelyn has now decided to hang up her apron! Thanks go to her for making these refreshments available, thereby having enabled parishioners to enjoy some fellowship – usually an important element of church life (as we are now beginning to realise!).

Once public worship recommences, the Mothers Union will be taking up the apron and will continue to ensure that refreshments are served following the Thursday morning service.

**Caroline & Allen Kerr**

## **From the St Alphege Register**

### **Baptisms**

None

### **Weddings**

None

### **Funerals**

19<sup>th</sup> March                  Doris May Bedford

### **Memorials**

2<sup>nd</sup> March                  Michael Southworth

### **Interments**

10<sup>th</sup> March                  Doreen Davis

## **Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in April**

John Wallis	Leslie Brotherton pr.	Wilfred Gregory
John Keyte	Terence Butt	David William Wyldes
Eric Greasley	Mabel Florance	Vivien Soden
Eileen Edwards	Neville Freeth	Burmah Hall
Margaret Stenhouse	Mark Warrior	Arthur Owen Caldicott
John Harrison	Bob Maw	Joyce Eyre

## **OLIVER BIRD HALL BOOKINGS**

**Enquiries are welcome for the use of the Hall for  
social gatherings, christenings, anniversaries, meetings, etc.**

**Visit the website on:**

**[www.solihullparish.org.uk/church-hall-hire](http://www.solihullparish.org.uk/church-hall-hire)**

**or contact the Parish Office:**

**Tel: 0121 705 5350 / 0121 270 9740 Email: [office@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:office@solihullparish.org.uk)**



## *The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church*

### **EVENTS & NEWS**

Dear Guardians,

Unfortunately, the coffee morning on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and our Spring Lunch on 15<sup>th</sup> May have been cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

*Best wishes,*  
**Ruth Morton (Guardians Committee)**

### **FLOODLIGHTING**

The Guardian's Floodlighting Scheme is available for anyone who would wish to celebrate or mark an occasion, or to commemorate a date. The cost is £8.00 for 2 hours; £14.00 for 4 hours. Please give 14 days' notice. Forms are available from the Guardians notice boards in St Alphege Church or in the Oliver Bird Hall.

Names are displayed on monthly lists on these notice boards and also in the Parish magazine and acknowledged with a card sent to the donor. For further information please contact the Scheme organiser: Sheila Payne, 0121 706 0520; or email [sheilaepayne@aol.com](mailto:sheilaepayne@aol.com)

### **The Church was floodlit to remember the following:**

4 <sup>th</sup> March	In loving memory of Gordon Mitchell.
6 <sup>th</sup> March	In loving memory of Fraser Mitchell.
7 <sup>th</sup> March	Mabel Campkin remembered with great affection on this your birthday.
7 <sup>th</sup> March	In loving memory of Jack Florance on this his birthday.
10 <sup>th</sup> March	Loving and treasured memories of Charles Dennis Hancock.
12 <sup>th</sup> March	Loving and treasured memories of Don Mason.
13 <sup>th</sup> March	In loving memory of Jack Florance.
13 <sup>th</sup> March	In loving memory of Betty Hartley on the anniversary of her birthday.
23 <sup>rd</sup> March	In loving memory of Harry Hartley, Rector of St Alphege.
23 <sup>rd</sup> March	In loving memory of Jean McDonough.
27 <sup>th</sup> March	In loving memory of Joyce Eyre.
28 <sup>th</sup> March	To commemorate the wedding anniversary of May and the late Owen Cawser.

# ***Music Matters***

## **Thank you to Alex Woodrow**

In this issue, I would like to express our very sincere thanks to Alex Woodrow, who left St Alphege in February. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Alex over the last three years – although he was officially in post since September 2018, he was regularly covering the organist role with us for a long time before that.

Alex's exceptional organ playing has underpinned the rise in standards of the choirs at St Alphege – we have been treated to cathedral-standard playing every week, and some of our best cathedral tours to Rochester, Lincoln and Norwich, as well as a number of day trips, including the very successful visit to Tewkesbury Abbey in February. Alex's calm manner and professional approach to everything provided stability and created a positive atmosphere, which was wonderful to work in.

Alex worked with choristers, both boys and girls from a variety of backgrounds, with a variety of abilities, and a variety of temperaments(!), to develop their singing and their overall musicianship – I learned something new by observing every rehearsal taking in the knowledge Alex shared with the children.

We were very fortunate to have Alex working with the choirs for this time and we wish him every success in his new role at Leeds Minster – we hope we might be able to visit him in Leeds at some point in the future. In the meantime, please put Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July in your diaries as Alex will be returning to St Alphege that day to give a lunchtime recital, where he proposes to play the whole of Vierne's First Symphonie for Organ.



## **Thinking of our friends in Spain**

By the time this Parish News reaches readers, it may well be that the Covid-19 / Coronavirus situation in the UK is much worse than at the time of writing. I hope everyone stays safe and gets the care and support they need during this time.



We have just made the difficult decision to cancel our choir tour to Madrid, due to take place just after Easter. In gathering information to support making this decision, it became apparent to me how difficult the current situation is in Madrid. The Collado family (children Jorge, Ana and Javier, pictured here) were members of the choir during their two years in England a couple of years ago, before they had to return to Spain for family reasons. Both parents (Maria and Oscar) are medics and are literally on the front

line of the fight against Coronavirus in Madrid, working in extremely tough conditions. We are holding the whole family in our thoughts and prayers at this time, as well as the countless other medical heroes across the world.

**Isabel Baumber**



## **Music Recitals : St Alphege Church at 1:10pm**

### **Recitals are suspended until further notice.**

Every Wednesday at 1.10pm we will try to post video clips of varying lengths of past recitals on the Friends of St Alphege Music Facebook page to create a kind of virtual recital.

If anyone would like step-by-step instructions about how to get on to Facebook, please email Isabel on [isabelbaumber@btinternet.com](mailto:isabelbaumber@btinternet.com).

**Any voluntary donations to Friends of St Alphege Music**

## **RAYNER HOUSE AND YEW TREES**

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**L**ent began at St Helen's with the opening meeting of the Retreat in Daily Life. It was good to welcome retreatants from across the Parish and guides as we began this very special journey together.

Bishop Anne made her first visit to St Helen's, presiding and preaching at our 10am service. She was given a traditionally warm welcome, with excellent singing and coffee and cake after the service.

Those attending Forget me not teas heard a wonderful story of a shed of bottles filled with a gentleman's most precious memories. We thought about the things which bring back our own special memories. Those with dementia and their carers were then able to create beautiful sand art jars with shells, sequins and buttons to represent the special times shared which even though they are sometimes hidden from us still go to make up the people we are.

On the second Sunday of Lent we took the opportunity to prayerfully consider our planned giving to the Church. We are now keen to encourage all regular givers to move over to the Parish Giving Scheme.

It was with sadness that we learned of the death of Judith Foster-Smith and also of Rev'd Nora Sanders. We hold the families of both of these much-loved members of St Helen's in our prayers at this time.

Helen

**As notified elsewhere in this magazine, all services at St Helen's are suspended until further notice.**

## St Alphege Pre-School

We welcome you to apply for a Pre-School place for children who will turn 3 in the academic year beginning September 2021. The closing date for applications is 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Application Form and Admissions Policy are available online (paper copies can be requested). St. Alphege Pre-School offers highly experienced and qualified staff. The last Ofsted Inspection result rated us 'Outstanding'.

### **Little Treasures** (baby, toddler and pre-school age)

Every Wednesday in term time in the OBH : 1pm until 2.30pm. Children accompanied by parent/carer. Drop-in session, no need to book, just turn up!

### **Little Movers** (in the academic year the child turns two)

Every Monday in term time in the OBH : 9.30am until 11am. Children accompanied by parent/carer. Drop-in session, no need to book, just turn up! The activities are aimed at children who are approaching 2 years old and is an ideal opportunity for them to develop their physical, social and language skills.

**Further information available : [www.stalphège-preschool.org.uk](http://www.stalphège-preschool.org.uk) or email Pre-School Manager, Meryl Homer : [manager@stalphège-preschool.org.uk](mailto:manager@stalphège-preschool.org.uk)**



## PIANO LESSONS

Theory Aural Harmony

**JUANITA WATSON**

B.A. Hons., C.Ed., CT ABRSM, ALCM

Quavers, 35 Arundel Crescent,  
Solihull B92 8RQ

**Tel: 0121-706-3819**

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also welcome

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- ✓ Brush up on your interview skills
- ✓ Get help with your CV
- ✓ Opportunity to share experiences

Drop in for coffee, friendly advice and support  
When? Every Monday morning between 10.30 – 12.30  
Where? John Palmer Hall, Union Road, Solihull  
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More information? Email [solihulljobclub@live.com](mailto:solihulljobclub@live.com)

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### Knowle

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1682 High Street, B93 0LY



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Dear friends,

**A**s you probably know by now, following a ruling made on Tuesday 17 March 2020 by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, all public worship in the Church of England is suspended with immediate effect.

However, as the Archbishops are encouraging us to, we will continue to pray for each other and for the whole parish. In their recent letter to all clergy in the Church of England, (see pages 5-6 of this magazine) Archbishops Justin and Sentamu said:

*It has always been the historic vocation of the Church of England to be the church for everyone. William Temple, one of the great Archbishops of Canterbury and York of the last century, is often quoted as saying that we are the one organisation which exists for the benefit of its 'non-members'...*

*Our usual pattern of Sunday services and other mid-week gatherings must be put on hold. But this does not mean that the Church of England has shut up shop. Far from it.*

Therefore, as a staff team, we are committed to sustaining the prayer life and pastoral ministry of the parish and we have already begun to set up ways of enabling our congregations to pray and worship at home.

Details of these will be found on:

- the Solihull Parish website: [www.solihullparish.org.uk](http://www.solihullparish.org.uk)
- and also on the St Michael's website: [www.stmichaelspage.com](http://www.stmichaelspage.com)

Please check these websites regularly for updates on this situation, and also for other resources to support you at this difficult time.

St Michael's Chapel will be open for private prayer and reflection every day from 9.30am. Whilst I ask people to observe the latest health advice in terms of social contact, everyone is welcome to visit the chapel whenever they would like to.

As a staff team, we want to support the members of our congregations as much as we can during this time. So if you are in need of pastoral support at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me or any other member of the parish staff team.

*Yours, in Christ's service,*

**Simon**



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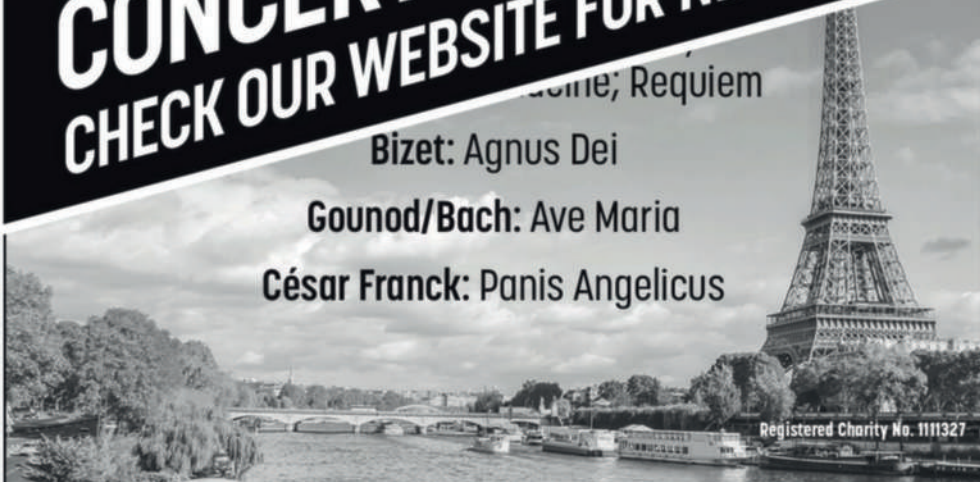
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## "How is it going?"

*"Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen." – Brené Brown (BB)*

I first came across American professor Brené Brown while studying counselling. Although I don't profess to have read everything she has ever written, I can honestly say that, as yet, I have never come across a Brené Brown quote that I didn't agree with. It took a while for me to realise that she is also a Christian. That's not surprising though, as it took her a while to realise it too!

Dr Brené Brown was baptized in the Episcopal Church and then later brought up Catholic, before turning away from the Church altogether in her youth. As an adult Brown went on to be a research professor who has spent the past two decades studying *courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy*, and returned to the Christian Church about ten years ago.

Why is this relevant? Well, as I write this, I am about to attend a Christian gathering (on 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> of March) where the theme is 'Leadership, Vulnerability and Failure', based on Brown's latest book offering, "Dare to Lead": *"We know that vulnerability is the cornerstone of courage-building, but we often fail to realise that without vulnerability there is no creativity or innovation. Why? Because there is nothing more uncertain than the creative process, and there is absolutely no innovation without failure."* (BB)

Pioneering ministry thrives on vulnerability. Every day Pioneer ministers – myself included – put themselves 'out there': risking ridicule, anger and/or rejection, and many other things besides. However, as we've heard above, *"Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen."* (BB)

In general, I feel that I have been received into the community – my community, where I live – with mild curiosity. People who I have been seeing for the last three months have now begun to chat with me – sometimes it's about the weather, sometimes a bit more – but I feel that I am being recognised and beginning to be accepted as a part of the community as I explore my surroundings. This is good. This is how genuine relationships begin.

*"Trust is earned in the smallest of moments. It is earned not through heroic deeds, or even highly visible actions, but through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection."* (BB)

These are all the kind of things I wish I could call to mind each time someone asks me "How is it going?"

Today's society talks about 'getting your money's worth' or 'good value for money'. Unfortunately, the Church, with its annual statistics, is not immune to that way of thinking and so, each time someone asks me 'How is it going?', I have to resist conspiring with that way of thinking and reeling off a list of 'achievements', to placate both the person asking and – at times – myself.

Instead, I am being there, listening, discovering, and finding where people are, while also resisting the pressure for results: *"It takes courage to say yes to rest and play in a culture where exhaustion is seen as a status symbol."* (BB)



In conclusion, thank you to all those of you who ask me "How is it going?" I really do value your interest. And when I say 'It's going well', try not to be disappointed that I haven't reeled off a list of activities – believe me when I say that 'being' is the most important 'doing' I can achieve at this time and there are no shortcuts to that.

In the meantime, I am just being around, being vulnerable, being me. How about you?

*"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."* (BB quoting Howard Thurman)

Praise God!

Do ask me about the March gathering (as above) when you see me next.

Thanks for listening!

**Suzette.** ☺

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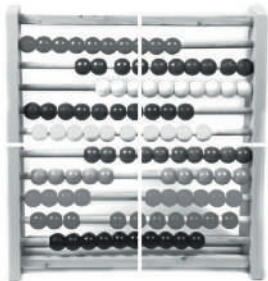
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# Youth Stuff

**All regular youth activities are not taking place until further notice. This includes the Easter Service Project.**

**The St Basil's Sleepout is not cancelled but postponed.**

During the Easter holidays Solihull Parish Youth were planning to participate in various service projects across the parish. We have done this over the last few years and it had become a brilliant opportunity for us to give back to the churches and the community.

We had planned a charity sleepout raising money for St Basils, a charity that helps homeless young people through support, accommodation and training. This involves taking part in a sponsored sleepout, with those taking part spending the night outside sleeping 'rough' in cardboard boxes. We will be going ahead with this at a later date, and (as part of the 800 Years of Christianity celebrations) we are aiming to raise at least £800 for St Basils through this event when it does take place. The young people always find it a very eye-opening and uncomfortable experience!

When we do go ahead with this, we would be grateful for any support you can offer us and St Basils through prayer and donations (including any large cardboard boxes if you have any!). Donations can be given in person or online at:

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/solihullparishyouth>

The various service projects that we were planning to carry out across the parish through Holy Week will unfortunately now not be taking place.

As a group the youth always appreciate prayers for our young people, and appreciate the impact that prayer has on their lives. Please also pray for St Basils and the work they do.

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# 800 Acts of Kindness Project

## Kindness News: April

It has been wonderful to see so many groups and individuals getting involved in the 800 Acts of Kindness project. Kindness collection boxes have appeared at Solihull Radio, Solihull Station and in the Cancer Research shop. Solihull Bid very kindly donated a stand to promote the 800 Acts of Kindness project at the Solihull Business Expo at the Ramada Hotel which was to have taken place on 18<sup>th</sup> March (now rearranged for 8<sup>th</sup> October). Solihull Radio have invited Linda Hicks along to record a podcast about Kindness.

St Alphege school were busy making plans to focus on the project in the half term after the Easter holidays as part of thinking about one of their school values – Responsibility. They were exploring ideas in conjunction with Age UK and hopefully will be able to focus on this when schools return to normality in due course. 6<sup>th</sup> Solihull Hurricane Beavers completed Kindness cards at their half term sleepover and put together a fabulous poster.

Sadly Solihull Parish Youth have had to put on hold their plans to do lots of Acts of Kindness during the first week of the Easter holidays when they were offering their time each day to be kind to different parts of the community but it is hoped that new opportunities will emerge in due course. Solihull Welcome have been recording the Acts of Kindness carried out by their volunteers who welcome and provide hospitality to Asylum seekers who are visiting Solihull. It has been wonderful to see the kind and generous response to the request for various items including warm coats, hats, gloves, toiletries and towels for the Asylum seekers.

A snapshot of Acts of Kindness already recorded:

- *This week I have been cutting out the material ready to sew into Grieving Gowns. The Women's, Heartlands and City Hospitals gratefully receive these gowns for the stillborn babies.*
- *The Junk Food Café is based at St Mary's Church Hobs Moat. A Junk Food Café Volunteer's husband was walking home from work and saw that someone was getting rid of some fridges on their driveway. He asked about them in case they could be used at the café and she said that they were broken but insisted she would like to buy one for them to support their good work! She came down to the café today and donated the money and the new fridge/freezer has been ordered!*
- *Fortnightly spending time talking to people as part of the Solihull 'chatty cafe' scheme with a view to reducing social isolation.*
- *My teenage daughter arrived home very wet one afternoon! She told me that on her way home she had seen an elderly lady getting very wet in a sudden down pour of rain. She offered the lady her umbrella and said she could keep it.*
- *A little girl sharing her sweets with someone else who had none.*

Progress towards the goal of 800 started slowly with 66 Acts of Kindness recorded by 1<sup>st</sup> March. By the 11<sup>th</sup> March this rose to 279 Acts of Kindness, good progress towards the goal of competing 800 Acts of Kindness during 2020.

In these uncertain and unsettled times there are going to be many opportunities to exercise a ministry of kindness. In their call for a National Day of Prayer and Action the Archbishops of Canterbury and York make many suggestions, for example, ringing someone who might be feeling isolated or vulnerable, donating to a local food bank, being attentive to neighbours, shopping for someone else, supporting those who struggle to feed their children when there are no free school lunches. We must all seek to be attentive to the needs of others and do our best to provide support and kindness where we can.

## **800 Acts of Kindness Q&A**

### **What is the 800 Acts of Kindness project?**

The project emerged from discussions that took place to decide what events would happen during 2020 to celebrate 800 years of Christianity in Solihull. The aim is to record more than 800 Acts of Kindness carried out in Solihull during 2020. It's a great opportunity to celebrate all the wonderful Acts of Kindness that are already happening and to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities.

### **Who can get involved?**

Everyone! – groups, individuals, churches, schools, the whole community.

### **How can I get involved?**

Decide on an Act of Kindness and then complete it! It can be something BIG or small, one off or ongoing. If you're stuck for ideas visit [www.facebook.com/800actsofkindness](https://www.facebook.com/800actsofkindness) and be inspired! See below for some of the Acts of Kindness that have already been recorded.

### **How do I record an Act of Kindness?**

Fill in a Kindness Card in your local church and then post it in a collection box or e mail [800actsofkindness@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:800actsofkindness@solihullparish.org.uk) If you don't want to record your own Acts of Kindness then why not record an Act of Kindness that someone else has done for you?

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## **Calendar and Prayer Intentions for April**

1	F.D. Maurice, Teacher	2020-21 Just Explore course	Four Stones Close
2	Feria	Those who suffer chronic pain	Froxmere Close
3	Feria	Parish youth / St Basils sleepout	George Road
4	Feria	Local workers and employers	Gilmorton Close
5	Palm Sunday	Peace in the Middle East	Glaston Drive
6	Monday of Holy Week	Vocations to the priesthood	Glenfield Close
7	Tuesday of Holy Week	Parish Women's Theology Groups	Grandborough Drive
8	Wednesday of Holy Week	Vocations to the religious life	Grange Road
9	Maundy Thursday	Hospice residents and staff	Greswolde Road
10	Good Friday	Prisoners and prison staff	Greyhurst Croft
11	Easter Eve	Those to be baptised/confirmed	Grove Avenue
12	Easter Day	Vocations to lay ministry	Grove Road
13	Monday of Easter Week	Bishop Anne	Habberley Croft
14	Tuesday of Easter Week	Young adults; 20s/30s Group	Hainfield Drive
15	Wednesday of Easter Week	St Alphege J&I Schools	Halford Road
16	Thursday of Easter Week	Messy Church volunteers	Halstead Grove
17	Friday of Easter Week	Medical staff and chaplains	Hampton Lane
18	Saturday of Easter Week	Action on climate crisis	Hartwell Close
19	Alphege/Easter II	The mission of Solihull Parish	Haseley Road
20	Feria	Church guides and volunteers	Heath Gardens
21	Anselm, Abp of Canterbury	The Diocese of Canterbury	Heath Road
22	Feria	Racial justice and reconciliation	Heathcote Avenue
23	George, Martyr	The evangelism of England	Heaton Road
24	Mellitus, Bishop of London	Sarah, Bishop of London	Henley Crescent
25	Mark the Evangelist	Bishop David	Henwood Lane
26	Easter III	St Alphege Preschool	Herbert Road
27	Feria	The work of local foodbanks	Hermitage Road
28	Feria	The homeless and SCAH	Heronfield Way
29	Catherine of Siena	Spiritual directors and guides	Heyford Grove
30	Feria	The unemployed	High Street

The Church prays for the community daily: please include these topics in your personal daily prayers.

# ***Let us Pray***

## **Coronavirus Prayer & Action**

### **An article from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York**

We are good in this country at holding our nerve and steadying one another. But a pandemic is something else; you can't touch the virus, see it or even know where it is. It may be spread by those who don't even know they are infected. It is very serious for some, very mild for many. Nevertheless, the effect of the virus could drive us apart. To some extent it must do.

When someone we care for has it they must be isolated. That is particularly so for older people and the most vulnerable, the ones by whose bed we want to sit, and hold their hand, express our love with touch. As in epidemics throughout history the effects of this fear disturb us very deeply, and dread comes upon us.

The answer to conquering this fear is love that we receive. The tears of the child wakened by a bad dream are stilled by the embrace of someone who loves them. The uncertainty of someone of great age is often quietened with a familiar voice. The words of a friend can enable us to challenge the fears of illness to reduce our sense of threat. The UK has a culture of caring, expressed through the NHS, in Social Care, and in many other ways.

All of us, now, face a common threat, COVID-19. The question is, how do we find hope in these difficult circumstances? Hope comes both from what we can do and who we are.

We know that everything possible is being done to ensure that we can meet the challenge, in the NHS and across society. The struggle will bring with it many practical difficulties, from the closing of sports grounds to meeting the needs of those in isolation. It may mean some very hard decisions have to be taken about who is treated, as in Italy where they have had to decide not to treat some patients.

We must not be suspicious or indulge in conspiracy theories. Those who are leading our country are seeking the best advice and can be trusted to do all they can. NHS staff and scientists our Government can call upon are amongst the best anywhere in the world. They have no agenda other than the wellbeing of all.

We are capable of bearing the truth. Honesty strengthens our hopes. We need to listen to the science. Through listening we already know how to reduce the risk: washing our hands meticulously; self-isolating even if we are not ill but have come into contact with the virus; resisting the temptation to go to a doctor's surgery where we might infect others; resisting the temptation, too, to panic buy.

Above all we must look after one another, knowing that in an uncertain world with a new virus we are best protected with honesty, compassion and care.

Remember the example of the Good Samaritan, the story in the Bible, which speaks about the need to care for the other and ensure we notice those who are in distress even if they are those who are often invisible to us.

*Continued on next page*

## *Let us Pray*

We can find hope and courage in the goodly and wholesome spirit that is in so many ways common to all human beings, whether they are people of Faith or None. We must distinguish between a healthy fear - the beginning of wisdom, which prompts us to follow advice, and to care for those at risk - and unhealthy fear which is driven by pride, leading us to act, selfishly, doing harm to ourselves and others.

With the gift of truth and hope, we can care for one another lovingly, using words if not touch because of self-isolation. We can accept advice without grumbling, out of concerns for others, even if we do not see ourselves as being at risk.

We can go out of our way to be attentive to neighbours and to those who are vulnerable. We can shop for one another. We can help at a food bank. We can volunteer in community service. We can support those who struggle to feed their children when there are no free school lunches.

Finally, there is one more thing that everyone can do. Something we would expect from two Archbishops. We make no apology for saying "Pray!" Even if you scarcely can imagine how, pray! Pray for yourself, for those you love, for friends and neighbours.

Three thousand years ago a young King, of shepherd background, called David, wrote a song. It was a hit at his time and has remained so ever since. That is quite a success, even the greatest of our stars of today would feel that three thousand years at the top was quite an achievement. It's the Shepherd song, "The Lord's my Shepherd".

We sing it in our common worship, at weddings and at funerals. It starts with hope but speaks of darkness as well as life. The singer begins with joy: God, the divine Shepherd-King, leads his people to nourishment and safety but in the song the scene quickly darkens.

The path along which he goes becomes a valley of the shadow of death. But the shepherd's 'rod' and 'staff', implements that prod and guide the sheep, provides the comfort that comes from divine guidance.

Find Psalm 23 and read it aloud. The Shepherd's song is about real life, not an idealised picture. It speaks of suffering and facing enemies.

Whether we are confident and brave, or doubt-filled and fearful, God is the source of love and hope. Why not say the Lord's prayer – "Our Father who art in heaven ...." when you wash your hands. It takes more than the recommended 20 seconds.

So, we are inviting you to join us from today, for 7 days, in praying the Lord's prayer every time you wash your hands. Yes – for seven days! And then pray throughout the day for healing for those who are sick with COVID-19; and that God will heal us from the fear which will prevent us from working together.

May the wisdom of God lead the doctors, nurses and researchers, that they may know God's protection; and that God will guide the leaders of the nations into the ways of justice and peace. And that the love of Christ will surround us and take away our anxiety and give us His peace. May He hear us and heal us.

## ***Let us Pray***

With the hope that you will find, then act. Ring someone who is isolated and vulnerable; buy an extra item and place it in your local food bank; keep your night shelters open. Where someone is ill, encourage them. Where someone dies, remember that, as the foundation of our faith for over two thousand years, we have believed that God shared the pains and fears of our lives in Jesus Christ, that He faced death, but overcame it. And He is with the bereaved.

Where is our hope? It is in the end in the love and faithfulness of a God whom we may have forgotten, but whose action and character is expressed in millions of acts of love by every person in this country. This is the God who we see in Jesus Christ, who called himself the Good Shepherd. Acts of love are the normal reaction to those in need. They are a reflection of the God who is our Shepherd.

We have a stronghold and refuge, we do not depend on ourselves alone, for God keeps us so that as the Shepherd song ends: "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life".

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## **The Gospel of Mark**

**Part 5 of "Exploring the New Testament", by Sam Gibson**

**M**ark is the shortest Gospel of the four and is widely considered to the oldest by modern scholars, though interestingly not by the ancient church. According to the modern understanding, Mark was written between 65 and 75 A.D., either in Rome or Palestine. The author, Mark the Evangelist, is a presumed figure drawn from Christian tradition (see *Acts 12*), while the actual Greek text of Mark is written anonymously, with the title "Evangelion Kata Markon" (Gospel according to Mark) appearing in the deluxe Bibles of the fourth century.

*Mark 1:1* simply starts "the beginning of the good news (evangelion: gospel) of Jesus Christ..." and introduces a prophecy from Isaiah. This gives us a useful clue about the genre of this writing, which will define how Christians think of "Gospels" and "the gospel". First, a Gospel is a piece of writing, a narrative, which tells people about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in light of the Scriptures. For the Jewish writer of Mark, the Scriptures meant the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible. Second, hearing this "Gospel" read aloud would bring the audience that very same "good news" about Jesus, making it come alive for them.

There have been radically different interpretations of Mark depending on where it is placed in time and location. In ancient times, St Augustine (354-450) and other church fathers believed that Mark was an abridgement of Matthew and Luke, made to provide a shorter summary of the Gospel. As a result, they and subsequent interpreters often neglected Mark. One distinctive feature of Mark which may have encouraged this view is its famously fast-moving action, brought on by the Greek phrase "kai euthus" – "and immediately Jesus did this, and again he did that"!

On the modern reading, Mark was the first Gospel to be written and so invented the genre of "Gospel" which the other "Synoptics" (Matthew and Luke), and then John, imitated. Matthew and Luke appear to rely on, copy, and adapt sayings, stories and structure from Mark's Gospel. The relationship between these three Gospels, and the unique material used by each evangelist, is often called the "Synoptic Problem" and Bible scholars spend a lot of time debating various hypotheses! It seems likely that Mark used a couple of sources for his work, including a Passion narrative (a text about Jesus' betrayal and death) and a sayings source (sometimes named "Q" after the German word for "source"). Although people debate the precise nature of these sources, what is clear is that something prompted the second generation of Christian believers to write down the events of Jesus' life, his teachings and his death, in a definitive form. Depending on where scholars locate Mark geographically, this could be the crisis of the final destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D., or the persecution of Jews (and therefore Jesus-following Jews) by Nero in Rome in 64.



One way or another, it seems likely that until this point, Christians had been relying on telling each other stories about Jesus by word of mouth during worship, but turmoil and the death of the eyewitnesses prompted a need to provide a written account. Paula Gooder's novel *Phoebe* gives a very good idea of what this "oral" history would've been like: ancient people were skilled storytellers and would have kept a high degree of accuracy in their telling of shared stories. The writer of Mark took these and crafted them into a coherent narrative, complete with the Passion of Jesus, so that new generations could hear the good news.

So, Mark was a kind of historian, though not in a purely factual sense. As well as taking on the authoritative stories and sayings, he shaped them, as any good writer would do, and emphasised certain themes and messages. These include: Jesus' reluctance to be openly identified as Messiah (often called "the Messianic Secret"); the disciples' profound misunderstanding and disbelief; the radical all-encompassing nature of discipleship; the brutality of Jesus' death at the hands of the Roman empire. Mark gives the Gospel (and good news in general) and kind of "shape" running from Jesus' baptism, through his teaching and healing ministry, his clash with the ruling authorities, his journey to Jerusalem and his death. Christians will recognise this as the basic outline of our liturgical year.

What Mark seems to lack is any clear account of the resurrection. If you look up the final chapter (16) of Mark in your Bible, you will probably find some notes surrounding the verses from 8 onwards. These are called the endings of Mark. Despite Jesus predicting his rising from the dead at various points in Mark's story, the oldest manuscripts of Mark end at verse 8 where, having seen a young man in white (see picture), *"trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."* Feeling (rightly or wrongly) that something was missing, later scribes then added two extra endings, a shorter one and a longer one (vv.9-20). Some interpreters think Mark deliberately left the Gospel on a cliff-hanger, emphasising the shock of the empty tomb. Because Christians would have known about the resurrection, Mark did not need to tell them the whole story. Other scholars think that a page was lost from the end of Mark before it was copied, leaving later scribes to fill in the gaps! Why not have a look and see what you think?



Suggested reading:

- Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man* (Orbis, 1988)
- Austin Farrer, *A Study in Mark* (Dacre Press, 1951)

*Next time: Matthew and Luke*

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# ***For Your Diary***

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All Corporate Eucharists and meetings of St Alphege Mothers' Union are cancelled while the social distancing measures are in force to reduce the spread of Coronavirus.

We will be keeping in touch with our members during this difficult time and will be offering help to those of you who request it.

If you need help now contact:

Chris on 0121 243 4340 or Susan on 0121 270 6132.

*Keep safe - keep well - and try to follow the Government guidance.*

## ***WIVES' FELLOWSHIP***

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Sadly, due to Coronavirus, we will be suspending all of our activities until September.

For further details contact Carol Caldicott - 0121 705 3168

## **Second Saturday @ St Alphege**

***Breakfast & Bible Study***

The Second Saturday group usually meets on the second Saturday of every month between 10am and 11am in St Alphege church building. Unfortunately we are unable to meet at the moment, so will not be meeting in April and do not expect to be meeting in May.

For more info contact me at [solihullcurate@gmail.com](mailto:solihullcurate@gmail.com)

**Sam**

## **Women's Theology Groups *Meeting • Discussing • Praying • Supporting***

In uncertain times it is even more important that we are able to be in fellowship with each other. Unfortunately we will most likely be limited to discussions over the internet, but if you don't have access please do call me and I will try to find a way to at least get some material to you. We are currently working on setting up a Women's Theology podcast and online space to meet and discuss. If you would like to know more, please let me know via email or phone: [chachagibson@gmail.com](mailto:chachagibson@gmail.com), 0121 709 0668.

*God Bless,*

**Charlotte, Nicola and Lizzie**

## **Christian Men Together**

We had an excellent afternoon recently at Moseley Rugby Ground with a good meal, good conversation and an entertaining match. Thanks to those who came.

Unfortunately we have had to cancel the Breakfast on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April.

We will let you know details of future events when social interaction becomes easier.

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