

SOLIHULL PARISH NEWS

800
YEARS OF
CHRISTIANITY
IN SOLIHULL
2020



No. 517

NOVEMBER 2020

PRICE 50p

SERVICE TIMES IN ALL THE TEAM CHURCHES

St ALPHEGE - The Square, Solihull B91 3RQ



SUNDAYS 10.30am Parish Eucharist in church

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*The Church is open on Thursdays 10am-12 noon for private prayer.
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St HELEN - St Helen's Road, Solihull B91 2DA

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11.00am Eucharist or Morning Prayer (said)

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St MICHAEL - Bryanston Road, Solihull B91 1BS and Sharmans Cross School, Solihull B91 1PH

The St Michael congregation is currently worshipping jointly with the St Helen congregation at St Helen's Church on Sundays at 9.30am and 11.00am. Booking arrangements are shown above.



ONLINE - www.solihullparish.org.uk

<i>SUNDAYS</i>	9.15am	'The Junction' service on Zoom Please contact l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk for details.
	10.30am / 11.00am	One of our main Sunday morning services will be streamed live online - see website for details.
	6.30pm	Sung Evensong, streamed live from St Alphege
<i>DAILY</i>	12 noon	Midday prayer (not Sundays)
<i>WEDNESDAYS</i>	10.00am	'Dwell' reflective service, broadcast from St Michael's Chapel
<i>FRIDAYS</i>	9.30am	Praise & Play

Recordings of past recitals and services are also available via the website or social media channels.

WEDDING AND BAPTISM ENQUIRIES

Please contact the Parish Office:
office@solihullparish.org.uk
0121 705 5350 / 0121 270 9740

**If you need help of any kind, please
do phone the pastoral care helpline:
0121 661 6343.**

One of us is on duty each day.

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OF ENGLAND

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Cover picture

**'We Will Remember
Them'**

Headlines

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Editorial

2020 will be a year that we will all remember for ever, for many of us it may be a year we would prefer to forget. November is a month of remembrance. November 1st is All Saints Day when we remember the whole body of saints, November 2nd is All Souls' Day when we reflect on personal losses, the period of remembrance continues through to November 11th when we remember those who have died serving their country. On November 22nd we remember the most important thing of all. We remember Jesus is King: 'Christ the King'. This season of remembrance will be a particularly poignant time as we all search for comfort and hope during the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.

When we remember, we have in mind, or are able to bring to mind, an awareness of someone or something in the past:

- On All Saints Day we don't remember one particular saint, no one is lesser or greater. The diversity and variety of the saints is a source of encouragement to us all, there is a place for everyone, and indeed there is a special place for the lowly and humble.
- On All Souls Day we remember those we have been close to who have recently died or those whose memory we've been keeping down the years. As we remember, we become aware of our loss and our grief, but we remember too that God is with us in that loss and grief – to comfort and support us and to bring us hope.
- Fortunately few of us now have direct experience of war, so on Remembrance Sunday whilst we remember family members and others affected by war, we also bring to mind our own understanding of the horrors of war – the pain, bewilderment, anguish, bravery, heroism.

At the heart of our Christian faith is an act of remembrance. Whenever we celebrate the Eucharist we engage in an act of remembrance. When Jesus shared the Last Supper with his friends, he broke bread, said thank you to God for it and shared it with his friends saying, 'Take eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' Through this act of remembrance, we recognise our own frailty, we ask for forgiveness and we receive the gift of God's grace.

The feast of Christ the King marks the end of the Church's year and we look towards Advent and forward to our celebration of Christ's birth. It's the perfect time to review the year and to prepare for the year ahead.

In years to come when we recall the year 2020, let us hope that amongst the memories of loved ones who died, economic hardship, being deprived of human contact, missing spending time with friends and family, we are also able to remember the immense sacrifice made by key workers and the many acts of kindness that we heard about, saw or experienced.

Jesus calls us to serve him by serving each other, particularly those people who are most in need. Serving can be hard physical work, but it can also be about being attentive, watching

and waiting, considering another person's needs above all else. This kind of service is an expression of love. Just think how naturally we focus our attention on another person and their needs when we love them: new parents watch over their baby, attending to every smile and whimper, old friends seem to sense when we particularly need help or a shoulder to cry on.

During this season of remembrance let us remember that Jesus served us when he lived amongst us and that he died for us and that he calls us to serve. Loving and serving other people isn't always easy – but we are called to try.

Linda

800th 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.

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News from St. Alphege C of E Schools Admissions for September 2021

Parents are invited to apply now for places at these excellent schools for entry to **Reception** (infants School), for children who will be 4 by 1st September 2021, and for **Year 3** (Junior School), for children who will be 7 but not 8 by 1st September 2021.

The St. Alphege Schools provide a rich and varied curriculum which enables all pupils to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable in a caring, Christian environment. The most recent Religious Education Inspection awarded the top grade, "Excellent", reporting that *"The school's highly distinctive Christian vision, founded on inclusivity and doing the best for every child....is transforming lives and breaking down barriers to academic success and well-being."* Pupils have moved on from St. Alphege to a number of excellent local schools, particularly Tudor Grange Academy, as many live within that catchment area, but also twelve won places at local Grammar Schools, despite the new arrangements limiting the number of places for children living outside Birmingham. A number also won places at independent schools.

Applications for places at the Infants and Junior Schools (Reception and above) should be made through:-

School Admissions: <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/admissions>

Applications for Nursery should be made directly to the School.

Parents are also asked to complete a Religious Information Form available from the School offices.

More information is available on the St. Alphege Schools' website:-

<http://www.stalphege.solihull.sch.uk>

Please telephone the schools for further details; Mr. Morrissey, the Head Teacher, is very happy to talk to any interested parents. Open Days are, sadly, not possible under present restrictions. However, details about the Schools' work and activities are available on the St. Alphege Schools YouTube channel as well as on the website.

St. Alphege Nursery and Infant School: 0121-705-0443

St. Alphege Junior School: 0121-704-2714

Places are also currently available for immediate entry in Years 2,3,5 and 6. Any parent wishing to inquire about one of these occasional vacancies should contact Schools Admissions and the office at the appropriate St. Alphege School at once.

Carol Southworth

The Bell Ringers Share an Update

Between July and early October, we were ringing for Sunday services at St Alphege and we loved being part of the community again. We have been using our local risk assessment, written in accordance with advice from the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) and the Church of England Recovery Group – as you can imagine, there has been a reliance on hand gel, mask wearing and we have had the windows and doors open, whatever the weather!

We have been touching only one bell rope during the 15-minute sessions and keeping our distance from each other. And therein lies the problem, and the reason for the rather odd-sounding ringing that you were hearing. Whilst we're incredibly lucky to have such a large floor area in our ringing room, our bell ropes are closer than the magic 2 metres and so we were ringing alternate bells unless we had family members with us. So, whilst we would normally have rung bells within a musical scale, we were missing out some of the notes. St Alphege has a beautiful ring of 12 bells but because of the extra effort involved we've also avoided ringing the larger eleventh and twelfth, the tenor bell. All in all, it's not quite what we've all been used to.

Sadly, the CCCBR has now advised us that due to being under local COVID alert level high, we can no longer ring. Whilst church services can go ahead our ringing is considered to breach the guidance for socialising with other households. With no ringing household big enough to make up a band, we are so sorry to have to advise that our bells will need to fall silent again, until the advice changes.

Ringling will continue in medium alert level areas. We know of other towers where their ropes are so close that they have constructed extra rope guides and even a tower where they have raised some of the ropes into a clock room between their ringing room and belfry, from where alternate bells are now rung. We're so fortunate that we've not had to go to these lengths – not least because ringing from a room so close to the bells would be hard work and we rely heavily on seeing each other! I guess this is the pride though, that ringers take in getting back to ringing for their parishes.

Locally, despite the restrictions, we've been pulling together (excuse the pun) and taking it in turns to make up a band. Usually we've rung 6 bells at a time, albeit that this relies heavily on family members being available. We've been pleased that our ringing has also commemorated VJ Day and more recently celebrated the life of George Mullis. George's son, a member of our band returned from the States for the funeral and was also able to toll a bell for his father.

It is breaking our hearts to suspend ringing again but the Church of England and CCCBR continue to meet to discuss how best we can return to normal ringing. We'll be watching closely and updating our risk assessment just as soon as we safely can. So, keep listening out, hopefully we may soon be hearing ringing again and indeed ringing that sounds more familiar. Perhaps even we might be able to recommence practices rather than just relying only on outside handbell sessions and online ringing simulations!

Sand Cooper

Dan Wyman's Ordination

Dan Wyman arrived at our parish and our home on the day of the Summer Gin Festival in 2018 for a pastoral attachment during his training for the priesthood from the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield. He was ordained deacon on St Theodore of Tarsus' day* (September 19th) at Southwark Cathedral.



Dan started as a baritone at the Birmingham Conservatoire

before training as a priest and is an enthusiast for sacred music, so was delighted to discover the rich musical tradition at St Alphege. He found his vocation at St John the Divine, Kennington, a parish with a large West Indian congregation, which led to his second parish attachment at St John's theological college in Barbados (the first theological college in the Americas) during the hurricane season.

We remember Dan for his warmth, his late night discussions, not to

mention his enterprise: Dan repaired Sherwood's ancient bicycle which he used as transport whilst with us in Solihull. We also remember Dan for his singing and his taste for decent coffee (as he had been a barista).



We wish Dan well in his new role as a curate serving at Holy Trinity, Eltham (another musical parish).

(* St Theodore of Tarus - Archbishop of Canterbury 668 to 690 immediately after the Council of Whitby, when the Celtic and Roman church joined. He was a missionary archbishop setting up the organisation for the Church throughout England. He started a school in Canterbury teaching singing as well as Latin and Greek.)



Geraldine & Sherwood Burge

Elaine's Half-Marathon



I did it!!

All went to plan. I set off at 8am and was home 2 hours 11 minutes later after running 13.33 miles. The weather was cool, dry and overcast which is perfect for a long run.

I was joined by a companion runner from 10 to 12.5 miles which was a great help, especially up the hill at Widney Manor Station, and Mike met up with me a couple of times to hand out water. I managed to finish with a slight sprint so my training definitely paid off!

However, the biggest boost to get me round has been all of your generous donations and good wishes.

The money raised exceeds £1200 which is quite overwhelming and I cannot say "thank you" enough for the encouragement and support to raise money for St Alphege Mothers' Union.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The annual Parish meetings will be held on Monday 7th December 2020 starting at 7.30 p.m. Details of the arrangements for the meetings, including the venue etc, will be confirmed nearer the time. Amongst other matters, the meetings will elect new Parish Wardens, together with 5 lay members of the PCC and representatives to the Deanery Synod. Anyone interested in these roles should contact the Parish Office for more information.

The annual report and accounts for the Parish for 2019 will be presented, as will reports from various groups and leaders. Everyone is welcome to join the meeting but only members on the Electoral Roll will be able to vote.

Mike Abrams, PCC Secretary

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

or contact the Parish Office:

Tel: 0121 705 5350 / 0121 270 9740 Email: office@solihullparish.org.uk

Hanging up his Cassock

After a long and distinguished career in church music spanning sixty-five years, John Emmett has decided to hang up his cassock.

John joined the choir of St. Matthew's Church, Walsall, as a boy treble, in 1955. Many years later, by then a qualified solicitor, he married Jane and moved to Solihull and, after only a short interlude, he joined the St. Alphege Choir as a bass in 1977 and sang until the end of the Summer term this year. He also sang with the Birmingham Choral Union for a number of years.

He sang, too, in the close harmony group, The Surplus Cassocks, with other Gentlemen from the St. Alphege Choir. This extremely accomplished group entertained at many charity events, often with professionals on the same bill, and raised thousands of pounds for charity, particularly for Cancer Research UK, of the local branch of which John was for many years the Chairman, and for the Friends of St. Alphege Music. He has performed as a soloist and as a member of the Choir in services and concerts in Solihull and travelled with the Choir to sing at many of great cathedrals and churches, in England, Wales – and in Paris.



Believing passionately in the power and beauty of church music to enhance worship, John has always set himself and others the highest standards. A favourite composer? Too many to name – he loves the wide repertoire St. Alphege Choir has always had. Exposing young singers to many types of music he believes is an important part of their musical education.

The Choir, under the direction of Peter Gregory, reached cathedral standard. When Peter retired, John was invited to take an important role in the selection of his successors. John's love of church music, his musical knowledge and his belief in the importance of maintaining that cathedral standard, ensured that well-qualified Directors of Music were appointed. Nigel Stark created the first girls' and ladies' choirs, which now, as then, perform sometimes separately and sometimes with the boys and men. When Nigel moved to a new post, John was on the panel which appointed the young and hugely talented Joe Cooper; Joe has built on the foundations laid by his predecessors, maintaining and improving the standard of music, further widening the repertoire, developing musical education, reaching out into the community and enabling the choirs to continue to function even in the current Covid crisis.

Roundabout

John, with Michael Palmer and other Gentlemen of the Choir, realised that the Choir would need wider and more long-term support. As a result, they founded the Friends of St. Alphege Music in 1978 to support the choirs and musical education. John was the founder Secretary and has subsequently served for two spells as Chairman. One of Joe Cooper's innovations was to establish weekly lunchtime recitals in church, where there had only been monthly performances under Peter Gregory and Nigel Stark. John oversaw the installation and operation of the cameras which show the hands and feet of the organists as they play. It is rare at an organ recital to see the performer playing and this feature of our recitals is greatly appreciated by audiences. John has also helped in many other ways with running the choirs.

For many years, the highlight of the social calendar for the Friends of the Music was the elegant Summer Concert given at John and Jane's home at The Gatehouse. Each year a distinguished professional musician, very often a member of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, came to give a talk and to play. After the recital, the Friends, with Jane's help, put on a buffet supper. With the audience attired in evening dress, sipping wine and sitting on the terrace to admire the view, these occasions were our very own mini-Glyndebournes. The success of these functions was primarily due to the Emmetts, who worked so hard – willingly surrendering their house and garden to the preparations and the event.

The Choirs at St. Alphege owe an enormous debt to John for his musical, moral and practical support over so many years. The singers and the Friends thank John and wish him and Jane a long and happy – and no doubt musical – retirement.

Carol Southworth.

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Roundabout

Shoe Aid

Thank you, one and all, for the superb donations of shoes; of all types, sizes, and gender. Twelve well-filled sacks were collected last week, for which 'Shoe Aid' gave profuse thanks. Formal thanks will come later

BUT

The need for shoes goes on, so any more donations you have from friends, family, or anybody you ever knew will be gratefully received. Please see the advertisement below

Phil Godfrey

Trying to help to provide shoes, to people who are too poor to be able to buy shoes:-

- Children who cannot go to school, or play sports because they have no suitable shoes to wear, which often this makes them a target for ridicule or bullying.

(4 million children, Taking an average across the British Isles, this equates to 4 children out of a class of 30)

- Young adults unable to go for an interview due to lack of suitable shoes
- Rough Sleepers without shoes, "Trench Foot" is now rife amongst these people



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If you have any unwanted shoes in good condition, please contact Phil on 07770 406870



Used Postage Stamps

With the Christmas season fast approaching, you may like to donate used Postage Stamps, for use by the APS Support UK Charity

These stamps are sold and provide a very welcome donation to the Research and Special Projects Fund. The next special project will be an APS e-learning Training Module for Community Midwives

Please give me a ring on 07770 406870, and I can arrange collection, or leave them in St Helens Church - used stamp basket, above letter rack in Entrance Hall

Thank you very much, last years stamp donations proved to be very profitable

Phil Godfrey

From the St Alphege Register

Due to the coronavirus restrictions, there have been no baptisms, weddings, funerals, memorials or interments in the past month.

Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in November

William Tew
Norman Jewers
Joan Watts
Leslie Starbuck
Pat Sharrock
Margaret Harris
Peter Cooper

Mabel Campkin
Frank Wright
Peter Herd
Alexander Herd
Chris Davey
Gordon Ross
Frederick Fowler

Joan Freeth
Arthur Middleton
Dennis Tate
Rachel Scarff
Sydney Flood
Alan Clarke
Lawrie Andrew

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 31st 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.stalphege-preschool.org.uk or email
Pre-School Manager, Meryl Homer : manager@stalphege-preschool.org.uk**

Worship Notes November 2020

The Feast of All Saints, on 1st November, marks the beginning of what has come to be informally named the Kingdom Season. The four Sundays which make up the season are a continuation of 'ordinary time' and used to be part of a series of nine Sundays before Advent. The Church's year draws to its close with the Feast of Christ the King. The liturgical colour for the season is red or green.

Sunday 1st November – All Saints' Day

All Saints' Day celebrates men and women in whose lives the Church as a whole has seen the grace of God powerfully at work. It is a time to be encouraged by the example of the saints and to recall that holiness can grow in the ordinary circumstances of human life, as well as in the extraordinary events.

Monday 2nd November – All Souls' Day

Also known as The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, this day celebrates the saints in a more local and intimate way. It allows us to remember with thanksgiving before God those whom we have known more directly: those who gave us life, or who nurtured us in faith.

Sunday 8th November – Remembrance Sunday

Today across our parish we explore the theme of memory, both corporate and individual, as we confront issues of war and peace, loss and sacrifice. This will be the theme at the morning services across the parish.

Sunday 22nd November – Christ the King

The annual cycle of the Church's year now ends with the Feast of Christ the King. The year that begins with the hope of the coming Messiah ends with the proclamation of his universal rule. The Feast of Christ the King returns us to the Advent theme of judgement, with which the cycle begins once more the following Sunday.

Wednesday 25th November

The Dwell service, which will be livestreamed from St Michael's Chapel at 10am, will look ahead to the coming of the Advent season through prayer, music and reflection.

Sunday 29th November – First Sunday of Advent

Today a new year begins in the life of the Church. Advent is a season of expectation and preparation, as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (*adventus*) of Christ in his incarnation, and also looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time.

At the 6.30pm Evensong service from St Alphege, we will commemorate the Eve of the Feast of St Andrew the Apostle.

Changes to the services at St Helen's church

Now that the late afternoons and evenings are growing darker and colder, the times of the services at St Helen's will be changing from Sunday 1st November onwards. There will still be two services of the Holy Eucharist each Sunday but these will now take place at 9.30am and 11am. This will still allow the necessary time for cleaning of the hall in between the two services. For any further information, please contact the St Helen's or St Michael's Churchwardens.

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The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church

EVENTS AND NEWS

Dear Guardians,

I'm sorry to disappoint you with the news that this year's Christmas Luncheon will no longer be taking place due to the ongoing situation surrounding COVID-19.

With the restrictions on public meetings, it is intended that this year's Annual General Meeting will be held next year, probably in May or June. The Trustees will announce details of the AGM in the Spring and will send the Notice of AGM to all members at that time. It is hoped that members will be able to attend the AGM in person should they wish to do so, although this will be subject to Government restrictions and advice in force at the time.

Once we're able to all meet again, rest assured that the committee will be organising some hearty refreshments to help us celebrate!

With best wishes to you all,

Ruth (Guardians Trustee)

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

The Church was floodlit to remember the following:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16 th September | In loving memory of Neil John McDonough |
| 7 th October | Royal Marine Ashley Hicks.
Your love and laughter will live on in our hearts. |
| 8 th October | In loving memory of Richard John Hampson. |
| 17 th October | Leonard Kidner. Remembering you on your birthday. |
| 19 th October | In loving memory of Nicole Potts on her birthday. |
| 21 st October | In loving memory of Gwen Mullis on her birthday. |
| 23 rd October | In loving memory of my wife Alma Reah on this our wedding anniversary. |
| 25 th October | Raymond Colston Horswill 02.02 1928 – 25.10.2008.
Much loved by all who knew him. Devoted husband and father. |
| 31 st October | In loving memory of Vivien Soden on her birthday. |
| 31 st October | In loving memory of Nicola Blakeman. |



As I write this, we are starting to adjust to the new Tier Two status recently announced for Solihull. I hope that everyone remains safe and well, and I urge readers to reach out to the church community if they need support of any kind.

Throughout September, we have been able to work to careful guidelines and risk management to enable a socially distanced choir to sing at the Sunday morning Eucharist at St Alphege, and at our streamed Evensong services on Wednesdays and Sundays. Everyone wears masks, we are distancing at two metres from one another, we have strict hand hygiene in place, and we do lots of cleaning! We hope that this musical element is enhancing worship for members of the congregation, whether they are able to attend church in person or viewing the services online.



Over recent months, we have recruited new young choristers to both the boys' and girls' choirs. It has been a delight to welcome them and they are working very hard to learn music and liturgical content without the normal choir formation which would be to stand probationers next to experienced senior choristers. We are also supplementing their training with online Zoom learning sessions to make the most of the technology we used during the lockdown.

We have just started working on an outreach project for Christmas, where we are working with local junior-aged children to create a musical virtual Christmas card for the most vulnerable in our local community – look out for more details of this project in next month's Parish News.

If anyone wishes to get in touch about choir activities or any of the parish online services, please send me an email (isabel@solihullparish.org.uk) and I will do my best to help.

Isabel Baumber



Joint Services Continue

We are very happy to be working and worshipping with the St Michael's congregation. Recording and streaming of Services has become more polished thanks to the efforts of Mike Lampkin and Andrew Williams. They continue to produce varied and inspirational music and images to enrich our worship, and to include those who are unable to join us.

We are very grateful to Roger Chamberlain and Steven Mayes, who have Presided for us, and also to Father Simon and our readers, who have managed the organisation of Services in difficult circumstances, the result of their efforts has been appreciated by many.

Our Harvest thanksgiving Service was very different from other years, but once again, was an uplifting experience. Chris Carrington invited us to contribute to the Tear Fund, and other non-perishable food items were sent to Helping Hands Food Bank.

Changing Season, Changing Times

The change in season and temperature has presented an even bigger challenge. We strongly advise our congregation to wrap up warm. The heating will be on, but ventilation continues to be essential – although we have at least found a way to keep the fire doors closed! Despite all, Services have been very well attended and at capacity on some occasions.

As noted in 'Worship Notes', partly in response to the change in season, we are changing the times of the services at St Helen's from Sunday 1st November onwards. There will still be two services of the Holy Eucharist each Sunday but these will now take place at **9.30am** and **11am**. This will still allow the necessary time for cleaning of the hall in between the two services. You will still be able to book in exactly the same ways as before, either online at <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/eventlist/sthelseucharist>, or by calling Beryl Moppett on 705 0377.

Other News

We have unfortunately been forced to suspend our collection of pet food pouches and crisp packets; thank you to everyone who supported the scheme.

Our thanks go to everyone who has supported and attended our worship, we soldier on and look forward to brighter days.

Jean Fewins & Phil Godfrey

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Together at Last!

During those heady days when we could still gather together in controlled numbers outside, the St Michael's DCC decided that we would try a 'social gathering' in the garden at Oak Cottage for an hour. It was back at the beginning of September that around 30 of us came together for a short while to recapture the time when we could gather just to enjoy being together. The risk assessment had been done (thanks Graham) names and contact numbers were taken (thanks David) and so at a distance of course, we were for a short while, able to chat to one another. Some of it was about the holidays we hadn't managed to take, or which supermarkets were most efficient at home delivery, but no matter we were together at last. Our group of musicians even managed to provide some Covid-approved music during the afternoon. Well done everyone.

Sadly, events have taken over so a similar one planned to coincide with St Michael's day had to be cancelled.

St Michael's Day

We did manage to celebrate St Michael's day on 27th Sept with the services at St Helen's being themed for that Festival. Fr Simon presided at the services with Rev'd Helen giving a really excellent sermon reminding us all about the importance of our patron Saint, together with the angels, all done with humour and insight and a powerful message at the end. As a nice ending to the services small posies of Michaelmas Daisies were given to the congregation.

Dwell

I know Fr Simon has already mentioned this last month, but worth reminding ourselves that every Wednesday at 10am there is a simple service to give us time to contemplate and meditate. The link is on the Parish website.

Whilst thinking of this it may be just worth thanking God that the technology we have at least enables us to keep us in touch and to share in services and other meetings happening in the Parish.

Music

It is good to know that the musicians of St Michael's are still busy recording hymns and songs for use in services and online. Very well done and thanks to those who manage the technology to put it all together.

You can listen to their music at: www.tinyurl.com/stmdistantvoices.

Paul Smith

'Simply Advent' – a Taster

As I begin to type this Pioneer Diary Advent begins in less than seven weeks' time. As you read it Advent will be even closer!

With the year that we've all had, it might be tempting to think that Advent and Christmas won't really happen this year – but we'd be wrong.

Look around you. It is **our** (as humankind) created order that has been disrupted by this pandemic situation, while God's created order has continued unabated – in some places it has even thrived: remember wild Kashmiri goats roaming the streets of Llandudno, Wales, on March 31, 2020? Or the goose that, in May, laid four eggs in 'deserted' York train station?

At the end of the day, no matter how we feel at this present time, the truth that Advent and Christmas point us towards has not changed: ***For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*** John 3:16

So let's approach Advent and Christmas this year with renewed fervour, and ignore the cries of the world that their (commercial) Christmas isn't going to happen this year. Let's be the example and show the world how it should be done, all the while exhibiting both 'comfort and joy'. And let's begin with Advent.

Give Yourself a Break!

This is the strapline for something I've been working on to use during Advent with people in my local area. The purpose of my doing this is to promote Advent (the real meaning, not just the chocolate or gin-filled Advent calendar!); to experience Advent, both for myself and with others; and to connect with the local community. As I type Simply Advent is still coming together in my thoughts and prayers, but the general gist is that we 'gift ourselves' an hour a week during Advent and take a break. During this hour we have a coffee (other refreshments are available!), and maybe a mince pie, and think about a theme for that week. I will be connecting with the Church of England's theme of 'comfort and joy', but other themes might include things like 'Be still'; 'give thanks'; and 'Nativity'.

In order to get my mind into thinking 'Advent' I have been using some of the Advent literature that I already own and value. Things like:

- 'Making Christmas Happen'ⁱⁱ by Susan Sayers, who offers 'daily reflections to help you keep the sparkle in all the preparations'. This book introduces weekly themes that help us cover cards and gifts; decking the halls; carol singing; and festive food and drink.
- 'Do Nothing, Christmas is Coming'ⁱⁱ by Stephen Cottrell, who offers 'an Advent Calendar with a difference'. This book offers us daily thoughts laced with wisdom and humour, as well as a moment to stop and think. (Personally I think it's a good one for Christians and non-Christians alike. Suzette.)

- 'Walking through Advent'ⁱⁱ by Jan Sutch Pickard, who offers daily readings and prayers based around Micah 6:8 – 'What does the Lord ask of you? To love mercy, act justly and walk humbly with your God.' This book takes us on a walk through Advent (walking is another of my favourite things! Suzette) reminding us that 'sometimes (wherever you are) it is hard going' (how apt for 2020! Suzette) and that 'most of all we are helped by the knowledge that God walks with us'.

Of course, with the way things have been and continue to be in 2020, the way we all journey through Advent and celebrate Christmas will be different this year. I am preparing Simply Advent knowing that I already have two people who are interested but not knowing whether we will be able to meet by then. However, as someone has reminded us recently, different does not have to mean 'worse'. Instead it's time to reimagine Advent and Christmas – to make them happen in a new way; to give ourselves a break and maybe do nothing from time to time to connect more deeply with our God; firm in the knowledge that all that is asked of us is 'To love mercy, act justly and walk humbly with your God.' If we can do that, we can't fail to shine and set an example for those around us.

God, who walks with us,

Give us imagination, courage, grace

To be companions of the Way. Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ

Keep safe, keep *shining* and thanks for listening!

Suzette

- Comfort & Joy' is the Church of England's theme for Advent and Christmas in 2020, following on from 'Follow the Star' in the last two years. See <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/preparing-advent-christmas-2020-comfort-and-joy>
- All three of these books are still available to purchase online: don't hesitate to get in touch if you'd like to hear a bit more about any of them. Suzette.
- Pickard, page 16

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Is Back!!

We're delighted that the Junction is back and whilst it's sad that we can't meet in person at the moment, we're having great fun meeting over Zoom and worshipping together as a community with our usual mix of songs, bible stories, prayers and activities.

In October we celebrated Harvest, real life super heroes and Bible Sunday.

In November we'll be thinking about God's Saints, we'll Remember, we'll celebrate Christ the King and Advent Sunday and on 15th November we're holding a Pet service to help us to think about caring!

If you would like to attend you will need to register with Linda in advance via e mail l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk to receive the Zoom link.



Looking forward to Advent:

This Advent we're taking part in two very special events organised by Birmingham Diocese :



Celebrating Advent together...

Life at Advent -
A Christmas Special
Holiday Club -
Saturday 21st November

&

The Advent Adventure -
Saturday 5th December

Holiday Club – Life at Advent

On Saturday 21st November, 10:30-12pm we'll be joining Filler and Spiller for more holiday club fun, in a one-off online event.

If you came in the summer then you'll get to see all your Holiday Club friends - if you've never been before they look forward to meeting you!

We will be following the story of the Shepherds as they go to visit the new born Jesus and explore what difference the 'Light of the world', can make in our lives this Advent.

We'll enjoy half an hour of games, fun and a bible story, then 45 minutes in our church breakout spaces, to create our very own advent calendar, full of fun and practical ways we can bring Jesus' light during Advent.

The event is aimed at families with primary school aged children - parents and carers are strongly recommended to stay for all the morning activities to create something you can use together as a family all the way through Advent.

Advent Adventure

On Saturday 5th December we'll join together for a fun interactive, online 'Advent Adventure'.

Based on Christmas through Keyhole, with a bit of Crystal Maze and an Escape Room thrown in; Advent Adventure is an interactive journey through the nativity.

For 50 minutes we will explore the Advent Adventure, meeting nativity characters, finding clues & solving puzzles to unlock an Advent treasure. Content is designed for primary aged children & their families.

If you'd like to take part in either or both of these events then contact Linda Hicks as soon as possible via e mail l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk to register your interest.



Prams to Preschool - Praise and Play



Normally every Friday in the main Hall of the Oliver Bird Hall from 9.30am. A time of fun and fellowship for all.

Come along and chat, have a cuppa, play, eat biscuits, sing action songs, explore a bible story.



Currently we're not able to meet in person but instead we are bringing Praise & Play to your homes on Friday mornings at 9.30am with the familiar format of songs, a story, Craft and prayers. The YouTube link goes live shortly before 9.30am and can be accessed via the parish website www.solihullparish.org.uk or you can watch via the Parish Facebook page (bring your own cuppa and biscuits!)

Youth Stuff

Youth Meetings – on Zoom and in Person

Open to young people from Year 6 and above the Parish youth meet over the Zoom app between 7.30 - 8.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Prayer reflections, scripture analysis, games and open discussion, everyone is welcome. These sessions allow the youth to 'meet', interact and support each other during the Covid-19 pandemic. If you have prayer requests these can be shared anonymously with the group or prayed for by name.

After half-term we are planning to restart in-person sessions in Room 6 OBH. These sessions will be held in line with Covid-19 protocols on a Wednesday evening 7.30-8.30pm. The first session will be on Wednesday 4th November. You will need to book ahead as numbers will be limited. This will replace the Wednesday Zoom session.

We are also planning to resume Sundays at St Helen's, time and date TBC.

If Covid-19 restrictions change then our plans may have to change!

Email Joe Minall (j.minall@solihullparish.org.uk) for more information and to find out how you can get involved. You can also find the youth on Instagram @solihullparishyouth.

Keep safe, God Bless

The Youth Team

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Christmas Greetings

We understand that there are those amongst our readers who like to distribute a number of Christmas cards amongst their friends in church each year. The impacts of Covid-19 restrictions are likely to make this rather more difficult than usual this year, and the alternative of posting the cards may be prohibitively expensive. In the December issue of the Parish News, we will therefore be offering readers an opportunity to place a small notice (similar to our usual adverts) wishing all your friends a Happy Christmas etc., and with whatever message you would like to attach (e.g. saying you will not be sending cards but will be contributing to a named charity). Our suggested layout for these notices is shown below.

The charge for placing a notice will be **£5** for a 42mm x 84mm box as shown here (which will be printed six per page). If you would like to post a notice, please e-mail the text that you would like to include to parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk (or you can leave a note at the Parish Office), by **Monday 9th November** at the latest.

Provided that your text is sufficiently brief, you may also like to include a small seasonal picture with your notice, similar to the examples shown here. There are 11 different images available (numbered below and overleaf, and which regular purchasers of the Parish Christmas card may recognise from Christmases past!), so please also indicate which number 1-11 design you would prefer (or whether you would prefer no picture). If you would prefer to design your own notice, please ensure that you provide it in a graphics file format (e.g. .JPG/.JPEG or .PNG), and that it has the correct dimensions, and can be printed in monochrome.

If you are dropping your message at the office, please pay by cheque when you submit your entry. If you are e-mailing, please provide your address and phone number: we will send you an invoice on 1st December giving you the option to pay by bank transfer or cheque.

Santa Claus

wishes all his friends
in church

**A MERRY CHRISTMAS
and
A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

He will not be sending out
cards this year but
will donate to the
Crisis at Christmas appeal



Rudolph Reindeer

wishes all his friends in
church

**A HAPPY AND
PEACEFUL CHRISTMAS
and
A JOYFUL NEW YEAR**

He will not be sending out
cards this year but will
donate to the
Malawi Charity



Frosty Snowman

would like to wish
everyone

**A VERY HAPPY
CHRISTMAS
and
ALL GOOD WISHES
FOR 2021**

He will not be sending out
cards this year but will
donate to Tearfund



Optional images 4-8 for our "Christmas Greetings" notices are shown below.



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Heather's Story – 'Yes to Life'

"Saying Yes to Life" by Ruth Valerio was our Lent book this year at Ascension Stinchley. Each week we read a chapter, watched the YouTube videos, and reflected on its message. Christiana Figueres, former head of UN Climate Change Convention, in her interview, <https://youtu.be/UQ387Xs8Bks>, spoke passionately about how it is the responsibility of us all to put our energies into doing everything we can to address climate change now!

I bought her book "The Future We Choose" where she paints starkly contrasted pictures of what life will be like in 2050 if we address climate change now, and if we don't. She describes her journey from hopelessness around climate change to "Stubborn Optimism" where with the support of her daily spiritual practice, she wakes each day choosing to do all she can to address it. I was so inspired I bought three extra copies of the book to give to friends whom I hope will share the message.

She, like Ruth, makes the link with climate change and all injustice and calls us as followers of Christ to work alongside those who are suffering to try to bring about justice. For me this was an epiphany. I wanted to get involved, I contacted a friend and joined the local Anglican Group, Birmingham Anglicans for Climate Action (BACA).

Others in Ascension Stinchley and the Lent Group had been on this journey since the 1980s, buying Ecover Products for as long as they could remember. During Lent we were encouraged to take small actions which if carried out collectively would have a real impact, like charging our phones during the day, rather than leaving them on charge all night and supporting each other to change our habit.

During lockdown the Ascension WhatsApp group was buzzing with ideas about composting, growing vegetables, sharing soup recipes to use tired vegetables and recycling. People shielding left surplus plants for others to grow. Photos of the resulting beans were shared and celebrated. Concern about tackling slugs was shared and imaginative strategies suggested. On a recent gardening project to tidy the frontage of the church, for the removal of the railings, we retained the trees which produce the berries which the birds love. Yes, we tidied up, but in line with nature.

To confirm our renewed enthusiasm and shape future actions we signed up to Eco Church. Eco Church (an initiative set up by the environmental organisation A Rocha and widely adopted within the Diocese and the CofE nationally) has helped create a church culture where care for the environment is important.

Two examples:

- It has focussed our attention on what we buy. A recent Church Council meeting agreed to purchase supplies in line with our values, even though it may be financially challenging.
- It has made us think harder about how we get around. Cycling is encouraged – our vicar is often seen cycling around the parish, and one of us has even bought a tricycle having never learnt to ride a two wheeler!

We are trying to always consider the impact of our actions on our planet whether it's the plastic and recyclability of the presents from Father Christmas at our Christmas Fair, switching off lights in our church hall when not needed, or what to do about heating for evening meetings during winter, we are trying to play our part as Ascension Stinchley. Will you play yours by signing up to Eco Church?

Heather Holmes, Ascension Stinchley



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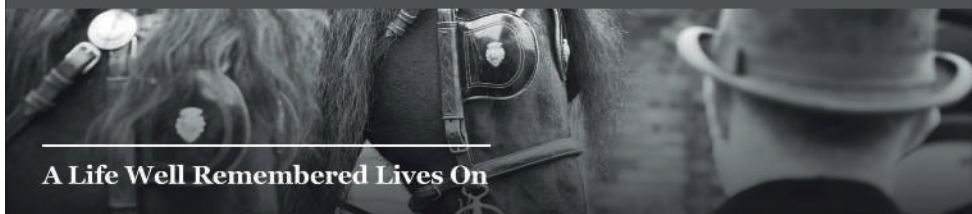
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Calendar and Prayer Intentions for November

1	All Saints' Day	All saints and martyrs	Widney Manor Road
2	All Souls' Day	Departed loved ones	Willoughby Drive
3	Richard Hooker, pr	Clergy and Readers in the Diocese	Winterbourne Road
4	Feria	Wholeness and healing	Winthorpe Drive
5	Feria	H M The Queen	Witham Croft
6	William Temple, Bp	David and Anne, our Bishops	Witley Avenue
7	Willibrord of York	Diocesan Staff team	Witley Farm Close
8	Remembrance Sunday	Those who died in war	Wollescote Drive
9	Margery Kempe, Mystic	Members of religious communities	Woodbury Grove
10	Leo the Great, Bp of Rome	Solihull Mayor and Councillors	Woodfield Road
11	Martin, Bishop of Tours	Those serving in the armed forces	Woodlea Drive
12	Feria	Our Parish Church Councils	Woodperry Avenue
13	Charles Simeon, pr	The work of the Multi Faith forum	Woodside Way
14	Samuel Seabury Bp	The people and ministry of St Michael's	Woodston Grove
15	2nd Sunday before Advent	The people and ministry of St Alphege	Wroxall Road
16	Margaret Queen of Scotland	The people and ministry of St Helen's	Yew Tree Lane
17	Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln	St Alphege Mothers' Union	Yewhurst Road
18	Elizabeth of Hungary	Our Rector, Jane	Albany Gardens
19	Hilda, Abbess of Whitby	Those exploring religious vocations	Alderbrook Road
20	St Edmund, Martyr	Workplace Chaplains	Alderham Close
21	Feria	All places of worship in Solihull	Alderminster Road
22	Christ the King	Solihull Parish	Alderpark Road
23	St Clement	Our Archdeacon, Simon	Alderton Close
24	Feria	Those working in retail	Alderwood Place
25	Isaac Watts, Hymn writer	The Choirs and Musicians of the Parish	Alston Close
26	Feria	University students	Alston Road
27	Feria	All who work in schools in the Parish	Anchor Lane
28	Feria	Those who are looking for work	Arley Road
29	1st Sunday of Advent	Solihull Parish	Ashborough Drive
30	Andrew the Apostle	The people of Scotland	Ashbrook Crescent

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

Let us Pray

November 12th - Our Parish Church Councils

Lord, we ask for your blessing on our Parochial Church Council and District Church Councils.

Help the members of our Councils to understand what each can contribute both during the meetings and in supporting our work between meetings.

Enable them to listen to and learn from each other and give them unity of heart and mind to consider the tasks and challenges before them.

May our PCC and DCCs have the vision to see your purpose in our work, and for wisdom, strength and courage to carry it out.

Amen.

November 17th - St Alphege Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union Prayer

Loving Lord,

We thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen

Loving Lord,

we pray for your love and compassion to abound as we walk though this challenging season.

We ask for wisdom for those who bear the load of making decisions with widespread consequences.

We pray for those who are suffering with sickness and for all who are caring for them.

We ask for protection for the elderly and vulnerable to not succumb to the risks of the virus.

We pray for misinformation to be curbed that fear may take no hold in hearts and minds.

As we exercise the good sense that you in your mercy provide may we also approach each day in faith and peace, trusting in the truth of your goodness towards us. Amen

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Why I Read the Bible

by Martin Tunnicliffe

In last month's article, *How I read the Bible*, I was concerned to point out that there could be a more helpful way of reading the Bible than from beginning to end. This month, I want to develop the equally important question of *Why* I read the Bible. Somebody once described our sacred scriptures as God's love story. I like that idea, but it needs developing, because I can't help thinking that the Bible is a very strange love story.

There is a lingering idea in the minds of many Christians that God wrote the Bible, therefore it must somehow be literally true from beginning to end. Let's dispense with that notion from the start. It was people who wrote the Bible, and what they wrote was edited by other people. They were doing this, on and off, over a period of more than a thousand years, from about 1000 BC to about AD 120, specifically during the time of the Babylonian exile during the sixth century BC.

So, who were these people? Well, most of them are unknown. They were nearly all members of a small ethnic group, living very precariously on that small strip of land at the East end of the Mediterranean which we call the Holy Land. Their world bore little resemblance to ours. It was bereft of all the modern conveniences that we take for granted. It was a world which was disease-ridden and violent, in which people who survived childhood would have thought themselves very fortunate if they lived beyond the age of forty.

Those people, the Jews, considered themselves to be specialists in religion. Not long before the time of Jesus, their scholars assembled a collection of carefully selected and edited scrolls, which they revered then and ever after as their sacred Scriptures. We call this collection The Old Testament. A short time after this, a breakaway group, the early Christian Church, added to this Old Testament an astonishing postscript of writings concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. We know these writings as The New Testament.

Uncomfortable

The Bible is an extraordinary mixture of fact and fiction, legends and myths, folk tales and fables, outdated laws and irrelevant regulations. It also contains a sizeable proportion of downright outrageous comments and opinions that in today's world are quite unacceptable. By contrast, one also finds poetry and imagination, uplifting and beautiful songs, inspiring and meaningful stories and parables, and some essential moral guidance.

Most of the people who were responsible for the Old Testament had a restricting and often uncomfortable idea of God. Like the pagan peoples around them, they had a tendency to create a God in the image of humanity. He was male, and generally thought to inhabit a realm that was out of reach, but located not very far above the (flat) world.

In the Old Testament, with a few notable exceptions, this God bears some of the least appealing of human traits. For example, he is often vengeful and very quick to administer severe and sometimes cruel punishment. He causes disasters, plagues and infestations. He seems to think that wars and combat are the only way to settle disputes. He appears to be racist, he condones slavery, he has no particular respect for children, he imposes laws and

regulations many of which are virtually impossible to abide by, and he demands to be worshipped by means of elaborate rituals and sacrifices.

In this way, the Old Testament God is not unlike the gods of heathen peoples, the super-beings said to dwell in Valhalla or on Mount Olympus. I am therefore content to leave aside and ignore a great deal of the Bible's historical writings as irrelevant, along with many of its folk tales and legends, and its laws and instructions for living.

There are specialists in these matters who can be consulted if one is interested.

Salvation

So why is the Bible so important? The short answer is, the Bible is important because it contains the story of salvation which comes to a climax in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. This is why it is God's love story. In order to appreciate this fully, it will help if we bear in mind three basic elements essential to humanity that authentic religion is always concerned with: firstly faith, secondly community, thirdly morality. In other words:

BELIEVING BELONGING BEHAVING

Believing is emphatically not believing everything that you read in the Bible is true. Very simply, believing is having faith and trust in God who is above all and yet who is in all, who is transcendent and unknowable and yet who is known, who is a spiritual reality beyond all human understanding and yet who is experienced within creation.

Belonging is to do with our human connectedness. It is expressing the loving God-presence in society and community, our need for God and for one another.

Behaving is to do with our moral compass. It derives from Belonging, shown in the evident need for self-discipline and respect for others.

In spite of all its curious contents, its errors and inconsistencies, the Bible is paramount among the sacred scriptures of the world in demonstrating the vital importance of each of these three cornerstones of human existence. In addition to that, the Bible contains the greatest and most authentic story of salvation. This is flagged up in the Old Testament (particularly in the prophetic writings), and culminates in the Christ event on which the New Testament writings are based.

The Bible is indeed inspired by the Spirit of God. It therefore deserves not to be worshipped, but to be revered. Its writings are to be read, studied, analysed and carefully interpreted, and, above all, to be approached with faith and common sense.

For Your Diary



Sadly, due to the Government rules which restrict social gatherings, we shall not be able to meet for the foreseeable future. We'll keep you informed if things change.

We are keeping in touch with our members and are offering help to those of you who request it. If you need help now contact:

Elaine Diskin on 0121 705 3265

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

Please be aware of the Government guidance

Hands - Face - Space

Women's



Theology



Group

The Women's Theology Group are meet over Zoom every two weeks on a Wednesday at 7.30pm.

If you would like to join us but are not on the mailing list, do e-mail womenstheology@gmail.com and we will send you an invitation!

Second Saturday @ St Alphege

Due to Covid-19 restrictions our monthly Bible study sessions will now take place over Zoom and all are welcome. They will be led by Ali Welch, with the next one on 14th November.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with Ali at alistair.g.welch@gmail.com if you would like to join in.

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Email to parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk or leave in the Parish Office

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