

# SOLIHULL PARISH NEWS



No. 519

JANUARY 2021

PRICE 50p

# SERVICE TIMES IN ALL THE TEAM CHURCHES

## St ALPHEGE - The Square, Solihull B91 3RQ



**SUNDAYS** 10.30am Parish Eucharist in church

To book call the Parish Office 0121 705 5350  
or email [office@solihullparish.co.uk](mailto:office@solihullparish.co.uk)

*The Church is open on Thursdays 10am-12 noon for private prayer.  
(Access for 10 people at a time)*

## St HELEN - St Helen's Road, Solihull B91 2DA

**SUNDAYS** 9.30am Eucharist or Morning Prayer (said)  
11.00am Eucharist or Morning Prayer (said)

Please book online: <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/eventlist/sthelenseucharist>  
or phone Beryl Moppet on 0121 705 0337



## 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](http://www.solihullparish.org.uk)

<b>SUNDAYS</b>	9.15am	'The Junction' service on Zoom Please contact <a href="mailto:l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk">l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk</a> 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
<b>DAILY</b>	12 noon	Midday prayer (not Sundays)
<b>WEDNESDAYS</b>	10.00am	'Dwell' reflective service, broadcast from St Michael's Chapel
<b>FRIDAYS</b>	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](mailto: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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**[www.solihullparish.org.uk](http://www.solihullparish.org.uk)**

**Want to email the Editor?**

[parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk)

*Cover picture*

**'Light in the Darkness'**

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# Editorial

**I**t is something of an understatement to say that the year 2020 was one of the most challenging we have ever experienced. So much of what we might want to refer to as "normal life" was swept away; the people, places, routines and relationships which sustained us were suddenly beyond our reach.

At the time of writing this editorial, in the middle of December 2020, the situation doesn't seem to have improved: bars, cafés and restaurants are closed; travel is being discouraged; church attendance is rationed and the number of hospital admissions due to Covid-19 is rising in many parts of the country.

The plans which many of us hoped to make for Christmas are being redrawn; the government is telling the nation to celebrate Christmas more locally, on a smaller scale, and for less time. Despite the long-awaited arrival of the vaccine, only a true optimist could say that much of this sounds like 'good news of great joy for all mankind'.

And yet, there is a truth which underlies our current situation - that in a small town on the edge of the Roman empire, a child was born who would bring hope, healing and wholeness to all of creation. For a great many of the people of our own town, it is this child of Bethlehem who has sustained us through the last ten months of hardship and sadness, and who has inspired our attempts to witness to his light in our worship both in our churches and in our homes.

In many and various ways, we have truly kept the festival of Christmas, even in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. We have made creative use of technology; we have redesigned our traditional services; we have reached out to new parts of our community; we have developed new ways of bringing to life the great story of the incarnation, the coming of God to earth as a human being.

And now, we look to the next chapter of this story - the visit of the Magi - which seems to speak to us in new ways this year. For, like you and me, those philosopher-scientists also journeyed into the unknown, guided only by divine light. They, too, hoped to find a glimpse of divine activity in the world, whilst confronting danger and uncertainty.

Most significantly of all, after their visit to the infant Jesus, the Magi returned home by another way (Matthew 2.12). This is also the manner in which we journey into a new year, with new ways of being a church family and of reaching out into our community. For the time being at least, things will continue to be different. But, just as the Magi did, we continue our journey having seen and knelt before the Christ-child.

I wish you a hope-filled journey in this Epiphany season.

**Father Simon**

# **RAYNER HOUSE AND YEW TREES**

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  - Guest flat accommodation available for visitors

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**<http://www.raynerhouseandyewtrees.co.uk/>**

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

**48 LODE LANE, SOLIHULL, B91**

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**Enquiries to Miss Michelle Farrugia**  
**Telephone No: 0121 705 3356**

# Roundabout

## Church and Community Mobilisation

**CCM** is the approach that Mothers' Union is adopting in countries to help communities to break free from dependency and self-solve issues such as poverty – either financial or educational.



CCM is a transformational, community-based process which uses facilitator-led Bible studies to work with church groups encouraging them to kick-start economic, social and physical transformation within their communities. Mothers' Union is uniquely positioned in that we are able to equip our members to facilitate, within their church and communities, lasting change.

It is compiled of a series of Bible studies and workshops which encourages participants to identify the skills, experiences and gifts within the Church that can be used to help others. Mobilised and enthused church groups act as catalysts for change in their own communities, using the word of God and his promises of provision and prosperity to inspire their communities to a realisation that God has already made provision for them. It is proving highly successful as a way to enable communities to take control of their futures, and use the resources God has given them to create a sustainable and flourishing future for themselves.

These groups are then agents for change in the communities in which they live, working with their neighbours to address their own needs in their own way. This empowers them to acknowledge the skills and resources they already have within them and around them in their environment to the benefit of themselves, their families and their wider community.

**Susan Leach** (Courtesy of Mothers' Union)

### *The Mary Sumner Prayer*

*All this day, O Lord,  
Let me touch as many lives  
As possible for thee;  
And every life I touch, do thou  
by thy spirit quicken,  
Whether through the word I speak,  
The prayer I breathe,  
Or the life I live.  
Amen*



## Padre Stuart Richards : *Waiting and slowing down*

Our December meeting was held on Zoom, 22 members joined in and Chris Thorp opened the meeting with prayers.

Padre Stuart Richards (top left in our picture) was a curate at St Alphege and is now Station Chaplain, Army Aviation. He has been a regular speaker to St Alphege Mothers' Union in recent years and this time he led us in our Advent Meditation. His theme was *waiting, slowing down*. He started by telling us how he was advised to use a heart monitor, to pace himself during exercise, not to go at top speed - a slower steady pace is far more beneficial for health. He reminded us that this year has been a time of slowing down, waiting for the end of lockdown, waiting for life to return to normal.



Advent is a time of waiting. As the prophets waited, as Mary waited for the birth of Jesus, so we are waiting for Christmas, though it will be very different this year.

Waiting is difficult, but whilst waiting, we must hope – we hope for the end to this pandemic, we hope for a vaccine, and we hope for a return to normal life with friends and family.

Padre Stuart concluded with the Advent Collect – and wished us all a happy Christmas.

Thank you to Amanda who set up the Zoom and to Niki who hosted it, maybe this will be the pattern of meetings for the early part of next year.

**Susan Leach**

## Diocesan Fund for Malawi

Thank you to those who responded to the item in the December edition of *Parish News* asking for donations to the Diocesan Fund for Malawi. I can confirm that I have sent the sum of £585 to the Diocese on behalf of Solihull Parish.

**Geoff Wyatt**

## **Greetings to all in the Solihull Team Parish**

**T**his note comes from Archdeacon, Simon Heathfield, at a key time in the life of the parish and when you have faced several difficult circumstances.

A number of significant things have arisen at the same time: your Rector being on extended sick leave, Revd Helen withdrawing from ministry for a limited period, unexpected changes in parish officers and significant decisions and issues in which the PCC is engaged. All this, of course, in the wider context of our lives in the COVID pandemic.

This note neither minimizes problems nor shares confidential information, you will understand both are inappropriate. Primarily it is to assure you of our prayers and support. You are not alone, and your Bishops and Archdeacon continue to be actively engaged with colleagues to support and help the parish at a variety of levels.

Perhaps our first encouragement is to redouble our prayers. Let us be open with God even when that is frustration, anger or disappointment. You may feel very weak at praying (we all do!!), but the Psalms remind us that God welcomes the full range of human emotions and feeling, however expressed

Please pray for Revd Jane as she continues a recovery which is slower than expected. You will have heard her report in the AGM. Please also pray for Revd Helen as she steps back for a while. The significant personal issues she is facing are best dealt with by the withdrawal Bishop David has asked for that she might have space and focus to deal with them.

You will understand in both circumstances there is much confidential information. However, we know both Jane and Helen are deeply grateful for those who have offered prayer, kindness and practical support. We are also equally affirming of the role of both the Interim Parish Wardens and the St Helen's Wardens in both cases. The parish is significantly in their debt for handling sensitive, draining, and complex issues with grace and commitment.

Much of the ministry load has been shared across staff and volunteers all of whom are precious. In particular Fr Simon has continued to hold together many needs beyond his own role and remit. We are deeply grateful for his continued faithfulness, conscious of the strain for him and his family, so affirm his valued contribution.

During the year the parish have experienced the change of Parish Wardens at an unexpected moment. You will share our thanks to Dierdre Moll and Neil Eaton for all their work in recent years. There are many things which are unseen and often unappreciated but essential and they have attended to them. Likewise, for Ruth Marshall and Andrew Williams as they were willing to stand to continue those roles to the AGM, we give thanks. The parish has benefited deeply from such commitment and will continue to need such in the months ahead.

The issues that gave rise to those changes are complex and are being worked through by the PCC. Please pray for the PCC and all parish officers as they seek the common good of the team churches, their ministers and wider parish. In particular please play your part in making it a joy to serve in parish leadership through constant prayer, loving behaviour and unflinching support.

*Continued on page 7 opposite.*



It is unusual that such significant things arise at the same time and with much necessary confidentiality. Please resist the temptation to second guess or assume what is happening. It is a high calling to seek the good of all, especially when we don't know everything completely or have deep concerns or uncertain hopes.

Bishop David sends his heartfelt greetings and joins in thanks for all who contribute to the parish and assure you of our continued prayers and support. We stand with you trusting in Christ's gospel promise that he '*will be with us to the very end of the age.*' (Matt 28:20)

**Archdeacon Simon**

## **SCAH (Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness)**

**SCAH (Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness)** is no doubt familiar to many of you. We are a small charity made up of around 12 volunteers. We work within the Solihull borough and surrounding district assisting not only those who unfortunately find themselves homeless, but also those who are suffering from deprivation or abuse in these most difficult of times.

We help families to 'get back on their feet again' by supplying the essentials that a family, who may have very little indeed, need in order to restart their lives.

From January to the end of November 2020, we had helped over 190 adults and 70 children, mostly within the Solihull borough. We continued to operate throughout the whole of the lockdown periods either by on-line shopping or the normal supermarket shopping. We find ourselves delivering many of the Starter Packs directly to the recipient rather than the caseworker, many of whom are working from home. That's an average of about 4 requests a week!

We are incredibly grateful to all of our volunteers for going the extra mile – literally!

The month of November saw exceptionally high demand for our services and we recorded our busiest month yet. Expenditure was £3,377. Income was only £284.

Hopefully, the month of December will have seen a higher income.

We look ahead to 2021 now and are seeking to improve communications to all churches across the borough and wish to reach out to those interested in our work.

We maintain very strong links with Solihull Council and are proud to work alongside them in providing help to the homeless.

Our next fundraising event is a Flag Day in central Solihull on Saturday March 6<sup>th</sup>. Please do get in touch if you can spare an hour to help: [admin@scah.org.uk](mailto:admin@scah.org.uk)

**Louise Cox**



## 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 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021, and for Year 3 (Junior School), for children who will be 7 but not 8 by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. The Admissions Policy with helpful notes is on the Schools' website.

*"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."*

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

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

**Closing date for applications for September 2021 is 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021.**

Offers of places will be made on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

There is plenty of help and information on the Solihull Council website.

Parents are also asked to complete a Religious Information Form available from the Schools' offices, to which the forms should be returned.

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

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

Please telephone the schools for further information; 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 enquire about one of these occasional vacancies should contact Schools Admissions and the office at the appropriate St. Alphege School at once.

**Carol Southworth**

## **From the St Alphege Register**

### **Baptisms**

There have been no Baptisms in church.

### **Weddings**

6 <sup>th</sup> December	Paul Christopher George and Soraya Katie Birch
31 <sup>st</sup> December	Ryan Kevin Westwood and Jessica Angela Leach

### **Funerals**

1 <sup>st</sup> December	Norman Broadrick
2 <sup>nd</sup> December	Gerald Edwards
4 <sup>th</sup> December	Barbara Waters
10 <sup>th</sup> December	Jeremy Rose
17 <sup>th</sup> December	Geoffrey Crawford Duggan
18 <sup>th</sup> December	Ernest John Beddall
22 <sup>nd</sup> December	Beryl Frances Holbourne
23 <sup>rd</sup> December	Diane Jessie Gagnon

### **Interments**

23 <sup>rd</sup> November	Mary Marston
3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Joyce Hunter
3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Phyllis Taylor
5 <sup>th</sup> December	Doris May Bedford

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

Mary Feldman	Peggy Turner	Noreen Sheehy
Margaret Tate	Maud Dunkley	Dorothy Smith
Kathleen Dumigan	John Flood	Elsie Flood
Nellie Kemp	Jim Madeley	Elizabeth Newton
Stan Jones	Edwin Barnes	Dorothea Hobbs
Clive Thwaite Williams	Hilda Mary Pinfold	Elsie Katherine Malpass
George Shirley	Colin Leach	Betty Wood
Lily May Hale	Robert Davis	Tim Berry
Margaret Aston	Katherine Davis	Michael Robert Southworth
Cecil Campkin	John Barnsley	
Ronald Metcalfe	Betty Hartley	

## **Worship Notes January 2021**

The progress of the Covid19 pandemic at the time of writing remains unpredictable. For information about services in the Parish, please continue to consult the Parish website.

The following are the main Saints' Days and Festivals in January:-

- 1<sup>st</sup> January    The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus
- 6<sup>th</sup> January    Epiphany
- 10<sup>th</sup> January   Baptism of Jesus, First Sunday of Epiphany
- 17<sup>th</sup> January   Second Sunday of Epiphany
- 18<sup>th</sup> January   Start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 24<sup>th</sup> January   Third Sunday of Epiphany, Fourth Sunday before Lent
- 25<sup>th</sup> January   The Conversion of St. Paul
- 31<sup>st</sup> January   Fourth Sunday of Epiphany, Third Sunday before Lent

## **A Message from the Editor**

**U**nlike Tony Blair, I do not feel the hand of History on my shoulder, but I do feel the weight of the responsibility of editing your Parish News. I must express my thanks for all the help I have received from previous editors, Mike Lampkin and Philip Leach, and from Roger Edwards, who is not only deals with production but is a fount of practical advice. I am grateful to the regular and occasional contributors, without whom there would be only advertisements to read – which prompts a thank-you to Tim Drakeford for gathering in so many. Parish News is important for communication within the Parish and as a showcase for the outside world. It is even more important in these difficult times when we cannot live our lives and physically be present with other people as we were wont to do. Please email me your news from your part of the church or organisation so we can continue to share joy, good practice, spread the Gospel, find help for those in need and invite those outside to come in.

**Carol Southworth**

# SHEPHERDSON COURT DAY CENTRE

7 Damson Parkway, Solihull West Midlands B91 2PP

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**0121 711 4266**

**[daycentremanager@raynerhouse.co.uk](mailto:daycentremanager@raynerhouse.co.uk)**

**<http://www.raynerhouseandyewtrees.co.uk>**

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



## *The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church*

### **GUARDIANS 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 in 2020:**

1 <sup>st</sup> December	In celebration of the 13 <sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Paul and Alex (née Jameson) Tregellas.
4 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Michael Edwards.
5 <sup>th</sup> December	In memory of Angela Jameson devoted wife of John, mother to Alex (and Paul) and Victoria, grandmother to Jamie and Isabelle. Greatly missed by family and friends.
6 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Myra Wilson.
7 <sup>th</sup> December	To commemorate the marriage on 7 <sup>th</sup> December 1985 of Wendy and Ted Corbridge.
8 <sup>th</sup> December	In ever loving memory of the late dearly loved Robert Lamble.
10 <sup>th</sup> December	Birthday memories of my dear husband Robbie Lamble.
14 <sup>th</sup> December	To commemorate the birthday of Marjorie Elsie Lane.
14 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Malcolm Spence.
14 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Mike Southworth on his birthday. A beloved husband, father and grandfather.
15 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Dr Oswald.
19 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of William James Lane.
22 <sup>nd</sup> December	To celebrate the 70 <sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Trevor and Jean Jones.
24 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Rachel Elston as this was her favourite time of year.
24 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Ronald McDonough.
27 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Gwen Mullis.
27 <sup>th</sup> December	In loving memory of Ron Soden.





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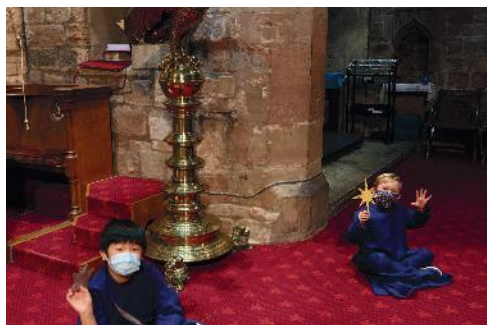
# Music Matters

This year we are certainly working towards Christmas in a different way from normal!

During the second lockdown in November, we worked with the Boys' and Girls' Choirs on Zoom, and continued with the Christmas outreach project with local children joining us on Zoom to create a virtual Christmas card for local care homes. The routine of choral services was maintained by small groups of adults.

Services for Advent Sunday were a particular highlight of the lockdown month, with the Advent Carol Service comprising music recorded quickly before the new lockdown, some archive recordings, and readings recorded in St Alphege Church specially for the occasion.

Now that we are in December, we are delighted to be able to resume in-person services and are, as before, being very careful with all the safety protocols.



We have sung at the services for the Sundays in Advent and are currently putting the finishing touches to a recorded service of Nine Lessons and Carols. This service has involved members of all our choirs, and also some visiting children who joined us for the outreach project for care homes. In addition, the junior choristers worked with Linda to create the pre-recorded Crib Services for Christmas Eve. We hope that you will have enjoyed sharing these special services with us and with many across the parish and local

community by the time the Parish News goes to print. It is such a shame we can't be together in person for these special celebrations, but we hope that everyone will appreciate the hard work and creativity which has gone into preparing the best online versions of services we can.

It has been wonderful to admit new choristers to the choir, some of whom visited just before the pandemic back in March, and others who joined us for the Zoom project during the summer holidays. They have shown great tenacity to start to learn the ropes in such unusual circumstances, and we look forward to their continued development of musical and liturgical knowledge over coming months.





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](mailto:isabel@solihullparish.org.uk)) and I will do my best to help.

Wishing all readers of the Parish News a very Happy New Year, and here's hoping for a positive year in 2021.

**Isabel Baumber**

## **J**ob **A**dvice **C**lub **S**olihull

### **Are you job Hunting?**

If you would like support and advice on CVs and interview techniques in an informal and friendly atmosphere, then come to JACS. It is also a great opportunity to meet and talk with others in similar circumstances.

We meet at Solihull United Reform Church on the Warwick Road opposite House of Fraser Mondays 10.30am-12.30pm

**Currently due to Covid 19 please do not turn up without first contacting**

Tim Freeman 07929 786 893

[timfreeman1000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:timfreeman1000@yahoo.co.uk)

**W**e were delighted to reopen our doors at the beginning of December. Sunday worship has re-commenced with the new times of 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. It's good to be continuing with the St Helen's/St Michael's team, which is becoming a well-oiled machine, sharing setting up, cleaning and securing the building. The Chapel was kept for private prayer on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until the end of November. Thanks to Merrill and Keith for helping to steward this.

We are looking forward to our outdoor Carol Service on December 20th, which will be a past event by the time you read this. It will be a joy to be able to sing once more. Thanks to Chris Carrington for spearheading the event and everyone else involved. Watch this space to read about its success!

It was marvellous to welcome back the Montessori School, the Ballet School and Tumble Tots, hopefully others will return, and we are very grateful to Jeremy Eade for all the complicated work he's put in for this to take place. Thanks also to Geoff Wyatt for steering us successfully through very stormy financial waters.

Phil has collected a phenomenal number of pairs of shoes for Shoe Aid (currently 46 well filled sacks), and a fantastic amount of used stamps on behalf of APS Support UK. BIG thanks to everyone who contributed, please keep on giving when you can.

We continue to pray for Helen and Jane, hoping that the New Year will bring them health and strength. Our thanks to everyone who has helped and supported St Helen's in the past, very difficult times.

We will soldier on in the New Year; anticipating January weather, please continue to join us in worship if you can, warmly wrapped and masked, until better news and better weather come.

**Jean & Phil**

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## **Martin Tunncliffe**

Over the past 23 years Martin Tunncliffe has been worshipping at St Michael's following his retirement from St Mary's Church Tanworth-in-Arden. Last month Martin celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination and we were delighted that he was able to Preside at the 11am Eucharist on 20<sup>th</sup> December. Many of you will know Martin and enjoyed his many talents which have ranged from published author of a number of books to the many articles appearing in 'Parish News', and his love of music which has delighted many over the years. Added to this is the Prayer of Stillness over many years and the great help he has been in the Parish and especially at St Michael's following his retirement. Many congratulations on this milestone, Martin.

## **Dwell**

The Dwell service streamed on Wednesday mornings from St Michael's Chapel continues to offer a quiet and reflective space in the middle of the week to enable us to connect or 'dwell' with God. although this is streamed live at 10am the services are available during the week.

## **Zoom Meeting Time**

As it seems 'Zoom' will feature in our lives for a little while yet, we are trying a regular coffee time just to enable St Michael's folk to catch up with one another and exchange news.

## **Home Groups**

On the subject of 'Zoom' it's good to know that our existing Home Group and Prayer Group are managing to continue through the medium of the technology available.

## **T's & C's Apply!**

As this article was written a few weeks ago it is subject to the variations that may be imposed on us by Tiers and Lockdowns.

**Paul Smith**





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## Look Both Ways

**OK**, there's something that you probably don't know about me. I am a big country music fan. Not the old stuff, although some of that I find OK. What I really like is what is often termed 'new country', with artists like Garth Brooks, the Chicks, and Keith Urban.

I find myself thinking about the lyrics of a particular Garth Brooks song, 'The Dance', as I begin to think about the new year and what it might bring.

*"And now I'm glad I didn't know  
The way it all would end the way it all would go  
Our lives are better left to chance  
I could have missed the pain  
But I'd have had to miss the dance."*

As we stand and face 2021, none of us could have known what turmoil 2020 would bring. These lyrics suggest that pain and the pleasure – the good and the bad if you like – exist together, and if you ditch the bad, you will undoubtedly miss some of the good too. Remember the good things that came out of 2020? No? Well look harder: Captain Tom; heroic healthcare and service care workers; Goats in the deserted street of Llandudno; to name but a few. *(Please add your own, e.g. in our Christmas letter to family and friends we listed the things that we have valued this year that we want to take forward into 2021, things like 'Life can change in an instant – live it today!'; and 'There are some really good people in this world. Be one of them!')*

So, as we stand and face the unknown that is 2021, how do we move forward? Well, I'm not into new year's resolutions, but I am suggesting that we move into 2021 with wisdom from Jesus as our guide. There are lots of Bible passages that we could use for this but, for today, I would like to focus on Matthew 7.

In Matthew 7 Jesus instructs us:

- Do not judge: *how much time do we spend finding the speck in the eyes of others and ignoring the plank in our own? What would be different this year if we each focused on ourselves, to become the best that we can be before God?*
- Ask, search and knock, to receive good things from God: *are we more comfortable doing things in our own strength and with our own resources than in welcoming Jesus and his wisdom/instruction into our life? What do we need to do this year to change this?*

- Do to others as you would have them do to you: *and if you don't like the way others do to you at the moment, take a long, hard look at what you are currently doing to them. What needs to change?*
- Look for the narrow gate that leads to life and don't take the easy way that leads to destruction: *how much do we follow the crowd with the world's values? Are we willing to stand out and proclaim Christ's values in our words and in our lives? How can we do this effectively?*
- Remember you will be known by your fruits: *Can you name all nine fruits of the spirit? Which one are you drawn to the most? Which do you crave more of? How can you make this change come about?*
- Seek God's will first in all that you do, so that you don't deceive yourselves or others: *How much of what is going on in your day-to-day life do you bring before God? When do you pray? How do you pray?*

As we stand and face the blank page that is 2021, why not use any or all of the above (or another favoured Bible verse) to instruct your way forward, and hear the commendation of Jesus:

*<sup>24</sup> "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!" (Matthew 7:24-27)*

Brothers and Sisters, we are the Bible that most people outside of the church will read. May our 2021 be built on rock.

Amen?

Keep safe and thanks for listening!

**Suzette**



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# CHURCH 4 FAMILIES

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Via Zoom!!



Whilst it's sad that we still 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.

Here are the themes for January:

3 Jan Following the Star

10 Jan Baptism

17 Jan Hearing God's call

24<sup>th</sup> Jan Jesus changes water into wine

31 Jan Candlemas

If you would like to attend you need to register with Linda in advance via e mail [l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk) to receive the Zoom link.

# Advent and Christmas 2020:

Advent and Christmas were very different for all of us this year but it was a great opportunity to find new ways to do things:

## Advent Holiday Club

A number of us joined with other parishes across the Birmingham diocese to take part in an online Holiday club on Saturday 21st November. We had great fun playing games, singing songs and hearing the story of the shepherds meeting the baby Jesus. We then went into our Solihull parish group where we had a wonderful time making our own interactive Advent calendars to keep us shining the light of Jesus all the way through Advent.



Here is Oscar proudly showing his finished Advent calendar!

## Christingle Zoom Scavenger Hunt

Instead of the traditional St Alphege All age Christingle service in the church building, families joined together for a Junction via Zoom Christingle service with a difference. Everyone was encouraged to find something in their home that represented the world, something red that represented love, something that represented light and something that represents the good things God gives us.





## Journey to the Stable

It was really sad that school groups weren't able to join us in church for the Journey to the Stable this year but a window of opportunity arose to go into the church building to do some recording so that we could take the Journey to the Stable to the schools instead!



Thanks goes to Alison Pratt, Pam Price, Michael Rumball and Katie Fisher and baby Ethan for their acting roles, to Hazel and Kitty Smith for the artwork that appeared in the video, St Alphege Church choir for Away in the Manger and Isabel Baumber who filmed and produced the video. Thank you also to Elaine Diskin who put together craft packs to be delivered to 9 different schools to use alongside the video.

It has been so lovely to be able to share the video with all our regular Journey volunteers and for the video to be shared with a number of new schools and also with friends and families near and far.

### Nativity and Crib Services

St Michael's wrote and recorded a fantastic original version of the Nativity story, the Junction families dressed as their favourite Nativity characters and joined in with the Nativity story via Zoom and on Christmas Eve families from across Solihull gathered together in a virtual way to participate in an online version of the traditional Crib services.



# 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](http://www.solihullparish.org.uk) or you can watch via the Parish Facebook page (bring your own cuppa and biscuits!)

# Youth Stuff

## Solihull Parish Youth Activities

This month the plan is to continue with Zoom sessions on Mondays and Fridays 7.30pm – 8.30pm and to meet in person on Wednesdays, 7.30pm – 8.30pm in OBH. Prayer reflections, scripture analysis, games and open discussion, all young people in Year 6 and above are welcome to join us.

The Wednesday session, in Room 6 OBH, will be held in line with Covid- 19 protocols and you will need to book a place in order to attend as numbers are limited. **Please do not turn up on the night if you have not booked a place.**

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

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

Keep safe, God Bless

The Youth Team

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# **Growing Disciples, Building Community, Transforming Lives**

## **Rector's Report April 2019 - April 2020**

When I gave last year's Rector's Report, none of us had any idea that the 2020 Annual meetings would be held in December 2020 or that 2020 would turn out to be such a difficult and extremely different year from what we had ever experienced before.

To comply with what is needed for this year's Annual Meeting, I will cover the 12-month period from April 2019. But, I will, in these exceptional circumstances, make some reference to the time since last April 2020.

**Thank you** to every one of you: Churchwardens and other PCC Officers, Large Staff team, every member of all the congregations for all the ministry you continue to exercise inside the church buildings and outside in your places of work/leisure and local communities.

I remain deeply grateful to everyone who has put in such efforts to cope with the lockdowns and the months of uncertainty that have followed since last March. It's been a huge challenge to have to do things very differently, but I am amazed at what you have done, some of which will be carried through into the "new normal". For example, a Pets' service was created on-line by Linda Hicks – even a tarantula attended the service! On reflection, perhaps such a service is better done on line...

Church will never be the same again – hopefully enriched and reaching out beyond what we imagined pre- March 2020.

## **Staffing**

There have been several changes in our staff over the last 12 months:

In June 2019, we said farewell to Paula Vundum. Paula has served this parish conscientiously and diligently for many years and both Fr Tim and I have really appreciated her colleagueship with us, acting as our PA.

Fran Halstead also stepped down from Parish Office work once our new Office staff had "bedded in". Thank you, Fran, for your meticulous work.

We were very glad (and very grateful) that Prem Patel has stayed on ensuring continuity.

To replace Paula and Fran, we appointed and welcomed Ann Colloby (Rector's PA) and Lilley Green. Lilley was with us for a year and used her imagination positively when it came to publication artwork for the weddings and ensuring that the schedules for Occasional Offices were efficiently run.

Ann has been a huge asset – always going the extra mile and being hugely supportive and encouraging to everyone. Also importantly, she and Prem remain the shop window for the church, forging links with those outside the church – a hugely vital ministry. They both have



very warm natures that draw people to them. In addition to all the (usual) Office work, Ann has done a lot of work with the Parish website and we're very grateful to her for that input. Ann is always full of ideas which is fabulous.

In Jules Morgan's report, Jules supported my view that we needed to have a Pioneer Minister who could reach out into the poorer end of our Parish (where St Francis' Church used to be) and start building community in that area. We were delighted to welcome Suzette Maguire (and her husband David) in November 2019. Suzette is a Church Army Officer and came with a lot of varied experience of working in this sort of field. Since beginning her ministry with us, Suzette has made a good start and then lockdown came which made things more difficult for her to build community. But credit where it's due- Suzette has ploughed on and is continuing to build connections with a variety of people.

Another staff member that Jules Morgan pressed us to appoint was a Director of Operations. This person would oversee the operational side of Parish Life which would then in turn free up the Ministers to actually minister. We appointed Nic Duncan, who like Suzette, began her ministry in November 2019. Nic's start wasn't easy with two particularly difficult HR areas to navigate.

At the end of 2019, I got a lovely surprise, when the Rev Sue Chandler sought me out to discuss where she felt God was leading her in relation to her ordained ministry. Together with the Vicar of Olton (where she was working), it was discerned that she left St Margaret's, Olton (where she has served since 2009) and worked alongside us in addition to her work as one of our Children's workers here. She was due to be licensed in March 2020, but that was delayed because of the lockdown. Happily, the licensing took place in July. On reflection, God's hand was certainly in this situation- little did we know at that time that I would be off sick for a considerable time and Sue has stepped up magnificently. Thank you, Sue – it's great to have your expanded ministry here with us.

In February, we have said goodbye to Jackie Jenns who has worked in St Alphege Pre-School for many years. Thank you, Jackie.

I will mention Sam and Charlotte Gibson here – even though they left us in July 2020 – strictly outside the scope of this Report. They have both been a huge asset to our parish: Sam has been a brilliant curate and he and I had a great working relationship where we learnt a lot from each other. Both he and Charlotte brought in fresh ideas, many of which we have adopted, and we remain eternally grateful to them for their various ministries. It was very sad to see them go but Sam was certainly ready for a new challenge and I was delighted when he took up his new appointment in Edgbaston because it would use his twin vocations- being a priest and a theological educator.

*Continued on next page*

## 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

2020 has been the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christian community in Solihull.

800 years ago, a building was started on the site of St Alphege Church- a Christian community saw the Good News of Jesus Christ so important that they wanted the Solihull area to know that Good News and become followers of Jesus.

A lot of hard work in planning was done in 2019 by a team of people from a number of Christian denominations in Solihull. Linda Hicks and her team set up the enormously popular "800 Acts of Kindness" and we had many events planned. Sadly, Lockdown came in March and all the events that had been planned for the rest of 2020 were cancelled. But what it did achieve was a fabulous working together of people from the various churches and I hope those relationships will further blossom as we move forward. I want to express my thanks to all who worked with us.

## Mission and Ministry

Our Parish Strapline is:

**Growing Disciples, Building Community, Transforming Lives.**

It is the responsibility of EVERYONE to grow in their faith, help others to grow in their faith and share their faith with others.

The **Purpose** of the churches in Solihull Parish is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed to everyone in the Parish.

## Our Vision:

The whole of the Parish will become a growing parish where all ages can come to faith in Jesus Christ and grow in that faith, receive spiritual and pastoral support and have a reputation for loving service to the local community.

As I explained last year, there are six strategy areas.

### **Strategy 1 Making new disciples, growing deeper in our faith and growing leaders**

Making and growing disciples is our number one priority – it undergirds everything - like it did in the early Church – they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles tells us.

Having run the 3D course in 2018, we spent all of 2019 (and the start of 2020) running the Growing Leaders Course. The aim of doing this was to grow new leaders who could then feel more confident about leading groups and discerning what particular ministry God might be calling them to. Unfortunately, due to lockdown, we haven't been able to (yet) follow this through, but the course was completed by 15 people from across the parish. Undergirding this course was the serious consideration of three things: Vocation, Competence and Character. You might think you have the vocation and feel very competent but if your character is questionable, disaster will follow. Character trumps everything. It is worth translating that into every sphere of ministry/every sphere of living because at heart it is character that matters. Not that

I am saying competence is not important - it is, but without Godly character, we are missing the point.

My thanks go to the participants and to Chris Carrington and Charlotte Gibson who ran this course with me.

Saturday morning monthly Bible Study in St Alphege continues; Women's Theology groups have continued to run (and continued to take place online in lockdown), along with the many housegroups across the parish. Andrew Williams and his team continued to run "Just Explore" – the essential nurture course for people who have either not yet become Christians and for those Christians who want a refresher.

For Lent 2020, we offered a Retreat in Daily Life. I was delighted when 37 people from across the parish took part. Speaking personally, I found it enormously enriching and I would heartily commend it to everyone. I am very grateful to Gill Jones who with a team from Manresa House (in Birmingham), organised and ran this Retreat.

During Lent 2020, we also set up a prayer tent in the middle of Solihull High Street on Saturday mornings in Lent. This was an ecumenical initiative also tied in with the 800<sup>th</sup> celebrations. Prayers from members of the public were written on post-it notes which were then taken into the various churches for a prayer offering the following Sunday. I am very grateful to Avril Welch for master-minding the organisation of this.

In addition to all these particular things, there is absolutely PLENTY of marvellous work being done by Linda Hicks, Sue Chandler and Joe Minall in the Children & Families and Youth departments. More detail can be found in their own reports to the AGM, but I want to express my deep-felt thanks to them and their colleagues who support them.

Early in 2020, I was delighted when three people approached me about training for Reader ministry. They are still keen now and one of them, Ruth Marshall, starts training in January 2021. We wish her well and God's blessing on her. The other two are planning to do some preliminary theological study before they offer themselves for Reader ministry selection.

At Diocesan level, the Rev Guy Donegan Cross was appointed to revamp discipleship training and he has truly been a breath of fresh air. Hitherto, many courses trying to grow Christian disciples have concentrated on the "head" rather than the "heart". It's all been about how much you know in a cognitive sense. For example, you might know all this historical information about the Book of Daniel, for instance, but has the knowledge of God working in the life of Daniel transformed your heart and helped you to grow closer to God? How has it affected your prayer life? It's often been said that the longest journey is from our heads to our hearts. For example, we might know lots of things about Jesus, but do we seek to *know* Jesus?

Guy has re-written the Diocesan training course with this in mind and Sam Gibson, Sandy Schieby and I were invited to join a small group to critique the course before it comes on stream. Believe me - it's a great course!

Guy also stresses the importance of being accountable to one another on a spiritual level. This is an important area to further develop in terms of our discipleship.

## **Strategy 2    New ways to care for each other and exercise hospitality**

St Michael's and St Helen's have good pastoral care systems set up and St Alphege remains a challenge.

Thank you to Stephen Linstead, who has been holding together the Pastoral link team- they need more people to join them – is God calling you to that ministry of care for others?

During lock-down, I am very grateful to all of you who kept in telephone touch with neighbours and friends so that many people were contacted regularly. I apologise if any of you felt neglected - we did try! If you need any help in the coming months, please contact the Parish Office.

## **Strategy 3    Extending the churches' work to new areas and new people**

I spoke earlier about Suzette's work. She can't do this on her own- she needs a team to work with, so if any of you feel God calling you to join her, please get in touch with Suzette. Our hope is that these fledgling communities that God is building through Suzette's ministry will grow into strong Christian communities. But this takes time- it is not instant. Please continue to pray for Suzette in this ministry.

Since March, the Church nationally has had to really think how it can reach out to people in lockdown and this parish has worked very hard. I am enormously grateful to people like Isabel Baumber and others who have spent so long training us and enabling on-line worship and other things to take place. Statistics show that working through the internet, a far larger number of people were reached and our next challenge is how we further connect with that much larger group of people and help to grow them in their Christian faith.

## **Strategy 4    Communications**

This group continues despite losing both Sam and Charlotte Gibson who were key members. If any of you have a gift for communications, please do get in touch with the Parish office.

## **Strategy 5**

Developing our passion for God's Kingdom and dependence on God's resources

This strategy is made of various strands.

### **Finances**

I remain very grateful to all our treasurers and money-counters. I know the treasurers spend hours doing the accounts for the parish- a huge thank you goes to them.

The Finance Committee has met and its members are fabulous people who bring a wealth of experience to this task. My hope is that this group will meet regularly from now on: the lockdown will have had an impact on our finances and together with the Stewardship group, there are considerable challenges to be faced.

Thank you to all of you who do give to the church and do regularly review your giving. If you are not already engaged with the Parish Giving Scheme (a Direct Debit scheme) please consider it because it encourages us to review our Giving annually as well as reducing work at the parish level.

**One way we can increase our income streams is to make better use of our buildings in terms of community use.**

Of course, due to lockdown, we haven't been able to use the buildings to generate income in the way we have been accustomed to.

In "normal" times, I know St Helen's does brilliantly on this score.

St Michael's has two rooms at Oak Cottage Chapel that are often underused.

St Alphege Church could be used a lot more IF we had suitable and better toilet and kitchen facilities and excellent heating.

Improving the OBH has been on the agenda here for many years – this appears to be becoming more and more urgent. It's a vicious circle- we need to invest to improve in order to increase our income – whilst being able to serve the local community...

I am very grateful to Mike Rumball and Joe Homer who save us a lot of money with all the work they do in the church building but they cannot manage all that needs to be done.

On the ministry side – we still need to resolve the issue of clergy imbalance across the parish.

Jules Morgan pointed it up in her Report and the Diocesan People and Places strategy has recommended how the clergy staffing should look like in this Parish. This will involve looking at the legal Team Schemes again to see if they are really fit for purpose in 2021. So, change will have to happen.

**Strategy 6    Styles of worship through which a diversity of people can encounter God**

Until lockdown, we have been able to offer a variety of styles of worship and we have been blessed to be able to do that. For example, the choirs of St Alphege offer a rich variety of choral music which enriches the worship of both regular worshippers and visitors alike, and which also grows the understanding of the Christian faith amongst the younger members of the choirs. Also, our Junction service (which has recently re-started online) seeks to grow the faith of young families through appropriate worship and teaching.

Once we are out of lockdown and there is a vaccination for Covid-19, we don't quite know how the picture will look in terms of service attendance. I suspect, a lot more imagination and hard work will be going into this particular strategy.

*Continued on next page*

## Going forward:

We often hear the phrase, “the new normal”. Once we have people being vaccinated and we’re out of lockdowns and tiers, there is the terrible temptation to think that everything (including Church) will go back to how it was pre-March 2020. The Pandemic has been a wake-up call – things have got to change – it won’t be business as usual. How we live on this planet and respect creation will demand that we change. Shops that have survived best in the lockdowns have been forward thinking and relied on the internet for sales. Life will be different. We can’t stand still or go back to “how things were.”

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell was interviewed recently about the Vision and Strategy for the National Church of England. He said (surprise, surprise) that the Church must follow Christ. He spoke of the church being a community of missionary disciples serving the poor and all those in need; a church that was younger and more diverse; a church where mixed ecology is the norm; where everyone is **Christ-centred and Jesus-shaped: the Church has to be Simpler, Humbler and Bolder.**

Stephen Cottrell challenges the Church here in Solihull. Do our conversations, for example, in Church Councils and how we behave towards one another reflect our being Christ-centred and Jesus-shaped? If the answer is “No” or “not very often”, then we need to re-set our Godly compass urgently.

**Simpler, Humbler and Bolder.**

## Personally...

2020 has been a year of challenges. I hadn’t seen a cancer diagnosis (for the second time), coming to hit me in March/April. I hadn’t envisaged still being off sick from June onwards. Fortunately, it seems that the cancer hasn’t spread. It was not the best year for Linda Hicks either, with a cancer diagnosis as well coupled with family bereavements from Covid. But thankfully, Linda is cancer-free as well, praise God.

Thank you to everyone who has remembered Linda and me in their prayers and sent cards and messages and gifts. We have been truly blessed. Thank you.

**Jane Kenchington  
November 2020**

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## Calendar and Prayer Intentions for January 2021

1	Naming & Circumcision of Jesus	The well-being of our town in 2021	Bramcote Drive
2	Basil the Great & Gregory of Nazianzus 379/389	Bishops David & Anne, our Bishops	Brandon Road
3	2nd Sunday of Christmas	The three churches of our parish	Branthill Croft
4	Feria	Staff, patients and volunteers of the Marie Curie hospice	Brick Kiln Lane
5	Feria	Those administering the Covid-19 vaccine	Broad Oaks Road
6	The Epiphany	Those awaiting the birth of a child	Broomfields Avenue
7	Feria	Poets and spiritual writers	Broomfields Close
8	Feria	Staff and residents of local care homes	Broomfields Farm Road
9	Feria	Those caring for a family member who is ill	Brown's Coppice Avenue
10	The Baptism of Christ	Those preparing for baptism	Brueton Avenue
11	Mary Slessor, Missionary, 1915	The work of the Town Centre Chaplaincy	Bryanston Road
12	Aelred of Hexham, Abbot of Rievaulx 1167	Our Parish Warden, Andrew	Bufferys Close
13	George Fox, Founder of the Society of Friends (the Quakers), 1691	The Quaker Meeting in Solihull	Buryfield Road
14	Feria	The staff of funeral directors in our town	Bushell Drive
15	Feria	The staff of the shops, cafes, bars and restaurants in our town	Bushley Croft
16	Feria	Our parish Children & Families team	Caldwell Grove
17	Second Sunday of Epiphany	The community and congregations of St Alphege	Cambridge Avenue
18	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins	The Christian Churches in Solihull	Catherine's Close
19	Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester, 1095	Diocesan staff & members of Bishop's Council	Cedarhurst
20	Richard Rolle of Hampole, Spiritual Writer, 1349	Members of religious communities	Chadbury Croft
21	Agnes, Child-Martyr at Rome, 304	Those who care for children in need	Chadley Close
22	Vincent of Saragossa, Deacon, first Martyr of Spain, 304	Those persecuted for their faith	Chalgrove Crescent
23	Feria	Those who are seeking work	Charterhouse Drive
24	Third Sunday of Epiphany	The community and congregations of St Michael's	Chauson Grove
25	The Conversion of Paul	Our Pioneer Minister, Suzette Maguire	Chelthorn Way
26	Timothy and Titus, Companions of Paul	Our Rector, Jane	Cheltondale Road
27	Feria	The work of Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness	Chelveston Crescent
28	Thomas Aquinas, Priest, Philosopher, Teacher of the Faith, 1274	The staff and students of the schools in our town	Cherrington Way
29	Feria	Joe Cooper, St Alphege Director of Music and the St Alphege Choirs	Cherrywood Crescent
30	Charles, King and Martyr, 1649	Elizabeth, our Queen	Chesterton Close
31	The Presentation of Christ in the Temple	The community and congregations of St Helen's	Cheveridge Close

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

## **Baptism for Life**

**S**ometimes we need to remind ourselves that Baptism is not just a one-off event or merely a rite of passage. In Christian tradition Holy Baptism is a Sacrament of grace, welcome and commitment opening the way to exploring different *pathways of faith*, through good times and testing times, over a lifetime ~ finding true purpose for this life and a sure hope for the next along the way. These pathways include:

1. The pathway of readiness for experiencing and treasuring personal moments of spiritual awareness, wonder and illumination
2. The pathway of considering more fully Christian heritage, exemplars and beliefs and of their relevance for to-day's world
3. The pathway of valuing friendship and fulfilment in Church membership, along with ecumenical and inter-faith links
4. The pathway of coming to identify with one or more of a variety of devotional styles and of gradually establishing an appropriate rhythm of worship
5. The pathway of living out principles of faith thoughtfully and creatively, with humour and resilience, at home and at work, at leisure and in the community

All of the above are integral aspects of the Christian life, and find a natural focus together in the celebration of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) in which the sacrifice of Christ is revered, the glory of Christ is celebrated, and the strengthening of the Divine is received

*The First Sunday of Epiphany (10<sup>th</sup> January 2021): The Baptism of Christ*

**Revd John Bradford**

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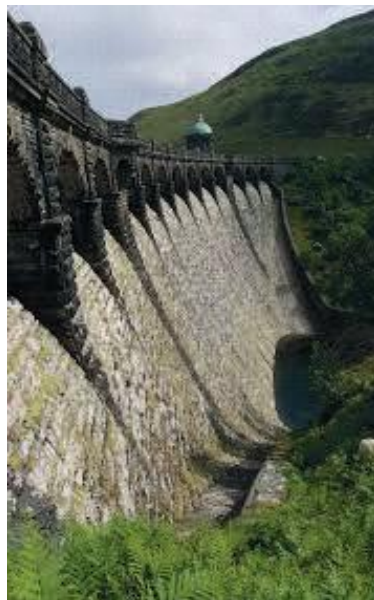
Martin Tunncliffe

**W**ater=Life=Spirit. That equation is in the forefront of human experience and consciousness. In the background lurk the dread opposites of chaos and death resulting from lack of water or too much of it. Water inevitably finds its way into religious texts and teaching, and is very evident in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Well: that's the serious bit. But at the start of a new year, and following the rather dismal 2019, let me share with you, by way of entertainment instead of information, a light-hearted personal story from the last century. It comes with my best wishes for a much happier New Year.

We stood at the foot of the Craig-Goch dam and looked upwards. We were dwarfed by the massive stonework which, together with that of the five other dams in the Elan valley, transformed this part of Mid-Wales into a man-made Lake District between 1893 and 1952. This was our first holiday without the children, and Irene and I were taking advantage of the offer of a holiday cottage in Snowdonia for two weeks.

The summer day was bright with sunshine as we drove West out of Birmingham, so with time to spare, we decided take a picturesque detour and explore the Elan valley reservoirs. For decades we had been enjoying their soft water each time we turned on the tap at home, without much thought about the 72-mile journey which that water had made by viaduct from Wales to the Frankley reservoir and thence to our kitchen and bathroom. Now was the chance to explore part of the stunning engineering feat which, over a hundred years ago, enabled water from the Elan valley to assuage the enormous and growing thirst of Birmingham homes and industries.



We were enchanted by the beauty of the mid-Welsh landscape. In the valley itself, where such a massive transformation had taken place, Nature had virtually reclaimed the area now occupied by the man-made lakes. In due course, we decided to stop the car at the highest lake of all, the Craig Goch reservoir, to enjoy the view from that point. We found our way to narrow road and a footpath across the top of the dam, but there was no space for parking. We managed to find a minor road in the valley below which brought us to a space close by the foot of the dam. Looking upwards, we thought that this is what it must feel like to be an ant at the base of a garden wall. We admired the awesome stonework, then, needing some exercise after our drive, we managed to scramble up a steep slope through trees and bracken. Finally, breathless and triumphant, we found ourselves back at the top.

Our efforts were rewarded by lovely views in all directions. On one side, the shimmering lake, reflecting the light of the sky: on the other the valley, with its full palette of colours and



shades, the rolling hillsides merging into the blue distance. All this beauty, laced with fresh clean non-city air from the Welsh mountains, provided a strong and welcome tonic for the start of our holiday.

Then it happened . . . . . !

We were walking along the footpath by the parapet, past the neo-Baroque water tower, when suddenly, for no apparent reason, my left ankle turned. I felt an agonizing pain and became totally immobilized. I clung on to the stone parapet, literally unable to move. Gradually, the glory of the Welsh landscape narrowed down for me to one small object far below. At the foot of this immense artificial cliff of majestic masonry I could discern the roof of our car, from that height reduced to the size of a dinky toy. I was unable to move a single step – and Irene couldn't drive!



This was the pre- mobile phone era, of course, so the outlook seemed bleak. However, with help from a passing motorist who gave us a lift back to the car, and the healing ministry of very cold Welsh water from the Elan river, our holiday did not, as seemed likely, come to an end before it had barely begun.

The car was automatic, so I only needed the use of my right leg to drive. Irene soaked a towel in the river and wrapped it round my swollen ankle. It was icy cold and an instant relief. Thus shod, I drove a few miles, with my ankle warming up the towel as we went. Then we stopped by the river again and repeated the treatment. Another few miles, another stream, another re-soak for the towel, and so on. Thus, by stages, we were able to complete our journey to the cottage. I had more or less said goodbye to the idea of carrying out the daily walk schedule that we had planned. However, the Welsh water treatment worked like a dream. By the next morning, the swelling and the pain were both gone, and we walked in the lovely Snowdonia National Park every day without any trouble at all.



# 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.

**Subscriptions** are now due and need to be in by the end of March. This year the subscription is £30. We'll be collecting subscriptions at the January, February and March meetings.

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**Annual General Meeting** - Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January at 7pm. This will be held remotely by Zoom. Details will be circulated to members after Christmas.

## WIVES' FELLOWSHIP

Unfortunately, because of the current Covid19 restrictions, it is not possible to hold meetings at present or to plan a future programme.

The Fellowship is sad to report the death of Valerie Beavan, who led the group with great success some time ago.

**Carol Caldicott**  
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