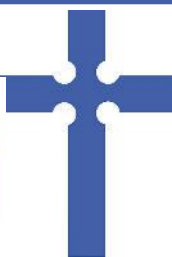


SOLIHULL
PARISH



NEWS



TEAM CHURCHES

St ALPHEGE - The Square, Solihull B91 3RQ

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

St MICHAEL - Bryanston Road, Solihull B91 1BS



On the advice of the Diocese of Birmingham, St Alphege, St Helen's and St Michael's have been closed from 8th January until further notice. We will continue to share Worship services online.

The new format on Sundays will be:

- 9.15 a.m. The Junction on Zoom – contact l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk
- 9.15 a.m. Eucharist Service from St. Helen's
- 10.30 a.m. Eucharist Service from St Alphege
- 6.30 p.m. Choral Evensong from St. Alphege (live-streamed or recorded)

Mondays Midday Prayer live-streamed from St. Michael's Chapel

Wednesdays Midday Dwell Service live-streamed from St. Michael's Chapel

Fridays 9.30 a.m. Praise and Play
Midday Prayer pre-recorded

Saturdays 11.30 a.m. Prayer and Fellowship closing with Midday Prayer by Zoom
contact sglrml@btinternet.com

Full details available on the homepage of our parish website at:
<https://www.solihullparish.org.uk>

Please don't hesitate to contact the Parish Office if you need any support or advice. Although we are working from home, we are fully operational, and it is always a pleasure to talk to you.

The Revd Simon Marshall
The Revd. Sue Chandler

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.

Contents

Editorial	3
Roundabout	4
News from Team Churches	9
St Alphege	9
St Helen	16
St Michael	17
The Guardians of St Alphege	12
Music Matters	14
Pioneer Diary	18
Church for Families	21-24
Youth Stuff	25
Let us Pray	34
Matters of Faith	40
For Your Diary	42
Address Book	44



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Want to email the Editor?

parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk

Cover picture
'Candlemas'

Headlines

Announcement to Solihull Parish	2
Archdeacon Emeritus the Venerable Paul Taylor	4
Michael David Middleton FRCSE, FRCS 1933-2020	5
Church Services	6
An Update from Solihull Welcome	7
Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness	8
Viewing our Church Services on your Television	28
A Christmas Act of Kindness	32
Mothers' Union AGM Report	32
Women's Theology Group	35

Announcement to Solihull Parish

It is with great sadness that we publish this statement from our Rector, Jane, and Bishop David. This has already been publicised at Sunday services across the parish over the last few weeks. We are publishing it here so that it is known and understood as widely as possible.

This is a joint announcement from The Revd Canon Jane Kenchington and the Bishop of Birmingham. Following appropriate consultation, Canon Jane Kenchington will take early retirement on grounds of ill health. These things are mostly confidential, but Canon Jane assures everyone that this difficult decision has been taken to ensure she can flourish now and in the future. This has been approved by the CoFE Pensions Board's expert advisers.

Canon Jane says, 'It has been a great privilege to serve in both Gloucester and Birmingham dioceses and most recently here in the Solihull Team. It has been good to see how the church and people have developed here in these last 5 years, and I am confident of Christ's continued presence with us all in these uncertain times. My sincere and heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers and staff, lay and ordained, who have shared in ministry.'

Bishop David comments, 'Canon Jane has been a great colleague in the service of God's people and the community in Solihull. I am sure we will consider her time here as being of great importance in the task of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Knowing that we never retire from Christ's call and love, I wish Jane and her family every blessing for the years ahead.'

Canon Jane's retirement will take effect from 1st February 2021, although she and Richard will remain in the rectory for a few months as their new house is prepared. The parish will be planning appropriate farewells, within the COVID-19 guidance and current Lockdown regulations. The vacancy from 1/2/21 will proceed as normal under the oversight of Parish Wardens and Area Dean, supporting the volunteers, staff and clergy of Solihull Parish.

We will provide details of how we are able to say farewell to Jane and her family in due course. And, of course, there will be an appreciation of Jane's ministry in the March issue of Parish News. In the meantime, please remember Jane and her family in your prayers.

Fr Simon

Editorial

Through the long months of 2020, we hoped that this year would see a return to something of a 'normal' life. Sadly, so far, that hasn't happened. Indeed, we began this year by having to close our churches to public worship once more - a sad but necessary step.

Despite this, as we enter the second month of this year, we hurtle through another season in the Church's calendar, moving from Epiphany to Lent in less than three weeks. And from that point, we are cautiously looking towards Easter!

But, lest we get carried too far, let us pause for a moment to take in the story which opens the month of February. The Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, also known as Candlemas, celebrates Luke's story of Mary and Joseph taking the child Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate him to God and to offer a sacrifice in thanksgiving for their child.

This is a story about seeking and finding: Mary and Joseph come to the Temple to seek God's blessing on their child; Simeon is patiently looking out for the arrival of God's Messiah and the aged Anna is anticipating the one who will come to free God's people.

It is also a story which seems to speak to our current situation, where we have been unable to freely interact with one another in church for so many months. We might look at the Holy Family, Simeon and Anna as they become lost in this most holy moment of recognition and recall our own experience of such moments.

Perhaps the gathering of these four figures - with the infant Christ in their midst - can encourage us to keep alight the flame of God's love within our hearts. Perhaps the patient waiting demonstrated by Simeon and Anna can sustain us until we can gather once again, with Christ in our midst, in our church buildings.

Before the end of this month, on Wednesday 17 February, the season of Lent begins. At this stage, it is not yet clear how we will be able to mark this solemn occasion, but please be assured that we will find a way to do so.

At the start of the Lenten journey, it is made very clear to us that we are mortal. The ashes we receive at the Ash Wednesday service are the same substance from which we were formed and with which, one day, our bodies will be reunited. Thus, at the beginning of this long journey to the joyful life of Easter, we are invited to confront the truth that our earthly life will come to an end.

Perhaps it is this coming-together of the concepts of living and dying that gives Candlemas and Ash Wednesday their mystery and depth. Both occasions bring us into contact with the ultimate questions of existence and offer us time-honoured rituals where we can contemplate them.

Towards the end of his poem 'Ash Wednesday', T S Eliot writes: "This is the time of tension between dying and birth...". We usually put those two events the other way around but, often it is only when things are allowed to die away that new life can come. As the Christ-child appears, so Simeon can embrace the end of his life; as we are reminded that we are dust, so we can turn and follow Christ again. May the hope of new things to come sustain us on our journey through the challenges - and the joys - of this season.

Fr Simon

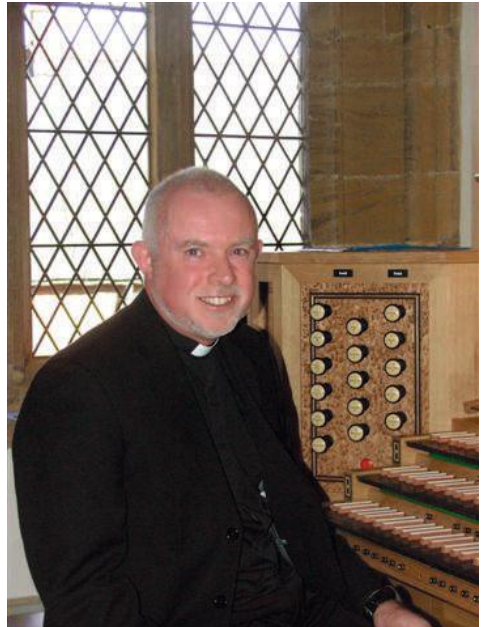
Archdeacon Emeritus the Venerable Paul Taylor

Welcome to Solihull Parish

The announcement that the retired Archdeacon Emeritus of Sherborne, the Venerable Paul Taylor, will give assistance in Solihull Parish is very good news indeed. He has returned to his native West Midlands after his retirement, an unusual move, he pointed out, as people usually retire from the West Midlands to Dorset, not the other way round.

The Venerable Paul Taylor was educated at Westminster College, Oxford, and Westcott House, Cambridge. He gained both the B.Ed. and M.Th. degrees from the University of Oxford. In the Diocese of London, he was ordained Deacon in 1984 and Priest in 1985, becoming Curate of St. Stephen's, Bush Hill, and then incumbent of Southgate and then Hendon. He was appointed Director of Post Ordination Training for the Edmonton Area of the London Diocese and Area Dean of West Barnet.

The Venerable Paul was collated as Archdeacon of Sherborne by the Bishop of Salisbury in July 2004 and became a Canon and Prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral in September the same year. He retired on 24 May 2018 and was created Archdeacon Emeritus. His farewell services were at Sherborne Abbey and at the village church of St. Andrew in West Stafford, where the family lived.



The Venerable Paul brings to Solihull Parish many gifts. He has served as a parish priest, is a talented church musician and has continuing involvement with clergy welfare as a trustee of St. Luke's Healthcare for the Clergy. He enjoys sports, was chaplain to Dorchester F.C. and is Captain of the Church of England Golf Team. Bishop Nicholas Holtam said of him, "Paul Taylor has been a wonderful parish priest of an Archdeacon. He has loved West Dorset and knows everyone. It was said that he brought love and joy and they don't say that about every Archdeacon in the Church of England." "He developed clergy wellbeing in this diocese into something special" and oversaw much work that that could be placed under the heading 'social justice'. He knows that theology matters and shapes who we are as a church and what we do as people.

At his retirement, the Venerable Paul said, "Priesthood predominates through everything, which is about the pastoral care of people. For better or worse, I have treated the Archdeaconry as a very large parish." "Relationship also builds affection, and I have always been naturally inquisitive about the stories the people I've met with tell." He also

commented that he has great regard for local decision-making and the people on the ground, recommending caution in dealing with “top-down” schemes, and that the systems of the Church are not about perpetuating the Church, but building the Kingdom of God. The Salisbury Diocesan theme of *Pray, Serve, Grow* is not an agenda or a strategy but a restatement of what our Christian life should be about and a call to re-focus on what is most important.

The Parish extends a very warm welcome, and thanks, to Archdeacon Paul Taylor who, by the time Parish News is printed, will have been assisting Fr. Simon, Rev. Sue and the whole team for several weeks.

Carol Southworth

Michael David Middleton FRCSE, FRCS 1933-2020

Michael and Pat lived in Lovelace Avenue for 42 years and were members of St. Alphege Parish Church. Michael was appointed a General Surgeon in 1968 at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital (previously East Birmingham) and also worked at Solihull Hospital. He specialised in Vascular Surgery and was the first vascular appointment at Heartlands. He was a keen gardener, just as well as the house had a large garden, also a golfer at Copt Heath and keen Bridge player. He supported Pat when she took on the position as Chair of the Guardians of St. Alphege and enjoyed the social activities such as the summer lunches.

Pat writes:

We moved to Edinburgh where Michael qualified in medicine to be near our two daughters, Caroline and Jennifer. Our son David died of a brain tumour in 2015. We had great support from the parish which was wonderful. Michael had lung cancer when we moved, but had good care in Edinburgh and enjoyed being back in Scotland. We nursed him at home which was a wonderful experience with the help of amazing district nurses. St. Alphege will always have a special place in our hearts. I joined Christ Church, Morningside, and also St Mary's Cathedral where we were married. He died a few hours before our Diamond Wedding anniversary.

Pat Middleton

Church Services

On the advice of the Diocese of Birmingham, St Alphege, St Helen's and St Michael's have been closed from the 8th January until further notice. We will continue to share Worship services online.

In an email sent out across the Diocese, Bishop David wrote:

"Although access to church buildings is still permitted by government during this third National Lockdown, I expect that with current uncertainties, and rigorous assessment of risk and capacity, you may wish to further restrict activities in the church building or close completely for the time being. In all this, you have my full support... With the myriad of digital and contemporary options open to our creativity, I recommend parishes consider alternative options to gathering in person."

The Revd. Simon Marshall in consultation with the Deputy Wardens from all three churches and the Parish Warden, and with support from the Venerable Paul Taylor, proposed that church buildings be closed with immediate effect. The situation will be reviewed in the week beginning 24th January.

At the time of going to press the new format will be:

- A live-stream of the 10am St Helen's and 10.30am St Alphege Eucharists.
- The 6.30pm St Alphege Evensong, with the minimum number of choristers necessary, recorded or live-streamed.

In addition to the above, The Junction will continue to meet every Sunday over Zoom at 9.15am, Praise and Play will continue every Friday at 9.30am, the new format of Midday Prayer will begin next week, and we will start the new Prayer and Fellowship group over Zoom at 11.30am on Saturdays. Full details are available on the homepage of our parish website at: <https://www.solihullparish.org.uk> and on the inside cover of this magazine.

Joe Minall continues to support the parish youth in every way he can, as do Joe Cooper and Isabel Baumber with members of the Choirs of St Alphege.

Please don't hesitate to contact the Parish Office if you need any support or advice. Although we are working from home, we are fully operational, and it is always a pleasure to talk to you.

We are glad to be able to offer help in our own small way during such difficult and anxious times.

An Update from Solihull Welcome

For more than 10 years until the first COVID lockdown happened in March of last year, St. Augustine's Catholic Church Hall in Herbert Road, Solihull, has been the home of *Solihull Welcome*, a multi-faith charity that provided a drop-in centre on Wednesdays and Fridays for Refugees and Asylum Seekers who had to come regularly to report at The Home Office Midland Enforcement Unit in Sandford House on Homer Road.

We provided hot and cold drinks, basic food, warmth and shelter, a listening ear, sign-posting to other services (such as the Red Reportees Cross), a children's play area and – crucially – toilets, which Sandford House didn't let them use! (Security they said??!)

COVID restrictions have coincided with the Home Office trialling remote and electronic reporting for all but the highest risk migrants, and these factors have resulted in a dramatic drop in the number of reportees to a handful each day, rather than the hundreds in earlier years. This is a great improvement for the majority of our refugee clients (they don't have to travel to Solihull regularly) but may also prove the end of *Solihull Welcome* as the low likely number of attendees makes opening the Hall rather pointless.

Solihull Welcome is affiliated to *Restore*, the largest Birmingham based Christian Charity for Refugees, and we used to help them run an annual "Refugee Fun Day", generally on Church Premises somewhere in "leafy Solihull" (well, much more "leafy" than the inner city areas where any of them lived!)



A Syrian Refugee Family – Restore Garden Party, Olton Friary, August 2016

Restore also run many other activities for refugees, including training, social activities and their 'Befriender' Scheme. This is where a volunteer is allocated a refugee to befriend, help with advice about life in the UK, go on walks or outings with them and generally just be their friend. Many *Solihull Welcome* supporters have signed up to this scheme but *Restore* now need more male volunteers.

Tom Brassil,

Chairman, Solihull Welcome

tobrassil@aol.com or 07803 921 749

www.restore-uk.org 0121 661 4275

Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness

As you are probably already aware SCAH (Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness) has been working for the homeless in Solihull now for over 27 years. Started in 1993 it has been a constant in helping those in the borough who have found themselves in that awful situation.

Since before the current pandemic started earlier in the year, but ever increasingly since, we have also been helping more and more the disadvantaged, abused or forgotten in the borough as well as helping ex-offenders to make a new start in life.

Our workload is ever growing, and we have a great team of volunteers who gladly give their time and effort to support what we do.

Our main provision is to provide our clients with a 'Starter Pack', literally giving them ability to start again once they have got a place to live. Our 'Starter Packs' consist of what you would need to start again, bedding, bedlinen, towels, cups and plates and glasses, cutlery, a kettle, cooking utensils and perhaps a microwave or saucepans

The number of people assisted continues to grow each year.

In November 2020 alone, SCAH assisted 25 adults and 17 associated children.

The cumulative total of people helped in 2020 is 187 adults and 69 children. This is averaging a 16% increase on 2019. All within Solihull Borough.

We do supply mostly new items to our clients, but if we receive good quality nearly new items from people we also supply these in a mix with the newly purchased goods.

Of course, like all charities we have seen our income drop this year from the normal sources, our faithful church congregations, but we have been blessed with other donations and gifts which have helped this year, but all donations and gifts are always welcome of course.

In this year we have also welcomed Father Simon as the Chairman of SCAH and it is really good that we have a passionate supporter of what we do as Chairman.



David Roots

From the St Alphege Register

Baptisms

There have been no Baptisms

Weddings

There have been no weddings in January

Funerals

8th January Brenda Daphne George

27th January Mary Edith Bowles

Interments

There have been no interments in January

Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in February

Norman Dunkley
Anthony Walker
Kenneth Atkinson
Joseph Fenwick
Wilfred Alcock
Barbara Palmer

Rachel Elston
Mamie Linstead
John Stewart Bateson
Dorothy Warrior
Barbara Alice Edwards
Martin John Caldicott

Cyrus Thomas
Joan Evelyn Gilbert
Barbara Gregory
Hilda Jewers
Catherine Moir
Jack Gilbertson

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

Worship Notes for February

The beginning of February brings the celebration of the festival of Candlemas.

In his poem *Mother and Child*, Charles Causley reflects on the image of Mary bearing the bright light of the Christ-child into the darkness of the world he comes to enlighten.

Mother and Child (American Primitive)

Holding in clear hands
The world's true light
She lifts its perfect flame
Against the night.

About its pulse of fire
Earth and seas run,
Season and moon and star,
The unruly sun.

Upon the hill a scuffed
Thinness of snow,
First of green thorn, a stream
Stopped in its flow.

She keeps within her hand
The careful day
Now the slow wound of night
Has bled away:

Vivid upon her tongue
Unspoken prayers
That she may not outlive
The life she bears.

~ Charles Causley

Later in the month, on February 17th Ash Wednesday marks the start of the season of Lent. The Lenten season lasts for forty days (not including Sundays) and takes us on a journey to the end of Holy Week. Where church services are able to take place, liturgical dress is the simplest possible, our churches are kept bare of flowers and decoration and the Gloria in Excelsis is not said or sung.

At the heart of the Ash Wednesday service is the act of being marked with the sign of the cross in ashes, made by burning last year's Palm Crosses.

Fr Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest, speaks of this ritual in this way:

'It... calls me back, as the ash is smeared on my forehead, to the palpable remembrance that we belong to earth: we are formed of her and will all too swiftly return to her.'

At the time of writing, it is unclear whether we will be able to hold services in our church buildings on Ash Wednesday, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, if we are unable to gather in church, we will find a way of observing this important and most solemn occasion. Please look out for further information coming soon this month.

Fr Simon

St Alphege Pre-School

Pre-School places are available for children who will turn three years of age in the academic year beginning in September each year. Application Forms and the Admissions Policy are available on-line (paper copies can be requested). St. Alphege Pre-School offers highly experienced and qualified staff. The last Ofsted Inspection rated us "Outstanding".

The other usual activities for pre-school children when the O.B.H. is open are Little Movers and Little Treasures.

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, Tammy Ellender: manager@stalphege-preschool.org.uk



The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church

Unfortunately, the present COVID19 restrictions mean that no events can take place. The Trustees will announce details of the A.G.M. in the Spring and will send the Notice of A.G.M. to all members at that time.

The Guardians Floodlighting scheme of course continues to operate and full details are below.

FLOODLIGHTING

The Guardians 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:

2021

3 rd January	In loving memory of Tony Davies on his birthday.
9 th January	In loving memory of my father, Dr Oswald on his birthday.
19 th January	To commemorate the birthday of the late Nicola Blakeman.
24 th January	In loving memory of Rachel Elston on her birthday.
27 th January	In loving memory of Alan Spence.
27 th January	In loving memory of Betty Hartley.
27 th January	In loving memory of John Barnsley.



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Music Matters

Greetings from the beginning of 2021 – a New Year, which we hope will bring a change in circumstances for many as the Covid-19 vaccinations are rolled out. Before then, unfortunately, we are in lockdown again, but let's hope that the pandemic will gradually be brought under control with the vaccination programme.

At the time of writing, we are still within Christmastide, so it feels relevant to talk about Christmas itself. This year was very different from normal, with the unusual circumstances requiring hard work and creativity to produce a full range of services. With the rest of the staff team, we planned a mixture of live and pre-recorded services for the Christmas period.

The Nine Lessons and Carols service was very well received by members of our congregations – thank you to everyone who took the time to pass on feedback. We wanted to create something special and also retain the community feel which is a feature of this service in normal times. Readers were invited to read the lessons from within our church community and also the wider local community including the Worshipful the Mayor of Solihull, Julian Knight MP, and representatives from the Town Centre Chaplaincy Team, Solihull Welcome and Solihull Churches



Action on Homelessness. Tom Brassil from Solihull Welcome and David Roots from SCAH also took the time to update us on their work – please see their articles elsewhere in the Parish News. The music for this service was created by our different choirs, including new junior choristers who recorded verses for some of the congregational carols. One particularly interesting carol was Britten's 'Hymn to the Virgin', which Joe created from an in-person socially-distanced choir and a remote Zoom choir – primarily to create a beautiful piece of music but also as a representation of this year with its combination of ways of working.

Throughout autumn, we worked with visiting children on an outreach project to create a 'virtual Christmas card' for local care home residents. This took the form of a series of popular carols which were created from individual audio tracks recorded by the children in their homes. The carols were used to illustrate a wonderful rhyming nativity story written by Fr Simon and read by participating children. This video was shared with a dozen local care homes (including those known to the pastoral link team) and the Marie Curie Hospice. We were pleased to get some positive press coverage within the Solihull area and Joe and one of the young participants were featured on ITV Central News.

In addition, the junior choristers worked with Linda to create the pre-recorded Crib Services for Christmas Eve. It was such a shame we couldn't be together in person for these special



celebrations, but we hope that everyone will appreciate the hard work and creativity which went into preparing the best online versions of services possible.

In a normal year, we usually sing carols for patients at Marie Curie on Christmas Eve but this year we instead shared our virtual Christmas card video so that all patients could enjoy listening to some carols and hearing the Christmas story. We were also

able to visit the hospice to sing outside for the patients (see photo), including one of our parishioners Anne – it was so lovely to see Anne and sing for her. We really hope that we were able to share some Christmas joy and bring comfort to patients and staff at the hospice. This visit has become an integral part of Christmas for many of us associated with the choir, and it was a real privilege to be able to visit this year.



Midnight Mass and Christmas Day were also very different from normal. Midnight Mass is usually a service when the choir stalls are full to bursting as many former choristers are in the area for Christmas. This year, we had to be very careful with numbers, so just Senior Girls and some members of the Men's Choir sang for this special service, led beautifully by Fr Andrew. Boys, Junior Girls and Men sang at the service on Christmas Day, which was another lovely service, this time led by Rev Sue Chandler. The choirs then had a well-deserved break after Christmas.

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.

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

Isabel Baumber

I'm writing this with a heavy heart; we have found it vital to close our churches for the second time since this awful pandemic. We will therefore carry on as we did previously with the aid of technology, to bring our worship safely into our own homes. The expertise of Andrew and Mike has made this possible at St Helen's and St Michael's and we are both amazed and grateful for the results they produce. As I was taking my permitted exercise in Cold Lands Wood this morning, the team was producing the next Service. Grateful thanks to everyone; these Services will be a lifeline to our spiritual health.

We will continue to keep in touch, as we have been, with all the Helen's and St Michael's church families. If anyone needs help, or wishes to have a chat, please don't hesitate to call either Phil or myself; you can find our numbers in the magazine.

On a brighter note, our outside Carol Service, which was held on the weekend before Christmas, was a huge success with around 140 people attending. Thanks go to Chris Carrington for organising it and going to great personal lengths to publicise it in the immediate neighbourhood. It was a joy to be able to join in the singing which was led by the St Michael's singers and musicians, who have provided us with so much lovely music in our Services. This is certainly a precedent worth repeating and a wonderful form of outreach.

Finally, on a really joyful note, we are able to announce the safe arrival of Reverend Helen's first grandchild, Persephone Rose, who was born on 3rd of January. She weighed in at 8 lbs 1 oz. She and her proud parents are doing well. We all wish them every joy and happiness for the future.

We continue to pray for our Rector Jane, and Reverend Helen, wishing them both health and strength.

We persevere, waiting for safer days when we can all be together again.

Jean & Phil

Ash Wednesday on 17th Feb! Can you recall when you first became aware of Ash Wednesday? Not all Christians have the tradition of putting ash on the forehead, but if this is your tradition then you may agree that this is a tradition that made a powerful impact especially when you were a child. Did the bits of ash drop down onto your nose? Was the cross on your forehead bigger than the next person's? Whatever your thoughts, there was a sense that we were embarking into serious stuff and we were all in it together.

But 2021 might be the year when God really stopped us in our tracks. Are we allowed to apply ashes at all, except by way of disposable cotton buds? Certainly not environmentally friendly. Suppose we decide not to? The only thing that matters on Ash Wednesday is that, refusing to click into any thoughtless regime, we ask God to show us the grace we need at the start of this season.

This will be different for each of God's children. This is the thrust of Jesus' teaching. 'When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen.'

Our Father sees all that is done in secret. So reflect in your heart. What are the idols in your life that need clearing out? Are you in slavery to your iPhone, or Facebook? The sugar kick? Or is it more serious than these?

And then reflect. There are spiritual resources in the Jewish tradition to which Jesus refers. It might help, by the grace of God, to say no to some things. It may be praying in a new way. We shall need to be imaginative, as unfortunately at this time we have many things we can't do anyway, so the options of 'giving up' things may have already been decided for us. But we need to start in the Spirit from exactly where we are, and that Spirit will keep us in peace about the journey that has brought us to this spot. Start the season in a new dramatic way, hold the mirror to your weaknesses, keep growing! God is at work in us every step of the way.

Paul Smith

Love Never Ends

You may have heard me talk about tinsel recently (*if you didn't but would like to, the service is on YouTube: search 'Solihull Parish Tinsel'*). During that talk I referred those listening to Galatians 5: 22-23 - 'the Fruits of the Spirit'.

There are nine Fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians. Why not pause now and see how many you can recollect before reading further?

The best diagram I ever saw detailing the Fruits of the Spirit is that of an orange cut in half, revealing eight segments. The circle of the orange is love, and the eight segments inside hold one each of the other eight fruits – joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

As we head towards Valentine's Day and the beginning of Lent, let's pause for a moment to take a look at love.

We might say we love our partners or our families. We might also say we love football or our pets or even that we love our favourite food or TV programme! If we're not careful we can trivialize love, so where do we begin?

Luke 10:27 instructs us to *27'Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'* That seems like a good place to begin.

Love the Lord your God. Love your neighbour. Love yourself.

I wonder which one of these do you think you do best?

And which do you think you do not so well?

The interconnectedness of these three should not be underestimated. That is:

I cannot love God as well as I should, if I don't love my neighbour and love myself.

I cannot love my neighbour as well as I should, if I don't love God and love myself.

I cannot love myself as well as I should, if I don't love God and love my neighbour.

Lent begins on 17th February, and so I would like to suggest that, for Lent, we each think about working on the way that we love God, our neighbour and ourselves.

Love the Lord your God

We love God by spending time with Him, reading his word, getting to know him better, gifting him our first (time, money, etc.) and our best. We tell others about the difference he makes in our lives. *Why not commit to something during the 40 days of Lent to help you love God more, such as a regular time of prayer; working through one of the Gospels; or something else that will help build your relationship?*

Love your neighbour

We love our neighbour by actually *seeing* them: we get to know them and put aside all of our assumptions about them. We walk alongside them and care for them: we rejoice when they rejoice, and we mourn when they mourn. We are a genuine friend to them. *Why not commit to do something during the 40 days of Lent to help you love your neighbour(s) more? Begin with a smile; or maybe support a local foodbank; or any other of the countless things that will help build those relationships?*

Love yourself

Loving ourselves is often the hardest part of this commandment. Many of us have been brought up to believe that any thought of ourselves is selfish. The 'Protestant work ethic' within the Church doesn't help either. So, first we need to look at **why** we love ourselves. We love ourselves so that we have love to give to others. It may sound like a cliché to say '*you can't pour from an empty vessel*', but that doesn't stop it from being true. And yet many of us still try! At the same time, any of us who have ever flown in an airplane will recognise the instruction to '*put on your own emergency mask before helping others*'. Is that selfish? No, it's practical: you are of more use to others if you make sure that you are secure first. If we were to just take the instruction to love ourselves and become self-serving, then *that* would be selfish. **However, we love ourselves so that we are then better able to love others.** From that perspective, to *not* love ourselves is the selfish option. *Why not commit to something during Lent to show love to yourself – it will be different for each of us - anything that will help build that relationship?*

If you would like to talk about any or all of the above do get in touch. I would love to hear from you!

In the mean time I'll let the Bible have the last word: (1 Corinthians 13:1-8)

¹³ *If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,^[a] but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

⁴ *Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

⁸ *Love never ends."*

Keep safe and thanks for listening!

Suzette



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Whilst we still can't meet in person, we're continuing to have great fun meeting over Zoom and worshipping together as a community with our usual mix of songs, bible stories, prayers and activities.

In February, amongst other things, we'll be thinking about Love and our journey through Lent.

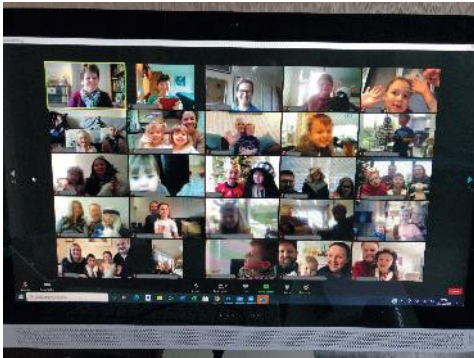
If you would like to attend you need to register with Linda in advance via email l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk to receive the Zoom link.

(Find out more about the Junction via zoom overleaf!)

The Junction via Zoom

December was joyful at the Junction!

We started the month with a Christingle Scavenger hunt, the following week we were treated to a great sketch and a brilliant song from the wonderful Solihull Parish puppet team. On 20th December we had our Junction Nativity and it was wonderful that so many people dressed up, we had Mary and Joseph, lots of angels and shepherds and some wise men. People also brought things along to represent their favourite part of the Christmas story and everyone enthusiastically joined in with a retelling of the Christmas story with lots of participation. Parents consented to a photo being taken of the Zoom screens at the end and it's wonderful to be able to capture a flavour of the Junction via Zoom.



It's been wonderful to receive positive feedback - this is what one parent said after the Nativity:

How wonderful it was this morning!

It really has a sense of community even though we're all logging in from our homes.

Thank you again to you and your team for giving us this opportunity every week to pray, reflect and connect with others.

Online Crib Service



It was sad that we weren't able to gather together in the usual way at a packed St Alphege church for the annual Crib services but it was wonderful that families were able to gather around their screens at home to join in online. We received some lovely feedback:

Thank you so much for the lovely Crib service, we very much enjoyed tuning in and singing along and reminding the children of the true reason for the season.

First Communion Preparation



This year the First Communion preparation sessions will take place via Zoom on Sunday afternoons. For further information or to register contact Linda Hicks l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk



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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

Solihull Parish Youth Activities

Due to current Covid-19 restrictions we are no longer able to meet in person. Therefore our Wednesday session, 7.30 – 8.30pm, will be online. Zoom sessions on Mondays and Fridays 7.30pm – 8.30pm continue as before. Prayer reflections, scripture analysis, games and open discussion, all young people in Year 6 and above are welcome to join us.

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](https://www.instagram.com/solihullparishyouth).

Keep safe, God Bless

The Youth Team

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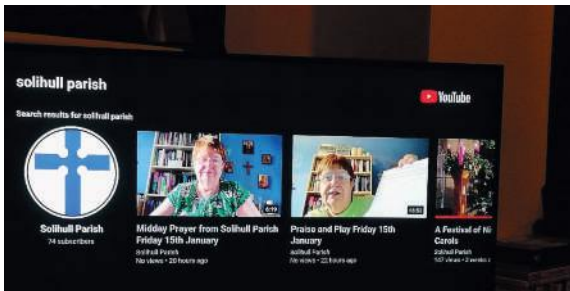
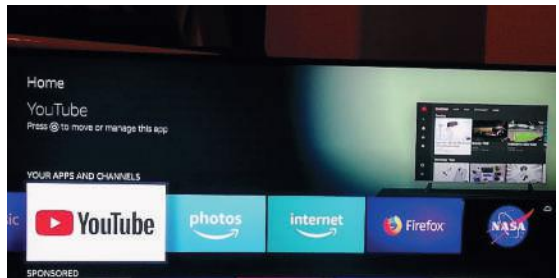


Viewing our Church Services on your Television

If you don't have a computer but have a Smart TV which is connected to the internet, you should be able to watch church services on your television.

One way to do this is to find YouTube on your television. You might be able to find it from 'Guide' or from 'Apps and Channels'. Once you've found YouTube, click through on it.

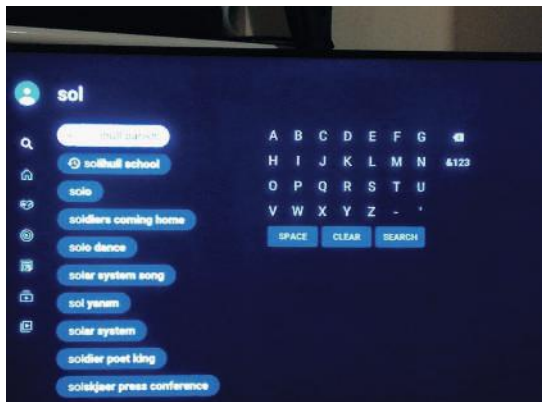
Next, you need to search for the Solihull Parish YouTube channel.



This can be a bit fiddly as you need to use the arrow keys on your remote control to go around the alphabet, and then press select for each letter. You're aiming to find Solihull Parish. It will be easier next time you do it as your TV should remember your search and bring it up after just a few letters.

Once you've got Solihull Parish, click through on this search result.

You will then get some search results which will be both the channel and recent and/or popular videos. If you click on the logo, this will take you through to everything on the parish YouTube channel so you can then select what you want from everything available. If you see something you want to watch here on these search results, you can just use the arrows to get to that video.



I hope this helps some more people to be able to connect with our church community during these difficult times.

Isabel Baumber

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A Christmas Act of Kindness

Charlotte Sabine, age 9, daughter of our Treasurer Sarah, enjoyed putting her new-found lockdown culinary skills to the test by making mini Christmas cakes for some of our more isolated members.

She enjoyed making and decorating twelve Christmas cakes in baked bean cans. Her family had to eat quite a few tins of soup and baked beans in the run up to the baking day! Her top tip was to use the 'ring-pull' end of the can as the bottom of the cake tin, and then if the cakes got stuck in trying to remove them you could simply pull the bottom of



the tin off and push the cake out!

The cakes were well received and she had some grateful thank you cards and emails which she loved receiving and reading. It turned out to be a lovely way to cross the generations.

Well done, Charlotte – what a wonderful thing to have done.

MU Committee

AGM Report

St Alphege Mothers' Union held its Annual General Meeting by Zoom on Thursday 14th January. Chris Thorp, now in her final year as Branch Leader, gave her report for 2020.

The year started well with talks from John Kay on his life in the Fire Service, from Padre Stuart Richards on *Working with War Detectives*, and a talk by Suzette Maguire - our Pioneer Minister. We held our Pancake Party in February, but then all meetings were stopped, due to Coronavirus. Committee meetings continued by Zoom and in December we held a members' meeting by Zoom with Padre Stuart who led us in a meditation. This year we intend to hold further Zoom members' meetings, starting with Fr Andrew on 4th February.

The Treasurer, Sarah Sabine, presented the accounts for 2020, and reported a fantastic year in fundraising. We sent £2,101 in donations to the Diocese. This was generated by our three meetings, the Pancake Party, Wave of Prayer donations and sale of Christmas face coverings. Our membership was 94 and the subscriptions sent to the Diocese amounted to £2,256. Elaine Diskin ran a half Marathon during the year but as her sponsorship money (£1,480) has not all been collected, it will be carried over to 2021.

The officers and existing committee members all expressed their willingness to carry on, and we welcomed Julia Hanson back onto the committee after an absence of several years due to teaching commitments.

Overall, notwithstanding the limitations due to Coronavirus, 2020 was a successful year, but we hope that this year we shall be able to meet together again and enjoy the fellowship of Mothers' Union.

Susan Leach

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

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Calendar and Prayer Intentions for February 2021

1	Brigid, Abbess of Kildare	David & Anne, our Bishops	Chilwell Close
2	The Presentation of Christ in the Temple	Those caring for young children	Chipstone Close
3	Anskar, Archbishop of Hamburg, Missionary	Archbishops of Canterbury & York	Church Hill Close
4	Gilbert of Sempringham	Those in religious orders	Church Hill Road
5	Feria	Those administering the Covid-19 vaccine	Clarewell Avenue
6	The Accession of Queen Elizabeth II	Her Majesty the Queen	Claverdon Close
7	2nd Sunday before Lent	Our Rector, Jane	Compton Close
8	Feria	Prem and Ann, our Parish administrators	Coppice Close
9	Feria	The Prime Minister and the Cabinet	Cornyx Lane
10	Scholastica, Abbess of Plombariola	Bible Translators	Cotheridge Close
11	Feria	Those who work at the Core in Solihull	Cranford Grove
12	Feria	Our Parish Warden, Andrew	Cryersoak Close
13	Feria	Those who are in hospital	Damson Lane
14	Sunday Next before Lent	Our part in God's mission to Solihull	Damson Parkway
15	Sigfrid, Bishop, Apostle of Sweden	Our Archdeacon, Ven Simon Heathfield	Danford Lane
16	Feria	Delivery drivers and other key workers	Deer Park Way
17	Ash Wednesday	Our observation of Lent across the parish	Dingle Lane
18	Feria	Our Archdeacon, Simon	Dorchester Road
19	Feria	Our Pioneer Minister, Suzette Maguire	Dormston Close
20	Feria	Joe Cooper, St Alphege Director of Music	Dovehouse Lane
21	1st Sunday of Lent	Solihull Hospital and NHS staff in our parish	Drury Lane
22	Feria	Those caring for a family member who is ill	Dunsmore Grove
23	Polycarp, Bp of Smyrna, Martyr, c.155	Those persecuted for their faith	Eldersfield Grove
24	Feria	Those who are looking for work	Elms Close
25	Feria	Paul Evans, St Alphege Verger	Felton Grove
26	Feria	Our district and Parish treasurers	Ferndown Road
27	Geaorge Herbert, priest & poet	Poets and spiritual writers	Fircroft
28	2nd Sunday of Lent	The work of our Parish Church Council	Four Stones Close

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

Let us Pray

February 2021

Lord, we ask for your blessing on Canon Jane Kenchington and her family as she moves into retirement and on Fr. Simon, Revd. Sue and all the clergy who minister in this Parish. We pray, too, for your blessing on the Wardens, Councils and others as they take on more responsibilities during the coming Interregnum; grant them wisdom and patience we beseech you.

Amen

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

Amen



Women's Theology Group

The Women's Theology Group will continue to meet over Zoom on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 7.30 p.m.

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

Meetings will be on:-

4th February 2021

18th February 2021

4th March 2021

18th March 2021

1st April 2021

15th April 2021

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Rumours of Spring

The beginning of February brings the celebration of the Celtic festival of Imbolc, which coincides with St Brigid's Day (1st February) and the Christian festival of Candlemas (2nd February). Imbolc marks the coming of Spring, the warming of the earth and the still-hidden possibility of new growth. Brigid (Bree-id) is associated with everlasting fire, and with the abundance of the natural world at springtime. She is also said to be the mid-wife of Christ, just as the season of Imbolc is thought of as the 'mid-wifing' of the year.

Mary, the mother of Christ, is also celebrated at this point of the year. The feast of Candlemas tells the story of Mary and Joseph taking the child Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate him to God. They offer a sacrifice in thanksgiving for their child and Mary receives purification after the rigours of childbirth. As they enter the Temple, Mary and Joseph are approached by the wise and aged Simeon, who praises God for the child who will bring light to the whole world.

Having seen the promised holy child, Simeon places himself into God's hands knowing that the end of his life is near. But Simeon also speaks dark words to Mary: there will be opposition to her son, and suffering and sorrow will pierce Mary's heart like a sword – the pain of motherhood.

Legend associates Brigid with learning, poetry, healing and describes her as a friend to both animals and people. She is a bringer of plenty, one who has the gift of making things grow – flowers were said to spring up as she walked, and in her shrine it is always springtime. Brigid is the keeper of eternal fire: she nurtures a spark to kindle the flame of creativity and inspiration – a precious gift of this new season.

This poem looks to Brigid and to Mary as sources of inspiration and new life. Both women bring gifts of light, love and warmth to nurture growth within each one of us and in the world around us.

Awakening

O where are you going? And what is your name?

My name, child, is Brigid and I carry a flame
to melt the old Winter and kindle the Spring,
to whisper her birth-name and teach her to sing.

O where are you going? Please, tell who you are.

My name, child, is Mary and I carry a star
to lighten the hearts of the folk of the earth,
to sing their true nature and dance them to birth.

Please tell me, Flame-Bearer, which way will you run?
By the highways, my child, in the paths of the Sun,
where the flowers leap to life as I travel along
and the cold earth awakes in the warmth of my song.

And tell me, Star-Mother, how far must you go?
To a land in my dreams, child, where the Sun melts the snow,
where a blade of pure innocence pierces the night
and the children of earth take their place in the light.

Please bless me, Flame-Keeper. Stay with me, Star-Maid.
Deliver my journey from shadow and shade.
And stir up my soul with a sunlit desire
to hallow this world with a new-rising fire.

Fr Simon

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For further information contact Day Centre Manager on

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daycentremanager@raynerhouse.co.uk

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

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.

You can pay by cheque (your cheque (**MUST BE** payable to **St Alphege Mothers' Union**).

Post or deliver your cheque to Susan Leach, 21 Grandborough Drive, Solihull B91 3TS.

Or if you want the convenience of paying by BACS, we'd be delighted. Details are:

HSBC - St Alphege Mothers Union. Sort Code : 40-42-12. Account No : 71771396.

Please supply Reference Information to identify payment : MU Subs - (*your name*).

If you wish to pay by cash please call Susan 0121 270 6132.

Annual General Meeting - Thursday 14th 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 that member Jean Williams passed away after Christmas. Her funeral will be held in church in February.

Carol Caldicott
0121-705-3168



All services are currently suspended.
Please see the inside cover for details.

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Safeguarding Coordinator

Viv Dobson, vhdobson@gmail.com

07960 783636

SOLIHULL PARISH PCC & DCC CONTACTS

<i>Parish Wardens</i>	Andrew Williams , arwilliams399@gmail.com	0121 705 3268
<i>PCC Secretary</i>	Mike Abrams , michaeldabrams2017@gmail.com	
<i>PCC Treasurer</i>	Ron Crowdy , 18 Wellington Grove	0121 705 3253
<i>Parish Electoral Roll Officer</i>	Stephen Linstead , 20 Silhill Hall Road	0121 705 1376
<i>St Alphege Deputy Wardens</i>	Susan Gomm , 10 Silverbirch Road Sheila Sayers , 636 Streetsbrook Road	0121 705 0015 0121 705 5331
<i>St Alphege Stewardship Recorder</i>	Frank Upton , 1 Rectory Road	0121 705 2963
<i>St Helen Deputy Wardens</i>	Phil Godfrey Jean Fewins	0121 705 3923 07925 688897
<i>St Helen Hall Bookings</i>	Jeremy Eade , solomere@aol.com	0121 706 3831
<i>St Michael Deputy Wardens</i>	Keith Wilson Merrill Flood	0121 778 2295 0121 705 3291

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The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily the views
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NOTE FOR ADVERTISERS AND POTENTIAL ADVERTISERS

Would all advertisers please ensure that any changes they might require to their advert, or notice of cancellation, are routed through the Advertising Manager (Tim Drakeford, 42 Fowgay Drive, Solihull B91 3PH, Tel 705 4494) in sufficient time to meet the copy date for the issue in which they wish the changes to take effect. The copy date is usually the first Friday of the preceding month, but the exact date of the next copy date is shown below. Similarly, would new advertisers please ensure that their requirements for advertising space are also routed through the Advertising Manager in plenty of time to meet the required copy date.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE MARCH EDITION OF THE PARISH NEWS

MUST BE IN BY FRIDAY, 5th FEBRUARY PLEASE.

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

SOLIHULL PARISH STAFF & CONTACTS

Team Rector

(The position is currently vacant)

Director of Operations

Nic Duncan

Room 5, Oliver Bird Hall,
Church Hill Road, Solihull, B91 3RQ

n.duncan@solihullparish.org.uk
via Parish Office 0121 705 5350

Team Vicar for St Helen

(Not currently available)

The Revd Helen Greenham

Team Vicar for St Michael

(Not available Thursdays)

The Revd Simon Marshall

St Michael's Church Centre, Oak Cottage,
Bryanston Road, Solihull, B91 1BS

simon@solihullparish.org.uk
0121 704 4730

Pioneer Minister

(Not available Fridays)

Suzette Maguire

10 Middlewood Close, Solihull, B91 2TY

s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk
0121 709 0884

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07970 791288

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01564 782557

0121 705 1376

0121 705 0337

0121 705 0902

0121 705 1377

Assistance is also offered by

The Revd John Bradford

0121 704 9895

The Revd Canon Andrew Hutchinson

0121 704 0171

(Chaplain, Solihull School - not available Mon, Wed)

The Venerable Paul Taylor

Director of Music & Musical Outreach

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joecooper1@hotmail.co.uk

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Director of Children's & Families' Ministry

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0121 270 7390

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j.minall@solihullparish.org.uk
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Debbie Woodward & Lynn Smart

Youth Office, Oliver Bird Hall,
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l.smart@solihullparish.org.uk
0121 661 6303

St Alphege Verger

Paul Evans

Verger's Office at St Alphege Church

07483 318713

St Alphege Tower Secretary

Cynthia Dodson

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0121 705 3744

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Church Hill Road, Solihull, B91 3RQ

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