

# SOLIHULL PARISH NEWS



No. 529

DECEMBER 2021

PRICE 50p

## 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**



Sunday services are:-

### **St Alphege**

- 8.00 a.m. Said Holy Communion  
10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist except:  
Second Sunday - 9.15 a.m. All Age Eucharist and 11.00 a.m. Sung Eucharist \*  
5.00 p.m. Sung Evensong

### **The Junction**

- 9.15 a.m. In person in the OBH on 5<sup>th</sup> December. On Zoom 19<sup>th</sup> December

### **St Helen**

- 10.00 a.m. Eucharist

### **St Michael at Sharmans Cross School from 3<sup>rd</sup> October**

- 10.30 a.m. Eucharist

### **Friday**

9.30 a.m. **Praise and Play** – please e-mail: [l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk)

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. 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](mailto:office@solihullparish.org.uk)

0121 705 5350

**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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THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

*Visit our Website*

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**Want to email the Editor?**

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

*Cover picture*

**'Christmas Lights  
in The Square'**

# *H e a d l i n e s*

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# Editorial

We have entered the season of Advent - we are now three Sundays away from Christmas Day. But there is a journey ahead of us before we reach that day of wonder and celebration.

Like the season of Lent by which we prepare for Easter, Advent is a time of waiting. It is a looking-ahead and an anticipation, whilst keeping a focus on the here-and-now, and paying attention to what is going on in our lives and in the world today.

Journeying through Advent is also something of a challenge, for its themes are not always comfortable ones, and they can contrast sharply with the shining, dazzling portrayal of Christmas which we find around at this time of year. As a result, we can find ourselves walking two paths at the same time: that of busy, fun-filled and potentially exhausting events and that of quieter, slower and potentially beneficial reflection.

The season of Advent not only invites us to look ahead with expectation, but also to look back in a sense of exploration. But how might we seek to put this into practice over the next few weeks? I'd like to make three suggestions in the hope that one or two of them, at least, may prove helpful.

Firstly, we might try slowing down. Now, I'm aware that this is something of a radical act in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Western society, where we expect faster internet access, quicker train journeys and shorter delivery times. Not that these are necessarily bad things in themselves but, as a wise individual once said, if we are committed to saving time, we need to consider wisely how to use the time we have saved.

Perhaps the season of Advent could be an invitation to turn the speed dial down, and to operate at a pace which seems more in tune with how our minds and bodies were designed to function. Perhaps we might travel, as the author Kosuke Koyama wrote, with the three-mile-an-hour God, so that we have the time to simply notice what God is doing in the world around us, and what God might be doing within us.

Travelling more slowly also allows us to look up. For some of us, this may be an opportunity to literally look up from our phone and computer screens so that we might have a wider vision of the world. And it may also involve looking into the faces of friends, family members and neighbours so that our relationships may be strengthened and deepened, or gazing into the world of nature to see what God is doing there.

And in order that we might discover the message and meaning of Advent for ourselves, we could try to listen in to what we hear and experience in our weekly worship and to take time to hear what the Spirit of God is saying to us in our own personal prayers and devotions. In so many ways, the season of Advent is about listening and hearing, that we might be open to the new things that God is leading us towards.

Slow down; look up; listen in. These could be our ways of waking up to and becoming aware of God's presence as we journey towards the celebration of the birth of Christ.

Finally, I offer some words of the poet Mary Oliver, from her poem 'Look and See':

*Oh Lord, how shining and festive is your gift to us, if we only look, and see.*

I wish you a slow and attentive Advent journey!

**Fr. Simon**

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# Roundabout

## St. Alphege gains a Bronze Eco Church Award

St Alphege is celebrating gaining a Bronze Eco Church award. Lots of thanks are due to the many people who have contributed in helping to put in place all the requirements that are needed to qualify. The District Church Council of St. Alphege will be looking at the areas that still need to be addressed or improved in order to work towards the Silver award.

## St. Alphege Advent Mission and Charity Collections

As had been the custom before Covid19, there will be collections in Advent for Charity and Mission causes.

5<sup>th</sup> December - **Malawi Diocesan Appeal**

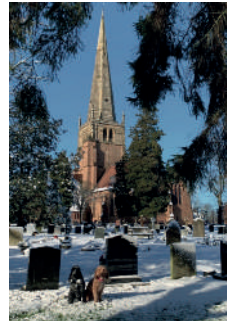
12<sup>th</sup> December - **The Children's Society**

19<sup>th</sup> December - **SCAH** (Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness)

There will be retiring cash collections after services at St. Alphege. Cheques, payable to *P.C.C. of Solihull*, may be given in church or sent to the Parish Office, or an on-line donation may be made via the Parish Website.

## The Bookstall and the Parish Christmas Card

The Bookstall is now up and running again! We have a wide range of attractive cards at very reasonable prices as well as votive candles, prayer cards and books. Do please purchase your cards from the bookstall if you can. Profits go to mission projects locally or further afield. We are also selling a Parish Christmas card again this year - a lovely photo of the church in the snow taken earlier this year. These are £4 for 10 cards, available from the Bookstall, Parish Office or by contacting [Fran Halstead](mailto:fran.halstead@gmail.com) (07710 329030, [fran.halstead@gmail.com](mailto:fran.halstead@gmail.com)) or [Alison Vining](mailto:alison@vining.eu) (07971 265702, [alison@vining.eu](mailto:alison@vining.eu)).



## Deadlines for the January issue of Solihull Parish News

Due to our printers being on holiday over the Christmas break, we will have very little time to put the January issue of the magazine together in order for it to be in church by the first Sunday in January, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup>. This means that we will have to have it printed before Christmas and consequently will only have about a week to put it together. Please could contributors help us by ensuring we have all copy in by the deadline, stated on page 48, as **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December**, or preferably earlier.

**Carol Southworth  
Roger Edwards**



# Bronze Eco Church Award Certificate

This is to certify that

## St Alphege Parish Church, Solihull

has won a Bronze Eco Church Award in recognition of their efforts to care for God's earth in each of the following areas (as applicable):

- Worship and Teaching
- Management of Buildings and Land
- Community and Global Engagement
- Lifestyle

Signed Andy Atkins Date 29th October 2021  
CEO, A Rocha UK



[ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk)  
[arocha.org.uk](http://arocha.org.uk)

# Roundabout

## November Churchyard Tidy-up

Where and when last month could you find working together the two parish wardens, the two deputy St Alphege wardens, a deputy warden from St. Michael, a church youth worker and youth assistant with three parish youth, the verger, twenty-six adults, four children, some non-church members and the local Hurricane Beaver Scout Leader?

**Answer:** On Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November between 1000 – 1300hrs. in St. Alphege churchyard for the great annual leaf gathering at the final churchyard tidy-up morning in 2021. The



total number of volunteers – forty-one – was the largest turnout for any such occasion in the last seven years. The weather and temperature were favourable for the time of year and the amount of work undertaken was also a record. Much fun and fellowship was had by all, especially the children who not only enjoyed playing in the fresh air among the leaves but also helped in their own small way to achieve this record. The final result was two hundred and ten black bags of leaves filled and a large separate pile of tree twigs and dead wood. These bags were all collected from the

Benefice area the following Monday by three local allotment holders, one whom was Richard Rayner, a former St. Alphege server, for recycled use on their allotment plots. Apparently they are referred to as the "Holy" leaves and their arrival is awaited with great anticipation.

We all enjoyed the traditional mid-session break of drinks, consuming the traditional freshly baked jam doughnuts, Battenberg cake, Mr. Kipling's (Author note: other suppliers are available) cherry Bakewells, almond slices, Bakewell slices, iced sponges and gluten free cakes and biscuits were required. For those of you with long memories of past occasions, it was then possible for the grass to be cut for the last time and also the churchyard was made accessible for visitors in winter - and I would expect a much better display of Spring flowers in 2022. We shall see.....





# Roundabout



Thank you to everybody who turned out, you were truly representative of the whole church and local community in responding to the appeals for help this year. Your efforts were indeed truly record breaking and the whole of Solihull can now see the results of those efforts.

Could you come and join in one of the planned sessions for 2022, even if for only an hour? The proposed dates, for entry in your diaries now, are **9<sup>th</sup> April, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 10<sup>th</sup> September and 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2022** – all **Saturdays 1000 – 1300hrs.** Could it be

possible to beat the new record totals set this year with your help?

I did manage to get one of the doughnuts this time.....

All the attendees have helped to make a safer churchyard for use not only during the outside Remembrance Sunday service at the War Memorial the following week, but for the following weeks.

**Michael Rumball**

**Church and Churchyard Committee member**

[What a magnificent effort! Well done Michael and all the volunteers! Ed.]

## St Alphege Pre-school

Pre-school places are available for children who will turn 3 years of age in the academic year beginning in September each year. St. Alphege Pre-school offers highly experienced and qualified staff. The last two Ofsted Inspection results rated us 'Outstanding'. Please see web-site for further information [www.stalphege-preschool.org.uk](http://www.stalphege-preschool.org.uk) – or email Tammy Ellender, Manager: [manager@stalphege-preschool.org.uk](mailto:manager@stalphege-preschool.org.uk) Application forms available from the Oliver Bird Hall or email the Admissions Secretary – [admissions@stalphege-preschool.org.uk](mailto:admissions@stalphege-preschool.org.uk) for a copy.

## Wraparound

We also offer a wraparound service for nursery Children attending St Alphege Nursery. Email: Tammy Ellender: [manager@stalphege-preschool.org.uk](mailto:manager@stalphege-preschool.org.uk)

## No1 Club

Before and afterschool club is held at OBH by highly qualified staff offering a range of activities for all. Tammy Ellender: [manager@stalphege-preschool.co.uk](mailto:manager@stalphege-preschool.co.uk) or [No1club@stalphege-preschool.org.uk](mailto:No1club@stalphege-preschool.org.uk)

# Let us Pray

## Calendar and Prayer Intentions for December 2021

1	Charles de Foucauld, Hermit, 1916	Members of religious communities	Cheveridge Close
2	Feria	Staff and residents of local care homes	Chilwell Close
3	Francis Xavier, Missionary, 1552	Those administering the Covid-19 vaccine	Chipstone Close
4	John of Damascus, Monk & Teacher, c.749	Staff, patients and volunteers of the Marie Curie hospice	Church Hill Close
5	2nd Sunday of Advent	The three churches of our parish	Church Hill Road
6	Nicholas, Bp of Myra, c.326	Those working with children in our churches	Clarewell Avenue
7	Ambrose, Bp of Milan, 397	Our Bishops David and Anne	Claverdon Close
8	The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Those awaiting the birth of a child	Compton Close
9	Feria	Those caring for a family member who is ill	Coppice Close
10	Feria	Those preparing for baptism	Cornyx Lane
11	Feria	The work of the Town Centre Chaplaincy	Cotheridge Close
12	3rd Sunday of Advent	Our Parish Wardens, Pam and Andrew	Cranford Grove
13	Lucy, Martyr, 304	That we may live simply and generously	Cryersoak Close
14	John of the Cross, Poet & Teacher, 1591	Poets and spiritual writers	Damson Lane
15	Feria	The staff of the shops, cafes, bars and restaurants in our town	Damson Parkway
16	Feria	The community and congregation of St Helen's	Danford Lane
17	Eglantyne Jebb, Social Reformer & Founder of 'Save the Children', 1928	Those who care for children in need	Deer Park Way
18	Feria	The Christian Churches in Solihull	Dingle Lane
19	4th Sunday of Advent	Diocesan staff & members of Bishop's Council	Dorchester Road
20	Feria	The community and congregation of St Michael's	Dormston Close
21	Feria	The staff of funeral directors in our town	Dovehouse Lane
22	Feria	The work of our Parish administrators	Drury Lane
23	Feria	Those who are far from their families and friends	Dunsmore Grove
24	Christmas Eve	Chris Thomas, Director of Music at St Alphege and the St Alphege Choirs	Eldersfield Grove
25	Christmas Day	That the worldwide Church may celebrate this day with joy and goodwill	Elms Close
26	Stephen, Deacon & first Martyr	The work of Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness	Felton Grove
27	John, Apostle & Evangelist	Those who live alone	Ferndown Road
28	The Holy Innocents	The staff and students of the schools in our town	Fircroft
29	Thomas Becket, Abp of Canterbury, Martyr, 1170	The community and congregations of St Alphege	Four Stones Close
30	Feria	Elizabeth, our Queen	Froxmere Close
31	John Wycliff, Reformer, 1384	Our Pioneer Minister, Suzette Maguire	George Road

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

## From the St. Alphege Register

### Baptisms

28<sup>th</sup> November Jude Churchard  
12<sup>th</sup> December Ivy Grace Walker

### Weddings

None

### Funerals

None

### Interments

None

### Memorial Services

None

## Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in December

Stan Hurley  
Colin Humphrey  
Robert Lambie  
Eric Smith  
Philip Newman  
S Oswald

Joyce Elsie Rumball  
Richard Feasey  
Richard Swann  
William James Lane  
Les Alcock  
Moira Arnison

Peter Rodway  
Alan Bryan  
Gwendoline Doricia Mullis  
George Linstead



**Live and streamed services are being held at St. Alphege's, St. Michael's and St. Helen's churches. Details are inside the front cover of this magazine and on the Parish Website.**

<https://www.solihullparish.org.uk>

## Worship Notes for December 2021

The season of Advent begins with a prayer for grace to rid ourselves of darkness:

*Almighty God,  
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness  
and to put on the armour of light...*

*from the Collect Prayer for Advent Sunday*

The Advent season is a journey from darkness to the light of the Christ-coming. And it is interesting that two of the saints who are celebrated during Advent bring us into contact with both darkness and light.

St. Lucy is celebrated on 13<sup>th</sup> December. Tradition has it that Lucy, as a young Christian, gave away her goods to the poor and was betrayed to the authorities by her angry husband-to-be, who felt that the goods should have become his property. Lucy was put to death for her faith in the year 304.

Lucy's name in Latin means Light and, as her feast-day falls in December, she became associated with the One True Light who was coming as the Redeemer of the World, the Light that would lighten the nations, the Light that would banish darkness and let the eyes of all behold Truth incarnate.

The following day, 14<sup>th</sup> December, is the feast-day of St. John of the Cross. His work of reforming religious life brought him into conflict with the religious authorities, and he was even imprisoned for a period, yet these experiences prompted some of his finest poetry and mystical writing. In particular, John of the Cross described the 'dark night' of the soul as it is purified in its approach towards God.

This poem speaks of darkness as the place where everything is held and encompassed. But it is not without hope: the poet notes that all life begins in the darkness of the womb. This is true for the Christ-child, too. He comes from darkness and enters the world's darkness as the Light for all people.

### Darkness

*after Rilke*

Darkness,  
your grand circle engulfs  
all the small bright circles  
of the world. None  
can withstand you:  
meteors trailing their lights  
through space, this slim  
candle on a shelf.

All selves  
belong to you, began  
in you. You place  
a hand on my shoulder, shift  
hand to wrist, feel my pulse.  
Your gentleness moves  
me to belief: in  
darkness.

Alan Payne

Fr. Simon



# SANTA'S FIELDS

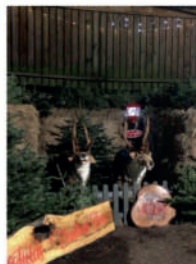
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Chadwick End, Solihull, B93 0BJ**



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## *The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church*

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 The Guardians held their Annual General Meeting in the OBH, the first one for two years. 19 members attended. The meeting received the Report from the Board of Trustees covering 2019 – 2021 in which it was stated that they had paid for two projects in the church - £8,760 for the heating and £2,673 for guttering. At the meeting Ruth Morton completed her 5-year term as a Trustee and she was thanked for all the work she has done. Sheila Payne was elected to the Board of Trustees, to join Margaret Oswald, Judith Hetherington and Jan Richardson.

Judith Hetherington reported that the financial position was good, but we must not rest on our laurels as there are, and always will be, jobs to be done to keep the church fabric in good condition.

The report from the Friends Committee stated that for obvious reasons there had been no fundraising events since the Christmas Lunch in November 2019. Ruth Morton and Sue Shaw are standing down from the committee and were thanked for all their work. Joining Caroline Kerr and Margaret Oswald on the committee will be Sheila Payne and Bridget Wright.

It was agreed the Guardians need more members, particularly younger people. If you are interested in finding out about The Guardians, please get in touch with one of the people mentioned above. Their details are on the notice boards in the OBH and the church.

It was also agreed that we must start our social gatherings again and so the Committee is arranging a Coffee Morning:

### **Mince Pie and Coffee Morning on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December**

**at 9 Ulleries Road.**

**More details to follow in the pew slip.**

**Please put the date in your diary.**



## *Happy Christmas*



*The Parish News Team wish all their contributors and readers a very happy and peaceful Christmas.*



# 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 21 days notice. Names are published in the Parish magazine and acknowledged with a card sent to the donor.

It may be possible to have the Church floodlit at short notice but it will not be published in the Parish News until a later date.

For further information please contact the Scheme organiser:-

Sheila Payne, 0121 706 0520 or email: [russellpayne110@aol.com](mailto:russellpayne110@aol.com)

The Church was floodlit to remember the following:

7 <sup>th</sup> November	To commemorate the wedding anniversary of Dr. and Mrs. Oswald.
10 <sup>th</sup> November	May Cawser on her 90 <sup>th</sup> birthday 10 <sup>th</sup> November 1931.
12 <sup>th</sup> November	The birthday of my late mother Peggy Oswald.
19 <sup>th</sup> November	In loving memory of Norman Weatherhead.
21 <sup>st</sup> November	Owen Cawser lovingly remembered on this his birthday by May and the family.
23 <sup>rd</sup> November	In loving memory of Rebecca Davies on her birthday.

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# Music Matters

Hello everyone. I hope you are all keeping well and have been able to meet with more people and do more things over recent weeks, as we start to move forward from the pandemic. Many of you will, I am sure, have received your booster jabs by now, so hopefully that will help to keep you safe over coming months.

In this month's 'Music Matters' I'd like to share news of an event we were privileged to take part in during October. This was a concert organised by the *Cathedral Music Trust*, formerly the Friends of Cathedral Music, which had originally been planned for the summer. It was entitled '*I Was Glad*' and featured the cathedral choristers of central Britain in concert in aid of the Diamond Fund for Choristers. As well as cathedral choristers, churches with a choral foundation recognised by the Cathedral Music Trust were also able to take part, which included St. Alphege, St. Mary's Warwick and St. Peter's Wolverhampton. The event had been planned as a much larger event when it was originally conceived, but in the end the organisers asked us to send one boy and one girl in order to keep numbers as low as possible.

The event was opened by the Reverend Kathryn Fleming, Sub-Dean of Coventry Cathedral, and during the concert the composer John Rutter spoke eloquently about the value of music in worship – for him, a church without a choir is like a garden without flowers. The programme included a range of choral repertoire, from 12<sup>th</sup> Century Hildegard von Bingen through to 21<sup>st</sup> Century compositions by Richard Shephard and John Rutter, all put together to showcase the skills of cathedral-standard choristers and to celebrate choral music. Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Gloucester was in attendance.



Our two participating choristers give their perspectives of the concert.



*At the event, there were nine different choirs, including Coventry themselves. We all seemed to enjoy it and all of the choristers had a chance to meet the Duchess of Gloucester. The visiting choristers, of which there were 16, spoke to her in the interval and the Coventry Cathedral choristers spoke to her at the end. The Director of Music there was very experienced and made it clear where we were supposed to be and when. The organist was extremely good as well. It was very exciting when we sang 'The Lord Bless You and Keep You', conducted*

*by the composer himself, John Rutter.*





*Singing in a cathedral as beautiful and historically significant as Coventry Cathedral in itself was a magical experience, but to do so with such accomplished choristers was even more incredible. Although the thought of performing for an audience with extremely high-profile figures (particularly H.R.H. Duchess of Gloucester and John Rutter) was quite daunting, I felt so proud to be able to be a part of such an amazing*



*sound. It is difficult to decide what my favourite moment was because meeting H.R.H. was - of course - absolutely unbelievable, but finding out that John Rutter was another of the Charity's patrons was astounding as well. For the final piece, we sang 'The Lord Bless You and Keep You' (my favourite anthem by Rutter) and I was completely shocked to find out that he would be conducting us himself. That was a moment that I will never forget.*

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.

Take care everyone.

**Isabel Baumber**

## **Wednesday Lunchtime Music Recitals, 1.10pm to 2pm**

In order to keep everyone safe, masks must be worn and social distancing and other Covid safety measures will be in place. Admission is free of charge and a retiring collection is held in aid of The Friends of St. Alphege Music (registered charity 511237). Please could we ask that you book a place by visiting <https://www.trybooking.co.uk/BBOF>. Tea, coffee and cake are now available.

**Isabel Baumber**

1 <sup>st</sup> December	St Alphege C of E Junior School SongSquad
8 <sup>th</sup> December	Sean Morrison, violin
15 <sup>th</sup> December	Angela Sones and Richard Hartshorn
22 <sup>nd</sup> December	Choristers' Christmas Recital

After a very difficult year we now look forward to being able to share Christmas together as a fellowship once more. By the time you read this we will have already had our *Christmas Fayre*. This was cancelled last year because of Covid. This year we sought to involve some of our building users in the festivities. We were very pleased that the Solihull Young Dancers who learn ballet and tap dancing agreed to do a demonstration of their skills. This year we used our whole building with the Youth Hall acting as a refreshment and entertainment area. This year proceeds from the Fayre are going to *Birmingham Restore* (a Birmingham Churches Together project working with refugees with particular focus at the moment on Afghans), and *Family Care Trust* (a Solihull charity working with disadvantaged families and individuals).

On 19<sup>th</sup> December at 4.00 p.m. we will be holding our *Open-Air Church and Community Christmas Carol Service* at the front of church. This was a very popular event last year with many of our neighbours joining us. We pray that this year's event will be just as popular and again be a bridge with the local community and an opportunity to share the love of Christ. We are grateful to the musicians from St. Michael's who will be providing the music for us.

We are excited to announce the relaunch of Wednesday Lunches now that we are able to meet up with friends, old and new alike. This is a very important ministry which reaches out to many of the elderly and housebound in our area. Wednesday Lunches were started by Diana Gregory, a member of St. Helen's Church, in 1991 to encourage us to meet and socialise over a meal, so it feels right to be re-opening on our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We are very grateful to June Paddock who has organised the lunches for many years and continues to be involved. We will be looking for assistance for drivers and cooks, but for now please hold us in your thoughts and do tell your friends, neighbours and relatives that there will soon be the opportunity to meet once again for lunch and a warm welcome.

If you can assist in any way with the Wednesday Lunches or wish to put your name down to attend then do please make contact with either Jean Fewins 07925 688 897 or Kirsty Hiles 07971 246 507.

The St. Helen's church family is saddened at the recent deaths of two of its long-standing members, John Mee and Andrew Arrowsmith, who had both been members of the church for 40 to 50 years. We remember them with affection and thankfulness and are praying especially for Margaret and Judith and their families at this sad time.

**Les Prescott**



### Dorothy Barnsley

Wishes all her friends in church

***VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS***

*and*

***ALL GOOD WISHES FOR 2022***

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but will donate to the Malawi Charity



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### St. Helen's Neighbourhood Carol Service 19<sup>th</sup> December at 4 p.m.

Following the success of the Carols last year, our open-air Carol Service takes place at St. Helen's Church, B91 2DA, on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December starting at 4pm with refreshments including mince pies and mulled wine, served afterwards.

St. Michael's musicians will lead our worship.

Please note that there will be no space for car parking, and please try to avoid parking in the road.

Do join us and bring friends and neighbours.



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Years ago, there was a popular television show called *What's my Line*. Celebrities would try to work out what occupation the guest did from a simple mime. Sometimes they got it right but often they didn't. Then the guest would reveal what his occupation was.

If Santa Claus was on the show, it would be Saint Nicholas who would have to reveal his occupation.

Saint Nicholas of Bari, the Bishop of Myra in the fourth century, is the real Santa Claus. Exactly how a kind cleric from present day Turkey got associated with an overgrown, red-suited elf from the North Pole is hard to work out.

The real Santa Claus was known for his kindness and generosity especially to the poor. One legend says he tossed bags of gold in the open window of a poor man's house to help with his daughters' dowries. The gold is supposed to have landed in stockings dangling on the corners of the beds which would account for the custom of hanging stockings for Santa Claus to fill. At any rate, Saint Nicholas was linked with gift giving, and in many countries, children still put out their stockings on his feast day to be filled with presents. Santa Claus has become a symbol for the Christmas holidays, but Santa is a commercial contrivance. Saint Nicholas, the real Santa, is just that, real. As we move into the holiday season with its excitement and bustle let us take a few minutes to remember that love and joy won't magically appear unless, like the real Santa did, we make them happen.

## Joke of the Week

*A woman had just returned to her home from an evening of church services, when she was startled by an intruder. She caught the man in the act of robbing her home of its valuables and yelled: 'Stop! Acts 2:38!' (Repent and be Baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins may be forgiven.) The burglar stopped in his tracks. The woman calmly called the police and explained what she had done. As the officer cuffed the man to take him in, he asked the burglar: 'Why did you just stand there? All the old lady did was yell a scripture to you.' 'Scripture?' replied the burglar. 'She said she had an Axe and Two 38s!' Remember: Knowing scripture can save your life - in more ways than one!*

## St. Michael's

We are continuing to meet on Sunday mornings at Sharman's Cross School at 10.30 a.m. with our congregation slowly getting back to pre-pandemic numbers. If you haven't yet been back do come along, we have a seat waiting just for you!

At the time of writing our Christmas services look like this, but please keep an eye on the *Wing & a Prayer* newsletter for the latest updates:

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> Dec - All-Age Nativity

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> Dec – Christmas Eucharist

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Dec – Holy Eucharist in St. Michael's Chapel.

## Carol Service

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December - Carol Service at 4.30 p.m. in Sharmans Cross School.

*Have a very Happy and Blessed Christmas!*

**Paul Smith**



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## Only Connect

Someone said to me recently, “when you’re only having a coffee with someone”, so let’s take a look at what we are doing when we’re “only having coffee\*\* with someone”.

(\*\*other hot drinks are available – apparently! 😊)

To *connect*, is one of the NHS recognised five steps to wellbeing. At the very least when we take the time to have a coffee with someone, we are leaving ourselves open to *connect* with them, and them with us. The BBC, the Mental Health Foundation, plus journals like Harvard Magazine and Psychology Today, have all spoken recently about increased social isolation and loneliness – one even calls it “the loneliness pandemic”. Connecting with others is key in combatting that loneliness pandemic and, only this morning, ten of us had coffee together at *Wellbeing Wednesday*.

*Maybe you can invite someone out for coffee sometime soon?*

But is that the only reason we should do it? And is it appropriate time spent for a pioneer minister or indeed for any of us?

Well, as Christians we know that we should always take our lead from Jesus. Indeed, in Hebrews 12 we are reminded of *the example of Jesus* and compelled to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

Throughout his life and ministry Jesus prioritised relationships: he prioritised his relationship with God, *and* he prioritised his relationships with people. Time and time again Jesus meets individuals and values them in their space. For instance, I remember the first time I really looked at Jesus’ meeting with Bartimaeus in Mark 10. As you may remember Bartimaeus was a blind beggar and, in calling out to Jesus, he was told by those around him to be quiet. In response to this Bartimaeus called out even more loudly and, when they finally came face to face, Jesus asked him “What do you want me to do for you?”

Let me repeat that. Faced with a blind beggar, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” It makes you think, doesn’t it?

The whole world is in need and, through us, Jesus wants to meet those around us so that he might ask them “What do you want me to do for you?” Note the turnaround in thinking. We are not meeting with people and getting to know them to offer them something that *we* feel we should offer or that *we* have created to benefit our church. *It’s not about us*. We are meeting people and getting to know them so that, at some point, Christ can make the offer to them - “What do you want me – Jesus - to do for you?” This journey starts with belonging.

For me, meeting people and getting to know them, so that they might have the opportunity to meet Jesus in His time, happens through hospitality – how often did Jesus eat and drink with those he was called to save? For you it may not be a coffee date but something different, like dog-walking, or a Knit and Natter group, or any multitude of other opportunities. Whatever it is, please be assured that Jesus never gave us the example of a business model. He was *and is* relationship orientated, making no assumptions about anyone, accepting them, and listening to them where he meets them. We should do the same.

## Pioneer Diary

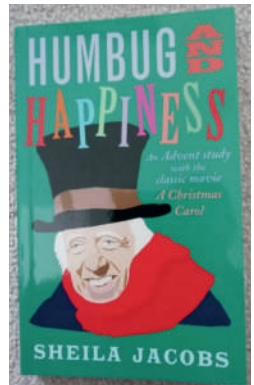
So, as I told the person who said it initially, there is no such thing as 'only having a coffee with someone', or *only* doing anything else for that matter. I'll step aside and let Teresa of Avila have the last word, as I believe she addresses us all so well: "*Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*"

### Humbug and Happiness

On Monday 29<sup>th</sup> November at least three of us (*up to press*) will be meeting at the \*Greville Arms, Cornyx Lane, to talk about how we are finding our Advent reading of **Humbug & Happiness** by Sheila Jacobs. Described as *An Advent Study with "A Christmas Carol"*, the blurb for the book is as follows:

*"Charles Dickens' tale of Ebenezer Scrooge and the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come is a familiar one to most people, and one we often revisit during Advent. But have you ever paused to wonder where Jesus is in this story, and what God might want you to learn through it: about living unselfishly, about repentance, forgiveness and restoration?"*

In the book's own words, *"It isn't a 'course', and you don't have to read the chapters as four Advent 'weeks'. Read it in the way that suits you best during this busy period."*



Following our beginning on November 29<sup>th</sup>, we have three more Mondays to meet in December – 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> - and so it's still not too late to grab the book and join us!

### Beer and Carols

#### Date for Your Diary:

On Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December, at 6.30p.m., the parish will host its first 'Beer & Carols' event at the \*Greville Arms, Cornyx Lane – other drinks will also be available! ☺ This is to build on the relationships that I and the Parish Men's Group already have at the pub. Dawn, the manager of the Greville Arms, is completely on board and is providing the mince pies for 'half-time'. Thank you to Chris Carrington and Roger Chamberlain for their commitment to this event. Please put this date in your diary and look out for further updates as the date approaches!

*( \* Please be aware that if you park in the Greville car park you have to put your registration into the machine inside the building to avoid a fine.)*

Keep safe and thanks for listening!

Suzette  
[s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk)  
 0121 709 0884

# Parish of Solihull

## Parish Wardens' Update

We started our new Church Year with our Confirmation Service on Advent Sunday when it was great to recognise that the candidates wanted to move forward on their Christian journeys and make commitments to our God and to witness to Him. We expect Chris Thomas will have joined us to lead the music for this service and we do welcome him into our midst and wish him well for his ministry with us.

We are thankful that so much of what we like to do in our congregations is now possible and it is great to see more people again.

We hope that by the time you read this, the Parish Profile will have been issued. This lays out the basis of our Parish and will give applicants for the role of Rector a good impression of the Parish and we hope it will encourage a good number to apply. We were much encouraged by the number of people who turned up to collect leaves in St Alphege Churchyard in early November. There was a tangible feeling that people wanted to work together for the church, the Parish and the community. Long may this continue!

There are a number of issues for the structure of the Parish to be resolved and so the date for advertising the position of Rector has moved back somewhat into the first month or two of the New Year.

The Planning Permission for the Development of the Old Rectory site has also been delayed in the Planning Department and so we still await a decision on this as we write.

We continue to be thankful for the clergy, lay staff and volunteers who do so much for us all and we ask that you uphold them in your prayers for stamina and enthusiasm as we go into the busy Christmas period. We are in the process of recruiting an Assistant for the Parish Office and hope to appoint soon.

What a great time this is and particularly so, as last year we were so restricted in what we could do. We hope and pray that we can help to bring the light and joy of the Gospel to more people this year with the traditional services and activities like *Journey to the Stable*, and newer events like the *St. Helen's Outdoor Neighbourhood Carol Service* and possibly *Beer and Carols* at the Greville Arms pub.

Thank you for your continued support. Please continue in your prayer and we do wish you a very Happy and Blessed Christmas.

**Pam Price and Andrew Williams**

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# CHURCH 4 FAMILIES

## December

(plus more dates on the next page!)

### Sunday Worship

#### St. Alphege

On **5th December** the Junction will meet **IN PERSON** at 9.15am in the Oliver Bird Hall

(An informal service for families of all ages. It's lively and laid back!)

On **12th December** everyone will meet in the church building for **Christingle All age worship**

On **19th December** the Junction will meet **ON ZOOM**  
(Come along dressed as your favourite Nativity character!)

#### St. Helen

Every Sunday at 10.00 am there is worship in a modern space with a community feel with activities available for children.

**Sunday 19 December Outdoor Carol service** St Helen's Church 4pm

#### St. Michael

Every Sunday in term time at 10.30am there is worship in the school hall where a warm and welcoming space is created for all ages to worship.

There is a crèche for little ones and activities for children of all ages.

On **12th December** everyone will meet together for an **all age Nativity service**

### Other Activities

Friday 17th December **Messy Church** St Helen's Church 4-5pm

**Praise and Play** Every Friday 9.30-10.30am Oliver Bird Hall

## Lots of dates for the diary:

Why don't you and your family join us for some of the Christmas services and events across the Parish. Here are the details of some of them:

### Christingle Service

Sunday 12th December 9.15am St Alphege Church



Come along to this special celebration and make your own Christingle to take home.

(Collection in aid of the Children's Society)



## Christmas

Activities for families of all shapes and sizes with lots of hands-on, Crafty fun - followed by a celebration including a story and a prayer

Friday 17th December St Helen's Church 4-5pm

Cost: £2 per child, max £7 per family.

Places are limited and booking is essential. E mail [l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk) to book your place.

## Nativity Services



Sunday 12th December St Michael's Church 10.30am

Sunday 19th December The Junction via zoom 9.15am

Come along dressed as you favourite Nativity character!


(Contact Linda Hicks to register to receive the Zoom link)

## Crib Services


Friday 24th December



St Alphege Church 3pm and 4.15pm



# Prams to Preschool -



# Praise and Play

Every Friday morning in the main Hall of the Oliver  
Bird Hall from 9.30am.

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

E mail [l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk) to book a place



## First Communion 2021



Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October was a very special day at St. Alphege church when 11 children received their First Communion. Some of them had waited patiently for over 18 months, so it was wonderful to see a packed church for this special occasion. Please do pray for the children as they continue on their journey of faith

# Youth Stuff

## December Youth Events

As the Youth Department ended the last half term with the *Lock In Log Out* overnight event this half term we are building towards our next social which is the *Christmas Party*, and we are very excited about it this year; after having to cancel it last year, we are coming back! With Christmas being the focus of the month, the *December Film Club* will obviously be Christmas-based, so come along and see what we are getting into on the 4<sup>th</sup> December in the Youth Room; bring your own snacks.

The date for the *Christmas Party* will be Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December, and although the plans might change depending on numbers the date will be the same. However, if we have low numbers we might scrap the party and do something different, but it will still be a great event regardless, so come along.

Youth will also be restarting back in the churches this month and next. We are not sure on the plan at the time of writing this, but Youth Sessions will be restarting so please contact Joe for more details on this.

As always if you have any questions or want to know more, contact Joe at [j.minall@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:j.minall@solihullparish.org.uk)

Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 7-8 p.m.	Junior Refresh- Our Bible study session for Years 6-8, with a mix of discussion, prayer, worship, and activities. In the Oliver Bird Hall.
Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec. 6-7:30pm	This session is open to all youth ages, meeting in Room 6 of the Oliver Bird Hall in which we play games, chat, and have pizza.
Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 6:30-9:15 p.m.	Film Club- With it being the build-up to Christmas we will be watching something Christmassy.
Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 7-9 p.m.	Our games and fellowship session in Room 6 in the Oliver Bird Hall, for all youth aged Year 9 and up, in the Oliver Bird Hall.
Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 7:30-8:45 p.m.	Refresh - Our Bible study session for Years 9 and up, with a mix of discussion, prayer, worship, and activities in the Oliver Bird Hall.
Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 6-7:30 p.m.	This session is open to all youth ages, meeting in Room 6 of the Oliver Bird Hall in which we play games, chat, and have pizza.
Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 7-9 p.m.	Our games and fellowship session in Room 6 in the Oliver Bird Hall, for all youth aged Year 9 and up, in the Oliver Bird Hall.
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 7-8 p.m.	Junior Refresh- Our Bible study session for Years 6-8, with a mix of discussion, prayer, worship, and activities. In the Oliver Bird Hall.
Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 6-7:30 p.m.	This session is open to all youth ages, meeting in Room 6 of the Oliver Bird Hall in which we play games, chat, and have fun.
Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup> Dec.	This will be the date for our Christmas Youth Social. What we will be doing will depend on numbers.
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 2022	Junior Refresh and the start of youth activities after the Christmas break.

# A Christmas Thanksgiving

Good Lord, at Christmas-time:

From the city of David, Bethlehem, the 'house of bread' ~  
we thank you for hospitality and festive fare;

From the setting of the crowded Inn ~  
we thank you for quiet and space when really needed;

From the Shepherds in the fields at night ~  
we thank you for watchfulness and responsiveness of soul;

From the heavenly choir of Angels ~  
we thank you for the Joy and uplift of Nativity praise;

From the Wise Men from afar ~  
we thank you for your guidance and your gifts;

From the straw and warmth of the Manger crib ~  
we thank you for your comfort and your care;

From the devotion of Mary, his Mother ~  
we thank you for nourishing us as we each grow steadily in faith:  
in the name of the Infant Christ.

Amen

Rev. John Bradford

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## All Souls Day

There are very few people, in fact I would hazard a guess that there is probably no-one who gets to the end of their own life, without knowing the grief of having lost someone that they dearly love. It's a grief like no other, and it leaves us with a terrible emptiness in our hearts. When we give our love to another human being, we know that there may come a day when we will be parted from the person that we care so deeply for, at least for a little while. And yet we continue to love, because that is how God made us. He created us from and for love. Indeed, love is the greatest gift that God gave to His world. It brings us such joy, but as we know it can bring grief and mourning too. And yet would any of us choose to forego the love that we have shared with those who are dearest to us? What kind of life, what emptiness would we experience then? Is a life without love a price any of us would be prepared to pay to protect ourselves from the pain of parting? I very much doubt that there is anyone here who would say that it is.

John Bell, a Scottish writer, a composer of hymns, a Church of Scotland minister and a member of the Iona community, wrote a reflection about life and death in his book entitled *"He was in the World"*. And I should like to read that for you now.

It's called *"I Never Wanted to be Born"*.

*"I never wanted to be born. The older I grew, the fonder I became of my mother's womb and its warmth and its safety. I feared the unknown: the next world, about which I knew nothing but imagined the worst. Yet, as I grew older, I sensed in my soul that the womb was not my home forever. Though I did not know when, I felt sure that one day I would disappear through a door which had yet to be opened, and confront the unknown of which I was afraid. And then it happened. In blood, tears and pain, it happened. I was cut off from the familiar; I left my life behind, and discovered not darkness, but light, not hostility but love, not eternal separation but hands that wanted to hold me. I never wanted to be born. I don't want to die. The older I grow, the fonder I become of this world and its warmth and its safety. I fear the unknown; the next world, about which I know nothing but imagine the worst. Yet, as I grow older, I sense in my soul that this world is not my home forever. Though I do not know when, I feel that one day I will disappear through a door which has yet to be opened. Perhaps, having come so safely through the first door, I should not fear so hopelessly the second."*

John Bell wrote that for the funeral of a group of teenagers who were killed in a car crash. We know only too well that not every human being is granted a long life; we read every day about those who have died at a young age, as babies, as children, as young people, as people in the prime of life. I am sure that some of you are here today experiencing the grief of losing someone whose life was all too short, while others will be grieving the loss of someone they spent a lifetime with. But whether we had only a short time with that person, or whether we shared love for decades, it is always too soon to be parted from someone that we love.

We need, however, to remember and to hold on to one absolute truth: that the love that we have given, received and shared never dies. It remains with us until we ourselves leave this life. Once love enters our world and our hearts, there it will remain. For love is much stronger than death, and death simply doesn't have the power to destroy it. That love will

always be a part of who we are. Those with whom we share even the smallest span of time, those to whom we give our hearts, change us and shape us into the people that we will become. They are never forgotten, never far from our thoughts, and always in our hearts.

At the end of John Bell's reflection he points us very clearly towards the hope that death really is not the end. And we hold onto that hope, the hope that one day we will be reunited with those whom we have loved. That the second door of which Bell speaks will open for us unto a new life. At the heart of the Christian faith is the belief that death, far from being the end of our lives, is the beginning of our lives in the closer presence of God.

Lives spent worshipping Him for all time, lives without pain, without tears, without fear or sorrow, but rather an eternity lived in joy and peace and love.

In John's Gospel we heard these words spoken by Jesus.

*"This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day."* A very clear promise from Jesus that all who know him and love him will one day share in his resurrection.

Later in John's Gospel we listen as Jesus tries to comfort his disciples; he has been telling them that he will only be with them for a short while longer, and they are probably feeling bereft, grief-stricken. We can forget, I think, how very much the disciples loved Jesus. Yes, He was their teacher, He was a healer and a miracle worker, but at a purely human level, He was their beloved brother and friend, and they fear that they are about to lose Him. Jesus tells them that is not so. As he tries to console them, He says:

*"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also."*

This is Jesus's promise: that there is a place in the Kingdom of Heaven for each and every one of us, when we believe, when we have faith, when we call upon His name and live our lives following His teaching, when we love one another.

God loves all that He has made, He adores every single human being, He wants only what is best for us, and offers through Jesus Christ, the hope of eternal life. We can absolutely trust that promise from God. He desires all of us to come home to Him when our lives in this world come to an end.

In the Book of Lamentations we heard this:

*"The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."*

As we are gathered here this evening, we too wait quietly upon the Lord, believing absolutely that those whom we have loved are safe in His keeping, and that the emptiness in our hearts will one day be filled with the joy of reunion with those who have gone before us.

Until that day comes, let us continue to pray for them. Let us ask God to pour upon each one of us His strength and His consolation. Let us give thanks to Him for the love that we have shared with those who we remember here this evening. And let us entrust them to His great mercy and love, until we meet again.

Amen

**The Sermon preached by the Revd. Sue Chandler at the Eucharist for All Souls Day at St. Alphege.**

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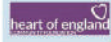
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# Online Donations – a Change

## 1 Goodbye VirginMoneyGiving



VirginMoneyGiving (VMG) is closing its doors at the end of November. Anyone who has donated through the parish website will be familiar with this screen. Through it you are linked to VMG and it is VMG which prompts you for the details of your donation and passes those details to the banks for execution.

Many of you, mainly from St Alphege, have used VMG, so we cannot ignore its closure and we have therefore sought a substitute.

## 2 Hello GiveALittle

We now have a new arrangement with GiveALittle, a website recommended by Parish Buying, the buying office of the Church of England. Your access to GiveALittle will be through the parish website as before but you will now be directed to the GiveALittle website instead of to that of VirginMoneyGiving. GiveALittle has a partner, SumUp. GiveALittle provides the online interface to take the details of your donation, while SumUp handles the banks.

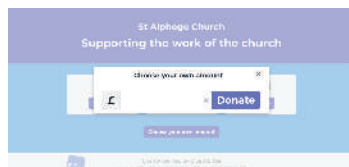
## 3 The GiveALittle Donation Process

When you click on the "Make a donation" button on the parish website GiveALittle will open in a new window in your browser.



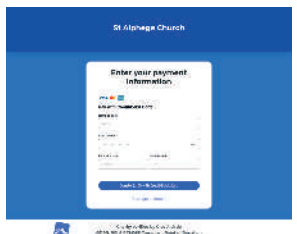
This is the first GiveALittle screen you will see. The heading tells you what you are donating for and the screen invites you to choose how much you wish to give. You can click one of the buttons for the stated amount or you can click "Choose your own amount".

If you click "Choose your own amount" a small window opens in



which you can enter your choice. You can enter your donation with or without two decimal places, e.g. 1 or 1.00. Once you have entered an amount click on "Donate" to move to the next screen.

Here you are invited to enter your card details. Your donation will be charged to your card. Please note: -



- You can use a debit or credit card.
- Only Visa, Mastercard or American Express cards are acceptable.
- The blue bar shows the amount you are donating.
- Click "Change amount" to change your donation or click the blue bar to confirm your gift and move to the next screen.

At this point your browser may open a new window and display a screen saying "Processing". If this happens just close the window and return to the GiveALittle screen.

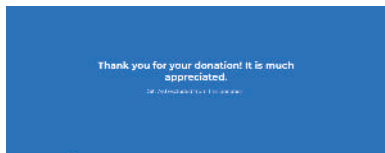
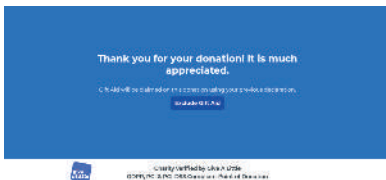
If you wish you can request a receipt for your donation. Just enter your e-mail address, click "Send receipt", and a receipt will appear in due course in your inbox.





If you do not require a receipt click “No thanks” to pass to the next screen.

The process concludes with a thank you screen. If you have not signed up for Gift Aid you have the opportunity to gift aid your donation. If you have signed up you will be told that gift aid will be claimed and you will be given the chance to override the claim for this donation.



If you override your gift aid instruction confirmation of the cancellation will appear as this screen.

Once you have got this far the process is complete and you can close the GiveALittle window. GiveALittle will use its partner SumUp to process your transaction. Your donation will be charged to your card and in due course will appear in the St Alphege bank account.

## 4 GiveALittle v VirginMoneyGiving

The two systems are very similar but there are differences, the two most significant ones that have become apparent so far being: -

- VMG has a facility by which the donor could elect to pay the transaction costs of processing the donation. These are the charges levied by VMG and the card companies. By default they are paid by the church as the recipient of the donation but the donors can choose to charge them to their card and many of you have very generously done so. GiveALittle has no facility and the church will now pay these costs. Fortunately, Parish Buying has struck a special deal with GiveALittle and these charges are low, about 1.95 percent.
- When you enter a transaction with VMG you can add a message. We have used this as a reference to say what the donation is for, e.g. for the church or for a special appeal such as SCAH or Malawi. GiveALittle does not have this facility. However, GiveALittle makes it very easy to set up and identify campaigns which in effect are collections for specific causes. In this context general support for the work of the church is just one campaign. I see this as a great strength since I foresee using it for the special collections we hold in Advent for our mission partners and other charities.

## 5 Conclusion

VirginMoneyGiving has served us well and we would not have moved away from them had our hand not been forced by their closure. However, GiveALittle seems to be a worthy successor. It offers virtually the same service and I am confident that they can be every bit as good as VMG.

I will be interested to hear of your experience.

**Tim Drakeford**  
**Hon Treasurer – St. Alphege Church**

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# Matters of Faith

## God Finds a Home with Us

Sometimes I wonder if our journey towards Christmas is actually a journey towards home. So much of the things that contribute to the build-up to Christmas are focused on the home. Indeed, we have only to think of TV adverts at this time of year:

- families gathering around a heavily-laden table;
- last-minute preparations in a steam-filled kitchen;
- the final present being placed under the Christmas tree;
- parents peeping round the bedroom door on Christmas Eve to check that the children are asleep;
- the child returning home from university to spend Christmas in the comfort and warmth of familiar surroundings.

It seems almost that the idea of home and the safety, welcome and familiarity that home provides are written into our very beings. Whatever the starting-point, the destination of all travellers at Christmas is home.

The Christmas story told in the Bible also leads us on the path towards home. In the season of Christmas we hear again the story of the coming of Christ to our world. Here, God literally finds a home on earth, coming to dwell with a human family. As one Bible translator puts it:

*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.*

However, all is not straightforward, even for the Son of God. When the baby is about to be born, and Mary and Joseph have journeyed to Bethlehem, they struggle to find a temporary home.

But we know that home is about far more than the walls, windows, roof and door. Surely, what home truly means to us is the people that gather there. And, perhaps, for Jesus, home was not a physical space so much as a place of relationship. In many ways, and certainly before he was actually born, Jesus' home was Mary herself - the God-bearer.

For Mary, who is at the heart of the Christmas story, this is an even more profound connection. For the child within her is the one who, as John declares in the first chapter of his gospel, has been in existence from creation:

*He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*

So the child Mary carries actually created the world in which she lives. And now, as he grows within her, she, in turn, creates the only world in which he can spend the nine months of pregnancy. Mary is now a home for the one who created our home, the Earth, and who came to make his home among us. She is the God-bearer, the world-carrier, the home-maker.

In his poem 'Four Quartets', T S Eliot wrote of the searching and journeying that we undertake throughout our lives. He speaks of the way in which the familiar things of life can sometimes seem strange and new to us when we are caused to see them from a different perspective. This may happen, perhaps, when we return to a place after a long absence or, maybe, when we are about to lose something we have owned for a long time. Eliot writes:

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

There is a sense that all of our journeying in life is an attempt to come home - home to those we love; home to our true selves; home to God. Perhaps all of our seeking is a longing to be welcomed into a place where the searching comes to an end. As we celebrate this Christmas may we all move closer to that place - and truly, finally, come home.

Fr. Simon

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We can arrange lifts to these meetings.

Contact Elaine (0121 705 3265), Pat (0121 705 8761) or Julia (0121 744 3540).

The latest information is now on the parish website Mothers' Union page.

You can access this on [www.solihullparish.org.uk/mothers-union](http://www.solihullparish.org.uk/mothers-union) and also from the website homepage top menu by clicking on **Connect** and then on **Mothers' Union**.

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 or Julia.

## WIVES' FELLOWSHIP

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**Carol Caldicott**



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## SOLIHULL PARISH PCC & DCC CONTACTS

<i>Parish Wardens</i>	<b>Andrew Williams</b> , <a href="mailto:arwilliams399@gmail.com">arwilliams399@gmail.com</a> <b>Pam Price</b> , <a href="mailto:colandpam@ic24.net">colandpam@ic24.net</a>	0121 705 3268 0121 704 3104
<i>PCC Minutes Secretary</i>	<b>Meryl Homer</b>	
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<i>St Michael Deputy Wardens</i>	<b>Keith Wilson</b> <b>Merrill Flood</b>	0121 778 2295 0121 705 3291

## SOLIHULL PARISH NEWS CONTACTS

<i>Editor</i>	<b>Carol Southworth</b> , <a href="mailto:parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk">parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk</a>	0121 705 4958
<i>Production</i>	<b>Roger Edwards</b> , 39 Westfield Close, Dorridge, B93 8DY	01564 739134
<i>Treasurer</i>	<b>Roger Giddings</b> , 70 Silhill Hall Road	0121 686 3422
<i>Postal Subscriptions</i>	<b>Helen Russell</b> , 30 De Moram Grove, B92 0PZ	07710 473 418
<i>Advertising Manager</i>	<b>Tim Drakeford</b> , 42 Fowgay Drive	0121 705 4494
<i>Circulation Enquiries</i>	<b>Philip Tew</b> , 19 Parklands, Blossomfield Road, B91 1NG or the Parish Office	0121 537 1236
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**MUST BE IN BY FRIDAY, 3<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER PLEASE.**

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# SOLIHULL PARISH STAFF & CONTACTS

---

<b>Team Rector</b>	The position is currently vacant	
<b>Team Vicar for St Michael</b> (Not available Thursdays)	<b>The Revd Simon Marshall</b> St Michael's Church Centre, Oak Cottage, Bryanston Road, Solihull, B91 1BS	<a href="mailto:simon@solihullparish.org.uk">simon@solihullparish.org.uk</a> 0121 704 4730
<b>Team Vicar for St Helen</b> (Not currently available)	<b>The Revd Helen Greenham</b>	
<b>Pioneer Minister</b> (Not available Fridays)	<b>Suzette Maguire</b> 10 Middlewood Close, Solihull, B91 2TY	<a href="mailto:s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk">s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk</a> 0121 709 0884
<b>Associate Priest</b>	<b>The Revd Sue Chandler</b>	<a href="mailto:s.chandler@solihullparish.org.uk">s.chandler@solihullparish.org.uk</a> 07970 791288
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<b>Music Department Administrator</b>	<b>Isabel Baumber</b>	<a href="mailto:isabel@solihullparish.org.uk">isabel@solihullparish.org.uk</a>
<b>Director of Children's &amp; Families' Ministry</b>	<b>Linda Hicks</b> Room 3, Oliver Bird Hall, Church Hill Road, Solihull, B91 3RQ	<a href="mailto:l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk">l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk</a> 07838 670772 0121 270 7390
<b>Youth Worker</b>	<b>Joe Minall</b>	<a href="mailto:j.minall@solihullparish.org.uk">j.minall@solihullparish.org.uk</a> 07746 708860
<b>Youth Assistants</b>	<b>Debbie Woodward &amp; Lynn Smart</b> Youth Office, Oliver Bird Hall, Church Hill Road, Solihull, B91 3RQ	<a href="mailto:d.woodward@solihullparish.org.uk">d.woodward@solihullparish.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:l.smart@solihullparish.org.uk">l.smart@solihullparish.org.uk</a> 0121 661 6303
<b>St Alphege Verger</b>	<b>Paul Evans</b> Verger's Office at St Alphege Church	07483 318713
<b>St Alphege Tower Secretary</b>	<b>Cynthia Dodson</b> 64, Stoneleigh Road, Solihull B91 1DQ	0121 705 3744
<b>Parish Administrators</b> <b>PARISH OFFICE</b>	<b>Ann Colloby &amp; Prem Patel</b> Parish Office, Oliver Bird Hall, Church Hill Road, Solihull, B91 3RQ	<a href="mailto:office@solihullparish.org.uk">office@solihullparish.org.uk</a> 0121 705 5350 <b>Mon-Thu 9am to 1pm;</b> <b>Fri 9am to 12 noon</b>
<b>Oliver Bird Hall Bookings</b>	<a href="http://www.solihullparish.org.uk/church-hall-hire/">www.solihullparish.org.uk/church-hall-hire/</a>	

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