

Holy Week and Easter



TEAM CHURCHES

St ALPHEGE - The Square, Solihull B91 3RH

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

St MICHAEL - Bryanston Road, Solihull B91 1BS



St Alphege (Sundays)

8.00 a.m. Said Eucharist
 10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist except:
 Sunday 9.15 a.m. All Age Eucharist 10th March and 31st March
 11.00 a.m. Choral Eucharist
 5.00 p.m. Evensong, not on 31st March, Easter Sunday
 Monday, Thursday and Friday 9.00 a.m. Morning Prayer
 Thursdays 10.30 a.m. Said Eucharist

The Junction

9.15 a.m. Junction in person at the OBH on Sunday 2nd and 17th March
 9.15 a.m. Junction on Zoom on Sunday 24th March

St Helen

Sundays 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion
 Third Sunday 10.00 a.m. Morning Praise
 Tuesdays 9.00 a.m. Morning Prayer

St Michael at Sharmans Cross School on Sundays

10.30 a.m. Eucharist.

St. Michael's Chapel, Bryanston Road on 31st March, Easter Sunday

6.30 a.m. Easter Dawn Service

St. Michael's Chapel, Bryanston Road on Wednesdays

9.30 a.m. Morning Prayer
 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Friday

9.30 a.m. **Praise and Play** – please e-mail Linda Hicks l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk

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

Please don't hesitate to contact the Revd. Nick Parker or another priest if you need help in an emergency or any support (full contact details inside the back cover) or phone the Parish Office on 0121 705 5350. It is always a pleasure to talk to you."

WEDDING AND BAPTISM ENQUIRIES

Please contact the Parish Office:
life.events@solihullparish.org.uk

The Revd. Nick Parker
The Revd. Simon Marshall
The Revd. Sue Chandler

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily the views of *Solihull Parish News* or of *Solihull Parish*.

Contents

Editorial	2
Roundabout	4
Let us Pray	10
News from Team Churches	11
St Alphege	11
St Helen	20
St Michael	22
The Guardians of St Alphege	16
Music Matters	18
Church for Families	23-26
Youth Stuff	27
Pioneer Diary	28
Matters of Faith	42
For Your Diary	46
Address Book	48



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

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parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk

Cover picture
"Holy Week and Easter"

Headlines

Bells for the Borough's 50 th , 60 th , and 20 th !	4
Visit to Potters Village	5
Annual General meeting of the District Churches	5
A Message from the Editor	5
World Day of Prayer	6
Observing lent in Solihull Parish	8
Rising Stars Choral Outreach Project	19
Social Justice and Environment Committee	32
Update from the Parish Wardens	36
A Down's Syndrome Family	40

Making the Most of Springtime

As you read this, we will already be well into the season of Lent and looking forward to Easter. Lent is not a Biblical word but derives from *Lencten*, the Anglo-Saxon word for Spring. *Lenctentid* (Springtide) was also the name given to this month of March. This year Lent began some weeks before the official start of Spring in the middle of February, but with no shortage of Spring flowers to herald its coming, thanks to a mild winter. The earliest possible date for Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent) is 4th February, which will be a year in which the Paschal moon, and thereby Easter Day, falls on March 22nd (the day after the Spring equinox). By the same calculations (the first full moon following the equinox) the latest possible date for Easter is April 25th. This year Easter Day is March 31st, the date on which the clocks go forward and British Summer Time begins – a curious coincidence. No less curious was Ash Wednesday coinciding with Valentine's Day this year, a good reminder that Lent is above all a time for refocussing on love – the heart of God's purposes for each one of us.

That Lent and Easter are coupled with Spring (in the Northern hemisphere) is no accident – indeed the return of life all around us in flower, leaf, nesting, and new birth, speaks more eloquently of hope and renewal than words can. But it would be a mistake to think of winter being solely about hibernation or as devoid of life. Nor should we think of the abundance of new life returning to our gardens and wild places, brought by the warming and lengthening days, as something to be taken for granted – rather it is fed by the return of nutrients into the soil through decomposition. Although most gardeners prefer to hide the compost heap from view, they know it is here that the magic happens – with millions of tiny creatures, fungi, and microbes turning waste into plant food – aided by the gardener's careful mixing.

Although we might to prefer to hide away from death and decomposition, they are a vital part of the cycle of life, and the compost heap a wonderful metaphor for the spiritual season of Lent. If we are to flourish, many of us first need to prune back areas of our lives that threaten to get out of control, consigning those branches and the spiritual leaf-litter that gathers, onto the spiritual heap. As we make space to reflect on life and to make better sense of life's more difficult experiences; as we seek to go deeper in our faith, to recognise and trust God's hand at work in our lives and in the world; we are aided by the wisdom of others, whether through conversation, or perhaps in reading. Resources are plentiful (such as Lent groups, Lent Booklets, Archbishop's Lent Books) if not quite amounting to the millions of organisms of a compost heap. The mixing of our spiritual compost happens chiefly in Holy Week when we choose to follow Jesus in the Way of the Cross – investing ourselves both in the costly work of self-examination, which includes owning our part in all that is wrong, and also in prayer, an opportunity for God to speak to us and for us to be touched by grace.

True gardeners know that the magnificence and fruitfulness of their garden depends as much upon composting, mulching, and digging-in, as it does upon acquiring plants and carefully planning where they should go. I am no gardener, but I have learned that the degree to which Easter offers us renewal and hope, links strongly with the investment we make in this present Lenten time. I conclude therefore by praying that we might all welcome the gift and challenge that *Lenctentid* offers, whilst wishing every one of you a Joyful Easter when that longed-for day arrives.

Revd. Nick

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Roundabout

Bells for the Borough's 50th, 60th and 70th!

Churches across Solihull Borough are making plans to ring for the Borough Anniversaries, Monday 11th March 2024 at 7:30 p.m. and Monday 1st April 2024 at 3:00 p.m. There are ten towers with bells hung for church bell ringing in the Borough and each of us has been approached to mark these important events. The towers involved are Solihull, Barston, Berkswell, Bickenhill, Castle Bromwich, Hampton in Arden, Knowle, Meriden, Salter Street and Shirley. Not all of these churches have their own active bands, and you'll know that we have in the past rung at Bickenhill when we were unable to ring locally, so we may be supporting them to ring their bells too.

The two dates mark the 70th anniversary of Solihull becoming a Municipal Borough (11th March 1954), the 60th anniversary of Solihull becoming a County Borough (1st April 1964) and the 50th anniversary of Solihull becoming a Metropolitan District (1st April 1974). At St. Alphege we

don't often ring for civic events except of course, for the civic services which we ring for as we would for any other Sunday morning service. However, interestingly we find in our records that we rang a quarter peal on Thursday 11th March 1954 on ten bells to celebrate the presentation of the Charter of Incorporation; the bells were rung for H.R.H. Princess Margaret's visit to the Borough; and 1st April 1964 we rang a quarter peal on eight bells when we became a County Borough. These pieces of ringing would have lasted for something in the region of 45 minutes and involved some very notable ringers of the day.

Solihull's Library Specialist for Heritage & Local Studies has recently herself become a bell ringer! Albeit that she isn't learning locally. So, when the Borough turned its attention as to how to mark the celebrations, she immediately thought of including us. Other celebrations will be somewhat low key until later in the year and will include a civic service, but the anniversaries fall close to an election which prevents anything more grand for the time being. However, listen out on these special dates; we don't yet have any definite plans but if we ring further quarter peals you'll be able to track our success by searching on the Bell Ringers national data base, Bell Board, <https://bellboard.uk/search.php> Just type in Solihull in the 'Place' field, press search and you'll see what we've been up to. We usually record our quarter peals within a couple of days of any successes.

Happy Birthday Solihull!



Sand Cooper
Tower Secretary

Visit to Potters Village

After our visit in April 2023 we came back with a project to collect monies to fund training for the 9 Nurses and their Lab. Assistant Sam.

This training was necessary as the Diocese of Murabara had decided that these Nurses must be upskilled from Certificate to Diploma level, at a cost of £900 each, with a similar amount for Sam.

Since returning, we have been giving presentations to various Rotary Clubs, Churches and others, and have now achieved our target of £9,000, only 10 months since returning, securing the training for these 10 Nurses and their Lab. Assistant, over the next 10 years.

The Baby Cots given during our visit are now being well used, as shown in the attached photo of the Special Care Baby Unit, and are very much welcomed by the Nurses and Mothers.

We are still trying to help the Kisoro area, as we are now part of the Project Team to build a Medical Centre on Mutanda Island, which will cover all aspects of health for the islanders. The Rotary Clubs in the Kisoro area had built a school for the island's children, as we have previously explained. We hope at some time in the future to return to Potters Village, and see the staff and Nurses again, plus a visit hopefully to the new Medical Centre.



Phil Godfrey & Vicci Hornsby

Annual General Meetings at the District Churches

The District Churches of St. Helen and St. Michael will also be holding Annual General Meetings at which they will elect Deputy Wardens and Council members and report on the past year.

St. Michael's A.G.M. will be on Sunday 17th March at 11.30 a.m., after the Eucharist, and the St. Helen's meeting will take place after the Communion service on Sunday 14th April.

A Message from the Editor

Spring is the time we request payment from subscribers for the delivery of the Parish News for the whole of the calendar year. The cost is £10 for the year. In response to a request, and in case you have not yet paid, we are publishing the bank details to facilitate payment for those who wish to use that method. If you do use this payment method, **please identify yourself** when you pay and **tell your distributor** so that the Treasurer and the distributor know you have paid.

Solihull Parish News: 30-97-78, a/c 00381419

World Day of Prayer

The next World Day of Prayer is on Friday 1st March. There will be opportunity to pray at any time of the morning or early afternoon at Solihull United Reformed Church using prayer stations to guide individual prayer. The prayer stations will be put together by volunteers from different churches so please make yourself known if you would like to help.

The World Day of Prayer material this year is provided by the women of Palestine on the theme of "I beg you, bear with one another with love" from Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1-7. This will influence the focus of the stations and some of the ideas for presentation, interaction and intercession. There won't be a service but there will be 20 minutes of prayers led from the front, at 12 noon, for those who would like some community guided prayers as well as the opportunities to pray alone.

Do you know people who have got out of the habit of going to church who used to? This might be perfect for them. They don't have to engage with formal church, but it is an opportunity to come into a church building again and reawaken their faith and engage with God in a way that is bigger than their internal conversation with Him.

The United Reformed Church (741 Warwick Road, Solihull) will be open 10 a.m. - 2.30 p.m. for private prayer with 20 minutes of prayers led from the front at noon. Please contact solihullurc@gmail.com with any questions about this event or with your offers of help to prepare prayer stations.

Linda Faber
Church Leader for Mission, Solihull URC

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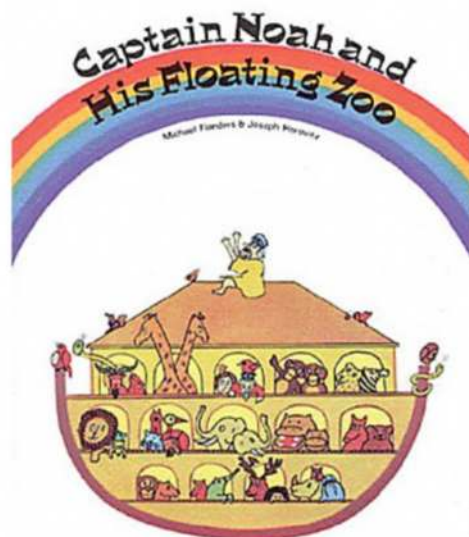
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present



a cantata in popular style
Wednesday 20th March 2024 at 6pm
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Roundabout

Observing Lent in Solihull Parish

Option 1: Life Balance: 5 sessions – Time to Pause, Time to Celebrate, Time to Rest, Time to Play, Time to Liberate

Monday afternoons 1.45 for 2 p.m. until 3.30 p.m.

Venue: Greville Arms, Cornyx Lane, B91 2RB

(Mondays 19th, 26th February; 4th, 11th, 18th March)

It is helpful if people can let me know that they plan to come along by the Saturday before each date, so that I can book an appropriately sized table and, out of courtesy to the Greville who host us, people should come ready to buy themselves a drink of some sort (coffee or tea is available).

Contact: Suzette Maguire s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk 0121 709 0884

Or

Monday evenings 7.45 p.m. until 9 p.m.

Venue: St. Helen's Chapel, St. Helen's Road, B91 2DA

(Mondays 19th, 26th February; 11th, 18th, 25th March)

Contact: Chris Carrington carringtons.church@gmail.com

Or

Friday Mornings 9.45 a.m. for 10 a.m. until 11.30 a.m.

Venue: Room 6, Oliver Bird Hall, Church Hill Road, B91 3RQ

(Fridays 23rd February; 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd March)

Contact: Nick Parker rector@solihullparish.org.uk

Option 2: The Art of Lent: Guided by the reflections of Sister Wendy Beckett, we will look at some of the world's greatest paintings to discover the spiritual message within them. Come and journey through Lent as we allow great works of art to lead us deeper into prayer.

Thursday afternoons 1.45 p.m. until 3 p.m.

Venue: St. Michael's Chapel, Oak Cottage, Bryanston Road, B91 1BS

(Thursdays 22nd, 29th February; 7th, 14th, 21st March)

Contact: Simon Marshall simon@solihullparish.org.uk

Further Opportunity: Lent Breakfasts (An activity of Churches Together in Central Solihull)

Saturday mornings 8.30 a.m. until 9.30 a.m.

Venue: Solihull Methodist Church, Blossomfield Road, B91 1LG

17th February: Speaker Felix Kupay from Entraide (assisting asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable migrants integrating into society)

24th February: Speaker John Bradley from Solihull Welcome and Borough of Sanctuary.

Lent Quiet Morning

***Exploring what it means to be
'A Holy Saturday Church'***

St. Helen's Church Centre, St. Helen's Road
Saturday 30th March 2023.

Refreshments available @ 9.30 a.m. for a **10 a.m. start.**

10 a.m. – 10.10 a.m. Opening worship (Chapel)

10.10 a.m. first input session

10.15 a.m. – 11.10 a.m. sacred space**

11.10 a.m. second input session

11.15 a.m. – 12.10 p.m. sacred space**

12.15 p.m. closing worship (Chapel)

Ends 12.30 p.m.

*Do take up the option to bring along a packed lunch so
we can eat together before we leave.*

**‘Sacred space’ is designed as time for you to spend
with God on whatever it is that has been ‘flagged up’ for
you during the input or worship.

Optional resources will be provided.

**Contact Suzette to book: 0121 7090884 or
s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk**

Let us Pray

Calendar and Prayer Intentions for March

1	David, bishop, patron of Wales, c. 601	The Welsh people and its government	Woodside Way
2	Chad, bishop, missionary, 672	Those who help spread the Good News	Woodston Grove
3	Third Sunday of Lent	Those connected with Wellbeing Wednesday	Wroxall Road
4	Feria (weekday on which no feast is celebrated)	Those who are isolated or feel forgotten	Albany Gardens
5	Feria	Seekers and our forthcoming Alpha course	Alderbrook Road
6	Feria	Those safeguarding endangered species	Alderham Close
7	Perpetua, Felicity and companions, martyrs, 203	Those who are persecuted for their faith	Alderminster Road
8	Edward King, bishop, 1910	For women (International Women's Day)	Alderpark Road
9	Feria	Those suffering violence and women's refuges	Alderton Close
10	Fourth Sunday of Lent (Mothering Sunday)	Those for whom this day holds pain	Alderwood Place
11	Feria	Solihull Borough on this anniversary day of celebration	Alston Close
12	Feria	Uniformed organisations	Alston Road
13	Feria	The people of St. Alphege	Anchor Lane
14	Feria	Post Offices and Post Office workers	Arley Road
15	Feria	Those leading our Lent groups	Ashborough Drive
16	Feria	Those seeking acceptance within the Church	Ashbrook Crescent
17	Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passiontide begins)	The people of Ireland and its government	Ashby Court
18	Cyril, bishop, teacher of the faith, 386	All who teach the Christian faith	Ashlawn Crescent
19	Joseph of Nazareth (festival)	Adopting families and foster families	Ashleigh Road
20	Cuthbert, bishop, missionary, 687	Retreat centres and monastic communities	Ashton Croft
21	Thomas Cranmer, archbishop, reformation martyr, 1556	Unity in our Anglican Communion	Austcliff Drive
22	Feria	Those facing redundancy and the unemployed	Avenbury Drive
23	Feria	Those who travel and those working in the travel industry	Baginton Close
24	Palm Sunday (Holy Week begins)	The people of St. Helen's	Barbourne Close
25	Monday of Holy Week	Muslims entering the 3rd week of Ramadan	Barnmoor Rise
26	Tuesday of Holy Week	The world's salvation	Barston Lane
27	Wednesday of Holy Week	Those places torn apart by conflict	Baxterley Green
28	Maundy Thursday (Principal Holy Day)	Those renewing religious vows	Beaminster Road
29	Good Friday (Principal Holy Day)	Churches Together in Central Solihull	Beauchamp Road
30	Easter Eve (Principal Holy Day)	Those preparing for baptism	Beaumont Grove
31	Easter Day (Principal Feast)	The people of St. Michael's	Beechnut Close

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

From the St. Alphege Register

Baptisms

4th February Justin Breeze

Weddings

None

Funerals

30th January Lucy Adeyemo

2nd February Margaret Roberts

12th February Gloria Binsted

Interment of Ashes

2nd February Margaret Thompson

Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in March

Alice Barnes

Julie Birse

Vanessa Carpenter

Mario Ferullo

Jack Florance

Geoffrey Gilbey

Betty Greasley

Evelyn Grocock

Jack Grocock

Edna Hampson

Harry Hartley, priest

Dennis Francis Harvey

Nigel Harvey

George Hutchinson

Laly Jimenez

Alma Jordan

Robert Kemp

Edith Lloyd

Fraser Mitchell

Gordon Mitchell

Alan Norman

Elizabeth Swann

Lilian Swann

Edith Tew

Janet Tracey

C. Patricia Wallis

Adrian Woollas

David Wright



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 March 2024

This month we journey through the season of Lent and Holy Week, culminating on Easter Day, 31st March. Through it we remember the cost of Jesus' earthly ministry and his turning to face the cross – coming to understand that his death is inevitable and a necessary sacrifice; we follow the events of Holy Week, entering into the story and finding ourselves reflected amongst the cast of characters; and having faced the sinfulness of this world and in ourselves, we are surprised by joy as the story continues on to Easter Day, discovering the wonderful truth spoken by St. Paul, that having shared in Christ's sufferings and death we may also share in his resurrection. High points include:

10th March: Mothering Sunday

The day on which people traditionally attended their mother church (in which they were baptised) so allowing families to be reunited. Today we give thanks for mothers and particularly focus on God's maternal care.

17th March: Passion Sunday

This Sunday marks the beginning of Passiontide in which we focus on Christ's suffering.

24th March: Palm Sunday

The Sunday marking the beginning of Holy Week, in which we follow the events which unfolded from Christ's entry into Jerusalem to which he came to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. It includes both the Liturgy of Palms (at St. Alphege beginning at 10 a.m. with a procession from the town centre) and the Liturgy of the Passion.

28th March: Maundy Thursday

We remember Jesus sharing a Passover meal, *The Last Supper*, with his disciples – in which he washes the disciples' feet before sharing bread and wine, commanding his disciples to do this in remembrance of him.

In the morning clergy and religious are invited to renew their vows at the cathedral.

At Oak Cottage garden (6 p.m.) there is opportunity to follow the full story of this day.

At St. Helen's (7 p.m.) we are invited to an *Agape Meal* (Love Feast) in which we informally share bread and wine within the context of a meal, a tradition linking us to the earliest Christian communities as well as to the Last Supper.

At St. Alphege (7.30 p.m.) a Eucharist including foot washing precedes *The Watch*, remembering Jesus and the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane as he asks them to watch and pray with him.

29th March: Good Friday

We remember Jesus' death on the cross, doing our best to comprehend the riches of Christ's passion and saving grace. There are services and activities across the parish for all ages. There will be the usual ecumenical *Walk of Witness* in the town centre; it will commence at St. Augustine's Church, Station Road, at 10.45 a.m., then proceed to Mell Square for a service and finally go to St. Alphege and then all are invited to the Oliver Bird Hall for hot cross buns.

Worship Notes March 2024 (Continued)

30th March: Easter Eve

A holy day of preparation for Easter. We ready ourselves for rejoicing which start at sundown with the *Easter Vigil*, the service in which we light the Paschal (Easter) Candle and sing the *Exsultet* (the Easter Proclamation).

31st March: Easter Day

The high point of the Church's year beginning at dawn in the garden of Oak Cottage. Every service centres upon the Easter Acclamation: *Alleluia! Christ is Risen!* to which we joyfully respond: *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Fr. Nick

Morning Prayer

Morning Prayer is ordinarily said each weekday, and all are very welcome.

Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays at St. Alphege at 9 a.m.

Tuesdays at St. Helen's at 9 a.m.

Wednesdays at St. Michael's Chapel at 9.30 a.m.

Wednesday Lunchtime Music Recitals, 1.10pm to 2pm

All are welcome to the Recitals. Admission is free of charge and a retiring collection is held in aid of The Friends of St. Alphege Music (Registered Charity 511237).

Tea, coffee and cake are available from 12.30 p.m.

Isabel Baumber

6 th March	Nova Wind Quartet
13 th March	No recital - Easter Journey in Church
20 th March	Anthony Tam, piano version of Liszt's Via Crucis
27 th March	No recital - Easter holiday

March 2024 Services

Sunday 3rd March – Lent 3

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
Oliver Bird Hall	9.15 a.m.	The Junction - with puppets
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 6th March

St. Michael	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist

Thursday 7th March

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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Sunday 10th March – Mothering Sunday

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Alphege	9.15 a.m.	All Age Holy Communion
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	11.00 a.m.	Choral Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 13th March

St. Michael	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist

Thursday 14th March

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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Sunday 17th March – Lent 5 (Passiontide begins)

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
Oliver Bird Hall	9.15 a.m.	The Junction
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Morning Praise
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 20th March

St. Michael	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist

Thursday 21st March

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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Sunday 24th March – Palm Sunday

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
Zoom	9.15 a.m.	The Junction
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion with dramatised Passion Reading, puppets and Sunday Club.
High Street	10.00 a.m.	Liturgy of Palms Procession
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion – Passion Liturgy
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

HOLY WEEK

Monday 25th March

St. Alphege	7.30 p.m.	Taizé Night Prayer
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Tuesday 26th March

St. Alphege	7.30 p.m.	Eucharist
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Wednesday 27th March

St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	7.30 p.m.	Stations of The Cross

Maundy Thursday 28th March

St. Michael	6.00 p.m.	The Maundy Thursday Story in Oak Cottage Garden
St. Alphege	7.30 p.m.	Eucharist followed by The Watch
St. Helen	7.00 p.m.	Agape Meal

Good Friday 29th March

St. Alphege	9.45 a.m.	Exploring the Easter Story – interactive service for all ages.
Town Centre	10.45 a.m.	Walk of Witness - CTCS
St. Alphege	2.00 p.m.	Devotions at the Foot of The Cross
St. Helen	7.30 p.m.	Tenebrae

Holy Saturday 30th March

St. Helen	9.30 a.m.	Quiet Morning
St. Alphege	8.00 p.m.	Easter Vigil Sung Eucharist

Easter Sunday 31st March

St. Michael Chapel	6.30 a.m.	Easter Dawn Service
St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Alphege	9.15 a.m.	All Age Holy Communion
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	11.00 a.m.	Choral Eucharist



The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church

It seems amazing that, as I write this, we are already into the second month of the year. By the time you read it we will be into the third month. They say time flies as you get older!

Our next social event will be **Coffee & Hot Cross Buns** on **Thursday 21st March, 10.30am – 12 midday**, at **9 Ulleries Road, Solihull, B92 8DS**. The cost will be £5 per head and there will be a raffle. Please let us know if plan to come, so that we know how many to cater for.

Advance warning – we have decided that for future events we may have to increase the cost to those attending. I think it has remained the same for many years, so in view of rising prices, it is time to reconsider costs.

We still need at least one more Trustee as our Constitution insists on 4. Even though we have one new recruit, with 2 of us are standing down at the next AGM, so that would leave only 3. If you don't feel ready to take on the responsibilities of being a Trustee, but would like to help, the Fundraising Committee will also be short of support, so maybe that would suit you better. A new member on that committee might well produce some new ideas for events.

Talking of members, this is my usual plea for more of you to join. If you are interested, please get in touch with me (margaretoswald43@gmail.com or 0121 722 4092). The annual subscription is only £15 per person or £20 for a couple. You all know how much work has been done recently, and that there is still more to do. So please consider helping us raise the necessary funds. Thank you.

The Trustees

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Floodlighting

The Guardians Floodlighting Scheme is available for anyone who would wish to celebrate or mark an occasion, or to commemorate a date.

Unfortunately the floodlighting of St. Alphege is unable to be switched on at the present time due to corrosion of the electric cabling. This problem will be resolved as soon as possible. The commemorative dates will still be displayed on the notice boards and also in the Parish Magazine. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me on the telephone number below.

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 Solihull Parish News 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: russellpayne110@aol.com

Commemorative Dates February 2024

2 nd February	Raymond Colston Horswill 2.2.28 – 25.10.08. Much loved by all who knew him. Devoted husband and father.
2 nd February	Anthony Walker. Remembering such happy times on your birthday.
10 th February	In loving memory of Ronald McDonough on his birthday.
15 th February	In loving memory of Barbara Alice Edwards.
21 st February	In loving memory of John Manners on the anniversary of his birthday.
24 th February	Happy memories of Patricia Blackburn on her birthday, at the start of another year of war in the Ukraine.
27 th February	Noreen Porter on her birthday anniversary. Treasured memories of a dear wife, mother and grandmother. David and family.

Music Matters

Spotlight on Recitals

This month in Parish News, I'd like to shine a spotlight on our wonderful lunchtime recital series. Every Wednesday during term time at St. Alphege Church we host a music recital. They are less than an hour long, starting at 1.10 p.m., and are usually finished just before 2 p.m. Our wonderful volunteers serve tea, coffee and home-made cake beforehand, from 12.30 p.m. The monthly recital listing is always included in Parish News.

We have built up a good weekly attendance with a mixture of regulars and new visitors each week – and more people would always be welcome! Sometimes visitors are new to the church, and stop to say a prayer or light a candle before or after the recital. Regular parishioners often make the most of their midweek visit to catch up with people or jobs as needed.

We have an amazing variety of performers – piano solos, organ recitals, small chamber groups (there's a wind quintet coming soon, an early music consort and a saxophone trio), harpists, violinists, singers – the list goes on... Our performers always appreciate the warm and appreciative audience, and the audience love the music (and the cake!). If you've never been before, why not come along to see for yourself? Have a look at the forthcoming listings and see if something takes your fancy – you would be very welcome and I hope you will not be disappointed.

Before Christmas, former Head Chorister, Rachel Baumber sang her Singing Performance Diploma programme, then after Christmas we were delighted to host Tom Lilburn, another former Head Chorister, now pursuing a career as a professional singer. We made the most of Tom's visit to Solihull and asked him to lead a masterclass with our Senior Choristers that evening – they really enjoyed Tom's tuition, and also tapping into his experience of university choral scholarships and finding out more about his study and career pathway.

Collaboration with Solihull School

As part of our ongoing collaboration with Solihull School, on Sunday 21st January, some of our Senior Choristers and members of the Men's Choir joined the School's Chamber Choir for a joint Evensong in the Chapel. The music was Smith Responses, Psalm 128, Howells Evening Service *Collegium Regale* and a favourite anthem *Beati Quorum Via* by Stanford. Look out for more music by Charles Villiers Stanford throughout this year, as 2024 is the hundredth anniversary of his death. We look forward to continuing this collaboration with return visits from Solihull School choristers in the summer term.



Isabel Baumber



Rising Stars Choral Outreach Project

Following the great success of their Carol Festival, the Rising Stars choral outreach choirs are preparing for performance of the popular jazz cantata '*Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo*'.

This will take place on Wednesday 20th March at 6 p.m. in St. Alphege Church, see page 9.

The four 'Rising Stars' schools' choirs singing are from TGPA Yew Tree, Widney Junior, Oak Cottage and Sharmans Cross Junior, with our own Junior and Senior Choristers.

The jazz trio accompanying the performance will be our Assistant Organist Liam Condon on piano, Steve Wallis (from our own All Age Band) on Double Bass, and Timothy Pitt (parent of one of our choristers) on drumkit.

The event is open to everyone, admission free.

It is being generously supported, as is the whole choral outreach project this year, by *The Cathedral Music Trust*.

Chris Thomas

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We continue to be very grateful to Nick, Sue and Roger who come each month to take our Holy Communion services. They each bring their own style and teaching and we all benefit from their ministry.

At our Morning Praise service in January we were pleased to welcome Matthew Vaughan, who first came to speak to us 2 years ago. He and his wife and family live in the vicarage at Bordesley Green. They work with 'Interserve' amongst the community there and, having lived and worked in Pakistan for nearly 10 years, they are well equipped for ministry to those who live in that area, not least because they both speak Urdu! Matt gave us a challenging talk, based on the passages set for the day and managed to encourage us to read parts of Revelation as well as giving us some goals for our personal faith journeys.

We are delighted that the Sunday Club which meets on the 4th Sunday of each month is growing and on 28th January we welcomed 12 children with their parents. They shared a song which we all joined in with after Communion and it is lovely that most of them stay on to share refreshments with us. We are so grateful to Linda for the hard work she puts in, especially on this Sunday when she runs 'The Junction' on zoom before leading Sunday Club in the youth hall.

As we write this, we look forward to the start of 2 Lent groups on 19th February (on Monday afternoons and evenings, both in the chapel) and hope that others from the parish will join us. Details of all Parish Lent groups are elsewhere in this magazine.

Looking ahead to this month, 2 special events will be held at St. Helen's. There is to be an *Agape Meal* at 7 p.m. on Maundy Thursday, and we shall be having our usual *Tenebrae* service at 7.30 p.m. on Good Friday in the chapel. We look forward to joining with others from Solihull Churches Together for the *Walk of Witness* on Good Friday morning, which is always a very worthwhile event. It is lovely to join together with all the other churches in the area for this very special act of witness. We hope to again distribute Easter cards to our neighbours with an invitation to come and join us and put a flower on the empty cross outside church on Easter morning.

Chris and Jenny Carrington

OLIVER BIRD HALL BOOKINGS

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

Visit the website on:

<https://www.solihullparish.org.uk/church-hall-hire/>

or contact the Parish Office at:

OBHBookings@solihullparish.org.uk

French IMPRESSIONS

Spring Concert 2024
Fauré - Requiem

Saturday 23rd March, 3:00pm
Shirley Methodist Church

MUSIC PROGRAMME

Fauré: Les Djinns; Pavane;
Cantique de Jean Racine; Requiem

Bizet: Agnus Dei

Gounod/Bach: Ave Maria

César Franck: Panis Angelicus

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At the time of writing Lent is almost upon us, it seems only a short while ago that we were in the midst of Advent. Both these seasons offer us an opportunity to focus on our relationship with God as well as prepare for the big occasions, Christmas following Advent, Easter following Lent. How we use these seasons depends on the individual, but it is an opportunity not to be missed. During Lent at Oak Cottage, in St. Michael's Chapel, we are offering a Lent reflection with a difference.

Lent at St. Michael's

There is an invitation to the Chapel to experience the Art of Lent. This is a time of reflection based on the writings of Sister Wendy Beckett, and looking at some of the world's greatest paintings to discover the spiritual message they convey. Religion has inspired some of the world's greatest artists and musicians in the projection of their talent, whether this be paintings or music. Do join us through Lent as we allow the world's greatest works of art to lead us deeper in prayer and thought. These sessions are all on Thursday afternoon at 1.45 p.m. until 3 p.m. in St. Michael's Chapel starting on Thursday 22nd February.

Holy Week & Easter at St. Michael's

On Maundy Thursday we shall celebrate this day with a service of reflection in the garden at Oak Cottage at 6 p.m.

Easter Day will be celebrated with a sunrise service again in the garden at Oak Cottage at 6.30 a.m. to which all are welcome. There will of course be the usual Easter Eucharist at the school at 10.30 a.m. on Easter Day.

These are in addition to our normal services.

Annual District Church Meeting

On Sunday 17th March following the Eucharist our Annual District Church Meeting will take place. This is usually, a lively affair where we reflect on the past year and more importantly look ahead to the next 12 months.

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CHURCH 4 FAMILIES

March

Sunday Worship

St. Alphege

On **3rd March** the Junction will meet **IN PERSON** at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall when we will be joined by the **Solihull Parish puppets!** (An informal service for families of all ages. It's lively and laid back!)

On **10th March** everyone will meet in the church building at 9.15 a.m. for a special **Mothering Sunday All age worship** service with the worship band

On **17th March** the Junction will meet **IN PERSON** at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall

On **Palm Sunday 24th March** the Junction will meet **ON ZOOM** (Contact Linda l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk to register to receive the zoom link)

On **31st March** everyone will meet in the church building at 9.15 a.m. for a special **Easter Day All age worship** service with the worship band

St. Helen

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

Palm Sunday Sunday 24th March St Helen's Sunday club will meet during the 10 a.m. service with an exciting action packed session for children age 0-11 and featuring the **Solihull Parish puppets!**

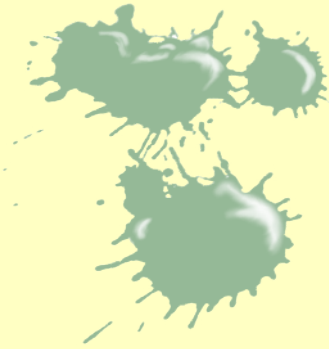
St. Michael

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

Other Activities

Friday 29th March Good Friday- Exploring the Easter story
St Alphege Church 9.45 a.m.

Praise and Play Every Friday 9.30-10.30 a.m. Oliver Bird Hall
(except 29th March)



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. Finally we'll finish with a tasty hot tea for everyone!



4.00 p.m. until 6 p.m. on Friday

22nd March, 19th April and 17th May



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B91 2DA (off Buryfield Road)



EVERYONE! Children, bring your friends, but be sure to bring an adult to share the fun.

Cost: £2 per person, max £7 per family



Booking is essential. E mail
l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk
to book your place.



Good Friday - Exploring The Easter Story

St. Alphege Church

Friday 29th March 9.45 a.m.



A special interactive service
for all ages.



Prams to Preschool -



Praise and Play

Every Friday in the main Hall of the Oliver Bird Hall
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If you want to know more ring Linda on
0121 270 7390
or 07838 670772

or e mail l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk

Youth Stuff

Are you, or someone you know in Year 6 and above, interested in joining a church youth group? Then do consider joining **Solihull Parish Youth** on a **Friday evening, 5 p.m. – 6.20 p.m.** in **Room 6** at the **Oliver Bird Hall**. The sessions include pizza, activities and games. The aim is to provide a safe space to have fun and where faith and friendships can grow.

There is no charge, but registering before you come along for the first time is essential.

Please email Lynn Smart for the registration link: l.smart@solihullparish.org.uk

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"Whose plan is it anyway?"

Wednesday, perhaps not surprisingly, is the most significant day in my working week. It's the day when I regularly connect with the growing Wellbeing Wednesday community, with all of the social, emotional, and pastoral concerns that come with that connection. However, Wednesday is also the *last* day of my working week – day 6 – as Thursday is currently my day off. None of this struck me as significant until recently when my *Tuesday* plans were changed.

Let me introduce you to my old Tuesday schedule: on that day I would do a very good impression of a ball in a pinball machine, ricocheting through the day from 8.20 a.m. in the morning when I set off to T.G.P.A. Yew Tree school, until around the same time in the evening after finishing board games evening at around 8 p.m. (or sometimes later if we were in the middle of a game at 8 p.m.). In-between there could be staff meetings, prayer group meetings, lunchtime meetings, pastoral meetings, rota meetings, preparation for Wellbeing Wednesday and other events, and a second visit to the school. Phew! Needless to say, it was not my favourite day of the week.

But then, a couple of weeks ago as I write, a lot of my plans for Tuesday got cancelled. The weather was so cold that I cancelled standing at the school gates, and a pastoral concern meant that I met with someone to find out what was going on with them, rather than attend the weekly staff meeting. I did get things done, but at my own pace and without a pinball machine in sight! I really enjoyed board games that evening, not being as 'frazzled' by that time of day as I might usually be, but the real revelation came the next day:

Wellbeing Wednesday had a totally different feel for me. I caught up with so many people and didn't stress about what else did or didn't get done. In short, I had the energy to 'be' at Wellbeing Wednesday the way I needed to be as the facilitator of that community. On reflection, this was enabled by my changing the draining structure of my Tuesdays.

You see, the pattern of my "pinball" Tuesdays may have served me at some point: when I began my connection with the school over three years ago Tuesday was a good day for us both and, at that time, my day off was Friday, so Tuesday was day 4 of the week and energy levels were not so depleted. It took me a long time to realise it, but it was time for a change. I'm pleased to report that those changes are now in place. ☺

However, all of this set me to thinking: *how many of us follow old plans and structures that no-longer serve us in our calling from God? And have we even thought about it recently?* (I know I hadn't.)

There is no criticism implied in asking these questions, but we would all be wise to think about them, and to go on thinking about them from time to time. This is where a spiritual exercise called '*The Examen*' might be of use.

The Examen calls us to look back at a period and recall "*When did I feel the most alive?*" and "*When did I most feel life draining out of me?*" Many people do this over a day, but it can be done after almost anything: a week, a month, a holiday, a meeting, Lent, Advent, even a whole life. Put very succinctly, Ignatius of Loyola, from whom *The Examen* comes, would advocate that we then direct our lives more towards what makes us feel the most alive, and cut back on those things that drain the life out of us when we can. If I had done *The Examen* over my working week, I may have concluded that my pinball Tuesdays were draining me, and I was frustrated that the life I was getting from Wellbeing Wednesdays was being hindered in some way. This is actually what happened, but next time I will employ *The examen* deliberately, rather than stumbling over what was happening almost by accident.

But was it an accident? I don't believe that it was. I firmly believe that the Lord stepped in because I was blind to what was happening at the time. Jeremiah 29, verse 11 tells us:

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

By employing *The Examen* in our lives, even if only from time to time, we can stay more on task with the plans that the Lord has for us, rather than perpetuating our own plans. And, as we'll be reminded in this year's Lent course, stopping and reflecting every now and again is a part of God's plan for us: He invented the Sabbath, meaning time to pause, time to celebrate, time to rest, time to play, and time to liberate.

Keep safe and thanks for listening!

Suzette

P.S. See separate details on page 9 for our [Holy Saturday Quiet Morning](#) – another opportunity to reflect on God's plans for us and for His World!

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Social Justice and Environment Committee

On the 13th December 2023, COP28, the 28th Annual United Nations Global Climate Summit, concluded in Dubai, with the agreeing of the UAE Consensus, a summary of the commitments made by countries around the world to address climate change. The use of fossil fuels was at the heart of discussions, because of their role in the warming of the global climate.

In the foreword to the Consensus, it says: "The UAE Consensus includes an unprecedented reference to transitioning away from all fossil fuels in energy systems... to enable the world to reach net zero emissions by 2050, in keeping with the science."

In January 2024 the European Union's weather and climate monitoring agency, Copernicus, confirmed that 2023 was the hottest year in recorded history. But why does this matter? Because, in short, a rising global temperature means rising sea levels, loss of biodiversity and more severe and frequent extreme weather events and droughts.

Sadly, some in positions of power choose to ignore the findings of COP28 and of scientific research. Among them is United States Republican candidate and former United States President Donald Trump. In recent political rallies he has referred to renewable energy as 'a scam business' and said that if elected President he would cancel the \$3 billion which the United States has pledged to help developing countries meet the challenges of climate change.

Mr. Trump's Presidential campaign website also promotes such viewpoints, saying: "President Trump unlocked our country's God-given abundance of oil, natural gas, and clean coal.... President Trump will unleash the production of domestic energy resources, reduce the soaring price of gasoline, diesel and natural gas."

(Source: <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/issues>)

His allies say that he would also scrap government considerations of the damage caused by carbon emissions; seek to overturn pollution rules for cars, trucks and power plants; and withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement.

There is some way to go before the possibility of Mr. Trump becoming a world leader materializes. However, it is troubling that someone with such influence ignores the findings of climate science, and the commitments of COP28.

However, instead of despairing at such unwillingness to change, this might motivate us to work where we are to reduce the effects of climate change. The A Rocha network, a global group of Christian nature conservation groups, suggests three things we can do:

- Speak up: campaign for further action in the UK on phasing out fossil fuels as the COP28 text calls on it to do, talk to our elected political representatives about the action we'd like to see on climate and biodiversity.
- Pray: that our leaders, both in the UK and globally, would have the courage to implement the commitments already made and go further and faster on climate action.
- Encourage others: talk in our churches and local community, encouraging conversation about climate change and ways in which we can enable others to speak up for nature.

Fr. Simon, on behalf of the Parish Social Justice & Environment Committee



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Update from the Parish Wardens

Linda and Revd. Sue and their teams are to be congratulated on the Children and Families work. The Junction and St. Alphege All Age Services are going well, together with the good attendance at Messy Church and it has been particularly exciting to see the Sunday Club at St. Helen's on the 4th Sunday of the month flourishing. All this is encouraging as is Solihull Parish Youth which we reported on last month.

In January, Churches Together held a Unity Service at St. Augustine's led by Fr. Dominic and the challenging sermon on the Good Samaritan was given by Pastor Johnny from the Renewal Centre.

Vespers, the following Sunday at St Alphege, was a fitting and joyful time of worship for the end of Epiphany.

As you receive this, Lent will be underway and we will be looking forward to Holy Week and Easter where just some highlights will be Palm Sunday Services with some interesting new features, a reenactment of Jesus's Maundy Thursday evening in St. Michael's Garden, and an *Agape Meal* at St Helen's. Good Friday Services will include the *Walk of Witness* in the Town, and a *Tenebrae Service* at St Helen's, and Easter Sunday will start with a Dawn service in St. Michael's Garden. There will also be the usual, more formal, choral services at St. Alphege. Please do have a look at the leaflet of services and events, and do take advantage of these opportunities to worship God and deepen your faith in Him.

We postponed the start of the *Alpha Course* and you will see elsewhere that we are holding an *Alpha Taster Supper Evening* on 6th March prior to the start of the Alpha series in April. Do encourage people to come to the Taster Evening to see what it is all about.

Following last month's update, we can report that on the maintenance front, the P.C.C. and St. Alphege D.C.C. have agreed that, in addition to the work on the face of the St. Alphege clock already put in hand, the mechanism will be repaired in the Spring so that the chimes and the striking will work again and the clock will be given a complete service. The churchyard wall, significantly damaged by a car going into it last July, should now have been completely repaired.

We are delighted to report that the Birmingham D.A.C. has recommended our new lighting application (for the proposed new lighting scheme in St. Alphege Church) for approval to the Chancellor, so Phase 1 of Project Turnaround can hopefully begin in earnest. The work will probably take place between June and August.

It is also encouraging that members of Solihull M.B.C.'s Public Realm Directorate, and their Community Development Team / Economy & Infrastructure Directorate have approached us with a view to work together, to discuss plans, and to see how we can work together in partnership.

District Church Council Annual General Meetings will be starting in March, and we are looking for people to volunteer to be nominated to stand for election to the D.C.C.s and P.C.C. and to be Deputy Wardens. Please do consider putting your names forward for these important positions.

The work on the review of the Parish Structure is continuing. The working party reported to the P.C.C. meeting in January and their report is now being considered by the individual D.C.C.s prior to the P.C.C. considering it again at their special meeting early in April.

Thanks again for all the work being carried out in the Parish and please keep praying for aspects and needs of which you are aware.

**Pam Price
Andrew Williams
February 2024**



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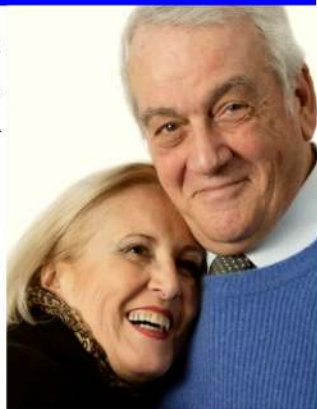
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A Down's Syndrome Family

Richard Hughes and his family are members of Knowle Church, but quite often worship with us at St. Helen's. Richard was asked to write something about himself for the Knowle magazine and we thought it would be nice to include it in ours too.

Quotes by Richard:

'It's not important whether you have Down's Syndrome or not, you still can be a very nice person.'

'Everybody is good at different things, we are not all the same, God made us. Down's Syndrome people can do well in things if they set their mind to it. They can act in films, play music etc'.

What I like doing:

- Go Karting
- Playing table tennis
- Playing the piano & keyboard
- Playing the bagpipes (unfortunately I can't play it at present as it takes too much puff). I last played at Elmdon church when the Mayor etc. came for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee
- Going to theme parks and going on the fierce rides
- Going on holidays
- Pestering parents and teasing my mother!
- Tracking down an actress in The Secret Garden - I have written three letters to her but she has not replied.
- Being taken out by friends and P.A.s



What I don't like doing:

- Eating gluten-free food (I'm a coeliac). I want to eat what I want.
- Washing up

The following has been written by Heather, Richard's mother

I have been asked to write what I would say to a new parent of a child with Down's Syndrome (DS). We have two children Richard (now 41) and Bethany (now 37) who have DS. Looking back to the time of Richard's babyhood I would have been amazed to have been told that one day he would be reading as well as writing (e.g. to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson to tell him it was time he finished the Covid Lockdown). He can play the piano and bagpipes, use computers, play table tennis, beat most people at draughts and enjoy lively outings. He has a good sense of humour and loves to tease people, especially his mother!

Over the years we have had to fight many battles for our children, especially for getting mainstream education. Richard was, as far as we know, the first child in Solihull with DS to go to a mainstream school (St. Alphege) and Bethany went on to Alderbrook School where she got 5 GCSEs grades C – F and, in her final year, she won the award for Student of the Year.

Children with DS, like the rest of us have different talents and abilities. The vast majority are able to achieve a lot more than people imagine. We have had to do a lot of work battling for extra support etc. in schools and give them help in learning to read and write. We also had to keep an eye on how the medical profession treated them. In hospital when Bethany was aged 10 months we were asked if we wanted her to have an intussusception operation. We asked what would happen if she didn't have one. They replied she would die!

Life with two children with DS has been exhausting but rewarded by giving and **receiving abundant love.**



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Hit and Myth

It is important, when reading the Bible, to realise that the people who wrote it, approximately between the years 900 B.C. and 120 A.D., were *not* writing history as we understand it. In the Western world, we have come to consider history as being more or less impartial, a written account of what happened in the past; as unbiased as, say, the BBC is supposed to be in disseminating the news and current affairs. By contrast, the Bible is totally biased from start to finish. It is a complex soup of fictional stories, plus ideas and opinions and beliefs, some positive, some negative. Often, these are contradictory, and indeed sometimes they can be cruel. Yet, in spite of that, the Bible is a book of faith, and for faith. It was once described as being written "from faith to faith": also, for Jews, Christians and many others, the saving Word of God can be discerned within it.

That much is evident. However, for many believers, what is not evident is that the Bible contains a staggering amount of myth. The influence of myth can be found in every one of the sixty-six books. It is seen in the stories, in the so-called historical books, in the poetry, and in the New Testament as well, including the Gospels. We know what a great storybook the Bible is: like me, you probably heard the stories as a child; Adam and Eve, Jacob and Esau, Noah's Ark, the Exodus from Egypt, David and Goliath, Jonah and the whale. Also, the New Testament stories about Jesus; his birth, his temptations, his teaching, his miracles, his death and resurrection. The Church has done a good job, teaching the stories, and, in its preaching, making them relevant.

What the Church, by and large, has failed to do is to give thoughtful guidance about the truth of these stories. Scholars and theologians have known for 200 years that the Bible should not be taken literally and requires interpretation. However, this has remained more or less an academic secret. Beyond academia, in frontline Church preaching and Bible study, many Christian ministers tend to fudge the issue, and ordinary lay Christians tend to accept the Scriptures at face value. In particular, we have not been taught how to recognise and to understand the meaning and power of myth. I want to focus now on just one example out of many, the myth of 'promised land.'

Palestine

Geographically, Israel is a modern construct. Historically, the area of land that borders the Eastern Mediterranean and extends eastwards to somewhere beyond the river Jordan has always been known as Palestine. The name "Palestine" comes from ancient Egyptian, and means "neighbours." In ancient times, the area was known by this name to the other two great powers that adjoined it, Assyria to the north and Mesopotamia to the east. Tribal groups and nomadic peoples occupied it variously over the centuries and millennia B.C., with 'exoduses' and settlings happening all the time. No doubt there was continual squabbling and conflict over bits of land. The Old Testament hints at that, as well as recording incursions by the northern and eastern powers, probably to keep this vital trade link open towards Egypt and the South. The origin and meaning of the name "Israel" are obscure. You can check it out in Wikipedia.

During the time between 1000 and 500 B.C., some of the scholarly settlers created the myth that the strip of land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean had been 'promised' by God to a select number of tribal settlers in perpetuity. So powerful was this myth that a sort of self-governing state came into being in the area around 500 B.C. They tried hard to live the myth, but it never really worked. Israel always had to exist under the domination of greater powers, successively Persian, Greek and finally Roman. It all came to a violent conclusion with the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-136 A.D).

However, in this precarious and sometimes turbulent 'neighbourhood', two seeds were planted which eventually would affect the whole world. First, a growing vision and understanding that God was One, and ineffable; not a multiplicity of beings made visible in effigies. Second, that 'neighbourliness' in the best sense was superior to power-structures in getting human beings to live together in some sort of harmony and peace. In the Bible, the first, visionary, seed is evident here and there in the poetic and prophetic writings, as well as in the New Testament. The second seed, neighbourliness, is evident in many of the law-codes in the first five books of the Old Testament, and from time to time in the New Testament. Paramount in the teaching is the requirement to care for people who are weak and vulnerable; widows, orphans, destitute foreigners, the unemployed or unemployable. This teaching is echoed repetitively by the prophets.

What is interesting from the Christian perspective is the dialogue between Jesus and the Scribe in Mark 12 verses 28-34. The Scribe begins by asking a standard catechism question: "Which is the most important Commandment?" He gets two for the price of one! One: love God with everything you've got. Two: love your neighbour as much as yourself. The Scribe endorses this emphatically: read the verses yourself. Luke has another take on the same question in chapter 10 verses 25-28. This time, it unlocks the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Promised land is a myth. It seems to me to be obscure. Promised land could be interpreted as Planet Earth; a land that is given as a home for God's human creation in which, or on which, we are to learn to live as 'neighbours,' without resorting to violence in futile attempts to sort out our differences. In other words, take the 'Hit' out of 'Hit and Myth.' Wise governance must be based on good theology; and theologians need to do more to help the Church and society in this respect, especially in times of change and uncertainty.

Revd. Martin Tunnicliffe



S t A l p h e e
All Age Eucharist
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- with Fr Andrew Hutchinson.

Thursday 21st March : 10.30am in church. *MU Corporate Eucharist.*

Thursday 4th April : 1.30pm in the OBH. *Antiphospholipid Syndrome*

- a talk by Phil Godfrey.

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Carol Caldicott
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