

SOLIHULL
PARISH



NEWS



No. 555

APRIL 2024

PRICE £1.00

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 14th April
11.00 a.m. Choral Eucharist 14th April
5.00 p.m. Evensong, not on 28th April

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 7th and 21st April
9.15 a.m. Junction on Zoom on Sunday 28th April

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 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

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THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Visit our Website

www.solihullparish.org.uk

Want to email the Editor?
parishnews@solihullparish.org.uk

Cover picture

"Flower cross made by Diana Austen of St. Michael's for joint worship with St. Helen's two years ago.

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Goldfinches and Rats

At times entertainment better than any of the myriad TV channels available is to sit and look through the conservatory window at the birds visiting the feeders we have set up. Even in an urban setting like ours, the beauty and variety of the species visiting the garden is wonderful. The downside though is that the bird feeders can also attract rats. Do we stop feeding the birds to be completely sure there are no visits from the rodents, or do we turn a blind eye and risk being overrun by pests?

The garden issue is perhaps indicative of a greater dilemma facing human relationships. How do we balance love, mercy and forgiveness with the need for justice and opposition to all that is evil? It's easy for us when thinking of our own sins and errors to ask God to be merciful and forgiving but maybe we are less inclined to seek mercy for those who sin against us. *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* eventually results in all of us blind and needing dentures! When I was teaching, we sometimes said that certain parents wanted the school to have the highest possible standards of behaviour and firm sanctions and discipline when any pupil stepped out of line, except of course when it applied to their own child.

Rabbi Levi wrote *"If you desire the world to endure there can be no strict justice, while if you desire strict justice, the world cannot endure. Yet you hold the cord by both ends."*

More recently, the Irish singer Joshua Burnside has this chorus in his song **26th Street**

*When the lightning strikes
When the lion roars
When the tulips bloom
Is it all paid for?
Is someone keeping score?
Is there a balance sheet?
Was it all paid for on 26th Street, yeah?
When the choir sings
When the eagle soars
When the day breaks
When must the blood pour?
Is there a balance sheet?
Or was it all paid for on 26th Street?*

(From the album EPHRATA by Joshua Burnside. Lyrics reproduced by kind permission)

Forgiveness costs, at a personal and international level, but who pays?

In a most profound way, we see Jesus on the cross holding out pierced hands and taking hold of justice and mercy. Out of love for a broken world Jesus bears himself the consequences of human sin and evil. Like a dressing on an infected wound drawing out the poison, Jesus brings healing and wholeness by bearing all that harms and destroys.

The Hebrew word translated in our Bibles as *"forgive"* is actually the ordinary verb for carry. When God forgives instead of making us carry the full consequences for our wrongdoing forever, he carries them himself. On the cross justice and mercy meet, where God does not simply turn a blind eye to evil and sweeps it under the carpet but instead overpowers evil with love.

The resurrection of Jesus means this dynamic of love overcoming evil is let loose in the whole universe.

How do we want God to be God? We want him to overcome all that is evil and wrong, but we want him to show love, mercy and kindness.

This Easter as we lament our own failings and as we are grieved when sin appears unpunished; when we are angered at the rank unfairness in life and as we look at all the seemingly intractable international conflicts may we above all see and experience afresh both the holy justice and limitless love of the risen Christ. Even death cannot defeat His loving purposes for us and the whole world.

*Christ carried the burden
of our sins.
He was nailed to the cross,
so we would stop sinning
and start living right.
By his cuts and bruises
you are healed.*

(1Peter 2.24 Contemporary English Version)

Happy Easter!

Rev. Roger Chamberlain

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Roundabout

Want to Know What Is Going on?

**Come and join us at the St. Alphege Annual General Meeting
7.30 p.m. Tuesday 16th April 2024, Oliver Bird Hall**

The A.G.M. is an important event in the life of the church, it enables members of St. Alphege's congregations to ask questions and learn about what has been happening over the past twelve months and what the plans are for the future. It is also the occasion where we elect officers to serve on the District Church Council (D.C.C.). This year the vacancies for election include the following posts: Deputy Warden, Deanery Synod Representative (see below), 5 members of the District Church Council and nominees who will serve on the Parochial Church Council (P.C.C.) along with members from St. Helen's and St. Michael's.

It is important to have representation from **all** St. Alphege congregations on the Church Council i.e. from worshippers attending Morning Prayer through to Evensong and services held in the O.B.H. e.g. The Junction. We also need a diverse council; with **all** ages and backgrounds included. Matters discussed at Council meeting can affect **all** aspects of St. Alphege and actions resulting from any decisions taken are most effective when every cohort of the church family is represented. The term of office for an elected member to the D.C.C. is 3 years and meetings are held once every 2 months. **Can you help our Mission and stand for election to ensure all views are taken into account?**

To be eligible to stand for election, you must have been on the St. Alphege section of the Electoral Roll for at least 6 months (at the date of the A.G.M.) and be proposed and seconded by persons who are also on the Roll. The forms for anyone wishing to stand for election should be completed and returned to either the Deputy Wardens (Susan Gomm/Sheila Sayers) or the Parish Office.

The Electoral Roll is a statutory document. To be entered on it you must have returned a completed form (obtainable from the Parish Office) stating that you are baptised and that you either reside within the Parish or have been a regular attendee at public worship within the parish for the previous 6 months. If you are in any doubt as to whether you are on the Electoral Roll or wish to have any questions about the vacancies, please contact Sheila Sayers on 07507 683639.

Deanery Synod: in 2020 the new Deanery of Solihull and Yardley was formed. This was a bringing together of 2 existing deaneries and is now a group of 24 parishes stretching from St. Peter, Balsall Common in the east to All Saints, Small Heath in the west with our own Revd. Nick Parker previously serving as the full time Area Dean before becoming our Rector designate last September. There are currently 2 vacancies (out of 6 parish positions) from St. Alphege D.C.C. to join the Deanery Synod for a 2-year tenure. The Synod meets on 3 evenings a year and recent agendas have included items on *Living in Love and Faith*, interfaith work in the Deanery, Anna Chaplaincy, racial justice and how we can work together to achieve Carbon Net Zero in our diocese by 2030. If you are interested in being more informed about current issues in the wider C. of E. and in having an opportunity to contribute to the debate, then please consider offering to be one of our parish reps. The elections will take place at the District Church Council A.G.M. If you would like more information about being on the Deanery Synod, please speak to Deirdre Moll on 0121 705 3271 or email her on d.moll@usa.net

A warm invitation to the A.G.M. is extended to all members of the congregation.

Come and join us.

Julia Hanson
Secretary

Roundabout

Shine Youth Charity

Shine Youth is a Solihull charity that provides listening, 1:1 mentoring and group support to 11 – 18 year-olds experiencing mental health and wellbeing difficulties, like anxiety and bereavement. The Charity is fundraising to continue and expand this work as it is in high demand in Solihull secondary schools and also at their *Youth Wellbeing Café* in Shirley. The next fundraising event will be on **Sunday 21st April**, a **Sunday Afternoon Tea**, with delicious homemade cakes, to be enjoyed in the beautiful **Wren Hall**. This Sunday Tea will be from **2 – 5 p.m.** Wren Hall is in School Lane, Wroxall, Warwick Road CV 35 7NE not far from Knowle. Plenty of free parking is available. We look forward to seeing you!

www.shineyouth.org.uk



SUNDAY TEA

Fundraising for

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SUNDAY 21 APRIL 2 - 5PM
WREN HALL, SCHOOL LANE
WROXALL, CV35 7NE
www.shineyouth.org.uk



Testimonial
★★★★★

"Thank you so much for how you have helped me over the last few months. You have helped me through some of the worst times in my life and for that I am so grateful!"

15 year old girl about their weekly Pastoral Mentoring

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Roundabout



Inclusion and Stewardship

Towards a More Inclusive Church

At our recent Church Council meeting we warmly welcomed the decision by the General Synod of the Church of England to allow pastoral use of *Prayers of Love and Faith*. As society has come to recognise the diversity of human identity around issues of gender, sexuality and relationships, it becomes increasingly clear that this diversity echoes the richness of God's creation and that we have a duty to celebrate all that reflects the breadth of God's goodness and love. Whilst further national agreement is needed before we are able to hold stand-alone marriage blessings for same-sex couples, we look forward to that possibility, and in the meantime are pleased to discuss what we can offer – in the light of a resource that is designed for a wide-range of situations, and which allows for a good degree of creativity in worship. To find out more please contact the Parish Office who will put you in touch with a member of our ministry team.

And a note on the Rainbow

It is curious that the LGBT movement has adopted the rainbow as its symbol. This dates back to 1978 when the pride flag was created by artist Gilbert Baker who gave each of the eight stripes its own meaning. To him this 'flag in the sky' was a natural place to turn when thinking about the spectrum of human sexuality and relationships. More recently we may have noticed a variation most often called the pride 'diversity flag' which seeks to recognise the often-overlooked role of people of colour in fighting for justice and equality – the triangular shape indicating a sense of movement or progress. Of course, for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim peoples, the rainbow is something we equate with Noah and God's promise of mercy. We may see the two coming together in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's 'Rainbow People of God' – a vision celebrating both our diversity and essential unity as God's children – each one of us dependent on God's mercy and grace. We may also wish to note that, scientifically speaking, the whole spectrum is an essential part of what we simply know as light – the universal symbol of truth, hope, and love.

Stewardship

Giving back to God



In April we will focus in various ways on Stewardship, that is how we are called to offer everything we have – our time, our talent, and our treasure – in the service of God from whom all good things come. With annual meetings and elections to District Church Councils and Parish Church Council looming, now is a good time to ask ourselves if God may be calling us to serve in this way. And please pray that we would find the right people to stand for vital posts including Parish Treasurer and District/Deputy Churchwardens. Whilst committees are not for everyone, they do play an important part in helping to shape our strategy and vision so that we may continue to proclaim the Gospel afresh to this generation in ways that are relevant and engaging. To do this effectively we need to draw as broadly as possible. Looking ahead we also expect to celebrate volunteer week (3rd – 9th June), recognising that our various parish ministries and mission can only thrive when people volunteer in a whole multitude of ways. As we prepare to make these 'asks' let me say, on behalf of us all, how very grateful I am to the many who already volunteer with great diligence, most often quietly and without seeking acclaim or thanks. I pray that such service may be a joy, offer fulfilment, and allow us to walk more closely with God – recalling the words of Bishop Michael at his inaugural service, who reminded us that our works will only bear fruit and have lasting value when we, the branches, abide in the vine which is Jesus Christ.

**Revd. Nick
Priest-in-Charge (Rector Designate)**



Crafty People – We Need You!

We are planning to host a poppy installation at St. Alphege Church in Solihull for Remembrance Sunday 2024, and we need as many poppies as possible!

(Knitted or crocheted.)

(Patterns are available if you need one.)

See **Ann Bocock** (Knit & Natter at the Greville Arms, fortnightly on Monday evenings) OR **Suzette Maguire** (Wellbeing Wednesday at the Greville Arms, every Wednesday morning or call

0121 7090884 for more details.

Drop off points to be confirmed.

Parish Pancake Party

On Saturday 9th February, Mothers' Union hosted the annual Parish Pancake Party in the OBH. It was good to see so many young families there and it was a great evening of fun and friendship.

We had races for tiny tots and then the serious races for the trophy.



Nick at full pelt!

The Mothers' Union team put up a valiant fight but was defeated in the quarter finals. The winning team was *MU Generation Z* – children of M.U. members.

There was a children's tombola, a cake stall, a bar and a pancake supper. Well done Revd. Nick for a fine pancake tossing performance, but alas not a winning one.

Thank you to Andy Hodkinson who organised the races, to all the helpers, and to everyone who came.

We made a total of £314.50 for M.U. funds.

Mothers' Union has been running the pancake party for well over thirty years! We'll be back again next year.



Lent Lunch

On Thursday 7th March, Mothers' Union members enjoyed a time of fellowship over a Lent Lunch of soup and bread rolls. After lunch, Fr. Andrew led us in a meditation. His talk was about God's bounty and he illustrated his talk with paintings of *the Wedding at Cana* by Giotto and an allegorical painting, *Winter Landscape* by Casper David Friedrich. We ended the meeting with tea/coffee and cakes.

Susan Leach



Winter Landscape



Wedding at Cana

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Let us Pray

Calendar and Prayer Intentions for April

1	Monday in Easter Week	Just Explore course	Beechnut Lane
2	Tuesday in Easter Week	The sick and suffering	Beechwood Park Road
3	Wednesday in Easter Week	Our parish youth work	Berkswell Close
4	Thursday in Easter Week	Local workers and employers	Berry Hall Lane
5	Friday in Easter Week	Prisoners and prison staff	Billingham Close
6	Saturday in Easter Week	Action on climate change	Billsmore Green
7	Easter 2	Hostages and those detained without trial	Birch Tree Grove
8	Annunciation of Our Lord to the BVM	The Mothers' Union	Bisbrook Croft
9	Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pastor, Martyr, 1945	All who have suffered for resisting oppression and injustice	Blackthorne Close
10	William Law, Spiritual Writer, 1761	Spiritual directors and writers	Blossomfield Road
11	George Selwyn, First Bishop of New Zealand, 1878	The Church in New Zealand	Blythe Way
12	Feria	Vocations to the priesthood	Blythewood Close
13	Feria	Bishop Anne	Boulton Road
14	Easter 3	St Alphege Junior and Infant Schools	Bourne Close
15	Feria	Medical staff and chaplains	Bowercourt Close
16	Isabella Gilmore, Deaconess, 1923	Our Parish children's work	Bradmore Close
17	Feria	The mission of Solihull Parish	Bramcote Drive
18	Feria	Church volunteers	Brandon Road
19	Alphege, Abp. of Canterbury, Martyr, 1012	The Diocese of Canterbury	Branthill Croft
20	Feria	Racial Justice and Reconciliation	Brick Kiln Lane
21	Easter 4	St Alphege Pre-School	Broad Oaks Road
22	Feria	Vocations to lay ministry	Broomfields Avenue
23	George, Martyr, Patron of England, c.304	The evangelisation of England	Broomfields Close
24	The Seven Martyrs of the Melanesian Brotherhood, 2003	Anglican Martyrs for the Faith; the Church in the Pacific	Broomfields Farm Road
25	Mark the Evangelist	The Church in Egypt	Brown's Coppice Avenue
26	Feria	The homeless and SCAH	Brueton Avenue
27	Christina Rosetti, Poet, 1894	Christian poets and hymnwriters	Bryanston Road
28	Easter 5	Bishop Michael	Bufferys Close
29	Catherine of Siena, Teacher, 1380	The Church in Italy	Buryfield Road
30	Pandita Ramabai, Translator of the Scriptures, 1922	Scripture translators and commentators	Bushell Drive

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

From the St. Alphege Register

Baptisms

None

Weddings

None

Funerals

1st March Geoffrey Chaplin
4th March Kathleen Biddle
22nd March Christina Weale

Interment of Ashes

None

Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in April

Leslie Brotherton pr.	Neville Freeth	Bob Maw
Terence Butt	Eric Greasley	Vivien Soden
Arthur Owen Caldicott	Wilfred Gregory	Margaret Stenhouse
Eileen Edwards	Burmah Hall	John Wallis
Joyce Eyre	John Harrison	Mark Warrior
Mabel Florance	John Keyte	David William Wyldes

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:

[**QBHBookings@solihullparish.org.uk**](mailto:QBHBookings@solihullparish.org.uk)

Worship Notes for April

All of April this year falls within Eastertide, which continues to celebrate Our Lord's Resurrection and leads on next month to Ascensiontide and Pentecost. The Gospel readings for the principal Sunday services are largely taken from John. They recall some of Our Lord's post-resurrection appearances and also recount some of our Lord's statements during his lifetime about himself and his mission. The first lessons are all taken from the early chapters of Acts and give accounts of the testimony of the disciples in the period immediately after Pentecost. The second lessons are taken from the First Letter of John. One of the main themes of this letter is what are the reliable signs of a life really lived in fellowship with God.

Apart from the Sundays in Eastertide, there are a number of other festivals which we celebrate in April.

Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary – 8th April (transferred)

We recall the account in Luke when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary telling her that she had been chosen by God to give birth to the Messiah.

St. Alphege-19th April

Patron of our Parish Church. Martyred by the Danes in 1012 for refusing to allow a ransom for his release to be raised from his impoverished flock. Alphege is celebrated as suffering for social justice and for promoting the reconciliation of divided peoples.

St. George – 23rd April

Patron saint of England and Roman soldier thought to have suffered martyrdom for refusing to recant his faith. Probably died under the Great Persecution of Diocletian in Lydda, modern Israel; also the patron saint of Georgia, Ethiopia, and many other countries.

St. Mark - 25th April

Traditional author of the second and probably first of the Gospels to be written down. Claimed to have been the disciple of Peter and founder of the See of Alexandria, Egypt. His symbol is a winged lion. Patron of Venice and of finances.

Stephen Linstead

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

3 rd April	No recital (Easter holidays)
10 th April	Elizabeth Khoo – piano duets
17 th April	Ewan Murray and Michelle Amezcua
24 th April	Simon Watterton - piano

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April 2024 Services

Wednesday 3rd April

St. Michael 10.00 a.m. Eucharist

Thursday 4th April

St. Alphege 10.30 a.m. Eucharist

Sunday 7th April – 1st Sunday after Easter

St. Alphege 8.00 a.m. Eucharist
O.B.H. 9.15 a.m. The Junction
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 10th April

St. Michael 10.00 a.m. Eucharist

Thursday 11th April

St. Alphege 10.30 a.m. Eucharist

Sunday 14th April – 2nd Sunday after Easter

St. Alphege 8.00 a.m. 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 17th April

St. Michael 10.00 a.m. Eucharist

Thursday 18th April

St. Alphege 10.30 a.m. Eucharist



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>

Sunday 21st April – 3rd Sunday after Easter

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Eucharist
O B.H.	9.15 a.m.	The Junction
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 24th April

St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
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Thursday 25th April

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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Sunday 28th April – 4th Sunday after Easter

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Eucharist
Zoom	9.15 a.m.	The Junction
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	4.00 p.m.	

N.B. Deanery Service of Welcome for Bishop Michael

<p>You're invited to Alpha.</p>	<p>For the explorers, open-minded, still thinking, curious.</p> 	<h3 style="color: #0070c0;">Alpha Course in Solihull Parish</h3> <p>Here is a List of the Sessions. Wednesdays 7.30 p.m.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Session 1</td> <td>Is There More To Life Than This</td> <td>April 10th</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Session 2</td> <td>Who Is Jesus?</td> <td>April 17th</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Session 3</td> <td>Why Did Jesus die?</td> <td>April 24th</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Session 4</td> <td>How Can I Have Faith?</td> <td>May 1st</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Session 5</td> <td>Why And How Do I Pray?</td> <td>May 8th</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Session 6</td> <td>Who Is The Holy Spirit? What Does The Holy Spirit Do?</td> <td>Saturday May 18th 10 a.m.-3 p.m.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Session 7</td> <td>How Does God Guide Us?</td> <td>May 22nd</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Session 8</td> <td>Why & How Should I Read The Bible</td> <td>June 5th</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Session 9</td> <td>How Can I Make The most Of The Rest Of My Life?</td> <td>June 12th</td> </tr> </table>	Session 1	Is There More To Life Than This	April 10 th	Session 2	Who Is Jesus?	April 17 th	Session 3	Why Did Jesus die?	April 24 th	Session 4	How Can I Have Faith?	May 1 st	Session 5	Why And How Do I Pray?	May 8 th	Session 6	Who Is The Holy Spirit? What Does The Holy Spirit Do?	Saturday May 18 th 10 a.m.-3 p.m.	Session 7	How Does God Guide Us?	May 22 nd	Session 8	Why & How Should I Read The Bible	June 5 th	Session 9	How Can I Make The most Of The Rest Of My Life?	June 12 th
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Session 8	Why & How Should I Read The Bible	June 5 th																											
Session 9	How Can I Make The most Of The Rest Of My Life?	June 12 th																											
<p>Start Date - Wednesday 10th April 2024 Time - 7.30pm - then Wednesdays after that.</p> <p>Where - St Helen's Church, B91 2DA.</p> <p>Alpha is a series of group conversations that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith in an open, friendly environment. Everyone's welcome. Whatever your background or beliefs, you're invited.</p> <p>To sign up or find out more,</p> <p>Email alpha@solihullparish.org.uk</p> <p>Or ring Parish Office - 0121 705 5350</p> <p>www.solihullparish.org.uk</p>																													



The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church

By the time that you read this, I hope we will have had an enjoyable social gathering with our Coffee & Hot Cross Buns event on 21st March. Also, Easter will have come and gone.

We have a number of ideas for future events and will notify you in the Parish News, the Pew Slip and by email when details are arranged.

We still need at least one more Trustee as our Constitution insists on four. Even though we have one new recruit, with two of us standing down at the next A.G.M., that would leave only three. 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 in helping to maintain the structure of our ancient Parish Church, 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

The Church was floodlit to remember the following in 2024:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 6 th March | To commemorate the 15 th anniversary of the death of Fraser Mitchell.
In loving memory. |
| 7 th March | Jane Yarnold. In memory of a beloved wife, mum and grandma. |
| 10 th March | Loving and treasured memories of Charles Dennis Hancock. |
| 13 th March | In loving memory of Betty Hartley on the anniversary of her birthday. |
| 15 th March | In loving memory of a dear son and brother, Adrian Paul Cripps on the 4 th anniversary of his death. |
| 16 th March | In ever loving memory of David Francis Wright. |
| 16 th March | In loving memory of Stan Boulter. |
| 19 th March | Vera Yarnold. In memory of a dear mum, grandma and great-grandma. |
| 23 rd March | In loving memory of Harry Hartley, Rector of St Alphege. |
| 23 rd March | In loving memory of Jean McDonough. |

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Spotlight on Chorister Training

In this edition of Parish News, I'd like to highlight the wonderful training which our choristers receive on a weekly basis to further their musical and liturgical understanding. All choristers, from the very youngest who join the Junior Choir at age seven to those who join as teenagers, are able to access the *Voice for Life* training scheme. This is a *Royal School of Church Music (RSCM)* programme where choristers progress through different levels, all of which include core skills such as vocal skills, musical understanding, knowledge of repertoire, and liturgical context for the music we sing, and all at varying levels of difficulty. It is different to traditional music exams as there is an emphasis on the context of the music and the purpose of the choir within the church. Our very youngest choristers start with the White Level, and then progress through Light and Dark Blue, to then have the option of an externally-examined RSCM Singing Award. This would be the Bronze Award, and it gives endorsement of a chorister's achievements through a recognised and nationally-standardised award. After this, there is a red medal, an optional Silver Award exam, a yellow medal and the final exam for the Gold Award (which was formerly known as the St. Nicholas Award).



To help them work through *Voice for Life*, our choristers have regular teaching sessions with adults and older choristers helping them with music theory and liturgical knowledge. They also have access to regular one-to-one or small group teaching sessions with either Chris or Liam which is an amazing opportunity to work on singing technique.

It is always a huge pleasure to present awards to choristers who have completed a workbook and the associated tests to achieve their next level. We are grateful to the clergy who are always pleased to make presentations during services and really ensure the choristers feel valued and that their achievements are recognised.

I'll give the final word to the famous composer John Rutter who has this to say about the *Voice for Life* scheme: *'Singing lies at the heart of worship. Voice for Life has a valuable part to play in giving life and soul to us all as we worship and learn.'*

Isabel Baumber

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As St. Helen's prepares for Easter, the Services planned will be:-

Palm Sunday. We shall have the Passion Reading from Mark's Gospel and also a visit from the Parish Puppets, as well as the Sunday Club.

Maundy Thursday 7 p.m. Parish Agape Meal – a fellowship meal, following the practice of the early church, at St. Helen's with Revd. Nick Parker. **Booking essential for catering purposes.** Please email carringtons.church@gmail.com or speak to Chris for more information (0121 705 0902).

Good Friday 10.45 a.m. - Churches together in Central Solihull Walk of Witness starting at St. Augustine's Church, ending at St. Alphege Church, followed by hot cross buns and refreshments in the Oliver Bird Hall.

7.30 p.m. Tenebrae - a service of light and shade in St. Helen's Chapel.

Easter Saturday 9.30 a.m. Parish Quiet Morning at St. Helen's. What it means to explore a Holy Saturday Church (registration essential - please email s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk)

The **St. Helen's Annual District Church Meeting** will be held on **Sunday 14th April**, following the Morning Service. This is an important event in the life of our Church when the District Church Council officers are elected. If you are interested in standing for the D.C.C., please speak with either Chris Carrington or Sand Cooper. Nomination forms are available from sand.cooper@outlook.com.

As this will be the last St. Helen's page written by myself, can I thank everyone in St. Helen's for their help and assistance during my 7 years as Warden, (3.5 years as the only Warden), sometimes turbulent, sometimes very fulfilling. In addition I have also stood down from being the Buildings and Plant Chair for the Parish.

I intend to carry on my fundraising for APS (in memory of Christine), and for Potters Village Kisoro, which very firmly occupies a place in my heart.

Can I also give a big thank you to all the priests who have given assistance to St. Helen's, plus, of course, everyone in St. Helen's who helps in so many ways to the smooth running of the Church.

Thank you all once again.

Phil Godfrey
Warden

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Lenten Observance with a Difference

During Lent at St. Michael's Chapel a good group of us from all the churches across the parish embarked on a Lenten journey with a difference. Under Fr. Simon's careful leadership, we found that art becomes a powerful tool for deepening our understanding and connection with God. Using art examples from Sister Wendy Beckett's book *The Art of Lent* using her insightful commentary we found that the use of art paintings can serve as a pathway to encountering the sacred.

During Lent, we are invited to contemplate the suffering, sacrifice, and redemption of Christ. Art offers us a visual language to engage with themes such as silence where we looked at *Woman in Pink* by Rembrandt which helped us to explore the idea of profound silence. This beautifully contrasted with Bruegel's depiction of *The Tower of Babel* about which Sister Wendy's commentary says, 'What silence principally armours us against is Babel, the endless foolish chatter, words used to confound thought, words misused to ward off friendship...'

Over the weeks of Lent other themes were explored as we looked at various works of art, thankfully, at least for some of us, no previous knowledge of these works of art was required, we just let the paintings speak for themselves and we also heard Sister Wendy's commentary on each one to help our journey through Lent.

This has certainly been a journey with a difference and many thanks to Fr. Simon for introducing such a meaningful way to enrich our spiritual practices and draw us closer to the divine presence.

Distant Voices

Our music group from St. Michael's have recorded many lovely hymns over the past few years under the name *Distant Voices*. These recordings began during Covid and have continued. The latest offerings are two Taizé chants, *Eat this Bread* sung by Anne-Marie, and *Bless the Lord* sung by Fr. Simon. The music group now play regularly at St. Michael's on the first Sunday of the month at the Eucharist and enhances the worship considerably.

I wish you a very Happy and Blessed Easter.

References: To find *Distant Voices* visit <https://www.youtube.com/@distantvoices4757>

The Art of Lent by Sister Wendy Beckett published by SPCK Publishing.

Paul Smith



CHURCH 4 FAMILIES

April

Sunday Worship

St Alphege

On **7th April** 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 **14th April** everyone will meet in the church building at 9.15am for a special **All age worship** service with the worship band.

On **21st April** the Junction will meet **IN PERSON** at 9.15am in the Oliver Bird Hall

On **28th April** the Junction will meet **ON ZOOM**

(Contact Linda l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk to register to receive the zoom link)

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 28th April St Helen's Sunday club will meet during the 10am service with an exciting action packed session for children age 0-11

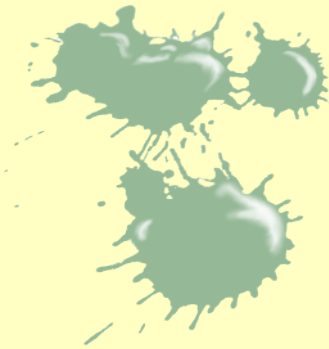
St Michael

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.

Other Activities

Friday 19th April **Messy Church** St Helen's Church 4-6pm

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



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!

WHEN?

4pm until 6pm on Friday 19th April,
17th May, 21st June and 19th July

WHERE?

St Helen's Church, St Helen's Road,
B91 2DA (off Buryfield Road)

WHO?

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.





First Communion



At the heart of worship in the Solihull Parish is the celebration of the meal which Jesus and his disciples shared on the night before he died - the Last Supper.

13 children in the Parish are currently preparing to receive their First Communion.

The children were welcomed during the All age service on 11 February and they will be attending 6 fun and interactive preparation sessions before they are admitted to receive Holy Communion at a special all age service known as First Communion Sunday at St Alphege church at 9.15am on Sunday 12 May.

During the preparation sessions the children take part in lots of different activities including: talking about why they have chosen to do the First Communion course and sharing any worries or concerns, playing parachute games where everyone works together as a team, making a clay chalice, learning about Baptism and learning about the Last Supper.

Please do pray for the children as they continue with their preparation sessions.



Prams to Preschool -



Praise and Play

Every Friday in the main Hall of the Oliver Bird Hall
9.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.

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

A time of fun and fellowship for all.



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 is 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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Don't Tell the Bumble Bees!

Have you heard the rumour that bumble bees are not aerodynamic and therefore cannot fly? I don't think the bees have and, to be honest, I'm really rather glad. One of my most enduring and relaxing memories from summers gone by is that of sitting reading on our garden bench, back in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. Where that bench was, I was hidden from all the world except for the bumble bees buzzing all around me as they went about their business. It was blissful.

Another thing that cannot happen – according to my gardener-husband and all his books on the subject – is that a cutting that is in flower will not root. Apparently, if you want to take a cutting to get it to root and grow another plant, then you need to take one that is not in flower. However, just like the bees, the plants themselves don't seem to adhere to this rule, as all the cuttings in our house at one time rooted successfully – flower and all! (The first two happened by accident – the second two because we couldn't believe it happened with the first two, so we set it all up again!)

So, where is all this taking us?

Well, as I write this Lent has just begun. By the time you are reading it will be over with again for another year. But I am hoping that we can take at least some of the learning that we had along the way with us into the rest of this year and beyond.

In the Lenten daily readings' booklet, *Watch & Pray*, some of us were reminded about something important in God's world. You see, we began with 'waiting in darkness'.

There is a long and unfortunate convention – in the Christian tradition and beyond it – of associating darkness and hiddenness only with evil, fear, and danger. Simplistic notions that light exclusively represents truth, holiness, goodness, and godliness – and darkness always their opposites – limit the wonderful ways in which we can encounter the beauty and majesty of God across the diversity of our world.

We may recognise this as the fact that, right from being children, we are taught that darkness is, if not bad, not somewhere anything good happens. The 'good guys' wear white and the 'bad guys' wear black. Plus, there are shadows in the corners - and who-knows-what under the bed - that are simply not a concern in the light of day.

However, as we have already alluded to, in our daily readings at the start of Lent we were invited to wait expectantly for God, and to draw on Black Spirituality in search of new wisdom and hope even in times of struggle and trial. We began that journey waiting with – and *searching for* – God in darkness.

We were introduced to the Black Spiritual practice of "tarrying" (waiting) as a community to draw closer to Jesus and to each other. Combining exuberant singing, fervent prayer and quiet lament, such services take place at night and can last for several hours. We were then invited to revisit the stories of God creating human beings "*from the dust of the earth*". And

to go even further back, to when – from *"the formless void"*– first the heavens and the earth are created, followed by human beings and all other creatures. Of course, the point being that *"this great work of God begins in the hidden and the unfathomable. Far from being bad, darkness is where God's most mighty work is done."*

Of course bumble bees can fly – even if by our human standards it is impossible. The original declaration that they couldn't fly came from people measuring bees against 'man-made' fixed-wing aircraft, and the wings on our bumble bees are much more complicated than that. We didn't make the bumble bees, God did!

And again, of course cuttings in flower can root. It is only us again measuring them by our human standards that say that they can't. After all, once again, we didn't make the plants – God did!

And finally then, of course the dark is not all bad: aside from God using the "formless void", we receive the most healing when we sleep, (not necessarily at night but with our eyes closed so we are 'dark' to the world), and seeds germinate in the dark and/or underground. *(You may be able to think of more exceptions to the 'dark is bad' unwritten rule.)*

According to Selina Stone, in her book *'Tarry Awhile'*, darkness can be *"consistent with confusion, difficulty and an inability to see."* *"This darkness, though painful, is also full of God's sustaining grace."* Remember, when we're tempted to be 'black and white' in our opinions and thereby anti-darkness, we don't set the parameters of possibility – *God does!*

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.*

(Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV)

Keep safe and thanks for listening!

Suzette

Christian Men Together

Our next **Christian Men Together Breakfast** is on Saturday 13th April at 9 a.m. at the Greville Arms when we welcome as our speaker, Wes Erpen who heads up *Birmingham City Mission*. We much look forward to hearing him, and enjoying breakfast together. Do come and join us. If you would like further information, please contact me via arwilliams399@gmail.com.

Andrew Williams

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Legendary Musical Works – And Some Re-adjustments

How to account for them in the light of spirit and material – and how to

The standard model current in society is that of the cosmic watchmaker: seeing Divine influence in the creation of the work of art, but not in the development and re-creation of it. Thus God is the inspirer of Tallis's *40 part motet*, Allegri's *Miserere* and Bach's *B minor Mass*; but is not involved in their subsequent manifestation, development, performance, or the effect it has on generations of listeners.

Disappointingly, in all these cases, the received, traditional understanding of their creation, how they originally came into being, and how they came to our contemporary ears, is far from legendary. Probably no young Mozart transcribing from memory in Allegri's case, and no Papal ban; no complete first performance in either a Lutheran or even a Catholic mass in Bach's case; and no liturgical opportunity in Tallis's case.

How legends surround a work of art is a matter of great interest: articles, books and even movies – the totality of which has all been very useful in the received orthodoxy of the narrative of the history of music, which places 'landmarks' in our understanding – thus offering us the narrative we all learned at school, conservatoire and university. Then there are the subsequent articles and books, of greater or lesser interest, puncturing the myths and re-writing the narrative.

The usefulness of legends surrounding works of art to political regimes has and is still manifest for all to see – from Hitler's re-writing of art history, based in turn on Wagner's *Das Judentum in der Musik* of 1869:

<https://archive.org/details/WagnerRichardDasJudentumInDerMusik186941S./page/n1/mode/2up> - to the East German communist regime's assimilation of Bach as national hero (ignoring the totality of his choral music, 99% of which is on religious texts).

As to Divine intervention in performances of a work, be it a child in his or her first concert, (or even in the act of practising their instrument); or St. Paul's Cathedral Choir making a commercial recording of Allegri's *Miserere* under the dome – it would not be every Christian tradition that would see the hand of God here. Indeed, the belief in the activity of the Divine in everyday life is viewed with suspicion in some Christian circles, as if it's borderline fanatical.

However, that is indeed where I am going with this article.

Allegri's Miserere – a work of many revisions

Take the performances we have all heard that drew us into the beauty of Ivor Atkins's 1951 re-creation of Allegri's *Miserere* – whether in Latin or English. Without the soaring top C, approached by a rising fourth then magically descending by step, I maintain that we would hardly have noticed the piece, save for its liturgical usefulness in setting Psalm 51 for an appropriate liturgy on Ash Wednesday or in Holy Week. It will disappoint many to hear that this musical device was not part of the original composition. Allegri, moreover, based his setting on an earlier model.

'The result is strangely beautiful, and is probably here to stay. It is, after all, one of the most popular pieces of sacred music. However, it is neither a representation of the performance practice of the Sistine Chapel choir, nor a true reflection of how the pieces was ever sung there.' Quoted from Ben Byram-Wigfield 2016 in Ancient Groove Music:

<https://www.ancientgroove.co.uk/essays/sources.html#top>

But this in no way detracts from the effect on the listener, of something that has developed over the course of many years and many revisions by many people (including a notable

ment As To How We Regard Them

Orthodox Christianity accounts for them

transposition mistake by none other than Felix Mendelssohn!). The comments on YouTube to performances by *Voces8* and the *Tallis Scholars* bear witness to this effect, and in so doing, I maintain, bear witness to Divine agency: God the Trinity acting in our daily lives in beauty and love – what Jean Calvin called ‘*Common Grace*’.

The great Japanese conductor Masaaki Suzuki puts this very clearly in his interview with Damian Thompson in *The Spectator*: ‘*Calvin saw music as part of God’s creation in this world, part of the wonderful grace that He has sent for us, says Suzuki. It doesn’t need to be sung as worship to glorify God — and it doesn’t lose its spiritual power because the performers or the audience aren’t Christians.*’

I cannot leave this work without mentioning a probable event (if regarded by some musicologists as implausible) that initiated part of the legend: here is the 14 year old Mozart’s father Leopold in a letter home to his wife:

Roma, 14th aprilis, 1770.

We arrived safely here at midday on the 11th.¹ It would have been easier to convince me that I was on the way to Salzburg than to Rome, as we had to travel from Florence to Rome for 5 days in the most abhorrent rain and cold wind. [5] In Rome itself I learned that they had had constant rain for 4 months and we sampled this indeed because we went to the *Sistine* Chapel on Wednesday and Thursday in fine weather to hear the *Miserere*² in the early service and were caught in such an atrocious cloudburst on the way home [10] that our coats had never had such a baptism until this moment. I do not want to give you a long account of

You will often have heard perhaps of the famous *Miserere*¹¹ in Rome, which is so highly regarded that the chapel musicians are forbidden, under pain of *excommunication*, to take any of the parts out of the chapel or to give it to anybody. But we already have it. [50] Wolfgang has already written it down and we would have sent it to Salzburg with this letter but that our presence is necessary to perform it. Only the style of performance alone has to make a bigger contribution than the composition itself, so we will bring it home with us and, because it is one of the secrets of Rome, we do not want to entrust it to other hands [55] *ut non incurremus mediate vel immediate in Censuram Ecclesie*.¹²

The original may be read here:

<https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/briefe/letter.php?mid=737&cat=>

Bach’s Mass in B minor – a mere job application?

For most of us, we encounter this great work in a single performance – so long that sometimes there is even an interval. I doubt that any of my readers have experienced a liturgical performance of the whole mass – it takes 1 hour 30 minutes – just the music, without prayers, sermons and hymns!

But even when divorced from the liturgy, its sheer beauty and tremendous proportions are indeed legendary. But what of a unified ‘work of art’, composed as one single intention or commission, however long it might have taken? No, this is in no way the kind of scenario that one might imagine for Mozart or Beethoven’s great operas, concertos and symphonies, some equally legendary to many of us.

Continued on next page

Legendary Musical Works (Continued)

The first section Bach composed was the Sanctus, some eleven years before he began work on the Kyrie and Gloria. Then other parts of the work were compiled from other cantata works with entirely different texts, over the remaining 17 years of his life.

Moreover, the most monumental parts of this mass, the Kyrie and Gloria, were completed as a job application to Augustus III, King of Poland – during a period of mourning for his father Augustus II. Initially ignored, the application was eventually successful: as a non-resident Court Composer.

So does this detract from the 'greatness' of this work? I would maintain that, had it been a quarter of its length, thus useful as a liturgical mass, it would not have found its way into the concert hall (as its gradual reception through the curiosity and agency of C.P.E. Bach and Felix Mendelssohn had ensured its endurance beyond the 18th century). Moreover, its spiritual message would have remained within the four walls of the church, and not have enriched the lives of countless millions of concert-goers and domestic listeners.

For a subsequent article I will offer you a summary of the current research on Tallis's monumental motet of 40 voice parts, *Spem in Alium* – which seems to have been an answer to a challenge.

Conclusion

(Well, my conclusion anyway!)

Less legendary? No – MORE legendary, if we take on board the science and truth of God's interaction in history, culture, and in our concert going, liturgical performances and general musical encounters in our day to day lives – whether or not we believe Calvin's 'Common Grace'.

I would add, furthermore, that the church's own rejection of major works of liturgical music in favour of something more pragmatic, or, day I say it, easier – has resulted in it being gifted to the wider world.

We could say that, where the church has been reticent in spreading the Gospel, the Almighty has taken the first step. Thus we are used to hearing concert performances of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, where subsequent church authorities in 'enlightenment' Germany considered it too long, and too distasteful in its focus on our Lord's suffering.

Thomas Tallis: *Spem in Alium* - a motet in 40 voice parts

However we might imagine how this monumental work came into being, it stands as a testament to man's potential to conceive works of supreme beauty and ingenuity.

It stands head and shoulders above not only every composition in Europe at the time – not only in its vocal scale (works in 50 parts had been attempted, as well as others in 40 parts) – but on a level with Bach's *Art of Fugue* in complexity an unfathomable richness and, some would say, perfection.

And if the sheer beauty of hearing a good choir singing it is sufficient to impress us, there is another layer of wonder: numerical significance, as is the case in many of Bach's works. The number 14 occurs everywhere in Bach, and so too with Tallis: the number 68 – in each case, the sum of the numerical alphabet for each of their surnames. The motet is 68 bars long, that is, 68 'longs' (twice the length of a 'breve').

Chris Thomas
Director of Music



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Update from the Parish Wardens

As you read this Easter will be with us and we can rejoice in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and hopefully we have all learned a lot through the period of Lent.

We will welcome our new Bishop Michael Volland twice in the next few months. On Sunday 28th April, he comes to a welcome service from the Yardley and Solihull Deanery at 4 p.m. at St. Alphege. Then on Sunday 23rd June at 5 p.m. he will be taking the *Deanery Confirmation Service*, again at St. Alphege Church.

We have just enjoyed the tasty *Alpha Taster Supper*. This gave a good introduction to the *Alpha Course* and raised some questions about our lives and the Christian Faith. A good number have booked into the course starting on Wednesday 10th April at St. Helen's at 7.30 p.m. and there is still time for more people to book in. *Alpha* is a great opportunity for people to explore the Christian Faith and for others to refresh their Faith.

Some Annual District Church Meetings have been held, or are imminent, and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting is coming up on Monday 22nd April at St. Helen's. Please do come along to hear reports on the past year and the opportunities for this coming year. We still need volunteers for vacancies for P.C.C. and D.C.C. members and wardens, and two particular needs are for Parish Treasurer and St. Michael's Treasurer. We do thank all the treasurers for their work at this time of the year as they present their accounts, and particularly we thank Tim Drakeford for temporarily taking on the role of Parish Treasurer in addition to his normal duties as St. Alphege Treasurer. Many thanks, too, to our retiring Deputy Wardens, Susan Gomm and Phil Godfrey, who have worked tirelessly on our behalf for many years.

We are also advertising for an Assistant Children's and Families' Worker as Sue Chandler is retiring from this post in the summer (but thankfully she will still be continuing as a Licensed Priest in the Parish).

The work on the review of the Parish Structure is continuing. The D.C.C.s will have considered various options and fed back views for the P.C.C. to consider, so that the Special P.C.C. meeting in April will be able to consider further action.

Since January, much work has been done forming our Oversight Area. This is the section of Yardley and Solihull Deanery which includes our Parish, Olton, Hobs Moat and Elmdon Parishes. Nick is leading as Oversight Minister, to enable us to grow and flourish by connecting our churches, working together and sharing resources. I am sure we will hear more about this very soon.

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

**Pam Price
Andrew Williams
March 2024**



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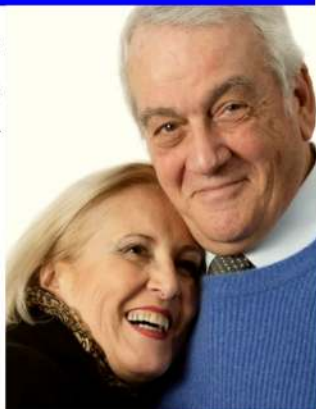
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A Sermon given by the Revd. Richard Horner Chaplain at Rugby School on the 200th Anniversary of the Beginning of the game of Rugby

Every morning when we come to chapel, we walk around the edge of the famous Close where the game of rugby football began. Every day we go to and from our lessons past the stone plaque which commemorates that beginning. In 1823, it tells us, William Webb Ellis "*with a fine disregard for the rules*", took the ball in his arms, and ran.

He was, quite literally, a game-changer. We don't know whether the young William's act was premeditated, or simply born of frustration at a boring passage of play. But it must have taken some courage to stoop among the flailing feet of his opponents, reaching in front of swinging boots to scoop the ball away.

Let's be clear, any member of this school who shows a fine disregard for the rules of our community will not be displaying the kind of courage we're trying to build in Rugby's pupils today. Rules have a purpose – they guide the way we behave towards one another and they build up our community.

Nevertheless, to disregard the rules can be a brave thing to do, it can be a fine thing to do, and, just sometimes, it is the right thing to do.

We've already heard how a fine disregard for the rules in 1823 led to the game whose bicentenary we're celebrating today.

In the early years of Twentieth Century a fine disregard for the rules of Newtonian mathematics led Albert Einstein to the principles which underlie our modern understanding of science.

In the 1920s the Suffragettes, with a fine disregard for the rules of the British electoral system, campaigned, fought and even died so that women could have the vote.

In 1955 a fine disregard for the rules in segregated Alabama made Rosa Parks refuse to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, a courageous deed which proved a catalyst in the American Civil Rights movement.

I could go on – but I can't think of anyone who disregarded quite so many rules, nor to such fine effect, as Jesus of Nazareth. Beginning with his appearance in the womb of Mary with a fine disregard for the rules of human fertilisation, his was a life of joyful, painful, playful, disturbing, rule-breaking.

With a fine disregard for the rules of his culture, Jesus sought out the most unlikely people. He went to the homes of sinners and ate with them. He called despised tax-collectors to follow him. For his closest followers he chose uneducated working men. Unlike other Jewish rabbis

of that era he spent time with women and showed that they too could receive, and give, God's blessing. Going beyond his own people he healed and blessed those whom the Jews of his time regarded as of inferior race. He accepted the devotion of prostitutes and showed special love to the poor.

With a fine disregard for the rules of nature, Jesus commanded a storm to be still. With a few loaves of bread and some fish he provided a meal for thousands. He filled an empty net with fish and walked on the surface of the water. From many who were in the grip of evil he drove away their torment, and to many who were sick he brought wholeness, giving sight to the blind, dance to the crippled, even life to the dead.

With a fine disregard for the rules of religion, Jesus infuriated the Pharisees, who seemed to care more about the letter rather than the spirit of the law and the love of God. He went to a synagogue on the Sabbath and broke the rules by healing people on that day when Jews were supposed to do nothing but pray. He offended the priests who considered themselves God's gatekeepers by telling the crowds of ordinary people who flocked to him, "*The Kingdom of God is within you*". He kicked out those who had turned God's temple into a market-place, and, both literally and metaphorically, he transformed the sterile water of ritual into the wine of celebration.

Best of all was Jesus' fine disregard for the rules of life and death. Our last Bible reading told how he was called to the home of a desperately ill little girl. By the time he got there, it seemed too late – she had died. Coming into the house, he said to the grief-stricken family, "*She's not dead, she's just asleep*". These were apparently callous words to utter over an evidently lifeless body; but here as elsewhere, Jesus was not denying death, but redefining it. With Jesus, death, like sleep, is something from which we get up again. To prove it, Jesus spoke to the dead girl, and sure enough, up she got.

And then, of course, the ultimate demonstration. Jesus' fine disregard for the rules of his culture, the rules of nature and the rules of religion offended, angered and threatened the men who occupied the seats of power. With a fine disregard for the rules of revolution as it is normally carried out, Jesus yielded himself to his tormentors, stood meekly before his judges and claimed to be God's anointed King, the Messiah. Whether it was self-damning blasphemy or mind-blowing truth, it was only going to end one way. With a fine disregard for the conventions of storytelling, the hero of this one got nailed to a cross and died.

But with Jesus, death is something from which we get up again. With a fine disregard for the rules of life and death, he burst from the tomb, triumphant in victory.

A stone plaque outside this chapel tells how, two hundred years ago, the action of William Webb Ellis started a process which would lead to the game we celebrate today; a game with its own rules – and how different they are from those of the round-ball game from which it grew.

Continued on next page

Matters of Faith

A text in one of the stained-glass windows in this chapel has the words of Jesus – *"I have come not to abolish law, but to fulfil it"*. In him, the old laws of sin and death are utterly overwhelmed by the new order of grace and forgiveness, of service and love.

In his life, death and resurrection, Jesus was the greatest game-changer of all time. Still today, he invites men and women to become his followers. The call to live the Christian life is an invitation to pick up the ball and run.

Followers of the game for Rugby look back 200 years; followers of Jesus look back 2000. There have been cheers and there have been jeers. There has been pain as well as joy. There has been exhausting effort and there has been air-punching exhilaration. There has been crushing disappointment, and there has been indescribable elation.

The best is yet to come.

And it all began with one man's fine disregard for the rules.

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The promise of Easter is eternal
Yet ever new.
Like the joy of daffodils, colour of crocuses
And a fresh start.

Winter is gone, along with regrets, hurts and grief
For death is conquered.
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Wendy Westley
St. Michael's Church



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