

**SOLIHULL  
PARISH**



**NEWS**



No. 565

MARCH 2025

PRICE £1.00

# TEAM CHURCHES

**St ALPHEGE -**

**The Square, Solihull B91 3RH**

**St HELEN -**

**St Helen's Road, Solihull B91 2DA**

**St MICHAEL'S CHAPEL -**

**Bryanston Road, Solihull B91 1BS**

Sunday Worship at Sharman's Cross School,  
Sharman's Cross Road, Solihull B91 1PH



## St Alphege (Sundays)

8.00 a.m. Said Eucharist  
10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist except:  
Sunday 9.15 a.m. All Age Eucharist in the church 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March  
11.00 a.m. Choral Eucharist 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March  
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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 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  
Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 10.00 a.m. The Junction joins the Sunday Club

## St Michael, Sharman's Cross School

Sundays 10.30 a.m. Eucharist.

## St. Michael's Chapel

Wednesdays 9.30 a.m. Morning Prayer  
Wednesdays 10.00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

## Friday

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

**The Revd. Nick Parker**  
**The Revd. Simon Marshall**

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THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

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

*Cover picture*

## Spring Blossom

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# Editorial

As this edition of the Parish News comes to publication at the beginning of March, Lent has still to begin. Easter Day, and therefore the season of Lent which precedes it, are determined by the Lunar Calendar. The rhythm of this calendar means that in 2025 the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, will be on March 5<sup>th</sup>. This is almost as late as it can be.

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent. Our services across the parish on that day seek to set the mood for the season through quietness, reflection and penitence. Our penitence is marked physically through the imposition of ashes on the forehead, accompanied by words which remind us of our own mortality.

The origins of Lent do not lie in a conscious re-enactment of our Lord's time in the wilderness which remains a secondary theme of the season. However, it is probably from this experience that it became customary for the season of Lent to last for forty days. Since Sunday is always a feast day of the Resurrection, Sundays are not counted as part of the forty days.

The major theme of Lent is a proper and rigorous preparation for the observance of Jesus' death on the cross and the celebration of His Resurrection at Easter. This observance of Lent was first undertaken by those preparing for baptism, which traditionally occurred at the Easter liturgy.

These candidates for baptism would have all been adults, and they would have been joined by those who had been ex-communicated and who were preparing to be readmitted to the Church's Sacraments after a period of penance. Soon of course the church realised that there was benefit for all Christians in observing Lent through prayer and fasting.

Many people associate Lent with fasting and indeed the Early Church encouraged a rigorous fast. Only one meal a day was permitted, and this could not be eaten before the evening office of Vespers. Meat and fish were forbidden. Gradually the rules around fasting were relaxed to the point that the evening office of Vespers was advanced to before midday so that the rule of not eating before Vespers could be maintained.

Today fasting has become voluntary. Many people, however, do take the opportunity to maintain some sort of fast during Lent and this has led to the popular idea of giving up something for Lent. Chocolate is a particularly favoured candidate for giving up, along with biscuits and cake. In recent years the notion of 'Dry January' has gained a growing following as people give up alcohol after the excesses of Christmas. January is of course still part of the Christmas/Epiphany season. Lent may be a more appropriate season for abstaining from alcohol.

The church too gives things up for Lent. In our liturgy we omit the Gloria at the Eucharist, and the word 'Alleluia' is shunned. Our hymns too are chosen to reflect the themes of the season. The simplicity and solemnity of Lent is also expressed in church through the use of purple or violet hangings and vestments and the absence of any flowers.

Fasting and abstinence help us all to keep a holy Lent. It is also important to understand the purpose of observing Lent. We keep Lent in order to focus our minds on the life changing work of Jesus on the cross. We keep Lent so that we can give something of ourselves in return for his self-giving. So, as well as trying to adopt a simpler life-style, it is also customary to try to deepen our spiritual life.

Most importantly, Lent is a season of penance. We should take time in Lent to consider carefully where we have failed God. We need to call to mind the times we have acted rashly, the times we have been too hasty, the times we have not acted at all. These failings, these sins we should offer to God in prayer and ask for his forgiveness. This we can do through our prayers and through reading

Elsewhere in this edition of Parish News you will find details of events around the parish which might help you to explore and deepen your own faith and your relationship with God.

As Christmas fades away our minds our thoughts begin to turn from the Incarnation to the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. I pray that together we may keep a holy Lent as we prepare to walk the way of the cross.

**Fr. Roy**

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

**48 LODGE LANE, SOLIHULL, B91 2AE**

CQC AND SOLIHULL MBC REGISTERED

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We offer Short term / Long term

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

## **SHEPHERDSON COURT DAY CENTRE**

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For further information contact Day Centre Manager on

**0121 711 4266**

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

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

# Roundabout

## Communion Rails for Sale

In the Undercroft, at the Oliver Bird Hall, we have 8 Communion Rails, no longer required. These are 2 Oak polished and 4 Painted Rails.



I



We have approval from the DAC for disposal, and have tried Architectural Salvage companies and similar, but no interest has been shown.

Revd. Nick has agreed that these should be offered for sale to the Parish, in exchange for a small donation.

Please contact Phil Godfrey 07770 406870 [philcgodfrey@btinternet.com](mailto:philcgodfrey@btinternet.com) if you wish to purchase them.

## 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).

Recitals are held weekly during term time and refreshments are available from 12.30 p.m.

**Isabel Baumber**

5 <sup>th</sup> March	Baroque String Quartet
12 <sup>th</sup> March	Solihull School – chamber music groups
19 <sup>th</sup> March	Tony Bridgewater (piano)
26 <sup>th</sup> March	No recital – Easter Journey in church



# Roundabout

## Solihull Parish Puppets

The puppets were very much involved in the All Age Service at St. Alphege on 9<sup>th</sup> February. This was the first of a 2-part series on the liturgy, this service being about the Liturgy of the Word. March's All Age Service will be focussing on the Liturgy of the Sacrament.



The two friends, Ezra and Logos, had lots of questions and answers for Revd. Nick. (You know that Logos means Word, don't you?) They even had a go at making an origami model of a boat! This all tied in with the Gospel reading about Jesus calling his friends to become fishers of people instead of fish (Luke 5:1-11). The fish puppets and Ruthie then gave an energetic performance of "Fishers of Men" (a parody of "It's raining men").

Why not come along to the All Age Service on 9<sup>th</sup> March and see the puppets in action again whilst learning more about the Liturgy of the Sacrament? We'd love to see you there!

**Ruth Sabbagh**

### **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](mailto:OBHBookings@solihullparish.org.uk)

# *Roundabout*

## **St. Alphege Annual General Meeting**

**T**he St. Alphege Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at 7.30 p.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall.

The A.G.M. is an important event in the life of the Church. It enables members of the congregation to ask questions, to learn about what has been happening over the past twelve months and what the plans are for the future. It is also the occasion when 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 (see below), six members of the DCC (one for a two-year term and five for a three-year term) and two nominees who will serve on the Parochial Church Council along with members from St. Helen's and St. Michael's.

It is important to have representation from all St. Alphege congregations on the D.C.C. as matters discussed at the meetings can affect all aspects of our Church life. We also need a diverse D.C.C. with all ages and backgrounds included. Actions taken as a result of decisions made are most effective when every cohort of the church family is represented. Meetings are held every two months at 7 p.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall. 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 six 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 Warden (Sheila Sayers) or the Parish Office. Details will be included on the pew slip from the end of February.

The Electoral Roll is a statutory document. To be entered on it you must have completed and returned a form obtainable from the Parish Office stating that you are baptised and that you either reside within the Parish or have been a regular attender at public worship within the parish for the previous six months. If you are in any doubt as to whether you are on the Electoral Roll or 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, bringing together the two existing deaneries and it is now a group of twenty-four parishes, stretching from St. Peter Balsall Common in the East to All Saints Small Heath in the West. There are currently two vacancies from St. Alphege D.C.C. to join the Deanery Synod for a one-year term. The Synod meets on three evenings a year and recent agendas have included items on the financial state of the diocese, the welcoming of the new Bishop Dr. Michael Volland and Eco Church within the diocese. If you are interested in becoming better informed about issues within the wider Church of England and having an opportunity to contribute to the debate, then please consider offering to be one of our parish representatives. The elections will take place at the D.C.C. A.G.M. If you would like more information about being on the Deanery Synod, please speak to Deirdre Moll on 0121 705 3271 [d.moll@usa.net](mailto:d.moll@usa.net)

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

**Peter Haselhurst**  
**D.C.C. Secretary**



## Services with Prayers, Laying on of Hands, and Anointing for Healing

Offering healing and wholeness was a central part of Jesus' ministry and remains vital to what it means to be a Church. As such, it is important that we allow opportunity for people to partake of this ministry as part of our regular worship. This is already offered on the first Thursday of every month at the 10.30 a.m. Eucharist at St. Alphege, which includes Prayer and Anointing. From February, we will also hold a monthly Holy Communion with Prayer and the Laying on of Hands at St. Helen's Church. This will take place on third Sunday of every month at 6.30 p.m., the first occasion being Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February. All are warmly welcome and we recognise that people may wish to receive this ministry on behalf of others as well as for themselves.

### **"Mostly\*\* Monday Group" dates,**

**February to June 2025 (including Lent)**



\*\* Formerly '4<sup>th</sup> Monday Group', '**Mostly Monday Group**' is a Bible study group that meets monthly (at least) at the Greville Arms, Cornyx Lane.

*All dates are 1.45pm for a 2pm start at the Greville Arms, Cornyx Lane, **unless otherwise stated.***

**N.B.** *Please let Suzette know before the day if you are coming along for the first time or are a regular and can't make it. Thank you.*

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February**

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March (Lent 1)** *Jesus among the crowds*

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March (Lent 2)** *Jesus in prayer*

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March (Lent 3)** *Jesus among friends*

**Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March (Lent 4)** *Jesus among enemies*

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April (Lent 5)** *Jesus in the city*

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April (Lent 6)** *Jesus on the cross*

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May**

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> June**

**Contact Suzette:** [s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk)

**or 0121 7090884**

## News from the Bell Ringers It's The Treasurer's Turn!

A few months ago, I told you all about our new Tower Keeper Kathryn, who is now responsible for looking after and maintaining our bells. So, I thought I'd introduce you to another of the bell ringing team and this time it's Margaret Burling, our Treasurer.

As I write Margaret has just had the books audited ready for the St. Alphege Guild of Ringers A.G.M. Our independent Auditor said, "As ever, you are doing a sterling job in pulling these accounts together - not an easy task." So, we know we're in good hands, but also Margaret started young reconciling her father's bank statements and as a mathematician she has a good understanding of the figures. It's an important role because over time we've accumulated funds, in part from wedding fees and visiting bands, and this helps us to maintain the bells on behalf of the church. Margaret has been our Treasurer since 2020 but even in this short time she's overseen the transfer to a new bank, sought out a higher rate of interest for our savings and she's been involved in moving us on-line.



So where did it all begin? Margaret had always enjoyed the sound of church bells but when she moved to a house opposite St. Giles, Sheldon, in the early '80s, it was time to go and explore. At that time during the Autumn the local band rang handbells so her first experience was of tune ringing. In the new year she was eager to be taught to ring church bells. There were just 4 bells at St. Giles. They were awkward to ring, hung in a wooden frame and had no rope guides. Since then, they have been augmented to 8, hung in a metal frame and huge improvements made so they are now a lovely ring of bells. Back then there weren't the teaching aids or guidance for learners that are available today so, resilience and tenacity were needed to get to grips with the art of ringing. At St. Giles the band ring from a balcony overlooking the nave, unlike our ringing room which is high up in the tower.

When Margaret moved back to her family home in Solihull after losing her parents, it was time to

# Roundabout

climb the stairs at St. Alphege. Margaret very quickly fitted into the band and at the earliest opportunity the baton of treasurer passed to her. Before joining the band here, most of her ringing had been on 6 or 8 bells, so regularly ringing at a 12 bell tower was a new experience. She says she's still learning but surely, that's the great thing about ringing, there's always room for new skills and challenges. She wasn't used to our heaviest bells which require good technique but, her confidence is growing and whilst she's rung them all, she's happiest ringing any of the lighter 8. Though, she's gradually more regularly working her way around the circle of bells. At Sheldon, it's not uncommon for them to have just 4 ringers on a Sunday. Ringing on just 4 is surprisingly hard work particularly when ringing changes, making the bells ring quickly and then slowly amongst each other is very hard work. She says, "It's a piece of cake ringing at St. Alphege after ringing changes on just 4 at Sheldon!"

Margaret has always taken time to ring at a variety of local towers attending practices and helping with wedding ringing. When she first learnt she rang at Yardley, Hampton-in-Arden and Bickenhill, as well Sheldon, so it took up much of her week. Today she lives in our parish and rings with us but she's still part of the Sheldon team and is their Deputy Ringing Master. She rings there on Sunday mornings and with us Sunday evenings. During the week, as well as the local practices, she's off to Shirley and Moseley. She supports practices and workshops further afield and it's not uncommon for her to attend 3 ringing events in one day! Yes, she's certainly committed but much of this time is helping others in their learning. In fact, she runs regular workshops herself, for ringers from across Birmingham to help them develop their skills. And this is not all, she spends time with family, enjoys origami, gardening, needle craft and travelling. A very busy lady!

## A few quick-fire questions to end on!

*Minimus or maximus? (Ringing on 4 or 12 bells)*

Neither! She loves it when we ring 6 bells together.

*Ringing in sight of the congregation or up in the tower?*

A tricky one because seeing people can be a distraction but it's great when they see the ringers' hard work and talk to us directly to share their appreciation.

*The bells of St. Giles or St. Alphege?*

St. Alphege are the easiest and nicest sounding bells in the Midlands though, she says it is lovely to hear the 8 bells being rung well at St. Giles. All bells have their appeal and she feels the heavier 8 bells together at St. Alphege are also rather special.

*Ringing from the floor or a box?*

Definitely the floor! If it has to be a box, the wider the better and carpeted. (Margaret hates having to stand on a box to reach when the ropes shorten in wet weather).

*Bell ringing or origami?*

Bell ringing - it's so much of her life!

*And finally, what's changed since learning to ring?*

Cake making! Margaret often provides refreshments at ringing events, she never used to bake, but now? She's one of our experts!

**Sand Cooper**

# Roundabout

## Lent and Easter for Everyone:

This Lent, we are drawing on themes and insights from the book *Lent and Easter for Everyone* by Tom Wright, a New Testament scholar and former Bishop of Durham, whose writings are widely appreciated for their accessible and engaging approach. The book offers daily readings and reflections for the seven weeks of Lent, guiding us to journey with Christ—from his time of testing in the wilderness, through the sorrow of the cross, and onward into the joy of Easter. There is no need to purchase the book as each group leader will draw on its content in different ways to suit their groups. However, the book will be available for £8 at the Parish Office and the St. Alphege Bookstall for those unable to join a group or wishing to explore the daily readings and reflections more deeply.

### Reflection Groups:

These groups offer an opportunity for reflection for all journeying through Lent. In addition to the material from Lent and Easter for Everyone there will also be artwork linked to the weekly theme to aid our reflection (kindly provided by Rev. Simon Marshall).

### Monday Afternoons (1.45 p.m.-3.30 p.m.)

Venue: Greville Arms, Cornyx Lane, B91 2RB

Led by: Suzette Maguire ([s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk))

Dates: Weekly, March 10<sup>th</sup> – April 14<sup>th</sup>

### Monday Afternoons – Women's Group (2 p.m.-3.30 p.m.)

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

Led by: Moira Wyatt ([geoffrwyatt@btinternet.com](mailto:geoffrwyatt@btinternet.com))

Dates: Weekly, February 24<sup>th</sup> – April 28<sup>th</sup>

### Monday Evenings (7.45 p.m.-9.15 p.m.)

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

Led by: Chris Carrington ([carringtons.church@gmail.com](mailto:carringtons.church@gmail.com))

Dates: Weekly, February 24<sup>th</sup> – April 28<sup>th</sup>

### Wednesday Afternoons (1.45 p.m.-3.00 p.m.)

Venue: St Michael's Chapel, B91 1BS

Led by: Simon Marshall ([simon@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:simon@solihullparish.org.uk))

Dates: Weekly, March 12<sup>th</sup> – April 23<sup>rd</sup>

### Friday Mornings (10.00 a.m.-11.30 a.m.)

Venue: Room 6, Oliver Bird Hall, B91 3RQ

Led by: Pam Price and Nick Parker ([colandpam@ic24.net](mailto:colandpam@ic24.net))

Dates: Weekly, March 7<sup>th</sup> – April 25<sup>th</sup>

**Food4Thought:** *A welcoming group for anyone curious to explore at an enquirers' level.*

### Monday Mornings

Venue: Greville Arms, Cornyx Lane, B91 2RB

Led by: Suzette Maguire ([s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk))

Dates: Weekly, March 10<sup>th</sup> – April 14<sup>th</sup>

All are welcome to attend any group, but please contact the leader so that they can plan appropriately. Groups run one week beyond Easter Day but won't meet during Holy Week. More details on Holy Week and Easter services will follow in April.

## Parish Worship Survey

**W**orship is central to the life of the Church, and we aspire to worship in a way that glorifies God, enables people to consciously come into God's presence, and is attractive to those who are not regular worshippers. Every church should regularly review its offering so that services may be as inclusive and accessible as possible, creating an environment where everyone feels they can belong.

In February we invited people to complete an online survey or paper questionnaire towards a review of our 'worship offering' across the parish and hope you will have seen an invitation and may have taken part. This month we are holding a series of focus groups to further collect people's thoughts (ensuring we have plenty of qualitative as well as quantitative data). If you would like to be part of such a conversation, please contact the parish office. We expect this to help guide our provision from September.

## Safeguarding Review

**L**ater this month (the week beginning 24<sup>th</sup> March) we will be visited by our Archdeacon, Ven. Phelim O'Hare, our Area Dean, Revd. Tony Rindl, and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Steph Haynes. They are offering one to one confidential conversations with any who were affected by the safeguarding events and situation surrounding the removal of Helen Greenham from public office in March 2023. The aim of these listening conversations is twofold. First, as an important step towards healing and peace of mind through giving people the opportunity to feel properly heard. And second, for the Diocese, as an important part of their learning process, so that communication and pastoral care (its two principal responsibilities) may in the future be as good as they can be. Where we expect this might be helpful, we are contacting people directly to invite them to book a time. If you have not received such an invitation but would welcome being part of this process, please email or phone Revd. Nick. Finally, please note, this is not a review of the national Clergy Disciplinary Measure (CDM) as it pertains to Helen Greenham. This is beyond the scope of the diocese and the CDM process is anyway under national review.

## Diamond Wedding

**C**ongratulations to Anne and Peter Rock who celebrate their Diamond Wedding this month. They were married at Honiley Church, near Kenilworth, on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1965 and have lived in this area since then.

# Let us Pray

## Calendar and Prayer Intentions for March 2025

1	David, Bishop and Patron of Wales	The Church in Wales	Birch Tree Grove
2	Sunday Next Before Lent	The Parish	Bisbrook Croft
3	Feria	Bishop Michael	Blackthorne Close
4	Feria	Our Area Dean, Revd. Tony Rindl	Blossomfield Road
5	Ash Wednesday	The Keeping of a Holy Lent	Blythe Way
6	Feria	Those seeking healing	Blythewood Close
7	Perpetua & Felicity: Martyrs at Carthage	Businesses in our Parish	Boulton Road
8	Edward King Bp. Lincoln	Stephen, Archbishop of York	Bourne Close
9	First Sunday in Lent	Worshippers in St. Michael's District	Bowercourt Close
10	Feria	Dr. Neil Shastri-Hurst: M.P. for Solihull West	Bradmore Close
11	Feria	The Ministry of all Bishops, Priests and Deacons	Bramcote Drive
12	Ember Day	Those who are discerning their calling	Brandon Road
13	Feria	The Ministry of all Authorised Lay Ministers	Branthill Croft
14	Ember Day	Those training for ministry	Brick Kiln Lane
15	Ember Day	Those selecting the next Archbishop of Canterbury	Broad Oaks Road
16	Second Sunday in Lent	Worshippers in St. Helen's District	Broomfields Avenue
17	Patrick: Patron of Ireland	The Church across the island of Ireland	Broomfields Close
18	Cyril of Jerusalem	The peace of Jerusalem and Israel	Broomfields Farm Road
19	Joseph of Nazareth	All Fathers and Step-fathers	Brown's Coppice Avenue
20	Cuthbert: Bp. Lindisfarne	Solihull Branch of the Mothers' Union	Brueton Avenue
21	Thomas Cranmer: Martyr	Those who suffer persecution for their faith	Bryanston Road
22	Feria	Aid Agencies working in difficult situations	Bufferys Close
23	Third Sunday in Lent	The Oliver Bird Hall Committee	Buryfield Road
24	Walter Hilton: Mystic	Bishop Esther	Bushell Drive
25	The Annunciation	Expectant Mothers	Bushley Croft
26	Harriet Monsell	The Community of St. John the Baptist	Caldwell Grove
27	Feria	H.M. The King	Cambridge Avenue
28	Feria	Archdeacon Phelim O'Hare	Catherine's Close
29	Feria	Saqib Bhatti: M.P. for Solihull East and Meriden	Cedarhurst
30	Mothering Sunday	For Family Life	Chadbury Croft
31	John Donne: Priest & Poet	Those who express their faith through art	Chadley Close

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



## From the St. Alphege Register

### Baptisms

19<sup>th</sup> January      Sierra Knott  
2<sup>nd</sup> February      Olivia Turley

### Weddings

None

### Renewal of Vows

None

### Funerals

27<sup>th</sup> January      Kenneth Foxley at Robin Hood Crematorium  
28<sup>th</sup> January      Sheila Harper at Robin Hood Crematorium & St. Helen  
14<sup>th</sup> February      Elsie Blisset at Robin Hood Crematorium  
17<sup>th</sup> February      Kenneth Hewitt at St. Alphege  
26<sup>th</sup> February      Ann Chandler at Robin Hood Crematorium

### Interment of Ashes

3<sup>rd</sup> March      Carolyn Ibbotson

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

Alice Barnes	Harry Hartley, Priest	Alan Norman
Julie Birse	Dennis Francis Harvey	Elizabeth Swann
Vanessa Carpenter	Nigel Harvey	Lilian Swann
Mario Ferullo	George Hutchinson	Edith Tew
Jack Florance	Laly Jimenez	Janet Tracey
Geoffrey Gilbey	Alma Jordan	C Patricia Wallis
Betty Greasley	Robert Kemp	Adrian Woollas
Evelyn Grocock	Edith Lloyd	David Wright
Jack Grocock	Fraser Mitchell	
Edna Hampson	Gordon Mitchell	

## Worship Notes for March 2025

**O**ur worship throughout March this year is dominated by Lent. Lent begins on March 5<sup>th</sup> with the commemoration of Ash Wednesday. On this day there will be services in all three of the churches in our parish. On Ash Wednesday we are urged to call to mind our own mortality, to confess our sins in penitence and to seek God's forgiveness and healing that we might obey his commandments to love one another. An important part of the Ash Wednesday service is the imposition of ashes in the form of a cross on our forehead. As this is done, we hear words reminding us of our own mortality.

Two of our national Patron Saints have their days of celebration in March, St. David and St. Patrick. David is the patron saint of Wales and Patrick of Ireland. David was a sixth century monk and bishop. He was particularly regarded for his kindness and compassion especially for the sick and the poor. He is believed to have founded a monastery at what is now St. Davids, as well as at a dozen others.

Patrick was born in Cornwall around the year 390. He was captured by Irish raiders and taken to Ireland as a slave. He escaped and fled to the continent but eventually found his way back to his own family. His Christian faith grew, and he returned to France where, under the tutelage of St. Martin of Tours, he became a priest. In his early forties he became Bishop of Armagh. He evangelised the people by walking extensively across the whole island of Ireland, gently bringing many to faith in Jesus Christ.

There are two days in March which particularly concern the Holy Family. On March 19<sup>th</sup> the Church celebrates Joseph of Nazareth, the man who became the adoptive father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph's act of adopting Jesus established Jesus' line of descent from King David.

March 25<sup>th</sup> is one of the principal feast days of the Church's year. Coming as it does exactly nine months before Christmas Day, this day is the feast of the Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The feast remembers that the Angel appeared to Mary and told her she had been chosen to be the mother of Jesus. Mary said yes. This feast day acknowledges her unique place of honour and veneration in the Church.

March is month rich in saints' days and days of special commemoration. These days cover the whole of Christian history from before the birth of Christ over 2000 years ago, to the assassination of Bishop Oscar Romero in San Salvador, in 1980. In March, therefore, there are a number of occasions when we can give thanks to God for the lives of many who have shaped our faith. These days can help us as we prepare for the trials of the Passion and the celebration of the Resurrection at Easter, next month.

**Fr. Roy**

# The Guardians of St. Alphege Parish Church, Solihull

The trustees of the Guardians invite you to  
**Light and Sound at St. Alphege Church**  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30 to 9.30pm. St. Alphege Church

All welcome. Free admission.

**Donations to our registered charity will be welcome!**

**Light.** The newly installed lighting has transformed the presentation of our Grade 1 listed church. See for yourself the range of settings available to highlight the architecture and the atmosphere inside.



**Sound.** For many a century the ringing of our bells has been a backdrop to the life and history of Solihull and its church. Meet the bellringers, hear their story, ask questions and enhance your understanding of the mysteries of what is going on just below the spire.

**Social.** Meet the many others who care about St. Alphege Church, its people and its complex history. Refreshments will be available.

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## March 2025 Services

### Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> March – Next Sunday Before Lent

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
Oliver Bird Hall	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 5<sup>th</sup> March – Ash Wednesday

St. Michael	7.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Helen	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	7.30 p.m.	Sung Eucharist

### Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist + Prayers for Healing, and Anointing
-------------	------------	--

### Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March – Lent 1 (Jesus among the crowds)

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 12<sup>th</sup> March

St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
-------------	------------	-----------

### Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
-------------	------------	-----------

### Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March – Lent 2 (Jesus in Prayer)

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
St. Helen	6.30 p.m.	Eucharist + Laying on of hands for Healing, and Anointing

## Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March

St. Michael            10.00 a.m.            Eucharist

## Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March

St. Alphege            10.30 a.m.            Eucharist

## Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March – Lent 3 (Jesus among his enemies)

St. Alphege            8.00 a.m.            Said Eucharist  
St. Helen                10.00 a.m.            The Junction Sunday Club  
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 26<sup>th</sup> March

St. Michael            10.00 a.m.            Eucharist

## Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March

St. Alphege            10.30 a.m.            Eucharist

## Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> 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.             Vespers

## 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.



**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>**



## *The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church*

**T**he fundraising events for your diary are listed here. We very much hope to see you.

### **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30 to 9.30 p.m. St. Alphege Church**

*Light and Sound at St. Alphege Church.*

See the advert published in Parish News. Open to all. Andy Halstead has kindly agreed to help with exploring the lighting. Our bellringing team will join us to shed light on their unique sound.

### **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 6.00 to 8.00 p.m.**

*Drinks Party. Hosted by Ann Taylor*

A Guardians event. Invitations will follow.

### **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June. 7.30 p.m. St. Alphege Church**

*Tour and History of St. Alphege Church.*

Carol Southworth and the 'Mothers Union' invite Guardians and everyone interested to join them for the evening.

### **July/August/September. Date and time to be settled. St. Alphege Church**

*The Stained Glass Windows of St. Alphege Church. Insights into the Art and History*

Phil Godfrey and our esteemed stained glass window restorer Barry Brady will lead this event. Barry will start with presenting the story behind the windows. Small group tours will then allow a closer examination and discussion of each window. Refreshments available.

### **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 7.30 p.m. Oliver Bird Hall.**

*Guardians A.G.M.*

### **November/December. Date, time and venue to be settled.**

*Christmas fundraising social event.*

### **Other News**

With the church open and welcomers at the ready, some heritage gains are starting to flow. A former member of the congregation, on visiting the church, very thoughtfully offered her father's local archive a return to Solihull. She was the daughter of the warmly remembered former Rector, Canon Harry Hartley. In addition, members of the Solihull Archaeology Group are interested in taking a closer look round.

A further bonus followed when the Parish Office recently put me in contact with a Jersey man who no longer needs a 19<sup>th</sup> century book on the memorials in St. Alphege church.

I hope these treasures can be shared with you before long.

Finally trustees Judith Hetherington and Andy Moore have worked on the membership list and communication channels. So hopefully members will have heard from us by now!

**Roger Shinton (Trustee)**  
[rogershinton@outlook.com](mailto:rogershinton@outlook.com)





## Floodlighting

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

The cost is £8.00 for 2 hours; £14.00 for 4 hours. Please give 21 days' notice.

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.

Do contact me on the phone or email below if you don't know about the Floodlighting Scheme and would like to learn more. It's open to all.

For further information please contact the Scheme organiser:-

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

### The Church was floodlit to remember the following in 2025

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> February  | Raymond Colston Horswill 2.2.28 – 25.10.08.<br>Much loved by all who knew him. Devoted husband and father.                                    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> February  | Anthony Walker. Remembering such happy times on your birthday.  |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> February | In loving memory of Ronald McDonough on his birthday.   |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> February | Dearly beloved Jonathan Mark. Rest in peace until we meet again.  |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> February | In loving memory of Barbara Alice Edwards.  |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> February | In loving memory of John Manners on the anniversary of his birthday.  |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> February | Happy memories of Patricia Blackburn on her birthday, (as another year of war in the Ukraine starts but with a glimmer of hope in Palestine). |

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Following the festivities of Christmas, January is a quieter month in some ways, but not a time for stopping, as shown by some of our choir activities in January.

The choirs joined the Churches Together service at St. Helen's for the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, where Fr. Nick had specifically chosen music to link with the theme of the service – the service was greatly enjoyed by all present – and everyone will remember it for many reasons, not least the fire alarm going off at the end as the large attendance meant there were lots of candles burning! But I know people will remember the service for other reasons also, and the music was certainly part of creating the desired atmosphere.

The following Sunday, we held a joint service of Choral Evensong at Solihull School Chapel. Our choir of Senior Choristers and Back Row joined forces with the School's Chamber Choir, and sang Smith *Responses, Psalm 33, Canticles* by Stanford, and Wesley's wonderful anthem '*Blessed be the God and Father*' – the male voices sections of the anthem sounded spectacular with the combined forces of both choirs under the direction of the new Head of Chapel Music at Solihull School, Callum Alger.



Chris and Liam continue to work hard on the *Rising Stars* project, involving them in outreach to local junior schools and possible recruitment to our choirs. Look out for details of the end of term performance of *Daniel Jazz*.



We received a very kind donation in memory of Laurence Lane, who sang with the choir along with his daughter Chloe in the mid-2010s, and who also sat on the Friends of St. Alphege Music committee for a couple of years. We have used the donation to purchase copies of Benjamin Britten's cantata '*Rejoice in the Lamb*' and have started rehearsing this in preparation for the *Vespers* at the end of March and for future concerts.

Please see attached photo of Laurence on

the choir tour to Ely Cathedral in 2015.

We are now hard at work preparing music for *Ash Wednesday and Lent*, as well as ongoing Sunday services, and we look forward to journeying through *Lent* alongside the congregation.

**Isabel Baumber**



SOLIHULL CHANDOS CHOIR | HAMPTON SINGERS

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# CHURCH 4 FAMILIES

## March

### Sunday Worship

*The Junction is a short family focussed service that meets on Sunday mornings. Here are the March themes:*

On **2<sup>nd</sup> March** the Junction will meet at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall when we will be learning all about Lent. Come along and collect a special booklet which will offer small steps designed to help us on our Lent journey. For each of the 40 days of Lent there is a daily challenge to do, or something to learn or think about.

On **9<sup>th</sup> March** everyone will meet in the church building at 9.15 a.m. for **All age worship** including a welcome to children who will be attending the First Communion course and the Solihull Parish puppets will be joining us again to help us to think about the Eucharist.

On **16<sup>th</sup> March** the Junction will meet at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall and will be thinking about prayer.

On **23<sup>rd</sup> March** the Junction will be joining the Sunday club at St Helen's Church, St Helen's Road, B91 2DA (off Buryfield Road).

On **30<sup>th</sup> March** everyone will meet in the church building at 9.15 a.m. for **Mothering Sunday All age worship**

### Other Activities

**Pause and Pray** Every Monday 9 a.m.-9.30 a.m. Room 5 Oliver Bird Hall

**Praise and Play** Every Friday 9.30-10.30 a.m. Oliver Bird Hall

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March **Pancake Party** 5-7 p.m. Oliver Bird Hall

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March **Messy Church** St Helen's Church 4-6 p.m.





What?

Lots of hands-on crafty fun  
A short celebration story and prayer  
Ending with a hot meal for all!

When?

Friday 4.00pm - 6.00pm  
28th February / 28th March / 16th May

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!

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

**Booking is essential.**

**email - [l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk)**





# First Communion Preparation



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. In this act of worship known as Holy Communion, Christians gather to hear the word of God and then share the bread and wine together. For several years the Solihull Parish has prepared children to receive Holy Communion (not the same as confirmation which is offered later) through a course of preparation which involves fun and interactive learning. They are then admitted to receive Holy Communion at a service known as ***First Communion Sunday***.

As Holy Communion is so special the bishops have laid down strict guidelines which every parish must follow. These include the following:

1. Children must attend all sessions of the preparation course and worship in the Parish on each of the Sundays during the course.
2. Parents must ensure that the children worship regularly after their *First Communion Sunday* i.e. twice monthly as a minimum.
3. Before admission to Holy Communion each person must be baptized. However, if a child has not been baptized, but wishes to receive Holy Communion, they may begin the course on the understanding that they will be baptized before *First Communion Sunday*.

The dates for 2025 are as follows:

Liturgy of Welcome	9.15 a.m.	Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> February	St Alphege Church
Preparation Session 1	2.30-3.30 p.m.	Sunday, 2 <sup>nd</sup> March	Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 2	2.30-3.30 p.m.	Sunday, 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 3	2.30-3.30 p.m.	Sunday, 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 4	2.30-3.30 p.m.	Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> April	Room 1 OBH
Preparation Session 5	2.30-3.30 p.m.	Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> April	Room 1 OBH
Rehearsal	2.30-3.30 p.m.	Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> May	St Alphege Church
First Communion Sunday	9.15 a.m.	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> May	St Alphege Church

For further information or to register contact Linda Hicks  
[l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk](mailto:l.hicks@solihullparish.org.uk)

# Praise and Play

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PARISH**

## Youth Stuff

By kind invitation a group of young people and their leaders made a trip up the Bell Tower. The visit was made on a Friday evening in late January and it was cold and dark



outside. Warmed by the climb up the spiral steps and the welcome received when we arrived in the Ringing Room. The experienced Bell Ringers, led by Sand Cooper, gave explanation and instructions allowing the young people to have a go and ring the bells. A further climb into the Belfry for a very close look at the bells in their frames. The evening ended with a round or two on the handbells.

Judging by the smiles on all the faces everyone really enjoyed themselves. A big thank you to Sand, Malcolm, Linda and Richard for providing an enjoyable, informative and joyful occasion. Maybe a spark may have been lit and a future campanologist inspired?

As I write this we are approaching the end of January. It has been very cold in parts and also very dull and gloomy in parts but all around, even though we are in the depths of winter, we see promise of things to come. I notice the snowdrops are starting to come out, there are shoots and buds on the trees and the church, emerging from Christmas and New Year is starting to move into the promises that 2025 will bring. This really came to light on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January. In the morning Matt Vaughan came to speak to us and shared his recent experiences of the joy of the baptism in Bordesley Green of those who had recently come to faith after their own Epiphany of Jesus Christ. He effused concerning the unconditional love that God has for each one of us.

Then in the afternoon we were privileged to host the Solihull Churches Together Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This was a most uplifting service led by the Revd. Nick Parker. The church was packed and there was wonderful worship and a powerful sermon from Steve Faber, the Moderator of the West Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church, focusing on the unity of the church around our core beliefs as expressed in the Nicene Creed. During the service members of the congregation each lit one another's candles speaking the words "the Light of Christ" and then they brought them forward to the front as we sang the Taizé chant, "The Lord is my light". As people came forward with their candles it seemed like a never-ending stream and was quite moving. At the end of the service the candles were all extinguished, causing a great amount of smoke in the hall and presenting us with an unscheduled test of all the smoke alarms. There are a few instances in the Bible when the Temple was filled with smoke but no mention of alarms. However, in the Bible elsewhere, smoke symbolises the ascending prayers of the saints and perhaps this is the picture we should take from this.

Healing and Wholeness services were recommenced in the Chapel in February. These will be Parish services and will incorporate the Eucharist and will take place at 6.30 p.m. on the third Sunday of each month.

During Lent our homegroups and the Lydia group are following the Lent Course based on Tom Wright's book "Lent and Easter for Everyone" along with the rest of the Parish. In February or March we will be recommencing our home visitation scheme "Say one for me."

A few other developments I should mention in January. We have now installed a defibrillator by the front door. This is for the use of both users of the church and the local community. It has been generously donated to us. We hope it will not be used too often but it is there should we need it.

We have finally got agreement from the Diocese to provide a faculty for the construction of a ramp to the rear fire doors which will be suitable for wheelchair users. The two sets of double doors at either side of the main hall entrance will be replaced in the next couple of months with glass doors to match those already installed but these will have frosted glass. This will complete the entrance modifications which have been financed by the legacy of Barbara Semple.

Unfortunately the boiler in the Chapel has broken down and we need to replace it. In the meantime we are relying on electric heaters when we use the Chapel. Hopefully this will be resolved quickly.

On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February we are having a Wassail evening together with St. Michael's (reported in News from St. Michael's). This promises to be a fun and entertaining event with singing and a comedy sketch. I understand ticket sales are going well.



## St Michael

### Wassail Evening

Wassail goes way back and was an ancient English Christmastide and Yuletide ritual and salutation, either involved in door-to-door charity-giving or used to ensure a good harvest .... however at St. Michael's a few imaginative folks decided we would produce our own Wassail celebration. So, it came about that with the involvement of our talented music group and singers together with a selection of other talents from both St. Michael's and St. Helen's on 1<sup>st</sup> February at St. Helen's Church our first Wassail event was staged. It was an evening of 'home grown' entertainment, including music, words and community singing. The MC for the occasion, Revd. Roger Chamberlain gave us many jokes and funny stories as he introduced the various turns. We had recitations, poems, juggling, a veritable music hall type evening of entertainment. At the interval there was a variety of drinks, mulled wine of course to fit the original tradition of Wassail, and various cakes and nibbles. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves and look forward to the next occasion. Grateful thanks must go to all who made this possible, and as a bonus about £500 was raised split between the two churches.



### Not Forgotten at Christmas



For over twenty years now St. Michael's has provided toys and Christmas presents for children of the inmates of Birmingham Prison. Last year as usual, contact was made with the Prison Advice & Care Trust (PACT) who organise the distribution of the gifts. With the contact made with PACT, donations of suitable presents were collected from St. Michael's congregation, and, together with a large number of quilts made by Project Linus, a very substantial delivery was made to the visitors' centre at H.M.P. Birmingham who were extremely grateful for such a generous contribution. This meant

that children of the prisoners would not go without a present at Christmas. Very many thanks to David Yarnold at St. Michael's for organising and delivering the presents.

### Art of Lent 2025

During Lent Fr. Simon is proposing to organise a group looking at the Art of Lent at St. Michael's Chapel, as a similar course proved so popular last year. Watch for more details as the plans develop.

## Be Real - Be Blessed

**T**ruth be told, I'm a bit fed-up at the moment. I have a lingering sore throat and cough which has left me with no sense of taste or smell. As a result, I have missed something this week that I was really looking forward to, as I didn't feel well enough to appreciate it - I find I run out of energy very quickly too.

On top of all that, I got a reminder of the due date for my Pioneer Diary article (*this one*) and, when I came back to what I had already started for it, I wasn't inspired at all to finish it on that chosen theme! (*I have saved it though, so it may crop up another time when the timing is right.*) I know, Oh, woe is me!

So, where to start?

Well, I was reminded that sometimes as Christians it's tempting to pretend that all is well with us, when in fact it isn't at all. I've met this before in the mantra of a former colleague - "*Double doses of deep joy*". Theologically speaking there is nothing wrong with this statement, but we should know that we can have the joy of Christ in our hearts without pretending all is OK, when it may not be. To be frank, we won't be fooling anyone, least of all God.

So, with Lent preparations under way and after being bombarded with all that the world wants us to focus on during March (*I'm looking forward to Earth Hour on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, although I will undoubtedly ignore 'Barbie Day' on the 9<sup>th</sup>*), I am drawn back to thoughts for a talk that I am preparing for mid-February, and to the word 'blessed'.

*Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,  
who walk in the light of your presence, Lord. (Psalm 89:15)*

Perhaps the most well-known use of the word *blessed* in the Bible is found in the Beatitudes (*Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-23*). Jesus used the term *blessed* in the framework of the Beatitudes to describe the inner quality of a faithful servant of God. This blessedness is a spiritual state of well-being and prosperity—a deep, joy-filled contentment *that cannot be shaken* by illness, poverty, grief, famine, persecution, war, or any other trial or tragedy we face in life.

And that's the point, isn't it?

When I was confirmed, I was given a book by a friend called *The Bumps are what you Climb on*, with the strapline of *encouragement for difficult days*. That book, which I still use after over 33 years, points out that, whatever is going on for us and however we are feeling, we are still blessed by God. And not only that, but we can also bear witness about that to others.

The one who is blessed trusts in God's love, no matter what, as we are reminded in Romans chapter 8: "*Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? . . . No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for*

## Pioneer Diary

*today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39, NLT).

*Blessed* speaks of our inner state of well-being, the prosperity of our souls in Christ. Blessedness comes from unhindered fellowship with God the Father through our Lord Jesus. To be blessed is to experience the full impact of God’s presence in our lives *now*— on good days and bad - and for all eternity. Others should hear that, even on our rough days, we are still blessed by a loving God.

*Be real. Be blessed.*

*Suzette.*

### Save the date!

Our next Parish Quiet Morning will take place on **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> April, Holy Saturday**, at St. Helen’s church. Why not save the date and plan to come along or, if you want to know more in the meantime, speak to me, Suzette, about it.

I’ll leave you with comments that were made after our last Holy Saturday Quiet Morning, where participants were blessed as follows:

What I have valued most is ...

***The time and space which isn’t usually available.***

***The chance to sit and ‘be’ without rushing around doing things.***

***Having two whole hours to pause and reflect and just ‘be’.***

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See you on Holy Saturday!

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## News from the Wider Church - Cross Cultural

**B**aptisms are always joyful, aren't they? For those of us who have been Christians for many years they remind us that God's kingdom is always being renewed, that the family of faith is always ready to welcome new members. Yet a recent baptism service at Christ Church Ward End was a particular cause for rejoicing as it showed signs of the church becoming more multicultural.

A few months earlier new people had started coming to our church. A family from Pakistan, mother and father with three children, arrived looking for a church home and were warmly welcomed: church members rallied round to donate furniture and other household items to enable them to settle in the UK. They had fled Pakistan in a hurry after their family and community reacted strongly against their decision to follow Jesus. They went from having land, property, cars, wealth and a respected position in the community to being penniless asylum seekers. Yet they were overjoyed at the prospect of baptism: such is the worth of the *"pearl of great price"*.

Then, a couple of months later, a young student from Pakistan walked into church saying that he wanted to know more about Christianity. His own family had rejected him and he was looking for an alternative faith. After much discussion, some in person and some over WhatsApp, he asked if he could be baptised as well. They were joined by a family from India who first went to church in London after seeing a vision of angels hovering over the church tower. Work brought them to Birmingham and our church's Thursday food pantry scheme brought them to us. It became clear that the father had long been seeking for truth and love in his life, a journey which took him from Southern India to Abu Dhabi, Dubai, London and finally to Nechells. When the day of the baptisms came, he said he had been waiting for it his entire life. Along with three Nigerian children, who came to our church with their parents a few months beforehand, there were 14 baptisms in total. To put it in perspective, that number is more than a quarter of our entire church family.

These new believers have enriched our church family in many ways. Their faith has a freshness that some of us, having been Christians our entire lives, may well have lost. They have a passion for evangelism and for serving others: they are constantly asking if they can volunteer for church activities or help anyone in need in our parish. In the last three years our Sunday school has grown from 0 children to 4, then to 8, and now to 19. Yet perhaps the most striking gift they bring to us is a reminder that God's kingdom was always meant to be multicultural.

This shouldn't come as a surprise, should it? The evidence has always been right in front of our eyes. Isaiah 2 speaks of God's kingdom, saying that *"all nations will stream to it"*. Isaiah 66 says *"And they will bring all your people, from all the nations, to my holy mountain"*. Jesus himself commissioned his followers to *"go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"*, and the book of Revelation contains a vision of *"a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."* Right from the start, God's kingdom was always supposed to be for all people.

Yet we are all part of a specific people group and we have the tendency to see God's kingdom through the eyes and the cultural habits of that particular group. Growing up, I used to think that God was basically like my grandpa: polite, kind, white, elderly and definitely English. Everyone at my church in the Hampshire countryside was white and English (and most of

# Church Growth in Birmingham

them were polite, at least most of the time!). I had no idea that God's kingdom was far larger than that; that every Sunday churches were full across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. I didn't know that there were more Anglicans in Nigeria than in the whole of Europe put together. I didn't know that Christianity was brought to England by missionaries from Europe and Africa nor that one of the first Archbishops of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus, was Syrian.

I had to learn all of this. And I suggest that all of us in Church of England Birmingham have to learn it too, and quickly, because the world has come to our doorstep. In Bordesley Green I can walk out of my front door and hear five different languages spoken in five minutes (and English is rarely one of them). People from all over the world are shopping alongside us at Lidl, waiting next to us outside the school gates, sitting by our side in the doctor's surgery. Many of them have no experience of Christianity; we may well be the first followers of Jesus they have ever met. If God calls them into our churches, as he has done in ours, how will we respond?

**Matt and Andrea Vaughan are Deanery Mission Enablers, based at Holy Trinity Benefice in Ward End and Bordesley Green**

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# Lent Breakfasts

Churches in our area are following Tom Wright's book 'Lent and Easter for Everyone' in their sermons and house groups and these breakfasts will introduce the topics for the following weeks with talks from members of our churches.

**Saturdays in March and April 2025  
8.30am to 10.00am**

Saturday 1 March - Jesus in the Wilderness  
Saturday 8 March - Jesus Among the Crowds  
Saturday 15 March - Jesus in Prayer  
Saturday 22 March - Jesus Among Friends  
Saturday 29 March - Jesus Among Enemies  
Saturday 5 April - Jesus in the City  
Saturday 12 April - Jesus on the Cross  
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# Update from the Parish Wardens

There are a couple of processes going forward at the moment.

Firstly, the renewal of the Electoral Roll – this is a 6<sup>th</sup> year, when **everyone** has to enrol again by filling in a new form. Please do this as soon as you can to ensure that you are listed as a member of our congregations. If you are not already on the roll, please do ask for a form to fill in.

Secondly the Worship Review – you should have received a copy of the questionnaire either by email or in printed form – please do complete it and return it as soon as possible. A number of our existing groups and activities will be asked to act as a focus group to hear and discuss what you would like to see in our worship sessions and activities. We will then look through the feedback and will report back on the outcome with a view to reviewing our worship if and where this may be appropriate.

We do thank Christopher Churcher and Justine Liu for their good work in preparing for this.

*'Lent and Easter for Everyone'* is now underway and it looks as though it will give us a wonderful lead throughout Lent and Easter. Breakfasts start on Saturday mornings on 1<sup>st</sup> March, the books are available, and sermons and house groups will be based on this book. Let us take the opportunity to deepen our faith and our walk with our Lord.

This is the time of year when we seek nominations for wardens, and members of our Parish and District Councils. These are vital roles for the running and direction of our Parish and so please do consider whether God is calling you to stand. All our District Churches have only one warden where there should be two, and our councils have vacancies to be filled.

The new car parking controls for the Oliver Bird Hall and the driveway to St. Alphege Close come into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> March. These have been implemented to change the behaviours of people who use our private parking areas inappropriately, often resulting in a lack of parking space for those who genuinely need it. Please note that the Parish Office Staff can issue you with a parking permit, but they will not be dealing with any appeals; these will be handled by the parking company.

We look forward to welcoming our new Bishop of Aston, Esther, when she comes to take our Confirmation Service on the late afternoon of Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October. Various courses and opportunities for exploring and deepening faith and preparing for Confirmation and Baptism will be held from May onwards.

Please do continue to pray for our Parish and our Mission to it.

**Pam Price**  
**Andrew Williams**  
February 2024



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## A Storm in a Chalice?

I wonder if you saw recent media reports that the Church of England was banning use of gluten free wafers and non-alcoholic wine at Holy Communion? This understandably caused some anxiety as well as making the Church of England appear insensitive to people's needs and therefore exclusive and unwelcoming. I confess I was left feeling cross that the national Church was once again proving itself to be inept and out of touch. It is not as if we needed any more negative publicity! Having now looked more deeply, it seems that there has been wilful misrepresentation by certain quarters of the national press, as well as a lack of forethought.

It turns out the story originates from a written answer given to a question submitted in advance of a General Synod meeting – namely, whether Canon B17 (part of the CofE rulebook) could be amended, in order to formally permit the use of gluten-free bread and non-alcoholic wine in the Eucharist. Bishop Michael Ipgrave, Chair of the CofE Liturgical Commission, answered that there was a “settled position” in the Church of England that “bread made with wheat and the fermented juice of the grape are the elements to be consecrated in Holy Communion” – an answer which he now accepts, in its brevity, was inadequate.

A statement from Church House on Monday 10th February said: “Contrary to recent reports following a question asked by a General Synod member, the Church of England is *not* banning ‘gluten-free’ wafers or ‘non-alcoholic’ wine at Communion. Church of England churches across the country routinely offer ‘gluten-free’ bread or ‘non-alcoholic’ wine at Holy Communion. Many professional ecclesiastical suppliers have long provided wine or bread which may contain tiny traces of alcohol or gluten which can legitimately be considered non-alcoholic or gluten free. Coeliac UK has a list of approved products. We hope this helps clarify and avoid further confusion!”

Nevertheless, the question I am left with is why we are resisting changing the canon? Is it because it is unnecessary or is it because we believe fermentation and gluten are somehow essential to the efficacy of Holy Communion? The fact that the CofE statement speaks of minute traces of alcohol and gluten remaining, appears to suggest the latter. In one sense none of this matters, a veritable ‘storm in a chalice’, but in another it appears to be missing the wood for the trees and takes me back to the debate around spiritual communion during the pandemic – when many worshippers joined in with Holy Communion at home using whatever they could. I am reminded of my liturgy tutor who regularly told us that intention is everything when it comes to efficacy, particularly of the worshipper, as God looks on the heart. For my own part I will therefore continue to take a more liberal or pragmatic approach which focuses not on the details but on these words used in the Eucharistic prayer, ‘may they be for us Christ’s Body and Blood’, remembering that ultimately it is God who consecrates through His Holy Spirit – and as St. Peter famously learned, if God says ‘yes’, who are we to say, ‘no’ (Acts 10).



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## Wave of Prayer

St Alphege celebrated the Wave of Prayer at the Thursday morning Eucharist on 16<sup>th</sup> January. About 25 members and friends attended the service, we lit a candle for our link dioceses and said a prayer for each one, using the *Wave of Prayer Leaflet* from the Diocese.

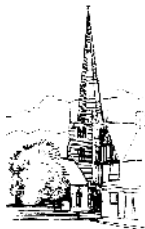


After the service we held the Annual General Meeting of the St Alphege Branch. We have had a very successful year, with a variety of speakers, Lent and Advent lunches with meditations. As a result of fund-raising events, we were able to send **£1,778** to the Diocese for the various Mothers' Union charities. Susan Haigh will continue as leader for the next three years and the committee remains unchanged.

## Ministry, my Unexpected Journey?

The Revd Anne Haselhurst was the speaker at our meeting on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February. She said that as a child, she had wanted to be a disc jockey! But growing up in USA, only men could become disc jockeys! Anne was fascinated with Greek mythology and so she studied ancient Greek and archaeology at university. After she and Peter were married, they came to England and had a family before she became a lay reader and then an ordained priest. Anne will be writing about her life in a later edition Parish News, so I will leave the rest of her story for her to tell.

**Susan Leach**



**St Alphege**  
**All Age Eucharist**  
**9.15 a.m. Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March**

# For Your Diary



**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March** : 5.00pm in the OBH. **PARISH PANCAKE PARTY.**

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March** : 1.30pm in the OBH. *Birmingham Tree People* with Tonia Clark.

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March** : 10.30am in church. *MU Corporate Eucharist.*

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March** : 10.30am in Birmingham Cathedral. *Diocesan Festival Service.*

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April** : 1.00pm in the OBH. *Lent Lunch and Meditation* with Peter Haselhurst.

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

## WIVES' FELLOWSHIP

**T**he Wives Lunch Club will meet on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March. If you would like to join this friendly group for a meal and good conversation, please telephone Carol Caldicott on the number below.

**Carol Caldicott**  
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<b>Oliver Bird Hall Bookings</b>		<a href="mailto:OBHbookings@solihullparish.org.uk">OBHbookings@solihullparish.org.uk</a>
<b>Life Events</b> (Baptism, Wedding, Funeral)		<a href="mailto:life_events@solihullparish.org.uk">life_events@solihullparish.org.uk</a>
<b>Pewslip items</b> (by 10 a.m. Wednesday)		<a href="mailto:Pewslip@solihullparish.org.uk">Pewslip@solihullparish.org.uk</a>

## SOLIHULL PARISH STAFF & CONTACTS

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