

SOLIHULL PARISH NEWS



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 Oak Cottage School,



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 11th May
 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 the Oliver Bird Hall on 4th and 18th May.

St Helen

Sundays 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion
 Third Sunday 10.00 a.m. Morning Praise
 Tuesdays 9.00 a.m. Morning Prayer
 9.15 a.m. On 25th May the Junction and St. Helen's Sunday club will be taking a break for Half Term

St Michael, Oak Cottage 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

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

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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

**The cover picture and the pictures illustrating the article
on the church eco group are by Courtney Jamieson**

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Roots and Shoots

I am no Monty Don, but I am enjoying trying to make my garden into an attractive, fruitful place where humans, plants and creatures can thrive and enjoy. Over the years I have slowly learned the importance of nourishing the soil, feeding it with compost and dutifully mulching it. In this way vital roots can be encouraged to find nourishment and develop healthily, feeding and anchoring the plants. As well as helping with the unseen underground health of what is growing, I have given attention to what is happening above ground. For instance, I have begun to learn to prune (hopefully at the right time and in the right way). I have tried to encourage branching out by pricking out the top leaves of seedlings. Later there will be the job of removing sideshoots on my tomato plants to help them produce tasty fruit. I have also had to find ways of defeating pests, from the little aphids, through to the dreaded slugs and on to the fox who likes to excavate my pots if I don't protect them with wire.

What is true of gardening is true in our spiritual lives. It is unsurprising that Jesus uses seeds, weeds, fruit and vines to illustrate truths about our life with God. In John 15 Jesus explicitly says that, "My Father is the gardener". To be healthy disciples of Jesus we need our unseen spiritual roots to go deep in Him. Our prayer, study of scripture and worship should be nourishing us. The point of this is also that we grow and bear fruit. What is true spiritually needs to be seen physically. In this time of waiting between Easter and Pentecost it's good to ask ourselves whether we are feeding our spiritual lives or are we spiritually malnourished? Alongside this though is the need to bear fruit and not to be so spiritually minded that we are of no earthly use. I vehemently disagreed with a crossword puzzle where the clue was the word "spiritual" and the answer to the clue was "otherworldly"! What difference does our Christian faith make to those around us? As the old adage says, "If you were on trial accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

The key to all this is being connected. Plants in the garden need healthily connected roots, stems, leaves, flowers and fruit. They also need to receive enough nourishment from rain and light, not forgetting protection from pests. We also need to lead connected lives.

We sadly see all around us the effects of broken connections. Loss of connection to God leads to the breaking of relationships with each other. Climate change and environmental problems result from our lack of care and connection with the earth. Brokenness within ourselves can show itself in depression, fear and anxiety. Tragically recent events witness to broken connections between nations.

Jesus has come to bring healing and wholeness to broken and disconnected lives. It is very appropriate that in this time of horticultural growth we mark *Christian Aid Week* (11th – 17th May). This year is the 80th Anniversary of *Christian Aid Week*. The theme this year is bringing hope to a broken world, particularly for parts of the world experiencing the harmful effects of climate change.

Brokenness is not the end of the story. Jesus is active in and through His people to mend what is fractured.

One of my favourite prayers is by David Adam:

*With the weary and the wounded,
Christ of the cross we come to you,
For you alone can make us whole.
With the fragmented and the fractured,
Christ of the cross we come to you,
For you alone can make us whole
With the stressed and the shattered
Christ of the cross we come to you,
For you alone can make us whole*

*With the broken-hearted and broken-spirited
Christ of the cross we come to you,
For you alone can make us whole
With broken relationships and broken hopes
Christ of the cross we come to you,
For you alone can make us whole
With broken promises and broken dreams
Christ of the cross we come to you,
For you alone can make us whole*

(from *Celtic Prayers* by David Adam published by Tim Tiley Ltd.)

So how does your garden grow?

May God bless us and help us to blossom where we are planted.

God Bless
Rev. Roger

SHEPHERDSON COURT DAY CENTRE

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St. Alphege Eco Group

You may remember that St. Alphege was awarded a Bronze Eco Church award in 2021. The Eco Church programme is led by A Rocha UK, a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world and committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment.

In recent months, the Social and Environmental Justice Committee has been reflecting upon the church's progress so far and our vision for the future. It is undeniable now that, as a planet, we are facing enormous environmental challenges and we as citizens must play our part. With this in mind, a new sub-committee, the St. Alphege Eco Group, has been formed.

The group met for the first time in February to discuss our progression to the Silver Eco Church award. We delved into discussions about the land and nature of the church and opportunities for increasing biodiversity, with much food for thought.



Love Your Burial Ground Week and Churches Count on Nature

Saturday 7th June marks the beginning of Love Your Burial Ground Week and Churches Count on Nature. During this week, churches across England and Wales will join together in celebrating the wealth of nature in our churchyards and exploring the plant and animal species living within these historic green spaces.

This year, we are delighted to be taking part in this very special week, with opportunities for everyone in the parish to get involved.



Save The Date!

Saturday 7th June: Love Your Burial Ground Celebration Day at St. Alphege Church

Activities for all ages! A fantastic opportunity for the parish to come together to explore our church grounds and create homes for wildlife. More details to follow soon.

Saturday 14th June: Churchyard Tidy Up

The St. Alphege Eco Group is open to all- we would be delighted to welcome new members! Please contact Deirdre Moll (d.moll@usa.net) for more details.

Natalie Satchwell-Hounsell
On behalf of St. Alphege Eco Group

Lent Meditation and Enrolment

Thirty-two members of Mothers' Union enjoyed a Lent Lunch on Thursday 3rd April. We had soup and bread rolls followed by a variety of delicious home-made desserts.



After the lunch there was a short service in which Fr. Roy enrolled Peter Haselhurst into Mothers' Union and welcomed Anne, who is already a member, into the St. Alphege Branch. Peter then led us in a meditation; his theme was *Mission and Service*.



Solihull Parish and Mothers' Union's Marriage Preparation

On Saturday 22nd March, 6 of the couples who will marry in the parish this year attended a Marriage Preparation Day at the Oliver Bird Hall.

Discussions around communication, commitment and conflict within a marriage, helped support the couples examine how they may deal with life's ups and downs as they move forward together.

The day was filled with candour, humour and cake and was again deemed a success by everyone. We wish all of the couples much happiness and joy, both on their wedding day and for many years to come.

Julia Hanson



Bronze and Silver Churches

St. Alphege is amongst the bronze and silver churches, and we continue to explore how we can reduce our energy and carbon footprint. Our Social and Environmental Justice Committee continues actively to encourage us towards becoming better stewards and advocates for God's world, our shared home. See also page 36.

Rev. Nick

"Mostly Monday Group" dates,**

May to June 2025 (including Lent)



** Formerly '4th 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 12th May

Monday 23rd June

Contact Suzette: s.maguire@solihullparish.org.uk

or 0121 7090884

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

Churchyard Trees

The St. Alphege churchyard provides a peaceful haven around the church and a suitable environment for relatives and friends to visit the grave stones and interment plaques of loved ones. But, for most visitors to the church it merits only a cursory glance and possibly little appreciation of the extent and beauty of the area. It contains 51 trees of 14 different species. By far the most common being the Common Lime (29), which is a very popular tree generally in public places for its reliability in being attractive, healthy and long lasting. Other species, of which there are none with more than four include: - Flowering Cherry (3), Laburnum, Witch Hazel, Lawson Cypress, Sawara Cypress (4), Yew, Swedish Whitebeam, Norway Maple (3), Norway Spruce, Whitebeam, Crab Apple, Elder and Tree Cotoneaster.

Naturally trees continue to grow and require regular maintenance to keep them healthy and in keeping with their environment, and in particular several have been obstructing gravestones. It is eight years since they were last pruned, but recently they have received extensive surgery by David Knight of Geotrees to great effect. In the majority this involved raising the crown by removing or trimming lower branches and also the epicormic growth around the base of the Common Lime trees. The before and after photos show one particular aspect that has been improved.



However, of all the trees around the church, the most spectacular is just outside the churchyard by the steps coming up from the Oliver Bird Hall and it is so tall that its size is often not

appreciated. David Knight described it as a Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia Glyptostroboides*) or *Sequoia Sempervirens* (Coastal Redwood), which can grow to 120 metres in their native habitat and have a diameter of 9 metres. They don't grow to this size in Europe, mostly to around 50 metres and the one at the church (see photo) would be around 120 feet, about 36.5 metres, so a long way to grow!!

Keeping the churchyard looking tidy requires regular maintenance for which we have four tidy-up sessions each year on a Saturday morning from 10 a.m.-12 noon. Refreshments and equipment are provided. More volunteers would be most welcome. Look out for notices in the pew slip.



David Sturdee
Chairman Church & Churchyard Committee

It's a Family Affair!

There's something special about bell ringing. It's an interesting pursuit for people of all ages, individuals or indeed family members. In most activities experience comes with age but amongst bell ringers it's wholly irrelevant and the most accomplished can often be the youngest. People help and support the learning of others regardless of age and for many, many years we've all been on first name terms even when in wider society younger members would normally have used Mr. or Mrs. to address their elders. As we look back at our local Guild we see from the earliest days, back when the Guild was formed, that brothers and fathers and sons were amongst the founding members. In fact, we've had 6 Bartholomews, 6 Braggs, 5 Smiths, 4 Davies, 4 Dodsons, 4 Greens, 3 Fitters, 3 Garners, 3 Popes, 3 Prices, 3 Wrights and the list goes on. Even today we have husband and wife team, Linda and Keith, and father and daughter, Malcolm and Sara. Our newest recruits are sisters.

So, family members are commonplace to us. But it's perhaps a tad presumptuous when we involve our non-ringing family. Well, why wouldn't they support us? Gillian has organised many of our recent ringing outings and she 'ropes' in husband John to do much of the administration in the background. Poor love, he's roped in with some of the tower cleaning too! Jen's husband Geoff has organised his friends to join our trips to fill the seats on the coach and many of us have taught family members enough about our methods (the patterns we follow in ringing) for them to be able to test our learning. Spouses often accompany us when we open up or lock up after a visiting band and of course, family relentlessly put up with our frequent absence and obsession with being up a tower! So, only natural perhaps to arm twist Carl, Sand's husband, into getting involved in replacing a stay.

The stay of a bell is the mechanism that allows us to leave a bell up in the upright position ready for ringing. When we ring we're taught to ring the bell in such a way as to avoid putting undue pressure on the stay but, inevitably, over time some damage can occur and the stay can become unreliable. The stay is made of ash which means it's more flexible and slightly weaker than the stronger oak fittings that it comes into contact with. This is by design so that it will be the first component to break and acts as a safety valve, protecting the bell and other fittings.

Kathryn, our Tower Keeper, whom I have introduced you to before, carefully monitors our stays and charts any cracks as they start to appear. Many years ago, a crack appeared in the stay of the treble, our smallest bell. It had been screwed together which isn't a practice we'd follow now but nevertheless, she'd been keeping an eye to ensure it was safe. However, it had reached the point where attention was needed and, it was time to replace. Here are photos of Carl and Kathryn working together to get the job done. A fusion of his carpentry skills (and the loan of his



Roundabout

tools!) and her recently learnt bell maintenance knowledge. Thank you to them both for looking after us.



**Look out for details of
our Bell Sunday celebrations
18th May 2025**

**Sand Cooper
Tower Secretary**

Bell Sunday



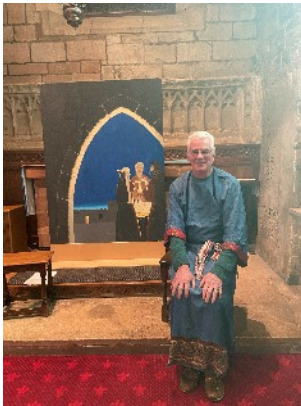
This year's Bell Sunday, 18th May, will be an even more special occasion. The Bell Ringers will be joined by past members of the Band, that joined us to ring in 2012 and 2013, when we rang to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the martyrdom of St. Alphege. We have a new black and gold Peal Board ready for the ringing room and it will be blessed during the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist, which we will be joining for this very special occasion. Please come along and join us too.

Robert Vaughan and Sand Cooper

Easter Journey 2025

The Easter Journey event is now in its nineteenth year at St. Alphege church. This year children attended from St. Augustine's, St. Alphege, Ruckleigh, Oak Cottage, Yew Tree and Greswold Schools.

The children listened to the story of Holy Week. They then experienced foot washing, learnt about the Last Supper and heard Simon Peter's story. They took part in a meditation on the Crucifixion and heard from one of the women at the Empty Tomb and had the opportunity to reflect on their own fears and worries. Finally the children fed back what they had enjoyed most about the Easter Journey and what was the most important part to them and why it was important.



Here is some of the feedback that we received:

- *Thank you very much for inviting Year 4 to spend the afternoon at St. Alphege Church listening and reflecting on the Easter Journey. It was a wonderful opportunity for the children.*
- *I just wanted to say thank you so much to all the volunteers who worked with the children from Greswold on Friday morning last week. The experience really helped the children to understand the Easter story and further their Religious Education learning. Please pass on my thanks.*

The Easter Journey would not be possible without the help and support of a team of wonderful volunteers who willingly give their time and many talents to make this event happen. A BIG THANK YOU to all of them.

Linda Hicks
Director of Children's and Families' Ministry



Gin...

*and
Jazz*



St Alphege Gin and Jazz Festival
Saturday 31st May
12 noon - 10.30pm

Gin

Food

Live Music

Oliver Bird Hall, Solihull, B91 3RQ

www.solihullparish.org.uk/gin-and-jazz-festival

Scan the QR code for advance booking and group discounts

Adults: £5 Under 18s: free

Registered charity 511237 – The Friends of St Alphege Music



Let us Pray

Calendar and Prayer Intentions for May 2025

1	Philip & James, Apostles	That we may share our faith openly	Drury Lane
2	Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria	Our Bishops Michael & Esther	Dunsmore Grove
3	Feria	Staff and patients of the Marie Curie hospice	Eldersfield Grove
4	3rd Sunday of Easter	Our Parish Church Council	Elms Close
5	Feria	Those who lead our parish study and fellowship groups	Felton Grove
6	Feria	Those who are looking for work	Ferndown Road
7	Feria	Those who work in the Touchwood Centre	Fircroft
8	Julian of Norwich, Spiritual Writer	Writers and poets	Four Stones Close
9	Feria	The staff of Solihull Railway Station	Froxmere Close
10	Feria	Those who work at the Core in Solihull	George Road
11	4th Sunday of Easter	The people and leaders of the Junction	Gilmorton Close
12	Gregory Dix, Priest & Monk, 1952	Those who plan and prepare our worship	Glaston Drive
13	Feria	Those waiting for the results of medical tests	Glebe Road
14	Matthias, Apostle	Suzette, our Pioneer Minister	Glenfield Close
15	Feria	Those studying for exams	Grandborough Drive
16	Caroline Chisholm, Social Reformer	Our borough Council	Grange Road
17	Feria	The St. Alphege bell ringers	Greswolde Road
18	5th Sunday of Easter	The people of St. Alphege Church	Greyhurst Croft
19	Dunstan, Abp of Canterbury, 988	The selection of the new Archbishop of Canterbury	Grove Avenue
20	Alcuin of York, Deacon & Abbot	Members of Religious communities	Grove Road
21	Helena, Protector of the Holy Places	The people of St. Helen's Church	Habberley Croft
22	Feria	The staff and pupils of the schools in our parish	Hainfield Drive
23	Petroc, Abbot	Those exploring religious vocations	Halford Road
24	John & Charles Wesley, Hymn Writers	Chris Thomas, St Alphege Director of Music	Halstead Grove
25	6th Sunday of Easter	he people of St. Michael's Church	Hampton Lane
26	Augustine, first Abp of Canterbury, 605	Our Archdeacon, Phelim	Hartwell Close
27	Feria	Those who are in hospital	Haseley Road
28	Lanfranc, Prior, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1089	Our curate-designate, Karen Marlow-Tipple	Heath Gardens
29	Ascension Day	Our part in God's mission to Solihull	Heath Road
30	Josephine Butler, Social Reformer, 1906	The Readers of our Parish	Heathcote Avenue
31	The Visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth	Those awaiting the birth of a baby	Heaton Road

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

From the St. Alphege Register

Baptisms

16th March

Mia Jamieson

23rd March

Aria Chambers

Weddings

None

Renewal of Vows

None

Funerals

None

Interment of Ashes

28th March

Geoffrey Chaplin at Widney Manor Cemetery

23rd April

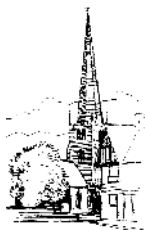
John Tarplee

Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in May

Paul Bloodworth
David Chambers
David Geoffrey Cox
Marie Davey
Tony Davies
Edith Feldman

Barbara Ferguson
Douglas Hale
Reginald Hobbs
Leslie Hodges
Christine Jukes
Margaret Mawson

Mark Metcalfe
Peter John Mitchell
Michael Shackleton
Geoffrey Starbuck
John Mark Taylor
Peter Walford



S t A l p h e g e
All Age Eucharist
9.15 a.m. Sunday 11th May

Worship Notes for May 2025

This month continues the Easter season and includes some special occasions for us as a parish. The main liturgical colour is white apart from several important feast days where the colour is red.

Thursday 1st May

Today is the feast day of Saints Philip and James, Apostles.

Sunday 4th May

The Junction will meet at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall. In addition to remembering St. Alphege, we will be honouring V.E. Day by planting flowers in the Junction Remembrance bed in the Victory Garden at the front of the Oliver Bird Hall.

Thursday 8th May

The feast-day of Julian of Norwich who, when thirty years old and suffering from what was considered to be a terminal illness, experienced a series of sixteen visions, which revealed aspects of the love of God. We will remember Mother Julian at the 10 a.m. Eucharist at St. Michael's Chapel the previous day, Wednesday 7th May.

Sunday 11th May

At the St. Alphege 9.15 a.m. All-age worship service, a group of children from the Parish will receive their First Communion.

Friday 16th May

Messy Church will take place at St. Helen's from 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. All families are welcome!

Sunday 18th May

The Junction will meet at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall to celebrate Bell Sunday and the contribution the bells and the bellringers make to the life of the church. We are hoping that the bellringers will bring handbells to ring and the children will be able to have a go at ringing!

Wednesday 21st May

10 a.m. Eucharist at St. Michael's Chapel at which the Feast Day of Helena, Protector of the Holy Places, will be celebrated. Helena is the Patron Saint of St. Helen's Church in our parish.

Monday 26th May

Today is the Feast Day of St. Augustine who became the first Archbishop of Canterbury at the end of the 6th Century.

Thursday 29th May

Today is the Feast of the Ascension, forty days after Easter Day. Jesus commissions his disciples to continue his work, he promises the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then he is no longer among them in the flesh. The Ascension is therefore closely connected with the theme of mission. From this day, we look towards the arrival of the promised gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost next month.

Saturday 31st May

The church today recalls the visit of the Blessèd Virgin Mary to Elizabeth, as recorded in Luke's gospel (Luke 1.39-56) This was the occasion for Mary to sing her great hymn of praise in honour of her Lord and God, which we know as the Magnificat.

Fr. Simon

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May 2025 Services

Thursday 1st May

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist, Prayers for Healing, and Anointing
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Sunday 4th May – Easter 3

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist (Patronal Festival)
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 (Patronal Festival)
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong (Patronal Festival)

Wednesday 7th May

St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
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Thursday 8th May

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist (VE Day Commemoration)
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Sunday 11th May – Easter 4

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

Wednesday 14th May

St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
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Thursday 15th May

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist (Mothers' Union)
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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 18th May – Easter 5

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
Oliver Bird Hall	9.15 a.m.	The Junction (Bell Sunday)
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist (Bell Sunday)
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 21st May

St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
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Thursday 15th May

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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Sunday 25th May – Easter 6

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion + The Junction Sunday Club
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 28th May

St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
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Thursday 29th May – Ascension Day

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	7.30 p.m.	Sung Eucharist

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.



The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church

A big thank you to all those who either helped with running or supported our first event of 2025, *Light and Sound at St. Alphege Church*, on 8th April.

Future events

We are looking forward to seeing many of you at further fundraising events this year.

Tuesday 10th June, 6.00 to 8.00 p.m.

Drinks Party. Hosted by Ann Taylor

This popular gathering for members is now open for booking. A chance to meet up and exchange news about the church and more. Entrance will require booking by contacting myself via the e-mail below. The cost will be £10 per person and include food and drink.

Monday 16th June. 7.30 p.m. St. Alphege Church

Tour and History of St. Alphege Church.

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

Thursday July 10th, 7.30 to 9.30 p.m. 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 open 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 will be available. Further details to follow.

Thursday 2nd October 7.30 p.m. Oliver Bird Hall.

Guardians A.G.M.

Nov/Dec. Date, time and venue to be settled.

Christmas fundraising social event.

Other News

Judith Hetherington and Andy Moore have worked on the membership list and communication channels which now seem to be working successfully. If you have still not heard from us, please let me or Judith know. Those wishing to join should contact Judith who runs membership along with the accounts, at: j.hetherington@btinternet.com

In the archive front I have now received 'Guardians' material from several sources. It has been maintained pretty well. The A.G.M. records are largely intact with a few yet to be uncovered. These are for the years 1982 to 1984 and 1986 to 1991. Founding members please scour your attics!

Roger Shinton
Trustee

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. Alternatively, you can contact Sheila Payne, details below.

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 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.

Sheila Payne

Scheme organiser:-

0121 706 0520

email: russellpayne110@aol.com

The Church was floodlit in April 2025 to remember the following:

4 th April	Ann Rona Mullen. In loving memory of a treasured aunt on her birthday.
7 th April	Margaret Mawson. In loving memory of a dear mother on her birthday.
8 th April	In loving memory of Ron Soden on his birthday.
10 th April	In loving memory of Mary Friswell.
24 th April	In loving memory of Vivien Soden.

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Music Matters

Rising Stars is the choral outreach programme that Chris and Liam are running, for the second year now, in local junior schools.

The Easter Term *Rising Stars* performance took place in St. Alphege Church on Wednesday 2nd April, with pupils from four schools, Sharman's Cross, TGPA Langley, Oak Cottage and TGPA Yew Tree, present, as well as our own choristers.



The performance was a lively and accessible mix of music with Howard Chappell's *Daniel Jazz* as the centrepiece. There were also popular native American songs, and the well-loved *Easter Jubilation* by Mark and Helen Johnson which will also feature at the Easter Day All Age service, the perennial favourite 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' and a John Rutter anthem For the Beauty of the Earth.





Thank you to the music leads at the four *Rising Stars* schools, to parents for supporting their children, to our volunteer helpers, and to all the children who performed. Everyone sang well and performed to the best of their ability, and it was noticeable how confident the soloists were: their singing is developing in leaps and bounds.



The Summer Term *Rising Stars* performance will be part of the *Solihull Choirs Festival* and will take place in Mell Square on Friday 27th June at 5 p.m. – make a note in your diary and come out to support us if you can!

Isabel Baumber

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

Recitals recommene on Wednesday 30th April.”

7 th May	Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Harp Department
14 th May	To be confirmed
21 st May	To be confirmed
28 th May	To be confirmed



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CHURCH 4 FAMILIES

May

Sunday Worship

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

On **4th May** the Junction will meet at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall. We will be remembering St. Alphege and will also be honouring VE Day by planting flowers in the Junction Remembrance bed in the Victory garden at the front of the OBH.

On **11th May** everyone will meet in the church building at 9.15.a.m. for a special **All age worship** service with the worship band and a group of children from the Parish will receive their First Communion.

On **18th May** the Junction will meet at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall and will be celebrating Bell Sunday and the contribution the bells and the bellringers make to the life of the church. We are hoping that the bellringers will bring handbells to ring and the children will be able to have a go at ringing!

On **25th May** the Junction and St. Helen's Sunday club will be taking a break for Half Term

Other Activities

Friday 16th May Messy Church St. Helen's Church 4-6 p.m.

Pause and Pray Every Monday in term time 9.00 a.m. Room 5 Oliver Bird Hall

Praise and Play Every Friday in term time 9.30-10.30 a.m. Oliver Bird Hall



Facebook page

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Youth Stuff

The Youth Group continues to meet on a Friday evening in the Oliver Bird Hall.

Are you, or is someone you know in Year 6 and above, interested in joining a church youth group? If so, then do consider joining Solihull Parish Youth on a Friday evening, 5 p.m. to 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: lsmart@solihullparish.org.uk



A Parish Event arranged by Mothers' Union

Monday 16th June
7.00pm in church

Everyone from across
the parish is welcome

The History of St Alphege Church

- a talk by Carol Southworth

Cheese and Wine.

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As I write this we are at the beginning of Holy Week, with the main events leading up to Good Friday yet to come.

There are various services planned for St. Helen's, including a Maundy Thursday service which will be held at 7.30 p.m. and a Tenebrae service which will also be held at 7.30 p.m. on Good Friday evening in St. Helen's chapel, and this will be led by Nick.

We of course look forward to the joy of Easter Day which will be celebrated at the usual time of 10.00 a.m. on Easter Sunday, and led by Roger Chamberlain.

Chris Carrington has produced some beautiful Easter cards, complete with all of the dates of our Easter services, which he has distributed among our neighbours, with our love and greetings for a joyful Easter. We have erected a cross outside the church, and local members of the community are invited to come along and weave a flower into the mesh which surrounds it. A really lovely way of remembering all that Jesus did for each one of us, and a way to celebrate Easter by making the world a more beautiful place.

Our Palm Sunday service was extremely moving, as we again recounted the passion of Our Lord. This was followed by our ADCM, which was well attended, and our officers were duly elected for the year. Revd. Nick shared with us some of the exciting events which we can look forward to in the near future, including the arrival of our new curate Karen, and we pray for her as she finishes her time at theological college and prepares for her ordination as deacon in July. Nick thanked all of our volunteers who work so tirelessly so that we can continue to proclaim the gospel to the people around us.

Members of St. Helen's will be participating in the walk of witness on Good Friday morning, and looking forward to a hot cross bun when they arrive back at the Oliver Bird Hall !

It just remains for me to say that the congregation of St. Helen's send their love and best wishes for a joyful Easter to all of our brothers and sisters in the parish of Solihull.

Revd Sue Chandler



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One Door Closes

It is a truism many people quote that when one door closes, another opens. We now have had direct experience of this. Towards the end of March Fr. Simon received an email from Sharmans Cross School informing us that from the end of April we could no longer use the school as our worship base. It would be fair to say that this came as a shock. After 60 years worshipping there from the very beginning of our church, it is not unreasonable to assume that we would be able to carry on worshipping there. Therefore, this termination of the arrangement with Sharmans Cross caught us unawares as there had been no warning or suggestion that this be coming our way. It seems that 'operational difficulties' were to blame. Anyway, whatever the problem, the result was the same, we could no longer use the school. The course of action following this was clear, we needed to find another base to worship from. In our district which comprises almost exclusively housing there are very few venues we could consider. The obvious choice was to approach Oak Cottage School.

Another Door Opens

Fr. Simon lost no time in contacting the Head Teacher, who needed to consult and would be back to us the following week. When Fr. Simon heard back and went to visit the school they were very happy that we would be using their premises for our Sunday morning worship. In discussion with the Head Teacher many of the arrangements we would need were established, i.e. where to store our items, where to make tea/coffee, the time we could hire the school, the rate for the hire etc. Also, we could start using the school the week after our last service at Sharmans Cross so we would have a seamless transition from one venue to the other.

We were delighted! This also gives us opportunity to grow by tapping into a new area close to the vicarage and chapel, thus our chapel and Sunday worship are close together. Perhaps God had this in mind all along, so it is our chance to make the most of this new opportunity.

We are hoping therefore that we shall finish at Sharmans Cross on Easter Sunday, 20th April, being our last Sunday there, and worship at Oak Cottage School the following Sunday, 27th April.

St. Michael's Annual District Church Meeting.

This was held on Sunday 23rd March following the Sunday Eucharist. Fr. Simon presented his report. Very sadly we had lost two dear members of the church, Elly Wright and Richard Austen. Both were dearly loved and will be greatly missed.

Fr. Simon thanked the many people who work to ensure our church functions as a church should. Elections were held and Keith Wilson was elected as the sole warden for another year. We really are grateful to Keith who has held this position for many years now. Churches having only one warden are becoming more common and it seems that the church needs to prune some of the meetings that have become norm and restructure the job of warden which may mean members feel more inclined to stand for this important position.

Book Signing

On 29th March Wendy Westley launched her new book at a presentation and signing at St. Michael's Chapel. Her book, 'Sun Hats & Staying Home', was a charming and quirky collection of short stories, poetry and photographs. In this book Wendy recalls memories of wonderful holidays and people and the joys of being at home. Throughout the book, there are themes of gratitude and wonder, and her love of holiday hats, food and nature. The full chapel was entertained by readings from Wendy and Fr. Simon who both told how they came to poetry and what it means to them. With refreshments it was a delightful evening. The book is available from Wendy or David Westley.

We end on a high note, that we have a base from which to operate which may give us new opportunities and a fresh start.

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"A Time for Everything"

On May 19th *Wellbeing Wednesday* will be four years old.

Last year our 'birthday' fell on *Pentecost Sunday*, so we had a joint Birthday/Pentecost party. It was such a success that members of the *Wellbeing Wednesday* community wanted to celebrate again this year – so for our 4th birthday we are going out for afternoon tea. (*More on that later.*)

Wellbeing Wednesday began after Covid, when I was going around the local estates meeting people who said that groups and events that they used to go to before covid had not been resurrected. Without wishing to sound flippant, in retrospect the Covid years were maybe '*A time to stay in, a time to go out*'. That being said, would *Wellbeing Wednesday* have happened without the Covid years? Who knows!

Wellbeing Wednesday moved from its original venue at the Kitchen Coffee Shop in 2023, as the community had outgrown it and, in turn, we were welcomed at Greville Arms, where we have remained every Wednesday up to date. (*Well, almost.*) *A time for everything indeed.*

Since we moved to the Greville Arms there has been a change of pub manager, and a major refurbishment when the pub was closed for three whole weeks, but we are still welcome there. People come and people go but on the whole the *Wellbeing Wednesday* community is still growing.

During the closure of the Greville for refurb, *Wellbeing Wednesday* took place at Solihull Royal British Legion on Union Road, the same venue that helped us out with the poppy installation last November. We decided that we wanted to keep up contact with the RBL and so it is to that venue that we will return on May 19th this year, for our birthday afternoon tea!

The theme of this article has come on the back of the fact that the Kitchen Coffee Shop has now closed for business for good. *A time to open up, and a time to close down.* The closure of this community resource is sad for all in the local community, but it should be celebrated that that business opened up during Covid, in July 2020, and stayed open for four and half years. The staff were well known in the local area, and those in the local area were well known to them. *Thanks to all involved over the last four and a half years. We already miss you!*

So, for the future: *Food4Thought*, a spin-off from *Wellbeing Wednesday*, meets most Monday mornings at the Greville Arms, and we chat on all kinds of themes, from the Incarnation to friendship; from denominations to hope; and much, much more. At least a couple of people within that group have stated that they see being *there* as their church. (*Yes, we have chatted about church.*) In the meantime, the Greville now have a room that can be separated off from everything else that is happening there during their long

(9 a.m. - midnight) opening hours. Some of us are praying about '*what next?*' there, knowing as King Solomon did that -

*There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:*

*² a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,*

*³ a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,*

*⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,*

*⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,*

*⁶ a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,*

*⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,*

*⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.*

*¹⁴ I know that everything God does will endure forever;
nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it.*

Ecclesiastes 3.

How well do you know your local community? How has it changed in recent times? Is there something missing?

What about any or all the above has spoken to you in your circumstances, either in your local community or in your life personally? Why not speak to God about it, either in your own words or by adopting the following prayer:

*Thank You, Father, that You know the end from the beginning
and that everything under heaven is within Your authority.*

*Thank You, that You are in control of all that is happening in my own individual life
and the wider world in general.*

*May I trust You through all the circumstances of life
and as I seek Your face in prayer and praise, may I learn more and more to pray,
"Thy will be done in my life and throughout the world."*

In Jesus' name I pray, AMEN.

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Ecclesiastes/3>

Thanks for listening!
Suzette.

An Exciting Discovery

A friend recently found a pamphlet dating from 1928, entitled, *Solihull Church – A National Treasure*. It was written by an engineer, John W. Hall, about St. Alphege Church and sold at one shilling (five of today's pence) in aid of the restoration fund. Reading this, I discovered something not mentioned either in the Revd. Pemberton's 1905 book or in later guide books. It is known that a chantry priest was paid for by Sir William de Odingsells to serve the chantry he built in 1277, and it is now assumed that he lived in the Lower, now St. Francis, Chapel as there is a fireplace at the West end of the Chapel. What the pamphlet told me was that there is a basic chimney, an angled flue, leading from the back of the fireplace to the outside, where the opening is clearly visible, as can be seen in the photograph. Mr. Hall describes it as "apparently a domestic fireplace provided with a chimney – if so it must be the first chimney constructed in England after the departure of the Romans. The inevitable conclusion seems to be that this was originally the residence of the chantry priest". Further evidence supporting the theory that this was indeed where the priest lived is that the stout wooden door is barred from the inside, with a small wicket, also opening inwards, through which the priest could speak safely to anyone in the church. The stone altar at the East end of the chapel may be of a slightly later date and has a clearly visible plugged recess in it for relics. We have no information about the nature of those relics. This double chapel, with one on top of the other, on the same foundations, is a very unusual feature to find in a church. Living quarters for a priest in the lower one is possibly unique.



Carol Southworth

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News from the Church of England

Birmingham Diocese is the First Silver-Diocese

A Rocha surprised the assembled delegates of Net Zero Carbon Officers and Diocesan Environment Officers, with confirmation of CoFE Birmingham's Silver-Eco status and achievement at the annual national CoFE conference taking place at the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge, in March this year. The CoFE Birmingham has made history by becoming the first Church of England Diocese to be awarded the prestigious Eco Diocese Silver Award, recognising unprecedented commitment to environmental sustainability and significant environmental achievements across the diocese's churches and operations.

Key milestones in this journey include:

- 40% of diocesan churches registered with Eco Church
- 30% of churches achieving bronze-level environmental recognition
- 10% of churches reaching silver award status

The Bishop of Birmingham, The Rt. Revd. Dr. Michael Volland said, *'Being the first diocese in the Church of England to receive a Silver Eco Award is a huge encouragement for us here in Birmingham and the region. It is a result of an enormous amount of commitment and hard work on the part of many dedicated and faithful people. I hope this award is an inspiration to other Dioceses and pray that many will follow suit with continued focused efforts in relation to actively caring for God's creation.'*

The Church of England Birmingham's success stems from a unique, integrated strategy. Unlike traditional environmental approaches, CoFE Birmingham has woven ecological consciousness into every Diocesan focus - from property management to education. A collaborative network of Deanery, and Parish, Environmental Champions and strong support by the Bishop and the Diocesan leadership have been instrumental in driving this transformative work.

Partnerships have been crucial. St. Peter's Maney, which has an Eco Church Gold Award, helped by sharing their learning as it has moved through the Eco Church awards. The Birmingham Anglican Climate Action (BACA) group played a pivotal role, with volunteers Caroline Egan (Assistant Diocesan Environment Officer) and Heather Holmes (Lead Environmental Champion), significantly boosting the diocese's environmental leadership capacity.

The journey wasn't without challenges. Developing a comprehensive Land Management Plan required extensive collaboration with A Rocha UK and national Church of England bodies, demonstrating the diocese's dedication to meeting the highest environmental standards.

CoFE Birmingham now stands as a beacon of environmental leadership, proving that meaningful ecological action is not just possible, but essential within institutional frameworks.

This award represents more than an environmental achievement, it reflects a deep commitment to responsible stewardship and our belief that caring for creation is a fundamental aspect of our faith.

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Update from the Parish Wardens

Following much that has been initiated in the past few months, there is not a lot that is new at the moment as we follow on from the wonderful time of Easter which gives the church a lot to say about new life and all that Christ is giving us.

Tom Wright's *Lent and Easter for Everyone* has been a real blessing for many of us with fresh insights from reading the book and sharing in house groups, the Churches Together Breakfasts and the weekly sermons.

But there are a lot of ongoing initiatives and challenges which will come to fruition at various times.

The Worship Review will be completed soon and the feedback will be correlated for our future direction on that.

It had been a big shock to hear that Sharmans Cross School is no longer available to St. Michael's on Sunday mornings at short notice and it will mark the end of an era when we meet there on Easter Day for the last time. But our prayers have been answered so that St. Michael's can now meet on Sunday mornings at Oak Cottage School, and we do thank the Headteacher and Governors for agreeing to this and it will provide new opportunities to reach out to the area and hopefully share initiatives with the school.

The news of Linda Hicks retiring in the summer has left some sadness for us as we will very much miss Linda's huge contribution with hard work, care and imagination with Children and Young Families but we are pleased that she can have a time for rest and relaxation and we know that Linda will be active in new spheres in the future. Linda will be away from the Parish for six months or so from the Summer so that she can reassess her priorities. We are now looking to recruit for the Autumn.

We are planning another Alpha Course in June and details will be available soon. Last year's course was well attended and appreciated and so do encourage people to sign up.

We do welcome Wardens, and P.C.C. and D.C.C. members elected at the Annual General Meetings, whether they are new or ongoing appointments and we do thank you for taking on these roles which are so important for the good future of the Parish.

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

Pam Price
Andrew Williams
April 2025

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Matters of Faith

'During the bombing raids of World War II, thousands of children were orphaned and left to starve. The fortunate ones were rescued and placed in refugee camps where they received food and good care. But many of these children who had lost so much could not sleep at night. They feared waking up to find themselves once again homeless and without food. Nothing seemed to reassure them. Finally, someone hit upon the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at bedtime. Holding their bread, these children could finally sleep in peace. All through the night the bread reminded them, "Today I ate, and I will eat again tomorrow."'

So begins one of the simplest and, at the same time, one of the most profound books that I have ever read:

Sleeping with Bread – Holding What Gives You Life –

by The Linns (Dennis, Sheila Fabricant and Matthew).

On first appearance, you would be forgiven for mistaking this book for a children's book – certainly the illustration on the front cover, while demonstrating what is happening in our (and their) opening paragraph, could give that impression. However, upon opening the book, you soon come to realise that this is a book about the spiritual practice of *the examen*. This is what it means for us to be sleeping with bread:

'For many years, we have ended each day the same way. We light a candle, become aware of God's loving presence, and take about five minutes of quiet while we each ask ourselves two questions. "For what moment today am I most grateful? For what moment today am I least grateful?"'

The Linns admit that they stumbled across practising the *examen* by accident – I won't spoil the surprise, but it involves rather a lot of rice - but, in actual fact, the *examen* dates back to the 15th century and is a significant part of Ignatian spirituality: *'Ignatius saw the examen as the cornerstone of spiritual life to the extent that when the Jesuits at the Council of Trent asked if they could skip their prayer exercises because they had no time, Ignatius told them to skip anything but the examen.'*

The *examen* is an exercise in reflecting on our lived experience and the Linns don't shy away from personal testimony, showing that the purpose of the *examen* is to help us to become aware of how God is active in our life, to see where He has been present to us in our day. This can be as simple as taking 5 minutes out your day. In this way, this practice (and indeed this book) is relevant to each and every one of us as we journey through our life and faith.

I have bought and/or recommended this book to so many people over the years since I discovered it, and I recommend it to you now.

(If you're quick, I think I saw a copy on the book stall in St. Alphege!)

Final word from the Linns – and me:

*"We hope the examen will enrich your lives and your relationships as much as it has ours."
Thanks for listening!*

Suzette

Friendship

John 15:15

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

I think friendship is a tricky subject because many of us want to be good friends but often fail. We let friends down sometimes, or I wonder if Jesus felt like that when Peter let him down? Or when we do?

We can't be friends with everyone either, because we don't have the time or energy. What we can do, though, is appreciate the many kinds of friends we have. I liken this to the friends I see in monthly interest groups such as in University of the Third Age, in contrast to church friends whom I see at least weekly.

Friendship takes time to grow, and trust and interest to nurture it. Prayer and Bible reading deepen my relationship with Christ, as well as art and music. Sometimes earthly friends are just for a season.

Friends for a season

Some friends are like sudden cold snaps.
The beauty of the frosted trees takes away
My steaming breath.
They don't last, but give me lasting memories
And I'm grateful for them.
Spring is another matter altogether.
Budding flowers offering hope and
Excitement of things to come
Though it is all too brief.
The heat of summer doesn't suit me.

Scorching and exhausting, the temperatures
Wring me out and leave me wilted.
Autumn invites welcome balance:
Sunshine and gentle breezes,
Leaves burnishing gold and blood red berries
Are reminders of future resilience
And hope.
Some friends are only for a season, though
I treasure the evergreen and lifelong ones.

A Prayer

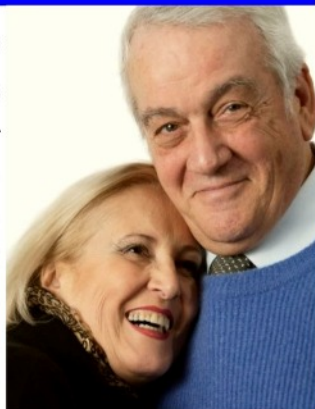
Thank you, Heavenly Father, that we are not only your children but your friends. Thank you for your gift of friendship. Amen.

Wendy Westley

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Thursday 1st May : 1.30pm in the OBH. *Spirituality of Walking* with The Ven. Paul Taylor.

Thursday 15th May : 10.30am in church - *MU Corporate Eucharist*.

Thursday 5th June : 1.30pm in the OBH. *Strawberry Tea* and a talk by Wendy Westley about her book *'Sun Hats and Staying Home'*.

Monday 16th June : 7.00pm in church. *Church Model and Tour* with Carol Southworth.

Thursday 19th June : 10.30am in church - *MU Corporate Eucharist*.

You can access more information on 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

The Wives' Fellowship has a monthly Lunch Club. In May it will meet as usual on the first Friday of the month, 2nd May, at 12 noon. If you would like to join this friendly group for fellowship and a good meal, you will be very welcome. Please contact Carole Caldicott.

Carole Caldicott
0121 705 3168

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of *Solihull Parish News* or of *Solihull Parish*.

NOTE FOR ADVERTISERS AND POTENTIAL ADVERTISERS

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<i>Circulation Enquiries</i>	Helen Russell, 30 De Moram Grove, B92 0PZ	07710 473 418
	Parish News is published every month except August and costs £1 per copy. The Annual Subscription is £10 for all 11 editions.	
<i>Printers</i>	Prontaprint, 126 Station Road, Knowle, B93 0EP	0121 705 9988

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Oliver Bird Hall Bookings		
Life Events (Baptism, Wedding, Funeral)		
Pewslip items (by 10 a.m. Wednesday)		

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