

SOLIHULL PARISH NEWS



**The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid;
for see - I am bringing you good news of
great joy for all the people...'**

Luke 2.10-11



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,
Greswolde Road, Solihull, B91 1DY



St Alphege (Sundays)

8.00 a.m. Said Eucharist
 10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist except:
 Sunday 9.15 a.m. All Age Holy Communion - Christingle
 in the church 14th December
 5.00 p.m. Evensong
 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 7th and 21st December

St Helen

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

St Michael, 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** – childrensministry@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 "Christmas in Solihull Parish"

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The Advent Season of Light

The shortest day and longest night, 21st December, coincides this year with the Fourth (and final) Sunday of Advent. Advent means 'coming' and is traditionally a time of hopeful preparation as we await the coming of Jesus. At this darkest time of the year Advent is also a season of light – with the lighting of candles a prominent feature in many of our services including Christingle and most dramatically our Advent Carol Service. This service begins in darkness, before our hand-held candles are lit, and ends with every light in church shining to its full brightness and glory. Meanwhile our Bible readings, poems, and sacred music take us on a journey through God's oft-repeated promise to come amongst us, culminating in the angel's message to Joseph that Mary's unborn child would be named Jesus and save God's people from their sins.

It was good to be asked by a curious visitor at a recent interfaith gathering, why we light candles in church. Good because we often take such traditions for granted and the question caused me to reflect. The conversation was prompted by our votive candlestand so I began by explaining that lighting candles can be prayer – the lit votives a reminder both of God's presence amidst whatever darkness we may be facing, and that God continues to hear our prayers even after we have stopped speaking, just as the candle continues to burn long after we have left church to continue our day. I also spoke of Jesus the Light of the World (John 8.12) who illuminates our path and who came to banish the darkness of this world.

As we enter Advent, I am this year particularly aware of the darkness – both the darkness of selfishness and sin within our own hearts, and the darkness of injustice and cruelty in the world out there – expressed in ignorance and prejudice, greed and poverty, conflict and war.

Truth is, most of us experience darkness of one kind or another – whether that already mentioned, or it might be the various pains and griefs we struggle to bear – often deeply personal and frequently beyond our control. Whatever darkness we may presently be facing, without or within, we are invited to come into the warmth of Christ's light, the light of hope we will share through this Advent and Christmas season. To this end, we greatly look forward to welcoming many guests and visitors to our services across the parish (*see details on pages 18 and 19*) as well as to St. Alphege on any weekday between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. with the invitation to light a candle as silent prayer and symbol of hope.

I close with ancient words from the prophet Isaiah, a scripture we will hear within our Advent services. If you happen to be fan of Handel's Messiah this might also be a musical memory, helping us to keep these powerful words of promise in mind.

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.*

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named*

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9.2,6)

Revd. Nick

SHEPHERDSON COURT DAY CENTRE

7 Damson Parkway, Solihull West Midlands B91 2PP

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Telephone No: 0121 705 3356

Roundabout

Potters Village, Kisoro Uganda - Pick-up Truck

I am really overjoyed that the brand new Pick-up Truck, has now arrived in Potters Village, much to the delight of Festo (the driver) and the very dedicated staff.



The Truck is used daily to transport children, social workers and physios to/from outlying areas, to take children to the Magistrate for approval of Care orders and to collect and deliver stores and materials.

Due to the isolated area and shocking state of the roads and tracks, this type of vehicle is essential

Thank you to the many Clubs and people that have contributed to the purchase of the truck; please rest assured that had we not been able to collect the £40,000 plus, Potters Village would not have been able to operate.

And, a very big thank you from all the staff and volunteers at potters Village

**Phil Godfrey
St Helen's**

Solihull Parish News Copy Date

Would contributors please note that the copy date for the January 2025 issue of the Solihull Parish News is **Friday 5th December**. We have very little leeway on this because the magazine has to be printed **before** the Christmas break as the printers are on holiday from the week before Christmas until after the New Year.

**Roger Edwards
Solihull Parish News Production**



I wish all my friends
at St Alphege church and Mothers Union,
also the Guardians
A VERY HAPPY & BLESSED CHRISTMAS
I will be donating to charity
instead of sending cards.
Dorothy Barnsley



Solihull Parish Puppets

It is early November as I write this, but we are already busy rehearsing for our next performance in early December. We could really do with more hands and are hoping to rope in a couple of extras to help us put on a performance of *Bethlehemian Rhapsody*, which we haven't performed for many years.



Why not come along and see Solihull Parish Puppets in action at the **All Age Service on 14th December, at 9.15am?** We'd love to see you there!

Ruth Sabbagh

Parish Christmas Cards

Once again we have high quality Parish Christmas cards and we encourage everyone to buy them. The cards are now available from the Bookstall in church, from the Parish Office or by contacting Fran Halstead (07710 329030, fran.halstead@gmail.com). The picture this year is a scene of St Alphege Church in the snow from a watercolour by George Busby. The packs are £5 for 10 cards. Please buy while stocks last and support the Bookstall which distributes its profits to selected charities. The Bookstall also continues to sell an excellent range of cards and books for all occasions at modest prices. Please do support it.



Roundabout

Soroptimists from Solihull ORANGE the World!

25th November marks the UN International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the start of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence which ends on 10th December (Human Rights Day). The colour orange represents a brighter future, free from violence against women and girls.

Members of Solihull and District Club will be joining Soroptimists across the world taking action and calling for the Elimination of Violence against Women. In Solihull Club members will be busy installing displays of orange flowers around the Borough, running a poster competition for secondary schools and, with Solihull Council, hosting an event to launch this years' activities.

These include a showing of the film "What's Love Got To Do With It" at The Core. A 1993 biographical drama telling the story of Tina Turner's life. This is a very moving film showing how she survives neglect and an abusive relationship to become a global superstar. It will be shown on Saturday 22nd November at 7 p.m. Tickets are £6 and available from The Core box office.

On 25th November the Mayor of Solihull, Councillor Annette Mackenzie will be at the gates of Malvern Park which will be covered with an eye-catching display of orange flowers. The flowers have been made by individuals and community groups across the Borough. Every flower made raises the awareness of the harm caused by domestic abuse. As Soroptimists we aim to challenge harmful behaviours and support survivors to rebuild their lives.



Displays can also be seen at The Core, Three Trees Community Centre, Chelmsley Wood and Hatchford Brook Family Hub. The art work from the school poster competition will also be on display in The Gallery at The Core from 25th November with judging taking place on 27th. All the displays sign post people to the help and support available to them.

Soroptimist International is a global women's voluntary organisation and this year the Solihull Club celebrated its 25th anniversary. As well as working on the 16 Days of Action the Club is supporting Liberty Circle, a volunteer-led support group in Solihull for girls with anxiety, and working with Solihull council to support care leavers and homeless people in the Borough. We meet at 7:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month at The Crowne Plaza Hotel, Homer Road, Solihull.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline - Call 0800 2000 247

Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid - Confidential helpline on 0808 800 0028

For more information please contact Angela Sadler 07770 703020

Soroptimist International is a leading global women's voluntary organisation. It has close to 80,000 members in more than 3,000 Clubs in over 100 countries around the world. Soroptimists focus on transforming the lives of women and girls, locally, nationally and globally, through education, empowerment and enabling initiatives. Soroptimists make a difference to the lives of more than half a million women and girls in the world every year. Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland is an organisation in Special Consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) since July 2013. This is in addition to the General Consultative status held by the umbrella organisation Soroptimist International. Soroptimist International is a recognised Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) representing women from all over the world.

Soroptimists
say NO
to Violence
Against Women

National Domestic Abuse Helpline - Call 0800 2000 247
The 16 Days of Action against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign running from 25th November to 10th December. The colour orange represents a brighter future, free from violence against women and girls. These orange flowers have been made by people all over the Borough.

Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid
Telephone: **FREE** confidential helpline on **0808 800 0028**
Email: solihullacm@bswaid.org
Website: bswaid.org

Solihull Council Safe Guarding Support
Telephone: **0121 605 6060**

In an emergency please call: 999

Soroptimists
www.si-solihull.org.uk
solihull@yahoo.co.uk

A Different *Sort* of Day Out

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle is a well-known mantra to help in the fight for survival of God's planet. The first two are fairly self-explanatory but when it comes to the third it has always seemed to be more complicated with the rules ever changing. So, what actually happens to our recyclable materials, here in Solihull? On 21st October, 8 parish members went to find out more by visiting Sherbourne Recycling Facility in Coventry.

We learned that traditionally residential recycling is handled by the contractor that collects the waste, whether that be the local authority or subcontractor. The system relies on the householder separating their recyclable materials correctly and is cost heavy on the councils dealing with the waste. Additionally, as reported in the media over the years, materials can be shipped abroad for recovery and/or processing and this may not always happen ethically.



Wanting to do things more sustainably and efficiently, the Sherbourne Material Recovery Facility (MRF) was conceived in 2016. The plan was so technologically advanced no British or even European company had the skills to provide the requisite machinery so a Canadian company was brought in. A total of 8 partner councils, including SMBC, came on board. After feasibility studies, financial modelling, planning permission and build, the first waste was accepted at the state-of-the-art plant in August 2023. Sherbourne MRF is now a global exemplar of what can be achieved and other facilities are now popping up worldwide. The councils invested a total of £65million, but over their 25-year contracts they should, all being well, recoup their investment and save money. Once materials are separated and recovered for processing, the profit from their sale is then shared between the 8 councils for use (we hope!) across the communities. Additionally, there is no need for separation of recyclable materials by residents.

Amazingly, the plant, which has the capacity to process 47.5 tonnes of waste every hour, has only 5 manual pickers. As the bulk of the work is carried out by 18 sorting robots, health and safety risks are reduced and recruitment issues avoided as unsurprisingly, not many people want to work with waste!

A tour of the plant showcased numerous conveyer belts whizzing through various stations where specific materials were removed: glass, metal, paper, cardboard, as well as hard and soft plastics. It was mesmerizing watching the robot arms pick materials out at speed and air pistons fire the waste into the correct hopper; soft plastics shot up and over, cardboard down etc. Our ear defenders were certainly required as the machinery and robots worked their magic.

A key element to the facility is that it operates sustainably. Forklift trucks are electric and plant power requirements are fulfilled by solar panels and the neighbouring *Energy from Waste* incinerator. Incidentally, any residue waste from the plant is also sent there, rather than to landfill. Importantly, the recovered materials are sold to UK based recycling processors and is transported by ultra-low emission compliant vehicles too.

So, what tips and hints did we learn? Unsurprisingly, contamination caused by residents is the main barrier to recycling materials...

Roundabout

- cans and tins, preferably *not* crushed are welcomed, but other metals such as frying pans, paint tins and metal gas cylinders should go to Bickenhill Waste and Recycling Centre.
- Intact, clean glass bottles and jars can be popped in. Wine bottles *can* have their lids left on. However, glassware and Pyrex should not be included. Basically, if it isn't single use glass it shouldn't be put in your recycling bin.
- Wet items especially cardboard isn't suitable nor is shredded paper; even if it is contained in paper carrier bags. However, pizza boxes that have just a smear of food residue or slightly soiled paper plates are welcomed.
- Plastic such as milk, drink or soup cartons should be rinsed clean with small lids left on. Likewise plastic take-away and food trays must be cleaned; unwashed food and drink containers cause contamination and have to be removed on entry to the plant.
- Soft plastic films should be separated from food containers, particularly if the tray is a different material. Both tray and film must be clean and dry before being put in the recycle bin. Most areas still can't recycle soft plastics via kerbside collection, so we are fortunate that our soft plastics no longer need to be taken to a supermarket for onward transmission.

It was however sad to see the items that people had put in the recycling that are clearly unsuitable – domestic and even car batteries have been discovered in wheelie bins. In fact, a major safety challenge the plant currently faces is disposable vapes being put in with recycling waste. A fire caused by the crushing of a vape battery resulted not only in the suspension of operations but also substantial repair costs to the plant.

So, although we no longer have to sort our recycling waste, we do still need to take responsibility for what we pop in that bin and what state it is in! The advice from Sherbourne staff "please read council advice carefully, only put in what is listed, ensuring it is **clean, dry and intact**. Thank you." Find out more online at <https://www.sherbournerecycling.co.uk>

Julia Hanson
Social and Environmental Justice Committee

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

3 rd December	Adam Parrish, piano
10 th December	Simon Watterton, piano
17 th December	George Finney, organ

Wood You Believe It?

Solihull care home residents team up with schoolchildren for DIY project

A care home in Solihull has joined forces with a local nursery and joined a nationwide campaign to save DIY skills.

Residents at Blossomfield Grange, on Worcester Way off Dog Kennel Lane in Shirley Heath, have been rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck into some hands-on DIY – all in the name of sharing skills with the next generation. As part of Care UK's 'Fixer Uppers' programme, residents worked with children from Mad Hatters Day Nursery, who got their creative juices flowing during the intergenerational activity. Together, they painted and decorated in vibrant colours bird boxes previously handcrafted by the residents. With the help of the home's maintenance manager, they then installed them in the garden and outdoor spaces, creating new areas for birds to enjoy.



Resident, Clifford Glanville, with the children

Clifford Glanville said: 'It was lovely to share my skills and knowledge with the children as we worked together to create and decorate the bird boxes. They loved being there while they were placed on the trees for the birds, ready for winter.'

Jag Singh, General Manager at Blossomfield Grange, said: "Residents have honed their DIY skills over a lifetime, and the *Fixer Uppers* project has been a fantastic way for them to connect with young children and share practical knowledge in a meaningful way. It was wonderful to see everyone fully engaged and residents swapping stories, learning from one another and genuinely enjoying the process. We'd like to thank Mad Hatters Nursery for coming to the home to take part in the decorating activity. It was a brilliant afternoon and we look forward to many more visits in the future."

Launched to celebrate International Repair Day, the initiative aims to revive traditional repair skills – such as fixing furniture, mending clothes and tackling small maintenance jobs – and champion the invaluable knowledge older generations can pass on while promoting sustainability.

The bird box crafting session was overseen by Blossomfield Grange's dedicated sustainability champion as part of Care UK's bid to embed environmentally conscious practices across all homes. Sustainability champions work closely with the Care UK ESG advisory committee to identify opportunities for greener ways of working, from reducing waste to encouraging biodiversity in care home gardens.

To find out more about Fixer Uppers, please visit careuk.com/Fixer-Uppers.

Blossomfield Grange provides high-quality residential, dementia and respite care. Designed to enable residents to live active and fulfilled lives, while also promoting independence, the home incorporates plenty of space for leisure activities and hobbies. The building has been configured into a series of neighbourhoods to facilitate the creation of close-knit communities and encourage social interaction among the residents.

To find out more about Blossomfield Grange, please contact Customer Relations Manager Jo Hopkins on 0121 756 2804, email jo.hopkins@careuk.com or visit careuk.com/blossomfield-grange.

Taran Sangha



Eradication of Polio

Phil Godfrey gave a short talk on 26th October at the St. Alphege Church 10.30 a.m. Service. He explained that Rotary International, working together with the World Health Organisation, and the Bill Gates Foundation, have been working towards the eradication of polio throughout the world. World Polio Day is the 24th October, which was the birthday of Jonas Salk. Jonas Salk (1914 – 1995) developed the first safe and effective vaccine for polio, and gave it to the world, without making money from his vaccine.

The Bill Gates Foundation have been assisting this cause, by matching every pound raised by Rotary International with a donation of £2; the current three-year commitment is £450 million.

Poliomyelitis, popularly known as polio, is a highly infectious disease that mainly affects nerves in the spinal cord and brain stem. Most people infected with the virus don't show any symptoms, but a small number become paralyzed. Polio primarily targets children under the age of five. Polio was endemic in 125 countries in 1988; that is down to two now. Wild polio only remains endemic in Afghanistan, where there are 4 cases, and in Pakistan, where there are 29 cases. The global effort to eradicate polio has prevented an estimated 20 million cases of paralysis.

However, because it spreads so easily, one or two cases can quickly multiply. In our world of global travel, an infected person can carry the disease to the other side of the world even if they are not sick themselves. This emphasises how important widespread vaccination is.

Phil was surprised and shocked that most people he spoke to afterwards, said "I thought polio had been eradicated" !! Sadly, this is not yet true and efforts cannot be relaxed to ensure that vaccination programmes continue uninterrupted.

Phil Godfrey St. Helen's and Solihull Rotary

St. Alphege Bell Ringers Annual Dinner

On a stormy night in October, 30 of us met at The Drum and Monkey in Dorridge, an opportunity for our long suffering, non-ringing partners to join us in letting our hair down. A seating plan had been carefully arranged, name place markers, with menu choices listed on the reverse, placed at their position and doubled as a book mark to take away.



We were joined by Reverend Anne Haselhurst and her husband Peter who kindly agreed at very short notice to being our guests. On the day of this event the church announced the forthcoming appointment of the first female Archbishop of Canterbury, very fitting then that we heard of Anne's journey through her ministry. Anne is an inspiration, we laughed together as she described the school where she often took assemblies and where the children knew her as Reverend Anne or as one of the young pupils asked, "when is *Revelling Anne* coming again?". Anne told of her dancing and reciting poetry for Burns night, done the proper Scottish way and how it was difficult to read a poem in Scots dialect with an American accent. I'm sure she'd have done Rabbie Burns proud.

It was humbling to listen to Anne talk about her own experience and her respect and admiration for those living with a disability.

Alison Shah
Guild Dinner Secretary

Putting Your Best Foot Forward

Can you imagine a place where thousands of men, women and children wear footwear that is not fit for purpose. Where at least 280,000 homeless people (up to 10,000 of them living on the streets) have no shoes or shoes that are falling to pieces. Then realise that we're actually talking about the UK.

This is despite the fact that we live in a country where millions of pairs of footwear that are still fit for purpose are sent to landfill each week! This footwear can be recycled, repurposed, and used to combat footwear poverty. Men, women, and children benefit directly from donated footwear, enabling them to attend school, start a new job, and enhance their mental well-being by engaging in outdoor leisure activities.

Solihull Rotary has now succeeded in collecting some 550 black plastic sacks of shoes (all types and sizes) from the people of Solihull Club President, Phil Godfrey visited Hasluck's Green School recently, and a little army of helpers carried a huge pile of bags and boxes to the Car Park, which "filled" his car, *no room for passengers!!*



School children are often a great source of footwear for such charities as they grow out of their shoes quicker than they can wear them out. They are also one of the key groups in society that have a keen desire to help others.

A big thank you from [Shoe Aid](#), based in the Nottingham area, whenever they pick up from Phil at St. Helens, they go away with nearly a lorry full

Phil is now approaching other schools for their donations of shoes/wellies/boots etc.

Thank you very much

Solihull
Rotary
Club



Phil.
Solihull Rotary



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PTW
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Let us Pray

Calendar and Prayer Intentions for December 2025

1	Charles de Foucauld, Hermit, 1916	Members of religious communities	White Falcon Court
2	Feria	Staff and residents of local care homes	White House Close
3	Francis Xavier, Missionary, 1552	Outreach events of the churches in our town	White House Green
4	John of Damascus, Monk & Teacher, c.749	Staff, patients and volunteers of the Marie Curie hospice	White House Way
5	Feria	The three churches of our parish	Whitefields Crescent
6	Nicholas, Bp of Myra, c.326	Those working with children in our churches	Whitefields Gate
7	2nd Sunday of Advent	Our Bishops Michael & Esther	Whitefields Road
8	The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Those awaiting the birth of a child	Widney Manor Road
9	Feria	Those caring for a family member who is ill	Willoughby Drive
10	Feria	Those preparing for baptism	Winterbourne Road
11	Feria	The work of the Town Centre Chaplaincy	Winthorpe Drive
12	Feria	Poets and spiritual writers	Witham Croft
13	Lucy, Martyr, 304	That we may live simply and generously	Witley Avenue
14	3rd Sunday of Advent	Our Parish Wardens, Pam and Andrew	Witley Farm Close
15	Feria	The staff of the shops, cafes, bars and restaurants in our town	Wollescote Drive
16	Feria	The community and congregation of St. Helen's	Woodbury Grove
17	Eglantyne Jebb, Social Reformer & Founder of 'Save the Children', 1928	Those who care for children in need	Woodfield Road
18	Feria	Our newly-appointed Director of Children, Families & Youth Ministry, Ben Yates	Woodlea Drive
19	Feria	Diocesan staff & members of Bishop's Council	Woodperry Avenue
20	Feria	The community and congregation of St. Michael's	Woodside Way
21	4th Sunday of Advent	Chris Thomas, Director of Music at St. Alphege and the St. Alphege Choirs	Woodston Grove
22	Feria	The work of our Parish administrators	Wroxall Road
23	Feria	Those who are far from their families and friends	Yew Tree Lane
24	Christmas Eve	Those leading and attending Crib Services today	Yewhurst Road
25	Christmas Day	That the worldwide Church may celebrate this day with joy and goodwill	Albany Gardens
26	Stephen, Deacon & first Martyr	The work of Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness	Alderbrook Road
27	John, Apostle & Evangelist	Those who live alone	Alderham Close
28	The Holy Innocents	The staff and students of the schools in our town	Alderminster Road
29	Thomas Becket, Abp of Canterbury, Martyr, 1170	The community and congregations of St. Alphege	Alderpark Road
30	Feria	King Charles & Queen Camilla	Alderton Close
31	John Wycliff, Reformer, 1384	Our Pioneer Minister, Suzette Maguire	Alderwood Place

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

From the St. Alphege Register

Baptisms

19th October Louis Crosthwaite

Weddings

11th Octob Joseph Barnard and Leeanna Stretton

14th November George Graham and Sophia McDemott

Renewal of Vows

None

Funerals

28th October Sonia Drake at Robin Hood Crematorium

Interment of Ashes

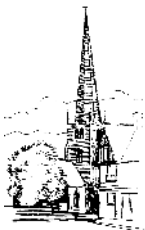
None

Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in December

Les Alcock
Moira Arnison
Alan Bryan
Nigel Cameron
Gillian Faithfull
Richard Feasey
Colin Humphrey
Stan Hurley

Robert Lambie
William James Lane
Roy Lilley
George Linstead
Gwendoline Doricia Mullis
Philip Newman
DR. S. Oswald
Peter Rodway

Joyce Elsie Rumball
Ann Simcock
Eric Smith
Hazel Mary Smith
Ronald Soden
Richard Swann



S t A l p h e g e

Sunday 14th December

9.15 a.m. All Age Holy Communion - Christingle

Worship Notes for December

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

St. Lucy is celebrated on 13th December. Tradition has it that Lucy, as a young Christian, gave away her goods to the poor and was betrayed to the authorities by her angry husband-to-be, who felt that the goods should have become his property. Lucy was put to death for her faith in the year 304. Lucy's name in Latin means Light and, as her feast-day falls in December, she became associated with the one true Light who was coming as the redeemer of the world, the Light that would lighten the nations, the Light that would banish darkness and let the eyes of all behold Truth incarnate.

The following day, 14th December, is the commemoration of Catherine de Hueck Doherty (1896-1985). She was born in Russia but came to Canada as a refugee, where she worked for a while as a lecturer. However, she felt God's call to forsake security and work among the very poor. Catherine became part of a Christian community called 'Madonna House', where she composed the following rule: 'Little, be always little, simple, poor, childlike... Go into the marketplace and stay with Me. Pray, fast, pray always, fast. Be hidden, be a light to your neighbour's feet.'

*

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

Darkness

after Rilke

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

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

Alan Payne

Fr. Simon



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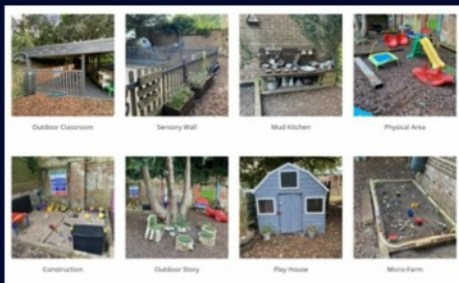
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December 2025 Services

Wednesday 3rd December

St. Michael 10.00 a.m. Eucharist

Thursday 4th December

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

Sunday 7th December – Advent 2

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. Helen	4.00 p.m.	Carol Service
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 10th December

St. Michael 10.00 a.m. Eucharist

Thursday 11th December

St. Alphege 10.30 a.m. Eucharist

Sunday 14th December – Advent 3

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Alphege	9.15 a.m.	All Age Holy Communion - Christingle
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	11.00 a.m.	Choral Eucharist
St Michael	4.00 p.m.	Carol Service
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 17th December

St. Michael 10.00 a.m. Eucharist

Thursday 18th December

St. Alphege 10.30 a.m. Eucharist



Live and streamed services are being held at St. Alphege's, St. Michael's and St. Helen's churches.

Details are inside the front cover of this magazine and on the Parish Website.

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

Sunday 21st December – Advent 4

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
Oliver Bird Hall	9.15 a.m.	The Junction - Nativity
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Wednesday 24th December – Christmas Eve

St. Alphege	3.00 p.m.	Crib Service
St. Alphege	4.15 p.m.	Crib Service
St. Alphege	11.30 p.m.	Midnight Mass
St. Michael's Chapel	11.30 p.m.	Midnight Mass

Thursday 25th December – Christmas Day

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael's Chapel	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist

Sunday 28th December – Christmas 1

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Parish Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evening Prayer

Wednesday 31st December

St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
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Thursday 1st January – New Year's Day

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

Part of the founding mission of the Guardians was to connect St. Alphege Church to the wider community of Solihull and to look to them for financial and other support. This was in operation recently with schools choosing to run Harvest Festivals with us, the moving Thanksgiving and Commemoration service on Sunday 2nd November and the Remembrance Day service and parade at the War Memorial and in the Church. Thanks are due to all those who organise these important events.

At the Trustees meeting in December we hope to hear of the starting date for works on the tower and base of the spire. On meeting recently with Malcolm Paulson (Tower chair) I heard of possible plans to get the church clock chiming again. I had not realised their wider role in ensuring we were all keeping good time.

We have recently all enjoyed the Guardians fundraising Christmas Lunch, kindly organised by Judith Hetherington. It was good to see many there.

Future events

Saturday 18th April 2026 St. Alphege Guardians History Fair St. Alphege Church

This will be an opportunity to learn about the history of our church, people, town and dioceses. In her History of Solihull, Sue Bates suggests the longstanding annual St. Alphege Day Fair ceased at the end of the Victorian era. So we will have another go, but perhaps not involve elephants? We are planning talks, exhibitions, tours, workshops, a heritage bookstall and a social programme. It will be a fundraising event and open to all.

Details and tickets will be available early in 2026.

We are aiming to set out more detailed plans for next year in the January Parish News.

Other News

Two decades ago the villagers of Hartlebury in Worcestershire formed a Trust to run Hartlebury Castle and gardens, the former grand seat of the Bishops of Worcester. Our parish was part of Worcester Diocese from 1837 until 1904. The extraordinary story of these powerful men is well presented, with guided tours available. In addition, they still have the library formed by Bishop Hurd (Hurd Library) in 1782. There is a plan for a Guardians fundraising visit next year, possibly June. Entry to the Castle, exhibition and tour would be around £12. This plus the Hurd Library with tea and cake £24. This does not include travel from Solihull. Expressions of interest would help with more detailed plans.

The Trustees send Christmas Greetings to the Parish News team and all readers.

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.

Do 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

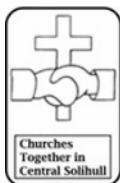
Scheme organiser:-

0121 706 0520

email: russellpayne110@aol.com

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

3 rd November	In loving memory of Stan Boulter on his birthday.
4 th November	In loving memory of Jonathan Mark.
7 th November	To commemorate the wedding anniversary of Dr. and Mrs. Oswald.
12 th November	The birthday of my late mother Peggy Oswald.
23 rd November	In loving memory of Rebecca Davies on her birthday.



Mell Square Crib Service

**Sunday 30th November 2025
3.00pm**

Please join us at 3pm in Mell Square, Solihull for the Blessing of the Crib and Carols. The service will last for about half an hour.

Please be careful not to block any entrances to Boots or other shops or cafés.

All are welcome.

Please also note: Annual Service for Unity

Sunday 25th January 2026 • time & place to be decided.

www.centralsolihullchurches.org.uk



On Saturday 11th October, we held our Chorister Experience Morning, inviting children from local junior schools to come to St. Alphege Church, to experience being a chorister in our choir. We learnt Harvest songs, music theory and about church life, and had fun with team games on the Glebe land, and a treasure hunt around the churchyard. Parents and family members returned to church in time to hear a performance of the pieces that the children had been working on, alongside our own Junior Choristers, and with the support of some of our Senior Choristers.



For the All Age service the next day, most of the visiting children returned to sing with us, which made for a joyous Harvest Festival. Three of the visiting children are continuing to attend junior choir practices and are making a great contribution as they learn. We look forward to them being admitted as full members of the choir in due course.



As part of our partnership with Solihull School, it was wonderful that their Chamber Choir could join our choirs for the annual Civic Service for Remembrance Sunday. We sang together at the outside Act of Remembrance by the War Memorial, and for the inside service, there was a wonderful, massed choir for the introit *For the Fallen* by Douglas Guest, which sets the words of Binyon's famous poem, and the anthem *Greater Love* by John Ireland.

*Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can the floods drown it.
Love is strong as death.
Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

It is an honour to provide the choral music for this important event for our local community. We are now fully involved in preparations for Advent and Christmas, and look forward to providing music for these important services.

Isabel Baumber



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This year at Santa's Fields, choose and **cut your perfect Christmas tree straight from the field**, or pick from our **ready-to-go selection**.

NEW - The Magical North Pole Stores

Our enchanting new Christmas shop is a must-visit, brimming with gifts and festive decorations.

Each child receives a free baby tree to
take home



OPEN WEEKDAYS
9am -7pm
OPEN WEEKENDS
9am - 5pm



What's on for Families?



The Junction is our family-friendly Sunday service that's all about fun, faith, and community!



Christmas with puppets Picture of a Nativity scene - including Mary, Joseph, stable, star ,donkey and baby Jesus.



All age worship - 9.15am at St Alphege Church. Today there will be no Junction as we will be joining the All age worship in church.



The Nativity - Today we will hear the Christmas Story. Come along dressed as a character from the Nativity story, followed by a fun craft activity.

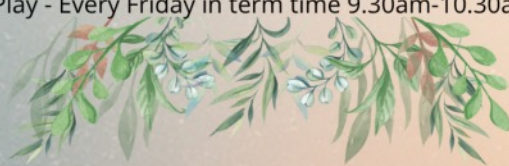


Crib Service at St Alphege Church at 3.00pm and 4.15pm.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Other Activities

Messy Church - Friday 19th Dec , 4.00pm-6.00pm, St Helen's Church
Oasis - every Monday in term time 9.00am, Room 5, Oliver Bird Hall.
Praise and Play - Every Friday in term time 9.30am-10.30am, Oliver Bird Hall.





Facebook page

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
17th Oct | 21st Nov | 19th Dec

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: £2.50 per person, max £10 per family

Booking is essential.

email: childrensministry@solihullparish.org.uk



Praise and Play

A relaxed, stay and play session.
A fun way to meet others
and grow friendships.

Interactive songs and bible stories
Chat, play & eat biscuits!



Oliver Bird Hall
Church Hill Road
B91 3RQ

No need to book
Just drop in

**Free First
Session**



To find out more email:
childrensministry@solihullparish.org.uk



Coffee & Chat

Get to know other local parents and carers,
with a chance to reflect on the week ahead

Open to all Parents and Carers of school age children

Term time Mondays

9 to 10am

Room 5, Oliver Bird Hall, B91 3RQ

No need to book,
just drop in after school drop off



For any queries contact: childrensministry@solihullparish.org.uk

Youth Stuff

The Youth Group meets on a Friday evening in the Oliver Bird Hall. Are you, or is someone you know, in Year 6 or above, interested in joining a church youth group? Then do consider joining Solihull Parish Youth on Friday evenings, 5 p.m. to 6.20 p.m. in Room 6. 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 details and the registration link: l.smart@solihullparish.org.uk

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Another year has almost passed and we find ourselves reflecting on our Christmas Fayre and looking forward to all our Christmas activities. As usual the Christmas Fayre was held on the last Saturday of November. This is always an enjoyable but quite demanding event and we thank all those who have organised, manned stalls, distributed fliers and helped in all sorts of ways and, above all, we thank all those who turned up and supported. The proceeds this year will be shared between Troop Aid, which is Solihull based and provides basic needs to casualties returning from active service, and SCAH (Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness).

Looking forward to Christmas, our Community Carol Service will be held at 4.00 p.m. on Sunday 7th December. This event is always well attended by our neighbours and is a wonderful opportunity to share with them the good news of Christmas. We will then have our Church Carol Service on Sunday 21st December at 10.00 a.m.

Looking back over the last couple of months we were very privileged to welcome Chris and Denise Arthey to speak at our morning service on 19th October. Chris and Denise suffered a head on collision with a speeding car whilst riding their motorbike in Texas in 2008. They both suffered extensive life-threatening injuries with Chris spending several days in a coma. They both finished up having to have their left legs amputated and have prosthetic limbs fitted.



Rehabilitation took a long time and was very difficult but they came through and now spend a good amount of time sharing their experiences and telling how their faith in God brought them through the difficult times. Their experiences are all shared in their book, Highway 35.

We continue to pray for and support Dr. Nicci Maxwell. Nicci has had a few weeks back in the UK, where she has had a heavy programme of speaking engagements concerning her work as a Paediatric Doctor in Africa. By the time this is published she will be back in Juba, South Sudan. The needs there are very great and the political situation is very unstable. Before taking up her current post, she worked at Potter's Village in Uganda. As a church we have contributed in various ways to Potter's Village hospital. The latest major requirement was for a new SUV used to carry patients and staff through the rough terrains Uganda. The old SUV was past its sell by date and a replacement was essential. We were pleased to have it announced in church that, thanks to donations from ourselves, the Rotary Club and many others, they had now purchased the new vehicle.

Earlier in the year we were saddened to hear that the Montessori School, which has met in St Helen's for many years, was closing down. This was a sad loss of a close friendship and also a substantial dent in our finances. However, we are now very pleased to be welcoming a new Montessori Ladybird School which will commence in January 2026. In preparation we

have redecorated the Youth Hall and undertaken a number of safety measures to accommodate their requirements. We look forward to a long and happy relationship with the new school.

Just after Christmas last year our Chapel boiler broke down. This is 30 years old, and we have been talking about replacing it for some time. However, the Church of England is now seeking to discourage replacement of fossil fuel burning boilers and, as a result, we had to apply for a faculty to replace it. As the requirements for heating in the Chapel are generally short term and of a non-continuous nature and there were not really any feasible alternatives, we have now after several months managed to secure the required faculty and will be replacing the boiler in the New Year. We did actually manage a repair of the old boiler after several very cold weeks but, bearing in mind the age and inefficiency of the old boiler, it seemed prudent to continue with the replacement. We are very thankful that we have received a very kind donation to cover the cost.

We continue to provide lunches for some of the elderly in our area on most Wednesdays. This is a very much appreciated service and we are very thankful to all our cooks, helpers and drivers for their dedicated service and to Anne Noble for her organisation of the whole service. However, we continue to struggle to provide enough drivers, cooks and helpers to ensure that the work can be carried out without overburdening our volunteers. If you think you can help in any of these areas or if you know someone who you think would appreciate the service, please let Anne know.

Les Prescott



Do come and join us for

A Neighbourhood Christmas Carol Service

St. Helen's Church

Sunday 7th December at 4 p.m.

Mulled wine and Mince Pies will be served

Everyone Welcome

"God with Us"

Christmas is such a mix of emotions, isn't it? For many, it's full of joy, laughter, and time with family or friends. For others, it can stir memories of those we miss or highlight how quiet life feels now. But whatever our circumstances, the heart of Christmas is still the same: *God with us*.

Those three simple words — *God with us* — tell the whole story. God didn't stay distant, watching from afar. He came right into the middle of ordinary life, born in a small town, to an ordinary young woman, in a place that was anything but glamorous. That's the wonder of it: God stepping into our world, not as a king surrounded by riches, but as a baby laid in a manger.

And perhaps that's the reminder we need this Christmas — that God meets us where we are. Not just in the big moments, but in the small ones too. In the quiet prayer at the end of a long day. In the act of kindness we offer without expecting anything back. In the courage to forgive, or the choice to reach out to someone who might be lonely.

Amid the busyness of December — the shopping, the cooking, the wrapping — it's easy to miss the gentle miracle that's right there among us. The light of Christ still shines, just as it did that night in Bethlehem, and it shines for each one of us.

So, this Christmas, whether your home is full of people or quiet and still, take a moment to rest in that truth: you are not alone. God is with us — in our laughter, in our worries, in our everyday lives. That's the real gift of Christmas, and it's one that lasts long after the decorations come down.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." — John 1:5

Christmas at St Michael's

Sun 14th December at 4 p.m.: Carol Service at Oak Cottage School

Wed 24th December at 3 p.m.: Crib Service at St. Michael's Chapel

Wed 24th December at 11.30 p.m.: Midnight Mass at St. Michael's Chapel

Thurs 25th December at 10.30 a.m.: Holy Eucharist at St. Michael's Chapel

A very blessed Christmas to everyone

Paul Smith



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0121 705 4494**

"How are your PJs?"

I hope that's not too personal a note to begin with! ☺

Christian tradition has it that Advent always begins on the nearest Sunday to St. Andrew's Day (30th November). For some reason I have always remembered that fact. However, I have been less clear in the past about the order of the Advent themes. So, one year, I came up with – *"I hope my PJs are lovely!"* It's the way my mind works! Let me explain:

The main themes for the four Sundays in Advent are, alphabetically, Hope, Joy, Love, and Peace, each representing a significant aspect of the Christian faith during the season of preparation for Christmas. The order in which they occur over the Sundays of Advent is Hope, Peace, Joy, Love. Hence *"I Hope my PJs are Lovely!"* (You're welcome! ☺)

So, as Advent begins, each of us are encouraged to think just how will I approach each of these themes in my preparations? How *are* your PJs?

Hope

There's a saying in Sheffield that says, *"You can live in Hope and die in Hathersage!"* ☺
(With apologies to those among you who are not as familiar with Derbyshire villages as us South Yorkshire folk are!)

Just recently at Food4Thought (as I write) we looked at the word 'lament', and we found, amongst other things, that true lament is an action, always leading us to hope. We see this in the psalms and in Jeremiah's lamentations: there is a turn in the language from despair to hope. E.g. *"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. **Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:** because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."* (Lam 3:19-23)

When it really comes down to it, what do **we** put our hope in? The first week of Advent is a good time to reflect on this.

Peace

While working as a Nursery Nurse there was a book that we read a lot. That book was entitled, *"Five Minutes Peace"*. You may have heard of it? In the story, Mrs. Large, the mum of the Large family, is looking for just five minutes peace away from her busy life. This is often what we think of when we imagine peace. A haven. A peaceful place or situation. Away from it all.

However, Jesus tells us otherwise: *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* (John 14:27) This verse emphasizes the peace that Jesus offers, which is different from worldly peace. I often picture this as a view on a heart monitor. That is, we see a wavy line with all

the ups and downs of life but, cutting right through the middle of this wavy pattern runs a straight line, unchanging. That is Jesus' peace.

We need to take the time to tap into this peace. The second week of advent, as the pace begins to gather towards Christmas, is a good time to practice this in whatever way helps you.

Joy

In the third week of Advent, we celebrate *Gaudete* – or “rejoice!” – Sunday.

When we look at Joy, we need to ask ourselves if we do in fact know the difference between joy and happiness. Did we even know that there is a difference?

The difference, put very simply, is that while we choose joy, happiness is what we feel when circumstances around us fall the way we want or expect them to. (Hence, unhappiness can happen when the reverse happens.)

But what do we mean by choosing joy? Well, Biblical joy is not just a feeling but a practice. Joy is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit. We can ask to develop that fruit in our lives.

⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1: 8-9).

Joy is a gift from God and a promise of the Advent season. How will you cultivate it this third week of Advent?

Love

Throughout Scripture, God reveals his love as sacrificial, unconditional, and transformative. This profound love is at the heart of Advent love, shown through God's gift of his son, Jesus Christ. This act of love calls us to respond in turn: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself."* (Matthew 22:37-39)

We can share and express God's love in many tangible ways in our lives, especially around the Christmas season. By seeking ways to love and care for others, we embody the spirit of Advent love, reflecting Christ's example in our daily lives.

Pray with me this 4th week of Advent:

Thank you, God, for creating us and pouring your love into us. Guard us against selfishness and pride. Help us to love others generously and unconditionally, beginning now, in this Advent season. Amen.

Al A.Mulder (author)

Have a blessed Advent and Christmas everyone!

Thanks for listening!

Suzette

At the MU meeting in October members welcomed Alistair Crooks from the Christian organisation Mission Aviation Fellowship. He explained that the organisation had worked for 80 years to bring humanitarian assistance and the love of Christ to remote communities which cannot be reached by any means other than by a light aircraft. MAF works with many international organisations, including the Red Cross, to deliver medical and other aid, and when necessary to take patients for medical treatment. We are very grateful to MAF for sending us the article below

Overcoming Isolation Together

On 3 April, His Majesty King Charles III unveiled MAF's latest addition to its fleet The new Cessna 208 Caravan will serve the people of Papua New Guinea (PNG)

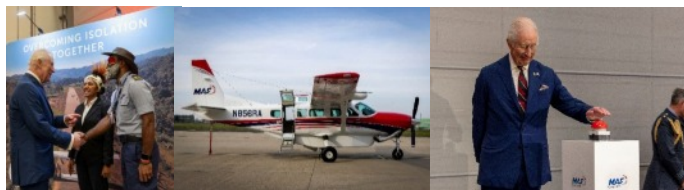
The King revealed the new aircraft to an excited audience at our special 80th anniversary event at RAF Northolt, West London – the Royal Air Force's oldest UK air base. Thanks to the incredible generosity of a charitable trust, MAF's global fleet now comprises 118 aircraft. This new plane will fly to and from the remotest communities in PNG, where our largest programme has been operating since 1951.

The momentous day marked a double celebration as this year is also the 50th anniversary of PNG's independence.

MAF UK Chief Executive Donovan Palmer invited the King to press a big red button, which revealed the shiny, new Caravan as the hangar door lifted behind him. Among the crowd were donors, dignitaries, supporters and staff, including several PNG nationals who were introduced to the King.

MAF Pilot Joseph Tua (Pictured) has worked in PNG since 2019. He will fly the new plane in the service of his people. Proudly wearing his country's ceremonial face paint, Joseph was particularly excited to meet the King – a fellow pilot who'd learnt to fly many decades ago with the Royal Air Force. 'To be invited to the UK for the commissioning ceremony of our newest aircraft and to meet the King is insane!' said Joseph. 'MAF carries everything from patients to tonnes of coffee, sweet potatoes, peanuts and oranges. This new aircraft will help us do a lot more. 'I never dreamed this amazing thing could happen to me. To be a part of this ceremony means everything. I am eternally grateful.'

Fellow Papua New Guinean Serah Michael (Below) – MAF PNG's Flight Operations Supervisor – is the main contact for emergency flights. It was her first visit to the UK. 'I am super excited!' said Sarah. 'I never thought I would ever visit the UK. I am proud to be part of this great international organisation bringing help, hope and healing. MAF is truly a lifeline to rural communities in my country. 'I'm just amazed and excited to meet the King. I'm honoured to be at this ceremony – it's the experience of a lifetime.'



Claire Gilderson
Photos Andy Aitchison

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Mothers' Union 16 Days of Activism

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Birmingham

Our November meeting was about raising awareness on gender based domestic violence, in preparation for the world-wide campaign of **16 days of Activism**. The initiative **"#Nomore1in3"** is the MU strap line for the 16 days, starting on 25th November.

Elaine Diskin told us that the shoe exhibition highlighting domestic abuse will be displayed in St Alphege this month – from 15th-23rd November and she showed us slides from other churches that had held similar exhibitions. She gave us leaflets suggesting things that we could do on each of the 16 days, as well as marking the days prayerfully.

We were joined by three guests from Solihull Soroptimists' Society who told us what they are doing on the 16 days, see page 6. They were wearing orange flowers in support – maybe we can have orange floodlighting on the church during the Activism days!

#Nomore1in3
End abuse and violence now



*Elaine (2nd from left) with Soroptimists
Ann Keepax, Grace Hampson, Sue Knowles*

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Project Turnaround Update

Project Turnaround aims to support our parish mission to the community by making our buildings more welcoming, hospitable, comfortable and flexible. Phase 1, to renew the lighting in St. Alphege Church, was completed last year. Plans for Project Turnaround Phase 2, to undertake a comprehensive liturgical reordering of St. Alphege Church, were shared widely across the Parish last Autumn and in Parish News (June and October 2024).

Since then, the P.C.C. has responded to valuable feedback from everyone, in particular the Diocesan and Local Authorities and the various amenity societies, to tweak the scheme to be broadly acceptable.

One important change is to keep the pulpit at its current height and make it moveable by modifying the Victorian supporting frame under the pulpit to accommodate an hydraulic wheel system. By pumping the hydraulics, the whole pulpit can be raised on the wheels and located wherever needed.

Whilst generally supportive of the overall reordering scheme, the P.C.C. was asked by the Diocesan Authority to consider whether a more appropriate location for the new toilets existed within the present church to avoid building an external addition. Revised plans to locate the new toilets in the West corner of the North aisle and relocate the Children's Corner to the current position of the bookstall in the middle of the south aisle have been submitted. It is hoped that these proposals will now get approval. The revised plans are available to download from the Parish website.

When approved the P.C.C. will embark on fundraising whilst working up detailed designs to tender the works. The best guess is that, subject to approval and funding, the works could be undertaken after Easter in 2027.

Andy Halstead

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Church of England News

A New Archbishop of Canterbury

You may have seen that His Majesty The King approved the nomination of the Bishop of London, the Rt. Revd. and Rt. Hon. Dame Sarah Mullally, as the next Archbishop of Canterbury. Bishop Sarah will be the first woman to hold the office and will be installed in a service at Canterbury Cathedral in March 2026.

Sarah Mullally has been the Bishop of London since 2018, the first woman appointed to that role, and before that was Bishop of Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter. Prior to her ordination in 2001, she was the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England – the youngest person ever to be appointed to that role at the age of 37 – having previously specialised as a cancer nurse. She described nursing as "an opportunity to reflect the love of God".

The most senior bishop in the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury's ministry combines many roles including serving as the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitan, as well as *primus inter pares* – or first among equals – of the Primates of the global Anglican Communion, which consists of around 85 million people, across 165 countries. In the House of Lords, the Archbishop of Canterbury is one of 26 bishops who comprise the Lords Spiritual.

Bishop Sarah said: "As I respond to the call of Christ to this new ministry, I do so in the same spirit of service to God and to others that has motivated me since I first came to faith as a teenager. At every stage of that journey, through my nursing career and Christian ministry, I have learned to listen deeply – to people and to God's gentle prompting – to seek to bring people together to find hope and healing. I want, very simply, to encourage the Church to continue to grow in confidence in the Gospel, to speak of the love that we find in Jesus Christ and for it to shape our actions. And I look forward to sharing this journey of faith with the millions of people serving God and their communities in parishes all over the country and across the global Anglican Communion. I know this is a huge responsibility but I approach it with a sense of peace and trust in God to carry me as He always has."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "I'm delighted that Bishop Sarah Mullally has been appointed as the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury and the very first female in the role. She is a person of huge courage, wisdom, integrity, and experience. In the many challenges the Church of England faces at the moment, we need the kind, godly and stable leadership Bishop Sarah will bring. It will be my great pleasure to serve alongside her, and I hope that together we can continue the work of helping the Church of England be simpler, humbler and bolder in its proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ and in our service to the nation."

Revd. Nick

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Update from the Parish Wardens

We continue to give thanks to Tammy and all the volunteers with the Children's Team and look forward to *Journey to the Stable* which will welcome children and staff from many local schools.

We are so pleased we now have Ben Yates as our Director of Ministry for Children, Youth and Families,

We had some wonderful events at the start of November, starting with *All Saints & All Souls* and the *Commemoration Service* to which those recently bereaved were invited by New Door and there was an excellent attendance, with appropriate readings and music and the chance to light candles for our loved ones. Thank you to Anne Rock for organizing it so well and for everyone else who worked so hard for this.

Then Remembrance tide was marked very well in all our centres with a particularly large attendance at the Remembrance Sunday Service at the War Memorial in the Square.

Before those events we had welcomed for the first time Bishop Esther at the Confirmation and Baptism Service which saw 7 confirmations and, for the first time, as far as we know for this Parish, 3 total immersion baptisms in the pool kindly lent to us by Gas Street Church. It was a very memorable occasion as you can see from the pictures. Bishop Esther presided over a moving and joyful occasion; she spoke about the place of the Holy Spirit in our lives.



Then the end of November will see the start of Advent. The blessing of the town's Christmas Crib in Mell Square will be at 3 p.m. on Advent Sunday 30th November.

If you have not done so, please do apply to come to our Parish weekend away at Launde Abbey – Friday 5th to Sunday 7th June 2026 and/or the Away Day for Families on 27th June 2026. Application forms are available.

We are pleased to say that there have been improvements in the Office where new computers have been installed which was very necessary as the old ones were really slow. We have also improved the loop system in St. Alphege.

Christmas is a great opportunity to take our gospel message out to people in our Parish through Carol Services and *Journey to the Stable*, Crib Services and Other Activities. Do take opportunities to invite people – we have a good leaflet to help us in this.

Please keep praying for all that is going on in the Parish.

**Pam Price
Andrew Williams
November 2025**



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Matters of Faith

Remembrance Sunday draws one of the largest attendances in the Church's year, reflecting its vital significance. There are three principal reasons which make it so.

- First, the need to remember and honour the sacrifices made on our behalf.
- Second, because we cannot afford to fail in our recommitment to work together towards a more just world in which all can flourish, and all may live in peace.
- Third, because this day genuinely belongs to us all, regardless of our background, and therefore has unrivalled power to bring our diverse community together. Something of supreme importance in this increasingly polarised world.

These truths are symbolised in various ways today.

- In the popular return of the community-knitted poppies adorning the outside of the church of various designs, including many red (remembering the huge sacrifices made in times of war), some purple (remembering the contribution of service animals), and some white (with a focus on peace and non-violence).
- In the 56 flags proudly carried by cadets from the Military Training College representing the nations of The Commonwealth who fought together alongside the British armed forces in both world wars.
- In the laying of wreaths from every corner of our town and borough.
- In outdoor and indoor services which draw together members of HM armed forces, veterans, and civilians, with contributions and participation from old and young alike - each playing their part to the very best of their ability.

There is undoubtedly an irony in the fact that some of the darkest days in our shared history should provoke some of the most remarkable and noble acts of courage and self-sacrifice. It seems always to have been thus. Perhaps such moments of brightness may give us courage to face the darkness we see in the world past and present and, if we are honest, deep within ourselves.

If, through this service, we are able to do this - to allow ourselves to be moved by words, music, and symbolic action - we may yet be surprised by grace, that is through an encounter with the Living God. The God who entered His own created world in all its brokenness and pain, in order to heal, forgive, transform, and raise us up into His presence and His light.

That, indeed, is my prayer.

Rev. Nick Parker
St. Alphege Church, Solihull



Christmas Acrostic Poem



Crackers and Cards  
Holly and Ho, ho, ho  
Robins and reindeer  
Intoxication and invitations  
Sprouts and Santa  
Television and tinsel  
Mistletoe and mince pies  
Advertisements and acquisitions  
Surely, there's more to this season than these?



Drawing near to us 
A friend and saviour 
You can know Him! 

'Fear Not'

The twinkling lights,
 Fir trees adorned with baubles
 And golden crackers, all invite
 Joy and banishment of gloom
 And winter dark.
 In the church there was a spark
 Of candle light, and a breath of peace
 From shopping and anxiety and fear.
 Christmas, pagan in its roots,
 Helps us small mortals
 Through the cold, dark days and

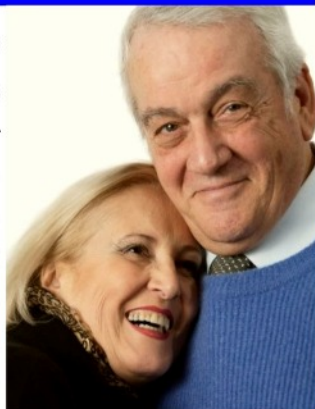
Frozen nights that speak of death.
 'Tis the reason Gabriel, aglow with
 Glory and wings that light the sky
 And in the chamber of the
 Trembling lowly maid,
 Cries, 'Fear Not.'
 It is the call aloud and clear
 Every Christmas far and near,
 And for every single one of us.
 Not only at Christmas.

Wendy Westley

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For Your Diary

Thursday 4th December : 1.00pm in the OBH. *Advent Lunch and Christmas Music.*
- contact Elaine Diskin (elainediskin@hotmail.co.uk 705 3265) if you want to come.

Thursday 18th December : 10.30am in church - *MU Corporate Eucharist.*

Thursday 8th January (*note this is the second Thursday*) : 1.30pm in Church.
A talk about *British Sign Language.*

Thursday 15th January : 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 **Mothers' Union.**

WIVES' FELLOWSHIP

This friendly, monthly Lunch Club will meet for its Christmas Lunch on Friday, 5th December, at 12 noon. If you would like to find out more or join this group for fellowship, good company and a good meal please telephone Carol Caldicott on the number below.

Carol Caldicott
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<i>Postal Subscriptions</i>	Helen Russell, 30 De Moram Grove, B92 0PZ	07710 473 418
<i>Advertising Manager</i>	Tim Drakeford, 42 Fowgay Drive	0121 705 4494
<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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