

**SOLIHULL
PARISH**



NEWS

Silent Night

H O L Y N I G H T

**Advent and Christmas in
Solihull Parish**



TEAM CHURCHES

St ALPHEGE - The Square, Solihull B91 3RH

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

St MICHAEL - Bryanston Road, Solihull B91 1BS



St Alphege (Sundays)

8.00 a.m. Said Eucharist
10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist except:
Sunday 9.15 a.m. All Age Eucharist 8th December
11.00 a.m. Choral Eucharist 8th 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 person at the OBH on Sunday 1st and 15th 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
Sunday 10.00a.m. The Junction joins the Sunday Club

St Michael at Sharmans Cross School on Sundays

10.30 a.m. Eucharist.

St. Michael's Chapel, Bryanston Road on Wednesdays

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

Friday

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

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

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

WEDDING AND BAPTISM ENQUIRIES

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

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

Contents

Editorial	2
Roundabout	4
Let us Pray	10
News from Team Churches	11
St Alphege	11
St Helen	28
St Michael	29
The Guardians of St Alphege	18
Music Matters	20
Church for Families	23-26
Youth Stuff	27
Pioneer Diary	30
Matters of Faith	42
For Your Diary	46
Address Book	48



THE CHURCH
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Cover picture

Christmas at St. Alphege Parish Church

Headlines

Parish Christmas Card	4
Second Sunday Drinks and Nibbles	4
St. Alphege Schools Admissions Policy	4
Appeal for Wheels - New Pickup Truck for Potters Village	5
The View from the Tower	6
Mothers' Union Stall at Volunteering Day	8
Remembrance Sunday 10 th November 2024	8
Solihull Parish News Copy Date	8
Helpful Ways We Can Prepare Ourselves for Christ's Coming	9
A Christmas Thanksgiving	27
St. Alphege - A Trip Back in Time, Creating a View of the Future	34
Update from the Parish Wardens	38

Editorial

I wonder if you are someone who re-reads favourite books or re-watches films? The latter is hard to avoid in the run up to Christmas as the networks screen old favourites, capitalizing on our heightened seasonal appetite for nostalgia.

Whilst at college, I vividly remember a fellow student chastising me for re-reading Lord of the Rings the umpteenth time. She told me in no uncertain terms that this was indulgent and wasteful when so many worthwhile books remained unread. My defence was, that along with the comfort of a familiar tale, I noticed or discovered new things at each reading which enhanced my appreciation.

I mention this as we may legitimately wonder about the value of the Christian year – and how spending time each Advent preparing for the coming of Jesus at Christmas can remain a worthwhile focus as each year goes by.

Part of the answer is rhythm, and I find it intriguing how in body, mind, and spirit, our lives are so bound up with natural rhythms governed primarily by the sun and the moon. This present autumnal season fits well with a time of reflection and preparation, as does our celebration of the 'light of life' entering our world at Christmas, so close to the shortest day and longest night (here in the Northern hemisphere).

The other thing to say is that whilst we might know the essence of the story, we may yet be surprised by some of the details and through repetition enter more deeply into its significance.

There are important differences between nostalgia, awe and wonder, and mystery – something brought home to me on a recent dog walk. Returning to a familiar route that takes in fields, byways, and a beautiful stretch of the Grand Union canal, I noted how everything was the same yet markedly changed since my previous visit in early summer. A particular joy was to observe a pair of wild Parakeets (pointed out to me by a fellow traveller) which I could never have anticipated! Incidentally, it might not surprise you to know my strong preference for round walks bringing me home to the place where my journey began, another cyclical rhythm!

As we enter Advent the journey motif seems especially apt, reflected in our 'Journey to the Stable' for local schools, by the familiar waymarks of Advent and Christmas Carol Services, and accompanied by our progressive lighting of the candles upon the Advent wreath, Sunday by Sunday.

We choose to undertake this Advent journey because it offers the opportunity to enter more deeply into the mystery of the Incarnation. A mystery because it's full meaning cannot be totally grasped by the intellect but must rather be experienced – or to put it another way, absorbed into our hearts and embodied in the way that we choose to live our lives.

The depth and profundity of this mystery becomes apparent as we struggle to comprehend, never mind express, what it truly means for Creation to be visited by its Creator. By embracing our humanity and sharing in our lived experience, God reveals a staggering humility, simultaneously showing us what it truly means to be made in God's image – so lifting our eyes heavenward and consecrating this human life with holiness. Indeed, it has been wisely said that in the Incarnation, Jesus of Nazareth is God's answer to every question we have about ourselves.

My prayer is that we would make space not just to revisit but to re-enter this greatest story ever told at the heart of our faith. And that so doing we would behold and respond to this God of love who chooses to dwell with us in Jesus Emmanuel.

"Let us go now even unto Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

Revd. Nick

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Roundabout

Wednesday Lunchtime Music Recitals, 1.10pm to 2pm

Everyone is welcome to the Recitals. Admission is free and there is a retiring collection held in aid of The Friends of St. Alphege Music (Registered Charity 511237). Refreshments are available from 12.30 p.m.

4 th December	Alessandra Scalzone, flute
11 th December	Performer to be confirmed
18 th December	George Finney, organ (Hertford College, Oxford)

There will be a Christmas break and the next recital will be on Wednesday 8th January 2025.

Parish Christmas Card

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 reproduction of an original watercolour by Edward Girard. It imagines a scene of the choir singing carols around a Christmas tree in the square with the church lit up ready to welcome the congregation. 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.



Second Sunday Drinks and Nibbles

Refreshments will be served after the 11 a.m. Choral Eucharist on Sunday 8th December.

St. Alphege Schools Admissions Policy

In accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021, the **Schools of St Alphege** are required to consult on admissions arrangements where changes are proposed. The draft Admissions Policy for the academic year 2026-27 is available to view on our website at <https://www.stalphege.solihull.sch.uk/Parents/Admissions/> and a copy is available from the school office. **There are significant changes in the proposed policy.**

Appeal for Wheels New Pickup Truck for Potters Village!

Potters Village is in desperate need of a new-second hand pick-up truck, this is absolutely essential for the daily work of Potters Village.

As I hope you have read in previous magazines, Phil, Vicci and Solihull Rotary Club are supporting Potters Village, Kisoro, Uganda, in various ways, but now we have a big challenge to help with! We do appreciate it is unlikely we can achieve the whole amount, but it will be a great success if we can make a good contribution to the £30,000 needed.



The current pick-up truck was second hand, and is now in urgent need of replacement, it is used daily to support the work of the charity. When the Trustees visited in January, they saw the need for a new vehicle and Idah (Potters Village Administrator) has outlined below some of the ways it is used on a weekly basis. The rural roads are very difficult to navigate and are tough on any vehicle, especially after any rain (often torrential!). **Potters Village needs a dependable and sturdy pick-up to cope with these conditions.**

Ways we use our vehicle:-

Going to communities to visit and assess babies' homes at the time of admission and towards the time of resettlement.

Resettling babies back with their families.

Taking babies to and from hospitals, when they are at times referred to other hospitals, other than Potters Village Medical Centre.

Taking babies to court at the time of acquiring care orders. The magistrate always wants to see the baby before he grants the order.

Transporting the social workers to communities to follow up cases especially for abandoned babies and at times collecting babies from far communities.

Transporting the psychiatric nurse and social worker making home visits to treat mothers with mental health problems.

Shopping for baby products and food.

If any parishioner would like to assist in our quest, please contact Phil Godfrey on philgodfrey@btinternet.com or 07770 406870.

Thank you.

We are trying to raise £30,000 for this appeal.

Phil Godfrey

Roundabout

The View from the Tower

It's been another busy time for the bell ringers. Since last writing, we've entertained the 6th Solihull St. Alphege Vulcans Scout Group to a tour of the tower. Rather than the sedate affair of the Heritage Day tours that we told you about last time around, this was an altogether more frantic event with complete and utter happy chaos in the tower! The Scouts got to have a go at chiming the bells, had a go at full circle ringing, and rang changes on the handbells. Quite a cacophony of sound! The feedback has been great and another scouting group are now thinking of coming to take a look too. So, thank you to the Cubs who shared their experience and encouraged the Scouts along. And thank you to the band members who gave up their time to support the visit.

We've also had our Annual Dinner. We met at the Greswold Arms in Knowle where they did an excellent job of looking after us. A huge thank you to Kathryn for making all the arrangements. We enjoyed pre-dinner drinks and a good catch up before Malcolm, our Tower Captain, calmed the hubbub of noise and kindly said Grace ahead of us digging into our very much appreciated meals. Before a short break Malcolm proposed a toast to our sadly missing friend, Richard Cann who passed away in September. The mood lightened as the speaker was introduced, we were joined by Clare McArdle. Clare is a prominent ringer and member of the St. Martin's Guild (Birmingham Diocese), with many strings to her ringing bow including her being one of the founding members of the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing, being a key player in the Association of Ringer Teachers (ART) and having been a previous Master of the



St. Martin's Guild. So, we were all ready for her to speak on any one of these amazing ringing achievements but no, Clare had decided to mix things up a little for us. We were all intrigued to find that Clare has become a beekeeper! She gave the most intriguing talk about her experiences and we learnt a thing or two about bees too! It was a great evening and a super opportunity for us all to catch up properly which is hard in the tower when we stop only briefly between each slot of ringing.

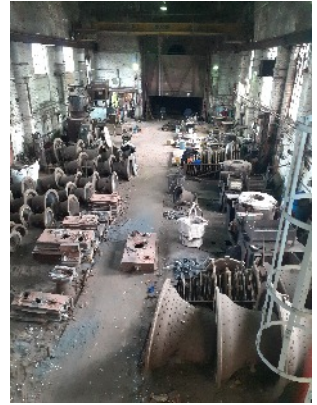
And then on to the next event. A few days later and we were off to Taylor's Bell Foundry at Loughborough for our Autumn outing. What a fab day! We started with a visit to the newly refurbished foundry museum, a particular highlight of which was the 2024 Paralympic Games bell, signed by all the GB medal winners. Then it was off for a tour of the factory floor. Too much to describe here but it really is well worth a visit for non-ringers and bell ringers alike so, it was lovely that we had along with us a few friends and partners of the band. The foundry has been



Roundabout



there since 1859 and still has its wooden floor tiles, safe for a bell should one fall. We learnt about the various types of wood used for different parts of the bell mechanism, we learnt about Taylor's special processes for tuning bells and we were able to look down into the casting room where a few us had visited to see our 13th bell cast, back in 1996! After the tour we then rang on the 12 bells in the foundry tower. Tiny little bells by comparison to ours at home so a little tricky to master at first but, we made a good noise before heading off to Barrow upon Soar for a lazy late lunch before tackling some rather horrid rain and spray on the motorway journey home.



And that's not all, there was also the Volunteering Fair. Margaret along with some help from other members of the band, arranged a great display of bell ringing and they manned our stall throughout the day. The display was most appreciated and there were some very useful conversations.

Sand Cooper
Tower Secretary

Roundabout

Mothers' Union Stall at Volunteering Day

The Parish held a Volunteering Day on 20th October. Mothers' Union had a stall on which we displayed various knitted items - including blankets and fiddle muffs etc. We gave out leaflets and newsletters, showing what we do and what we stand for. There was a lot of interest shown by attendees after the Junction and from the congregation after the 10.30am service at St Alphege, so hopefully we might be gaining some new members as a result of this initiative.



Remembrance Sunday 10th November 2024

The Borough of Solihull remembered those who in died in in war at a service conducted by the Revd. Nick and Suzette Maguire at the War Memorial outside St. Alphege and then at a



Civic Service in the church. The Lord Lieutenant, our M.P.s, the Mayor and Councillors and many members of youth organizations and the public attended.

Solihull Parish News Copy Date

Would contributors please note that the copy date for the January 2025 issue of the Solihull Parish News is very early at **Friday 29th November**. This is because the magazine has to be printed **before** the Christmas break; the printers are on holiday from the week before Christmas until after the New Year and that I am also on holiday at the beginning of December.

Roger Edwards
Solihull Parish News Production

Helpful Ways We Can Prepare Ourselves for Christ's Coming

Amidst the busyness of our preparations for Christmas, it is important to put time aside to prepare our hearts. This year we offer four opportunities through December.

The Art of Advent

On Wednesdays 27th Nov, and 4th, 11th, 18th Dec from 1.45pm – 3pm Fr. Simon is leading a journey through some of the world's most significant paintings at St. Michael's Chapel. This is one of an ongoing series of events and short programmes exploring spiritual practice. To indicate your interest please call the parish office or email: simon@solihullparish.org.uk

Everyday Faith

The Church of England has recently launched a wonderful resource in the form of an app (*Everyday Faith*) which can be freely downloaded to a smart phone. This offers a short reading, reflection, suggested action or activity, and a prayer. This links to the Church calendar so will guide us through Advent. And it is ongoing so if you find it helpful you may wish to continue into the Christmas season and beyond! If you need help downloading the app please come to the parish office and we will gladly help you.

Journeying through Advent with New Daylight

This booklet is similar in content and format to Everyday Faith. It was offered last year and appreciated by many – and we still have some limited stock for anyone who missed it. Copies are priced a very reasonable £2.99.

Do Not Be Afraid by Rachel Mann

Limited copies of the Archbishop of York's Advent Book will be available on the bookstall in St. Alphege priced £9.95 – and Fran will happily order additional copies if requested.

The blurb reads: "As much at home with Strictly Come Dancing as the mystical writings of Julian of Norwich, Rachel Mann writes with disarming verve of something we all experience – waiting". 'Waiting can be beautiful and, at least sometimes, it can take us to the heart of the holy.'



I wish all my friends
at St Alphege Church & Mothers Union
A VERY HAPPY & BLESSED CHRISTMAS

I will be donating to charity
instead of sending cards.

Dorothy Barnsley



Let us Pray

Calendar and Prayer Intentions for December 2024

1	1st Sunday of Advent (The Patriarchs)	The fulfilment of God's promises	Southey Close
2	Feria	Staff and residents of local care homes	Spilsbury Croft
3	Francis Xavier, Missionary, 1552	Volunteer carers in the community	St Alphege Close
4	John of Damascus, Monk & Teacher, c.749	The Marie Curie hospice community	St Bernard's Road
5	Feria	Those who help care for our church buildings	St Helen's Road
6	Nicholas, Bp of Myra, c.326	Those working with children in our churches	Station Approach
7	Ambrose, Bp of Milan, 397	Bishop Michael	Station Road
8	2nd Sunday of Advent (The Prophets)	That we may faithfully keep watch for Christ's coming	Stonebow Avenue
9	Feria	Those caring for a family member who is ill	Stoneleigh Road
10	Feria	Those preparing for baptism	Stoneythorpe Close
11	Feria (Ember Day)	Those working in our parish office	Stonor Park Road
12	Feria	Our Parish Wardens, Pam and Andrew	Streetsbrook Road
13	Lucy, Martyr, 304	That we may live simply and generously	Tanwood Close
14	John of the Cross, Poet & Teacher, 1591	Poets and spiritual writers	The Crescent
15	3rd Sunday of Advent (John the Baptist)	That we may seek to prepare the way for Christ	The Green
16	Feria	The Wellbeing Wednesday community	The Hermitage
17	O Sapientia	That we would seek God's wisdom	The Square
18	O Adonai	That we would know Christ's redemption	Thornby Avenue
19	O Radix Jesse	That we would be rooted in God	Thorngrove Avenue
20	O Clavis David	That we may open the door of our hearts to The Light of the World	Thornhill Road
21	O Oriens	That we might seek and follow the light of Christ	Tibberton Close
22	4th Sunday of Advent (The Virgin Mary / O Rex Gentium)	That, through Mary, we may welcome Christ, King of all nations.	Timmins Close
23	O Emmanuel	Those who are far from their families and friends	Touchwood Hall Close
24	Christmas Eve	Chris Thomas, Director of Music at St Alphege and the St Alphege Choirs	Union Road
25	Christmas Day	That the worldwide Church may celebrate this day with joy and goodwill	Upwey Avenue
26	Stephen, Deacon & first Martyr	The work of Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness	Vulcan Road
27	John, Apostle & Evangelist	Those who live alone	Wadleys Road
28	The Holy Innocents	Our preschool and all who care for nursery age children	Walton Croft
29	Christmas 1	The community and congregations of St. Alphege	Warmley Close
30	Feria	Charles, our King	Warwick Grange
31	John Wycliff, Reformer, 1384	Our Pioneer Minister, Suzette Maguire	Warwick Road

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

From the St. Alphege Register

Baptisms

27th October Olivia Tinkler

Weddings

None

Renewal of Vows

None

Funerals

24th October Michael Curran

28th October John Hughes

1st November Richard Cann

Interment of Ashes

29th October Margaret Jordon

8th November Hazel Harwood

Names taken from the Chantry Book for Remembrance in December

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

Robert Lamble
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



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

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

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

Worship Notes for December 2024

The season of Advent, from the Latin *adventus* meaning “coming,” invites us to reflect on two of God’s promises. First, the coming of a Saviour (Messiah) fulfilled through Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem; and second, the coming of Christ as judge at the end of the age, heralding the dawn of a new heaven and a new earth. As we celebrate one and await the other, we look expectantly towards the justice, mercy and peace Christ alone can bring.

Our sense of longing for Christ’s advent is amplified by the cold and darkness of winter. In this season we turn to light as a symbol of our hope, anticipating Christ’s coming as the Light that dispels all darkness. We mark his coming through cherished traditions – Advent Candles and Advent Calendars in our homes; the Advent Wreath and Christingles in the church. The brightness of each flame reminds us of the radical hope promised through Christ’s arrival.

The tradition of the Advent Wreath began in 19th-century Germany with Lutheran pastor Johann Hinrich Wichern. To teach children about Christ’s arrival, he created a large wooden wheel with candles. The circular shape symbolising God’s eternal love without beginning or end, while the evergreen branches represent hope and life everlasting, pointing us toward the light of Christ at its centre.

Advent Wreaths typically feature five candles, four around the circle and a central white or gold Christ Candle. Sunday by Sunday, each candle represents a new aspect of God’s ongoing love-story with humanity steadily drawing us closer to Christ: The Patriarchs who received God’s covenant of grace; the Prophets, who foretold the coming of the Saviour; John the Baptist, the forerunner who proclaimed Christ as the Lamb of God; and Mary, who bore Christ in faith and obedience. These symbols guide our hearts, focusing our expectation not only on Christ’s birth, but also on his final advent, when he will return in glory to remove every hurt and right every wrong.

The following poem captures our deep anticipation of Christ’s coming during this season. It speaks to the profound transformation the incarnation promises, where the Christ-child emerges from darkness to bring hope and light. Upon his arrival, he delivers divine peace and judgment, a grace that renews and redeems the world.

The Revd. Nick Parker

Advent Calendar

He will come like last leaf’s fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud’s folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

Archbishop Rowan Williams (b.1950)



CHRISTMAS


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December 2024 Services

Sunday 1st December – Advent 1

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
Oliver Bird Hall	9.15 a.m.	The Junction
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Advent Carol Service

Wednesday 4th December

St. Michael's Chapel	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Michael's Chapel	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist

Thursday 5th December

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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Sunday 8th December – Advent 2

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Alphege	9.15 a.m.	All Age Christingle Service
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	11.00 a.m.	Choral Eucharist
St. Helen	4.00 p.m.	Carols in the Car Park
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evensong

Wednesday 11th December

St. Michael's Chapel	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Michael's Chapel	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist

Thursday 12th December

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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Sunday 15th December – Advent 3

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.	Evensong

Wednesday 18th December

St. Michael's Chapel	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
St. Michael's Chapel	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist

Thursday 19th December

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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Sunday 22nd December – Advent 4

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Helen	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion and Sunday Club
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Michael	4.30 p.m.	Carol Service
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Tuesday 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	11.30 p.m.	Midnight Mass

Wednesday 25th December – Christmas Day

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Helen & St. Michael	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist

Thursday 26th December

St. Alphege	No Service
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Sunday 29th December – Christmas 1

St. Alphege	8.00 a.m.	Said Eucharist
St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
St. Michael Chapel with St. Helen	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
St. Alphege	5.00 p.m.	Evening Prayer

Wednesday 1st January 2025

St. Michael's Chapel	10.00 a.m.	Eucharist
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Thursday 2nd January

St. Alphege	10.30 a.m.	Eucharist
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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.



SANTA'S FIELDS

CHRISTMAS TREES



Visit the North Pole Grotto at our farm in Chadwick End where you can visit Santa, Mrs Claus & Elf Twinkle. Enjoy a complimentary hot chocolate or mulled wine (adults) whilst you stroll through the grotto, make reindeer food with Twinkle, pass the singing polar bear, see if you are on the nice list with Mrs Claus and get a photo in the giant sleigh. You will then arrive at Santa's House where your children will meet Santa. All children receive a present and certificate. Booking essential, please go to our website santasfields.co.uk for the booking link.

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The Guardians of St Alphege Parish Church

By the time you have read this the first meeting of the new Guardians Trustees will have met to start making some plans going forward. We will have considered both how fundraising will continue and thought about some activities and events for 2025.

We will be hoping that the opening of St. Alphege to those with a range of reasons to visit will remind people how important the building can be to people both local and further afield.

In this edition of the Parish News you will see that we have had visitors from across the Atlantic who have returned to engage again with their family roots. In the past David Patterson has welcomed such visitors and provided background to their stay. This time new Trustee, Martin Ayers, has picked up the baton to welcome the Hawes family back to St Alphege church and wider Solihull.

The Guardians wish all the St Alphege Community a very happy Christmas.

Roger Shinton
Trustee

CAROLS *for* LIFE



Saturday 14th December, 7pm

St Alphege Church, Solihull

A festive evening of carols and readings,
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St Alphege Church Choirs

Director: Christopher Martin Thomas

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Silent Night Holy Night
STILLE NACHT



Floodlighting

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

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

Forms are available from the Guardians notice boards in St. Alphege Church or in the Oliver Bird Hall.

Names are displayed on monthly lists on these notice boards and also in the Solihull Parish News magazine and acknowledged with a card sent to the donor.

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

For further information please contact the Scheme organiser:-

Sheila Payne, 0121 706 0520; or email: russellpayne110@aol.com

The Church was floodlit to remember the following in 2024

3 rd November	In loving memory of Stan Boulter on his birthday.
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.

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:

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Music Matters

Our focus in October was outreach and recruitment, with two well-attended and enjoyable events – *Chorister for the Day* and *Come and Sing*.

Chorister for the Day is an opportunity for junior-school-aged children from anywhere in Solihull to visit St. Alphege Church and learn some singing and music theory, play some games and make new friends. Children came from Greswold, Shirley Heath, Sharmans Cross, St. Alphege and Langley Schools. They had a great afternoon, learning music for harvest and, wonderfully, eight of them came back the next morning to sing at the Harvest All Age service. Particular thanks to Andy ('Mr Hod') and Alison for their ongoing support of the choirs and for helping out during this event.





The following Saturday, we held a *Come and Sing* event, where visiting adults joined our seniors and adult choir members to work towards an informal performance of Fauré's beautiful *Requiem*. We had the largest alto section we've ever known thanks to great support from Solihull Choral Society members! There were plenty of other visiting singers from across the parish and from other local choirs, and the informal performance was well-supported by family members of visiting singers and our congregation. Within the performance, members of our choirs performed some superb solos – congratulations and thank you to Lily, Joel and Jeremy.



We also enjoyed participating in the parish *Volunteer Fair* and meeting people who might be interested in supporting the music ministry at St. Alphege and across the parish. Thank you to all who already support us in so many ways – please do get in touch if you think you have something to offer; whether it be musical or practical, there are lots of valued ways to get involved.



Moving to look ahead, as you read this, we will be in *Advert* and preparing for *Christmas*, so we offer seasons' greetings to all readers of the *Parish News*, and we look forward to contributing to services at St. Alphege at this special time of year.

Isabel Baumber



Join us for
our next
events

Blossomfield Grange care home, Solihull

Dementia café

First Monday of every month, 10.30am - 12 noon

Join us for our regular free dementia café at Blossomfield Grange. Aimed at those living with dementia and their loved ones, you'll have the opportunity to meet other people, share experiences, take part in our fun activities, and get advice and support. We will have complimentary refreshments on hand, including freshly baked cakes prepared by our Head Chef.

Friendship café

Last Monday of every month, 11am - 12 noon

Join us for our monthly friendship café where you can meet likeminded people in the community for a chat, over a complimentary hot drink and freshly baked treats, prepared by our talented Head Chef. This is also a perfect chance for you to meet the Blossomfield Grange team, including our friendly Resident Ambassadors, who would be happy to talk about the daily lifestyle and activities that are happening at the home.

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CHURCH 4 FAMILIES

December

Sunday Worship

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

On **1st December** which is **Advent Sunday** the Junction will meet at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall. We will learn all about Advent, will light the first of our Advent candles and make Advent wreaths.

On the **8th December** everyone will meet together in the church building at 9.15 a.m. for **Christingle All age worship**

Sunday 8th December Outdoor Carol service St Helen's Church 4 p.m.

On **15th December** it's the Junction Nativity at 9.15 a.m. in the Oliver Bird Hall (Why not come along dressed as your favourite Nativity character!)

On **22nd December** the Junction will be joining the Sunday club at St Helen's Church, St Helen's Road, B91 2DA (off Buryfield Road). We'll be doing lots of Nativity themed activities.

Other Activities

Friday 20th December **Christmas Messy Church** St Helen's Church 4-6 p.m.

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

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

(See the next page for more dates and information)

Lots of dates for the diary:

Why don't you and your family join us for some of the Christmas services and events across the Parish. Here are the details of some of them:

Christingle Service

Sunday 8th December 9.15 a.m. St Alphege Church



Come along to this special celebration and make your own Christingle to take home.

(Collection in aid of the Children's Society)



Activities for families of all shapes and sizes with lots of hands-on, Crafty fun - followed by a celebration including a story and a prayer and finishing with a tasty hot tea for everyone.

Friday 20th December St Helen's Church 4-6 p.m.

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

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

Nativity Service



Sunday 15th December

The Junction Nativity 9.15 a.m. Oliver Bird Hall
Come along dressed as you favourite Nativity character!

Crib Services

Tuesday 24th December



St Alphege Church 3 p.m. and 4.15 p.m.



Prams to Preschool -



Praise and Play

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

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songs, explore a bible story.

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If you want to know more ring Linda on
0121 270 7390
or 07838 670772

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

Youth Stuff

A request from the Social Justice and Environment Committee, now called Community Engagement, was received by Solihull Parish Youth to undertake a community action activity. Following a brain storming session the young people came up with the idea to create a collage for the notice board at the back of St Alphege Church.

So on Friday 18th October we set out with black bags to collect litter. We walked from the Oliver Bird Hall through the churchyard and into the entrance of Malvern Park. As it was raining we were only out collecting for about 15 minutes but were amazed at the amount of litter we picked up in that short time!

The following Friday the collage was created out of the litter collected and a discussion ensued. I had no idea that a vape discarded in the environment takes 1000 years to break down!

Next time that you are in Church please take a moment to view the collage.



A Christmas Thanksgiving

Good Lord, at Christmas-time:

From the city of David, Bethlehem, the 'house of bread' ~
we thank you for hospitality and festive fare;

From the setting of the crowded Inn ~
we thank you for quiet and space when really needed;

From the Shepherds in the fields at night ~
we thank you for watchfulness and responsiveness of soul;

From the heavenly choir of Angels ~
we thank you for the Joy and uplift of Nativity praise;

From the Wise Men from afar ~
we thank you for your guidance and your gifts;

From the straw and warmth of the Manger crib ~
we thank you for your comfort and your care;

From the devotion of Mary, his Mother ~
we thank you for nourishing us as we each grow steadily in faith:
in the name of the Infant Christ.

Amen

Rev John Bradford

As we write this at the end of October it seems strange to be writing for December! But as we all know, Christmas will be upon us in no time

On 13th October we celebrated Harvest. The Revd. Roger Chamberlain took our 10 a.m. service and we very much appreciated his ministry and Ruth's piano playing, as we always do. That afternoon at 4 p.m. we held another 'Harvest Songs of Praise'. We had delivered invitations to 250 of the houses in our area and particularly invited those in St. Helen's Road to join us. It was a lovely afternoon with an amusing sketch, a reading, prayers and music lead by St. Michael's music group which included 2 well known harvest hymns and 3 chosen by those who shared a little of their own story. These are special times when we can be encouraged and/or challenged to hear from others about their faith journey. At the end of the service we served tea and cakes to everyone.

Wednesday Lunches continues to be enjoyed by about 20 people and we recently heard from the daughter of a lady who has recently started coming that she is very much enjoying the cooked meal and the company. We are very grateful to the many who make this possible – excellent cooks and kitchen helpers, drivers and Anne Noble who does a wonderful job co-ordinating it all and coping with many phone calls each week.

At the end of November we shall again be holding our Christmas Fayre which is organised by a very committed group of members of St. Helen's and attracts a good number of those who live in the road or near to the church. This year the proceeds will be going to Marie Curie and Lyndon Senior Fab Club. Saturday 30th November from 11am to 2pm – see details elsewhere in the magazine and do please come along!

Once a month for several years prior to covid, the Sunday Club worked on a craft project, making animals for a big Noah's Ark banner. The two people who headed this up no longer worship with us and the children are all now teenagers/students. However, we are very grateful to Paula McClenaghan who has finally managed to complete the banner which is now hanging up in church. It looks wonderful, and we shall celebrate its completion briefly at our service on 3rd November. Huge thanks to all those who have contributed over the years!



And once again we shall be holding a Community Carol Service, hopefully outside, on Sunday 8th December at 4 p.m. Again this would not be possible without the support of St. Michael's musicians and we are very grateful to them. As well as some well-known carols we hope to welcome the new curate from Knowle Church as she and her family are living at St. Helen's vicarage. She is originally from Malaysia where she was a professional singer, so we are looking forward to hearing her sing and share her story!

Chris and Jenny Carrington

St Michael

With Advent upon us, a season of preparation and reflection, the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle offers a poignant reminder of the call to discipleship. Andrew, who was first a disciple of John the Baptist, responded immediately to Jesus' invitation to follow Him, exemplifying a profound openness to God's call.

Advent is a time when we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, much like Andrew prepared himself for his mission. Just as he left behind his old life to embrace a new purpose, we too are invited to reflect on what we might need to let go of in order to deepen our relationship with God.

In this season of waiting and hope, we can contemplate our own responses to God's call. Are we attentive to the ways He invites us into deeper faith? Are we ready to share the joy of His coming with others, just as Andrew shared the news of Jesus with his brother, Peter?

As we light the first candles of Advent, let's pray for the courage and openness of St. Andrew, allowing his example to inspire us in our own journeys of faith. May this season be one of joyful anticipation, as we prepare not only to celebrate Christ's birth but also to renew our commitment to follow him wholeheartedly.

These key points help us to appreciate St Andrew:

1. Andrew was the first disciple to be called by Jesus.

Though we know more about his brother Peter, it was Andrew who first met Jesus. One day, Andrew was with John the Baptist when they encountered Jesus, whom John proclaimed was "the Lamb of God."

2. Andrew didn't hesitate in following Christ.

As Matthew 4:18-20 indicates, there was no hesitation on Andrew's part; he "immediately" followed Jesus, even leaving his father behind. One moment, he and his brother were casting their nets for fish, the next, they were with Jesus sharing the gospel and performing miracles as "fishers of men." Jesus commissioned Andrew with the other eleven apostles, equipping him to preach and heal in His name.

3. After spending time with Jesus, Andrew went to tell Peter of his discovery. According to John 1:40-42:

4. In the feeding the 5,000, it was Andrew who called attention to the boy with the five loaves and two fishes, which Jesus used to perform the miracle.

December at St. Michael's

Dec 4th, 11th, 18th Art of Advent in St Michael's Chapel 1.45 p.m. until 3 p.m.

Dec 5th Social afternoon in St. Michael's Chapel 2 p.m. until 4 p.m.

Dec 22nd St. Michael's Carol Service 4 p.m. at Sharmans Cross School

Dec 24th First Eucharist of Christmas in St. Michael's Chapel 11.30 p.m.

Please see the Parish Leaflet for Christmas Services.

Paul Smith

Labyrinth – A Journey

"When you wake up in the morning, called by God to be a self again, if you want to know who you are, watch your feet.

because where your feet take you, that is who you are." Frederick Buechner.

What is your experience of labyrinths?

The first time I was invited to walk a labyrinth was decades ago in Sheffield Diocese. We were on a Diocesan Away Day, and, amongst other things, a labyrinth had been laid out in a gym for us to try. It was painted onto canvas and rolled out on the floor. I remember as I was walking the labyrinth, following all the twists and curves, backwards and forwards, that I felt rather silly. However, when I reached the centre of the labyrinth 'something' had happened. I still can't verbalize what that 'something' was, but I do know that I wasn't as self-conscious following the route back out again. I also know that when I met another labyrinth, years later, at a retreat house in the Northeast, I couldn't wait to give it another try!

What about you? What do you know about labyrinths? Or is this the first time you have even heard them mentioned?

So, what exactly is a labyrinth?

"Stand at the crossroads and look. Ask for the ancient roads, where the good way goes; walk in it and find rest for your souls." Jeremiah 6:16

When defining what a labyrinth is, it is important first to point out what it is **not**. That is, a labyrinth and a maze are very different beasts. A maze can be described as a network of paths and hedges – often leading to dead ends - and designed as a puzzle through which one must find a way. A labyrinth, on the other hand, in its most basic form is a circular spiral, with a path that – no matter how many twists and turns it takes – always takes you to the centre. You cannot get lost in a labyrinth. It has only one path in and the same path out.

You get lost in a maze. You get found in a labyrinth.

What about you? Have you ever come across a labyrinth? Have you walked one? Would you like to?

What does the Christian faith say about labyrinths?

"When you pray, move your feet."

West African Proverb.

Labyrinths are an ancient spiritual tool for prayer and a symbol of life's journey. They have been used in different faiths, but especially by followers of the Way, for over 1,700 years, that is, since the Fourth Century. The first discovered Christian labyrinth is from 324 A.D. in Algeria.

The labyrinth is gracious and generous with its gifts for all who enter it. It reintroduces the much-needed walking meditation back to the Christian tradition. The word labyrinth does not occur in the Bible but walk and path do (319 times combined).

E.G. Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. (Psalm 25:4 NIV)

Pioneer Diary

*You are my God. Show me what you want me to do,
and let your gentle Spirit lead me in the right path. (Psalm 143:10 CEV)*

Thus says the Lord,

*"Stand by the roads and look; ask for the ancient paths,
Where the good way is; then walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. (Jeremiah 6:16 AMP)*

*Put succinctly, "Labyrinths embody spiritual reflection, with a way of praying with your feet
– of walking 'Soul to Sole'." (Jim Bailey, Anglican Priest)*

Is there any connection between walking a Labyrinth and wellbeing?

"Solvitur ambulando" – "It is solved by walking." St. Augustine

This ancient practice has been known to reduce stress, agitation and anxiety, while promoting relaxation, improved mental clarity, and enhancement of overall wellbeing. Walking a labyrinth can create a greater awareness of thoughts, emotions and memories, replenish energy, and increase creativity.

Labyrinths can be found in churches, cathedrals, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, hospices, retreat centres, and prisons. Indeed, hospitals have recognised the benefits of labyrinths in treating various illnesses, including cancer and brain injuries.

If you are looking for a unique and peaceful way to improve your health, why not consider taking a stroll through a labyrinth? It could be what you need to feel more centred and calmer in your daily life.

Why not ask Suzette about her experience of a labyrinth retreat?

Pray with me

Dear God,

We pray for another way of being: another way of knowing.

Across the difficult terrain of our existence

we have attempted to build a highway
and, in so doing, have lost our footpath.

God, lead us to our footpath:

Lead us there where, in simplicity,
we may move at the speed of natural creatures
and feel the earth's love beneath our feet.

Lead us there where step-by-step we may feel
the movement of creation in our hearts.

And lead us there where side-by-side
we may feel the embrace of the common soul.

Nothing can be loved at speed.

God, lead us to the slow path; To the joyous insights of the pilgrim;

Another way of knowing: Another way of being.

Amen. Michael Leunig

Keep safe and thanks for listening!

Suzette

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Saint Alphege - A Trip Back in Time, Creating

Recently, our family made a wonderful trip from the United States to England to explore family history. We can trace our ancestors back to Warwickshire in the 1300s and to Solihull and Saint Alphege in the 1500s. My ancestor, Edmund Hawes, who emigrated to America in 1635, was baptized at Saint Alphege in 1611. We also wanted to explore families related by marriage to include the Griswolds, Bromes, Colles and Shirleys, many of which were associated with Saint Alphege. So it was obvious the focal point of our trip should be Solihull and Saint Alphege.

The trip was greatly enhanced with the assistance of Reverend David Reddish, a family friend and retired minister, who lives in Solihull and Martin Ayers who we met through the church. Martin conducted a wonderful tour of Saint Alphege; and he arranged a superb tour given by John Loynton of Malvern Hall. Before becoming a school, Malvern Hall was a residence built by a related family, the Greswolds.

I wasn't certain what to expect from visiting Saint Alphege. I had seen a number of pictures and heard descriptions of the church from various family members, but I wasn't prepared for the moving feelings I had at my first sight of the church.

The church surpassed my expectations in terms of size and beauty, but above all I immediately felt a wonderful appreciation for the tremendous influence the church has had on our family for generations. As mentioned, Saint Alphege has provided spiritual guidance and support to our family dating back to at least the 1500's. Family members were baptized, married and buried at the church, and most importantly, it provided a place for spiritual awareness and growth.

Now hundreds of years later, the church still stands providing guidance and support to current generations. We attended a Sunday service and were graciously welcomed by Reverend Parker. And I found Reverend Chandler's sermon most inspiring as it focused on the spiritual gifts from Christ, the autumn festival, being thankful for the gifts we have received, and focusing on giving to others while acknowledging the challenges we all must deal with in life.

In short, I was so thankful to be able to visit the spiritual center for the Hawes and related families for so many generations, and to reflect on the support Saint Alphege has provided and is providing to so many individuals and families.

Of course no one can predict what lies ahead, but I fully expect Saint Alphege will be serving God in local and world communities continuing to create a better future.



Saint Alphege: (10/2024) Edmund Alexander Hawes Senior, Junior and III

a View of the Future By Ed Hawes

In closing I would like to share the following inscription located in the Becket Chapel at Saint Alphege which reflects the depth and importance of religion in the lives of two of my Solihull ancestors, William Hawes and Ursula Colles Hawes.

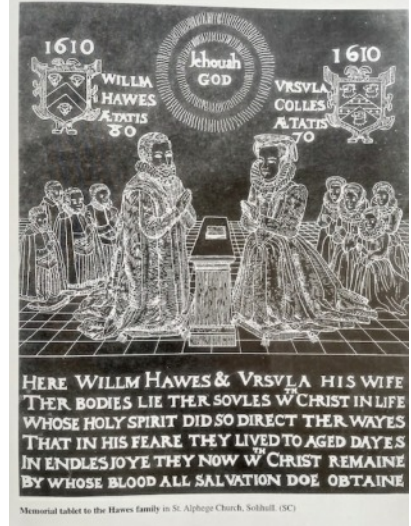
“Jehovah God

1610 WILLM HAWES AETATIS 80

1610 URSULA COLLES AETATIS 70

HERE WILLM HAWES & URSULA HIS WIFE
THER BODIES LIE THER SOULES WTH CHRIST IN LIFE
WHOSE HOLY SPIRIT DID SO DIRECT THER WAYES
THAT IN HIS FEARE THEY LIVED TO AGED DAYES
IN ENDLES JOYE THEY NOW WTH CHRIST REMAINE
BY WHOSE BLOOD ALL SALVATION DOE OBTAINE”

*Memorial Tablet to the William and Ursula Hawes
Family in St. Alphege*



*Hawes Family Picture in England
10/2024: from left to right Mary Melinda
(Mindy) Hawes, Edmund (Tripp) A. Hawes
III, Kathleen T. Hawes, Edmund (Alex) A.
Hawes, Jr., Edmund (Ed) A. Hawes, Sr.,
Mary Catherine (MC) Hawes (not pictured
cousin Terry Conner)*



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Update from the Parish Wardens

It was wonderful to see the wall of 8000 poppies on St Alphege Church and also the art displays from various local schools inside the church. These really enhanced our services and times of Remembrance at the beginning of November. Thank you to Suzette and all the team that organized this.

It has been good to have St. Alphege open during weekdays and to receive a good number of visitors and particularly to offer a 'Warm Welcome' on Fridays. Thank you to the volunteers who are welcoming at these times. Pam would love to hear from you if you could volunteer in this way.

As we said last month, we continue to thank the Guardians for their support for the fabric at St. Alphege and we recorded that three new Trustees had been appointed. But we omitted the fourth new Trustee – Martin Ayers. We are sorry, Martin, and thank you for agreeing to take on this appointment.

We do need to report on the leak from one of the old cast iron heating pipes in St. Alphege where it took a long time trying to find a solution. Hopefully by the time you read this, the repair will have taken place and the carpet dried out. Thanks to David Sturdee (Chair of Church and Churchyard Committee) and Michael Rumball for all their work on this.

Our Parish Youth were keen to get involved in care for the environment and went into Malvern Park to collect items of rubbish which they made into a great display which can be seen in St. Alphege Church.

Churches Together in Central Solihull are holding a Prayer Walk at 3 p.m. on 30th November around our Town Centre. Please do join us in this which we hope will help to draw together different aspects of our community.

The Crib Scene will be going up in Mell Square on about 30th November and there will be a short Blessing of the Crib Service at 3 p.m. on Sunday 8th December to which all are welcome.

Advent and Christmas are now upon us and we look forward to this great season of reflecting on and considering Christ's Comings, and then celebrating His first coming. There are great opportunities for Advent study in groups or using booklets which are detailed elsewhere in the magazine. By the time you read this, Linda and Tammy will have produced Journey to the Stable again which was keenly awaited by local schools and groups, and looked even better with the new lighting! Thank you to all who took part.

The Carol Services are popular events where we can celebrate the birth of Jesus and can invite people to come and share in them – so please do consider whom to invite. They include the Community Carols at St Helen's which we hope to hold outside, the mellow Carols at St. Michael's, and the Nine Lessons and Carols at St. Alphege, as well as a number of services that schools and groups ask to be held in our churches. There is also Beer and Carols at Greville Arms at 6.20 p.m. on Wednesday 11th December. Further details of these are shown elsewhere in Parish News. The St. Alphege Church Choirs are also performing a Carol Service in aid of Cancer Research UK on Saturday 14th December. Please do support this very worthy cause if you are able.

Our number one task is to love and worship God, and then to reach out in Mission to our Parish. Advent and Christmas give us a wonderful opportunity to do this.

Please do continue to pray for our Parish and our Mission to it.
Wishing you all a very happy Christmas.

**Pam Price
Andrew Williams
November 2024**

Erratum

The November Parish Wardens' report mentioned that the Guardians had three new trustees. Unfortunately, this was incorrect and there are four; the fourth is Martin Ayers, to whom we apologize.

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Matters of Faith

The Calling of a Mother

"In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, with a message for a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph . . . and the virgin's name was Mary."

Thus, in a few well-known words, Luke sets the scene for Christmas, and begins his ever-memorable account of the birth of our Saviour. We don't need much more stimulus than that to set our thoughts ranging over the scene of the Nativity, so wonderfully portrayed in the Gospel, and so lovingly re-presented year by year in our Nativity plays and Christmas worship. This Christmas, however, let us not stop there. Let us go behind the familiar scenes, and penetrate beyond the stable and the shepherds and kings. For this is what the gospel-writers are really inviting us to do.

Luke particularly would not want us to meditate on the birth of Jesus without thinking more deeply about the role of His mother. Perhaps you already know that one of the characteristics of Luke's gospel is the special attention he pays in it to women. In the male-orientated society of first-century Palestine, Luke is at pains to redress the balance by pointing out the important part that women had to play in the whole of the Jesus story, from birth to resurrection. So here, right at the beginning, is an account of two pregnant women. They are cousins, Elizabeth and Mary, each chosen to become mothers of very special children: in the first case, John the Baptist; and in the second, Jesus the Christ. The 'sixth' month referred to in my introductory quotation is, in fact, the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

Family

The bringing to birth of children and the subsequent caring for them is, in itself, an awesome and difficult task. But the vocation to motherhood goes further. For it implies in addition taking some responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the family. Children need a mother's prayers; not just prayers for their health and safety, but prayers that they too will grow up with a sense of vocation within the love of God. That can best happen if the mother (the father, too; but mother in particular) is alive to her divine calling. Let me illustrate.

Over a century ago, shortly before the First World War, a young girl was on the brink of a promising career in music. She belonged to a well-known and well-off family who lived in London. She was a gifted musician, a pianist and singer; and she had received some of the best tuition that money could buy, both in England and in Germany. She then fell in love with a young and impecunious priest, a shy and unassuming young man from the north of England, with an accent to prove his origin. It would be silly romantic exaggeration to suppose that the girl married against her family's wishes. That was not the case. She came from a devout Christian family, and they supported the young couple during the early years of their married life. However, at the time, the girl had to sort out her true vocation. Was it to be music, or motherhood? She decided in favour of the latter, and she never wavered thereafter.

Nor did she ever stop praying with, and for, her children, all nine of them as it turned out! Among her prayers she always included prayer for a sense of vocation, particularly (for the boys) a prayer for vocation to the priesthood. It was a shattering blow when the one boy

who had declared his intention to be ordained, and had begun training for it, was killed during the Second World War. It was a further disappointment when the only other boy who had looked as though he might be earmarked for the ministry appeared to show no interest. Eventually, the mother died of cancer in her early fifties, having declared during her last illness how good it was to be in hospital because she had so much more time to pray.

Was her sense of vocation to motherhood misplaced? You may think so: some people did, having expected to see the blossoming of a successful musical career. But the mother had learnt to see her vocation in a different light. She gave to her whole family an abiding love of music, and passed on to some of them a considerable portion of her musical talent. One of her children became a piano teacher, and one of her grandchildren was to become a well-known international cellist. She also gave them a strong sense of fun and fulfilment, and, at the same time, an understanding of true spiritual values which came directly from her own undying faith in God and sense of vocation as a mother.

One further result came nine years after she died. That was when the other boy, the one she had thought might have been called to sacred ministry but who had showed no interest in it, was ordained by Bishop Leonard Wilson in Birmingham Cathedral. I should know. I was that boy.

I hope you all enjoy a very happy and holy Christmas.

The Revd. Martin Tunncliffe

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For Your Diary

Thursday 5th December : 1.00pm in the OBH. *Advent Lunch* followed at 2pm by an *Advent Meditation* with Suzette Maguire.

Thursday 19th December : 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 December Lunch Club will meet on Friday 6th December at 12 noon. Please telephone Carol Caldicott if you would like to join this friendly group for a convivial pre-Christmas meal.

Carol Caldicott
0121 705 3168



St Alphege
All Age Eucharist
9.15 a.m. Sunday 8th December

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

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Would all advertisers please ensure that any changes they might require to their advert, or notice of cancellation, are routed through the Advertising Manager (Tim Drakeford, 42 Fowgay Drive, Solihull B91 3PH, Tel 705 4494) in sufficient time to meet the copy date for the issue in which they wish the changes to take effect. The copy date is usually the first Friday of the preceding month, but the exact date of the next copy date is shown below. Similarly, would new advertisers please ensure that their requirements for advertising space are also routed through the Advertising Manager in plenty of time to meet the required copy date.

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