

# St Helen's Magazine

December 2021

50p



St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch



Loving God, loving others, loving the world

# Parish Directory

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♦Opening times Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 10.00am - 1.00pm

- ♦ Facebook pages: St Helen's Ashby de la Zouch  
St Helen's Heritage Ashby de la Zouch
- ♦ Twitter: @sthelensashby
- ♦ Website: sthelensashby.net
- ♦ Flagstaff Team: www.flagstaff.org.uk

## Giving

You can make donations to the work of St Helen's via our website - <https://www.sthelensashby.net/Groups/327469/Giving.aspx>

## Editor Writes ...

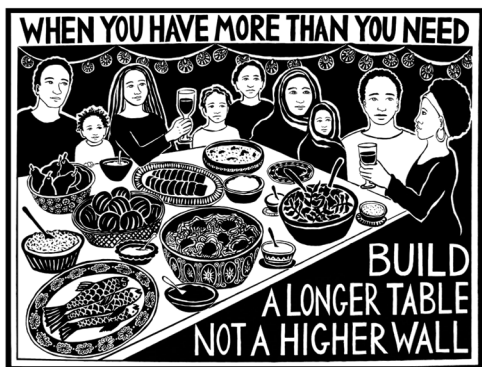
I read recently about some massive tunnels in Brazil, which stretch for hundreds of feet, and how they have been intriguing scientists. The largest one is a whopping 2,000 feet long, six feet tall and up to five feet wide. There not being any geological process that could produce such long and gigantic tunnels, they could only have been created by some enormous creature, and one with scarily huge claws if the marks on the rock inside the caves were anything to go by. And there are thousands of them.



Well, apparently the culprit is a giant ground sloth, *Megatherium americanum*, that lived 10,000 years ago and was the second-largest prehistoric land mammal next to the mammoth. Up to 4.6 metres (15 feet) and weighing roughly 2,590 kg (5,709 pounds) this creature would have spent much of its lifespan dedicated entirely to constructing tunnels. With the deadly sin of sloth being defined as 'a habitual disinclination to exertion, or laziness' – it seems a bit harsh to tar this particularly industrious excavator with that brush. Revd Margaret tells us about seeing some other busy creatures from the animal kingdom on page 7, and page 20 shows us here at St Helen's being anything but slothful!

Despite its enormous claws, *M. americanum* was a vegetarian. This was good news for humans as it made it easier to target – archaeological investigations show that ground sloths were on the menu. Oh dear - it's not only recently that humans have contributed to animal extinctions it seems. But life was probably quite tough for humans tens of thousands of years ago, right? On page 10 you can read about some present day humans for whom mere survival isn't easy.

People not always succeeding at getting along with fellow humankind is somewhat of a theme throughout this month's magazine (even Wendy Freer's historical perspective on page 14 isn't without a little bit) but it is a magazine bursting with hope. There is a message of the hope in difficult times that the gospel brings on page 16, and inspiring stories of how people are helping others (and how you can help too) on pages 13, 23, 25 and 28.



The perpetually anything-but-slothful Revd Mary has a hope-filled message over the page.

*Jill Chapman*



## Revd Mary Writes ...

Dear Friends

The Christmas season always has its fair share of uncertainty, of the 'Will it snow?'/ 'Will the in-laws get on?'/ 'Will sprouts really taste better when cooked with figs and chilli?'/ 'Surely he hasn't given me a *vacuum cleaner* for Christmas?' variety. (Please receive the last incredulous question as a public service announcement.....)

This year, it seems we might also have uncertainty of a pandemic variety. Sing along now: 'On the first day of Advent, Covid gave to me, the omicron variant'.

At the time of writing, we don't really know the impact this might have on us, although masks look set to make a comeback, and it can't be good news for an already overstretched NHS. What *is* clear is that we are back into a time of recalibration where risks are re-assessed, some plans reshaped, when we wonder what we'll be *allowed* to do, what it is *wise* to do. Yes, uncertainty is the unwelcome, insistent guest of Christmas present.

Amidst these questions, and our resultant anxiety, we'll do well to remember that uncertainty was a guest at Christmas past, too; at the very first Christmas where a young girl was told of her impossible pregnancy, and a young man wondered whether he could still marry her; where that young couple were forced by an occupying power to travel to a place they did not know, where they had nowhere to stay; where wise men set off from the east following a star to an unknown destination. Uncertainty has always been part of Christmas.

Or, rather, *human* uncertainty has. For Christmas from God's point of view has always had absolute clarity of purpose: for God to come from heaven to a broken earth, and a wavering humanity, to love them and to show them how to live and to point the way home. Through the young girl, and her broken-hearted fiancé, through the little donkey (although purists will tell you he's not in the Bible) and the inn-keeper, and in the manger, God's plan, God's mission-accomplished was to come and live with us, to come and love us.





And so, whatever *this* Christmas might hold, however our plans might have to flex, know that this hasn't changed: that, in Jesus, God comes once again to love you, to be with you, to rescue you. And so, even if your sprouts are underwhelming, and that ominous parcel *is*, after all, a vacuum cleaner, may your days be merry and bright - and filled with the sure and certain love of God.

A poem by U A Fanthorpe, 'Christmas Traffic':

'Three, two, one, zero. Lift off  
Signals Mission Control. And off they go  
To the dark parts of the planets  
In their pressurised spacesuits,  
Cocooned in technology, the astronauts.

Mission Control whispers in someone's ear.  
'Yes', she says, 'I will.' And in due time  
A different traveller makes a quieter journey,  
Arriving hungry, naked, true to instructions,  
Docking on earth, taking the one small step.

May you know God's peace, his certain love, this Christmas.

Mary

XX

## Stamps for Anne

**A**s we approach the point in the year when we receive more post, Anne Heaton has asked if we can collect the stamps for RNIB.

Please leave a 1 cm edge, and if you have overseas stamps, put them in a separate envelope. You can either drop them through Anne's letterbox (19 Rydal Gardens) or at the Parish Office, marked 'Stamps for Anne'. We collected a big bag last year - can we beat that?



## Food Bank

**A**shby Foodbank have thanked us for our continued support. Our Harvest donation to them weighed 67.50kg. Well done, everyone.

Christmas food has been requested for some of the donations in December - it need not be expensive but an item or two, such as a selection box or sweets, could help bring some cheer to the families.

The last donation date to receive goods is Friday December 10<sup>th</sup>, as the warehouse will then close until 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

**Chris Lewis**

Counsellor / Psychotherapist

## **Chris's Therapeutic Counselling**

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## More reflections from the bird hide

Last time I contributed to the magazine we had been ensconced in a bird hide waiting quietly for a bittern or two. A few months after that we were casting our binoculars over a very grey windy marsh at Rimac, a national nature reserve on the North Lincolnshire coast when a couple came up to us. We exchanged disappointment at the lack of birds and they told us that they had just seen spoonbills at Gibraltar Point, a Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Reserve in South Lincolnshire. So, the next day off we went to find the spoonbills. And, yes, they were there, but, to see their rather remarkable beaks you did have to wait until they woke up, braved the wind, and unravelled their very long necks.



On that grey “summer” break, birds were sometimes in short supply but something else was abundant – Dragonflies and Darters! With their incandescent wings they danced, whirled and whizzed across our paths, momentarily perched on plants and gave the general taunt of “catch me (or photo me!) if you can!”

This Christmas the weather may be grey (who knows!) but I’m sure we will be distracted and dazzled by the bright lights, glitter and glamour of Christmas. So dazzled by the artificial things that we risk missing the birth of the Christ child as he dances, whirls and whizzes momentarily across our field of view. So I urge you to stand back, pay attention, look and listen carefully this Christmas and in doing so I hope and pray that you will catch sight of the Christ child as he brings his love, peace and joy into your life.

With love at Christmas

**Revd. Margaret**



For news and views in North West Leicestershire read your local newspaper

# Ashby Times

on sale every Thursday at your local newsagent

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St Helen's Church

# Advent Concert Series

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December at 1pm

International pianist

## Jill Crossland

Jill Crossland is known for her imaginative, passionate interpretations of the classical repertoire. Jill has played extensively in the UK and abroad, including at Wigmore Hall and South Bank in London, Sage Gateshead, Vienna Musikverein and Konzerthaus, and Leipzig Gewandhaus.



Jill's recordings, including the Bach Goldberg Variations on Warner Classics and the complete well-tempered Clavier on Signum, have received much critical acclaim.

Jill's programme will include her trademark Bach, plus a selection of Scarlatti sonatas and Schubert impromptus to banish the winter blues!

- ❖ festive refreshments
- ❖ free entry, with a retiring collection

### LIGHT BULB MOMENT

Can you support our Light Bulb Moment?

To make our church lighting brighter, neater, and greener we want to switch to more energy efficient lightbulbs. The replacement bulbs will cost £1.92 each; or £15.36 for each of the side aisle fittings; and £23.04 for each of the main aisle fittings. Any donations can be given to the Churchwardens marked 'Light Bulb Moment'.





**The  
What's  
On  
Notice board**

**DEEP CLEAN OF THE CHURCH**  
On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December  
between 10.00-12.00 noon in  
preparation for Christmas. If  
you are able do come and join  
us. Many hands make light  
work. Buckets, mops, brooms,  
dusters are optional but helpful.  
Tea and coffee will be provided,  
cakes if we are lucky.



St Helen's Church  
Ashby de la Zouch  
LE65 1AA

## Advent Concert Series

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December  
at 7pm

# Ashby String Orchestra

- ❖ Includes music by Bach, Handel, Corelli, Britten, Dag Wiren & Jenkins
- ❖ Admission free, with a retiring collection

Please send any articles,  
jokes, book reviews,  
photos etc to  
jill.chapman12@btopenwo  
rld.com

Thanks



# Refugees

**R**efugees': the very word itself seems to have become a topic for heated and polarised political discussion, and recent tragic news from Calais has again pushed the issue of migration into the spotlight.

At international levels these problems seem huge and intractable: way beyond our individual capabilities to solve. I can only hope and pray that national leaders will find some answers, in a spirit of collaboration and compromise, rather than confrontation and blame shifting.

But since discussions in Coleorton (following a Flagstaff service on the theme of migration) I have begun to learn a little more about what happens to asylum seekers once they reach the UK.

Following one of Mary's suggestions, I began to investigate the work of an organisation called 'Cities of Sanctuary'. I discovered that Loughborough is in fact a 'Town of Sanctuary' and that there was a need for more volunteers to 'meet and greet' asylum seekers outside the Immigration Office there.

I went along to meet the local organiser and find out more - and I am now a regular volunteer.

So - to put you in the picture - some background information about the UK asylum system:

For people who are fleeing war or persecution, it is actually 'legal' to enter the UK and apply for asylum. At this point, asylum seekers are accommodated somewhere in the vicinity of their place of arrival, until their details can be recorded and information noted in order to process their claim.

Unless they have family or friends who are willing to support them, they are then accommodated with other asylum seekers - in shared housing, run by private companies under licence from the Home Office. These premises are very basic and have been repeatedly criticised for failing to provide security, respect for privacy and basic levels of hygiene and safety (particularly for women) in the media and in the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee report. Those seeking asylum are not allowed to work but, if deemed 'destitute', are given the equivalent of £5.66 a day to live on.

At this point begins the increasingly long wait for their asylum claim to be heard, often extending to several years. In order to be given official 'refugee status' and allowed to stay in the UK, they will have to provide comprehensive evidence that they have 'a well-founded fear of persecution owing to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group' and that 'the authorities in their country of origin are unable to provide protection' (1951 United Nations Convention).

If their claim fails, at present they can appeal (I'm not sure, but I think upcoming legislation may change this) and will then be put into a different 'queue' for a further long wait. (According to statistics from the House of Commons Library, in the period from 2004 to 2020 nearly a third of appeals resulted in the refusal being overturned and the claim being upheld.)

If the claim still fails, the claimant will be 'detained' until such time as they can be returned to their home country: a complicated and sometimes very long process in itself.

If on the other hand claimants are successful, they are finally given refugee status and the 'right to remain' for five years, after which their refugee status is maintained, but they must apply again for permission to stay.

While waiting for the decision about their 'status' to be made, people seeking asylum must register regularly at an Immigration Enforcement Reporting Centre - some weekly, some monthly, some less frequently (depending on a complex system of different types of 'status' which I don't pretend to understand!)

For those living in cities in the East Midlands, that centre is in Loughborough and they are given a travel voucher to cover the cost of their bus journey. It is here that Loughborough's 'Town of Sanctuary' volunteers try to offer some help.

Asylum seekers wait outside in the cold (only one person is allowed in at a time) and we wait with them. We wear 'Town of Sanctuary' badges and a sign offers welcome and announces who we are. We greet them with a smile but take our cue from them: some don't even want to make eye contact, others are glad of a general chat and some want to tell us their story. All those who have spoken to me desperately want to work and be self-supporting; there is SO much talent going to waste! Last week I spoke to a guy who speaks four languages and another who is a trained car mechanic.

Especially if they are waiting to have the assessment interview (when the decision will be made on their 'status') it's a tense time for them and some are brought by a friend who then waits anxiously outside with us. If the final decision goes against the claimant, s/he will be detained there and then. S/



he will not be allowed to make a phone call to the friend or family member outside to tell them about the decision, before they are taken away in a van, parked behind the Immigration Centre.

This week, the volunteer I was working with told me a harrowing story. Recently, during her 'shift', a young couple arrived who have two teenage children. The man and his two children already have refugee status, but as yet, his wife does not. The woman was inside the centre for a very long time and her husband was visibly shaking and growing increasingly anxious as the time went by. Fortunately, she eventually came out smiling! It transpired that she had received a text message from one of her children and had answered it. Because this is not allowed, she had been put to the back of the queue, hence the long delay.

ToS volunteers work in twos and we have vouchers to offer for a drink and a hot meal at the nearby John Storer House, as well as vouchers for toiletries funded by a lottery grant. In addition - (and here's where you might come in!) we have a collection of warm hats, scarves and gloves to offer on these cold winter mornings.

We can help people unfamiliar with the town to find their way back to the bus stop, or take them up to John Storer House and explain the voucher system, or sit and have a coffee with them if they are distressed; but what we can't do, of course, is to offer more comprehensive advice - we are not trained to do so. However, we do have information cards to offer, differentiated for the particular city where the claimant will be living, with details of organisations who can help and advise. The application process is complex and presentation of the right evidence is crucial if a fair decision is to be made; so the Red Cross, for example, have solicitors who will give their advice free of charge to people seeking asylum.

Recent media headlines imply that our asylum system is 'too soft' and that people seeking asylum are ungrateful recipients of any help offered. I can only say that from where I stand, on a windy street corner in Loughborough, the system looks pretty tough to me - and it certainly does not look like one based on compassion and justice, as called for recently by the Archbishop of Canterbury. What's more, the people I meet are far from ungrateful: they are very appreciative, even of just a friendly chat at a difficult moment.

Don't get me wrong: this is not to deny the huge, complex and heart-rending migration problems at international level; rather it is to say that we also need to acknowledge and press for a solution to problems closer to home in the shape of an unwieldy and frankly, cruel asylum system.

The huge backlog of asylum cases in the UK has been a systemic issue for successive governments over many years. A recent report by the Independent Inspector of Immigration and Borders states that 'the

government needs to take urgent action to address the current backlog and ensure the asylum system is fair, humane, efficient and effective going forward’.

Of course, there is no ‘magic bullet’ to solve either these national or international problems, but I cannot believe that the way to do so is for national leaders to engage in a competition to become the ‘toughest’ - or should I say, the ‘least humane’? Surely, we can find the means for countries to sit down together and try to find a way through these enormous problems - a way which, as the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster reminds us, must acknowledge our belief that everyone is a child of God, with an innate dignity and worth.

Given the enormity of the problem, it would be easy to think there’s really nothing we can do to help. What we do in Loughborough is just a very small gesture, but it is something. So - here’s one suggestion:

### **Please will you help?**

If you can donate a hat, a pair of gloves or a scarf, I can promise you it will be much appreciated by the recipient. (We don’t have storage space to accommodate larger items, unfortunately.)

Please leave these in the box at the back of church. **THANK YOU!**

And if you want to know more about volunteering for Loughborough Town of Sanctuary, do drop me a line - [pat@destafford.co.uk](mailto:pat@destafford.co.uk) and we can arrange to have a chat.

You might recall the story of a little girl walking on a beach where thousands of starfish have been washed up and stranded by the storm. One by one, she stoops to pick up a single starfish and throw it back into the sea. A passer by stops to challenge her:

‘You’re wasting your time, girl - there are thousands upon thousands of starfish here. You can’t possibly make a difference.’ Bending down again, the little girl picks up another starfish and tosses it into the sea. ‘Well, I made difference to that one!’ she replies.



**Pat Stafford**

## Christmas Waites

Round our village Christmas time I says to several mates,  
“Come on lads,” I says, says I, “how about some Christmas Waites?”  
So we gets a carol, learns it up, and then one evening wintry,  
We muffles up and sallies forth to try it on the gentry.”

**T**hus goes the opening verse of an anonymous folk song which I usually sing around Christmas time. The ‘Waites’ to which it refers were, traditionally, groups of musicians who performed in the streets, often at night and under people’s windows, but also at official occasions too. From medieval times, up to the first half of the nineteenth century, every town and city in this country had a band of Waites and Ashby was probably no exception. These musicians were officially appointed and were provided with a salary, livery and in some cases a silver chain.

Their official status as Town Waites came to an end in 1835 with the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act, but the idea of Christmas Waites continued as unofficial groups of singers or musicians who would gather to sing carols over the festive period.

The nearest I can find to a reference to Ashby Christmas Waites comes from the Leicester Daily Post on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1888. It reported that at about midnight on Christmas Eve, several sets of carol singers paraded the town and the Volunteer and Drum and Fife bands went on their accustomed rounds. The same newspaper reported that in Loughborough “ample and varied entertainment was provided for the inhabitants” with “carol singers and Christmas Waites astir during the night.”

In Leicester itself, the Christmas Waites were much better remembered although not always fondly! The East Midlands Oral History Archive holds several (undated) recordings of people recalling the Leicester Christmas Waites. Here are a few extracts:

“Oh they were marvellous, I used to love ‘em. We used to lay in bed just before Christmas ... and we used to hear them and oh it sounded marvellous. ... There was a trumpet and a big trombone. There was about three or four of them.”

“The very first time that I heard them, I wasn’t expecting them and I woke up and I heard this singing and they were singing ‘Oh solo mia’ and I thought I must be in heaven! It was so beautiful you know, coming over the night air. Of course, I came to earth with a bump and realised that it was the waites.”

“It was called the Leicester Town Waites, it was the Leicester Town Band, brass band, that used to go out Christmas Eve and play in the streets.”

“They had little lights in their coat. I don’t know what it was made of....



They played one or two Christmas hymns and tunes and greeted my father "Merry Christmas Mr Coleman," and went away. Then they came back some days after and collected the money which was a shilling."

We often hear complaints today about Christmas things appearing in shops far too early. It appears that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such complaints were also made about the waites. On the 18<sup>th</sup> November 1890, a reader signing himself "Anti-clamour" wrote an angry letter to the editor of the Leicester Daily Post saying that although he had no objections to waites on Christmas Eve, he could not understand "Why on earth these half-crown seeking nuisances should



begin their nocturnal musical exhortations to "salute the happy morn" in the middle of November." He went on to say that during the previous night he had heard "no less than four bands of these peace-breakers blowing and scraping one against the other" and added that "the loud braying of opposition instruments, so far out of season, and in the centre of a thronged district, is not a thing that fits in with my notion of what ought to be".

In December 1874, the London correspondent of the Leicester Daily Post complained that despite the miserable wet weather "Yet the Christmas Waites were abroad. .... "at times we were able to detect Christmas airs wretchedly played. How the wretched German players could stand in the wet and wind is a mystery. That they played out of tune and in admirable confusion as regards time is no wonder. But *why* they played is still one of those problems of human nature upon which the acutest minds might blunt their edge in vain."

The official Leicester Town Waites date back to 1499 and a revived form still exists today. In 2002, Councillor Maggie Bodell-Stagg marked her first day of office as Lord Mayor of Leicester by reviving the ancient tradition of the Town Waites. Since 1499, this group of official musicians had performed at civic ceremonies where they supported the Mayor and entertained the people of Leicester. Disbanded in 1947, they were reinstated at the Guildhall reception following the election of the Lord Mayor and now play as The Longslade Consort at various venues around the city.

**Wendy Freer**

# Her Majesty The Queen's Message to Synod

**On 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021 a message to the opening session of the 11<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the Church of England was delivered by His Royal Highness The Earl of Wessex on behalf of The Queen:**

**Y**our Graces, the Convocations of Canterbury and York, duly called together in obedience to Our Royal Writs, are on this day joined together in accordance with the Synodical Government Measure 1969 and the House of Laity is added to them in accordance with the Measure, so as to constitute the Eleventh General Synod of the Church of England.

Archbishops and members, the opening of a new Synod provides an opportunity for us all to give thanks for the witness of those who have gone before, and pray for wisdom as you seek to balance change and continuity in the decisions that lie ahead. It is hard to believe that it is over 50 years since Prince Philip and I attended the very first meeting of the General Synod.

None of us can slow the passage of time; and while we often focus on all that has changed in the intervening years, much remains unchanged, including the Gospel of Christ and his teachings.

The list of tasks facing that first General Synod may sound familiar to many of you: Christian education; Christian unity; the better distribution of the ordained ministry to the needs of the population. But one stands out supreme: "to bring the people of this country to the knowledge and the love of God".

Of course, in our richly diverse modern society, the well-being of the nation depends on the contribution of people of all faiths, and of none.

But for people of faith, the last few years have been particularly hard, with unprecedented restrictions in accessing the comfort and reassurance of public worship.

For many, it has been a time of anxiety, of grief, and of weariness.

Yet the Gospel has brought hope, as it has done throughout the ages; and the Church has adapted and continued its ministry, often in new ways - such as digital forms of worship.

St. Paul reminds us that all Christians are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, and the deepening of relations across the great Christian traditions has been a continuing priority since the first General Synod in 1970. And so I am pleased to note the enhanced cooperation between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, as well as the sustained ecumenical links between many churches, in the pursuit of Christian unity.

Your Graces and members of the Synod, the next five years will not always be straightforward. Like every new Synod, you have inherited weighty responsibilities with many issues to address, reports to debate, and difficult decisions to make. You may have to consider proposals on governance, on conduct, on the use of resources, and on other issues; and on a vision for the future of the Church.



In some areas, there will, of course, be differing views and my hope is that you will be strengthened with the certainty of the love of God, as you work together and draw on the Church's tradition of unity in fellowship for the tasks ahead.

At the beginning of this new Synod, my prayer is that the Lord's blessing may be upon you as you embark on your deliberations; and that you will find inspiration in the joyous words of the hymn you sang this morning:

O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

ELIZABETH R.



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# Our Worship for Advent & Christmas



**Wednesdays 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, & 22<sup>nd</sup>**

9.00pm Compline on the Flagstaff Family of Churches Facebook Page

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup>**

7.00pm Candlelit Carol Service at Staunton Harold

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>**

2.30pm Carol Service at Prior Park

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup>**

4.00pm Christingle in St Helen's Church

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup>**

6.30pm Ashby School Christmas Concert in St Helen's

**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup>**

6.00pm Ashby Day Nursery nativity, St Helen's

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup>**

7.30pm Carols Service at Isley Walton

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup>**

7.00pm Carol Service at St Mary's Coleorton

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>**

6.00pm Carols on the Green at Breedon

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup>**

10:30 - Carols at Worthington & collect your

Christingle DIY Packs (For Zoom link  
email [christingle@stmatthewsworthington.net](mailto:christingle@stmatthewsworthington.net))

3.30pm Candlelit Carol Service 1 at St Helen's

4.00pm Worthington Zoom Christingle

6.30pm Candlelit Carol Service 2 at St Helen's



**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup>**

5.00pm Carol singing to the nursing homes in Ashby

7.00pm Community carol singing in the Hollybush, Breedon

**Christmas Eve**

2.00pm Carols around the tree at Worthington

2.30pm Children's carol service at Breedon Church

2.30pm Children's carol service at St Mary's, Coleorton

3.30pm Children's carol service 1 at St Helen's

5.30pm Children's carol service 2 at St Helen's

11:15 pm Midnight Communion at Worthington

11.30pm Holy Communion at St Helen's – 'Midnight Mass'



## Christmas Day

9.00am Holy Communion at Staunton Harold

10.30am Holy Communion at St Helen's Ashby

## Boxing Day

10.30am Holy Communion at St Mary's, Coleorton

Holy Trinity's Christmas services can be viewed at [trinityashby.net/christmas](http://trinityashby.net/christmas)



## Our Worship on Sundays in December

Week	8.30am	10.30am	pm
<b>1</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 2	Staunton Holy Communion	St Helen's All Age	<b>6.00pm</b> St Helen's Evening Prayer <b>6.00pm</b> Isley Walton Holy Communion
<b>2</b> 12 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 3		St Helen's Holy Communion Coleorton Holy Communion	<b>12.30pm</b> Village churches Baptisms <b>4.00pm</b> St Helen's Christingle
<b>3</b> 19 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 4	Staunton Holy Communion	St Helen's Morning Prayer Breedon Holy Communion	<b>3.30pm &amp; 6.30pm</b> St Helen's Candlelit Carol Service - Nine Lessons & Carols
<b>4</b> 26 <sup>th</sup> December St Stephen		Coleorton Holy Communion	



Regular Sunday & Wednesday services at St Helen's are streamed live to Facebook, on the Flagstaff Family of Churches Facebook page. In addition, you can catch up with services which have been live-streamed later, on the St Helen's Church website. - <https://www.sthelensashby.net/>

## Other Services

- Wednesdays - Holy Communion - 10.30am in church & on-line
- Saturdays - Parish Prayers - 9.30am in church (Hastings chapel)



## From the Albums ...



For Remembrance we created our wonderful 'poppy fall' and worked with the Town Council to lead the Remembrance Service & commemorations held in the Bath Grounds.

Our Christmas Fayre was great fun  
and raised over £3,300  
Well done Eileen and all your helpers.







## Beautiful Brides

Our congratulations to (clockwise from top left) Molly, Beth, Eve, Emily and Katy Rose (AYFC), St Helen's Church 'alumnae' who have all married in recent months.



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# Mothers' UNION

## Christian care for families

On 27<sup>th</sup> November members and friends of Mothers' Union came together across Britain and Ireland and around the world to hold a three minute silence at 1.03pm. This was for a Global Day of Action in response to the call for 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

This Christmas UK MU are part of the 'Big Give Christmas Challenge' for the second year, asking for help to support women suffering from Gender-Based Violence across Africa (in Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa). Any donations made to the appeal between 30<sup>th</sup> November and 7<sup>th</sup> December will be doubled!

Mothers' Union's aim is to empower 4,225 Gender-Based Violence survivors or women at risk with vital support & skills to heal & remain safe. These women will then become community advocates, supporting activities that challenge harmful behaviours that endanger women. To find out more, and to donate, go to: <https://www.mothersunion.org/>



## When Eternity Played By The Clock

### A Christmas Prayer by Mark Galli

Almighty and Eternal God,  
infinite and holy,  
whose being genius cannot fathom,  
whose works galaxies cannot contain.

Before you we gratefully come, celebrating the day  
when you, the Almighty, did not count omnipotence a thing to be

grasped,  
when Eternity played by the calendar,  
when Infinity was checked by gravity,  
when Holiness mixed it up with sinners,  
when the Creator of intergalactic space  
became a body  
and moved into our neighbourhood.

Today we revel in the revelation  
that we who were light-years distant  
have been drawn to you as breath in lungs,  
that we who had lost touch  
can now feel the wounds in your hands and feet,  
brushing up against the holy body that bore the sins of the world,  
and the cold flesh that, soon enough, turned warm and whole,  
and soon enough, made all things new.

We, like the shepherds in the field,  
like the women at the tomb,  
are astonished,  
trembling in wonder  
and in fear.

If all this is true,  
if a love like this  
is the blood that courses through all reality,  
behold, all things are new.

On our better days, Lord, we long to be transformed  
by the wonder.  
But most days, we are scared to death to be changed,  
even by love.

Yet it is not to the bold that you have come,  
Only to the trembling  
And not to the wise,  
But only to the foolish.

Give us ears to hear the glad tidings of great joy,  
and lungs to sing with exuberant praise,  
and legs to dance spritely around the strawy trough  
that cradled the Love  
who redeems the cosmos.

Amen.



# Toybox Christmas Birth Certificate Appeal

## Changing the World for Street Children in Latin America

“All I want for Christmas is a Birth Certificate!”



**A**t Christmas would you do something extraordinary – would you contribute towards registering a street child and give them a birth certificate.

In Guatemala there are thousands and thousands of street children who don't have a birth certificate. As a result they have no official identity. They are simple known as XXX children. They have no name and don't officially exist.

Toybox is a small British Charity established in 1992 devoted solely to helping these children.

During Advent we often hear the Gospel story of the birth pangs as the wars and turmoil of the past die away and the Kingdom of God comes onto the horizon. For these street children the birth pangs of their mothers lead to their birth and then abandonment to a life on the streets with no hope. Without a birth certificate these children cannot see a doctor, sit an exam, get a job, earn an income, or get married. They are prey to human trafficking, and they finish up in a mass grave marked simply XXX.

Toybox are asking us to help provide a child a birth certificate this Christmas as the best Christmas present they could have because it opens so many doors for them. Over the past few years they have been able to get birth certificates for several thousand children but there are many thousands more without one.

It costs £32 each to do the research to establish who each of these children are and get that child registered with a Guatemalan Birth Certificate. As we have been doing for some years now, this Christmas we're going to sponsor certificates again as our Christmas present to two street children in Guatemala. If you would like to contribute in a small way then please send your donation to "Freepost Plus RUAB-HLJG-SRXG The Toybox Charity, Challenge House, Sherwood Drive, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 6DP" (cheques made payable to Toybox), or call 01908 360080 or visit [toybox.org.uk/christmas](http://toybox.org.uk/christmas).

I know there will be many calls upon you this Christmas and it will be hard to decide which, if any, you will contribute to, but we hope that you will give this some consideration and give a child a name and a future.

With our thanks

**Revd. Margaret and Allan**

# Snowy Quiz

1. Which American State gets its name from the Spanish word for snowy because of the snow which covered its mountains in winter?  
a) Minnesota b) Alaska c) Nevada
2. Who 'came dancing home in the purple winter twilight across the snowy places.'?  
a) Lucy in The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe b) Laura Ingalls in The Little House on the Prairie c) Anne of Green Gables
3. Which alcoholic ingredient is used in a Snowball cocktail?  
a) Kahlúa b) Frangelico c) Advocaat
4. How many sides does a snowflake have?  
a) five b) six c) nine
5. Which actor played Fritha in the 1971 film adaption of Paul Gallico's *The Snow Goose*  
a) Olivia Hussey b) Jenny Agutter c) Susan Penhaligon
6. What is another name for the mysterious ape-like creature the Yeti or Abominable Snowman?  
a) Sasquatch b) Banshee c) Basilisk
7. 'In winter with warm tears I'll melt the snow, And keep eternal spring-time on thy face.' is a quote from which Shakespeare play?  
a) Titus Andronicus b) As You Like It c) King Richard III
8. The Walt Disney animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was first released in which decade?  
a) 1930s b) 1940s c) 1950s
9. Which mountain range derives its name from the Sanskrit words for "Abode of Snow"?  
a) Purvanchal b) Himalayas c) Karakoram
10. What animal is Snowball in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*?  
a) a pig b) a horse c) a dog
11. Snowboarding first became a Winter Olympic Sport in the Games of 1998 in which country?  
a) Canada b) Japan c) United States
12. Which of these series of novels was written by C P Snow?  
a) Perry Mason b) A Dance to the Music of Time c) Strangers and Brothers
13. How many types of snow were included in the snowflake classification system devised by meteorologists C Magono and CW Lee in 1966?  
a) 20 b) 50 c) 80
14. Jon Snow, the fictional character in television's *Game of Thrones*, is portrayed by which actor?  
a) Sean Bean b) Rory McCann c) Kit Harington
15. Name the most famous great-great-grandfather of the British television historian and presenter Dan Snow?  
a) Harold Abrahams b) David Lloyd George c) Charlie Chaplin
16. The Snowy Mountains is the highest mountain range in which country?  
a) New Zealand b) Australia c) South Africa
17. 'Snow had fallen snow on snow on snow' - Who wrote *In The Bleak Midwinter*?  
a) Elizabeth Barrett Browning b) Augusta Webster c) Christina Rossetti

18. Who leads the pop group Snow Patrol?  
a) Chris Martin b) Alex Turner c) Gary Lightbody
19. The largest collection of snow globes is owned by Wendy Suen from China. She has a) 904 b) 2,633 c) 4,059?
20. The fictional white fox terrier, Snowy, is whose companion?  
a) Daddy Woodentop b) Rupert c) Tintin
21. Who originally wrote the fairy tale *The Snow Queen*?  
a) Hans Christian Andersen b) Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm c) C. S. Lewis
22. A blizzard is a severe snowstorm characterized by strong sustained winds of at least which speed?  
a) 35 mph b) 55 mph c) 75 mph
23. *The Snowman* is a children's picture book by which English author?  
a) Julia Donaldson b) Raymond Briggs c) Jill Murphy
24. Which type of snowflake forms a pleasing blanket of powder snow, the best type for skiing?  
a) stellar dendrites b) bullet rosettes c) simple prism
25. She was the first female artist to achieve a UK number one with a self-written song and released the album *50 Words for Snow* in November 2011, can you name her?  
a) Dusty Springfield b) Kate Bush c) Amy Winehouse
26. What do we call the condition characterized by an extreme fear of snow?  
a) Chionophobia b) Coulrophobia c) Pogonophobia
27. What size was the world's largest recorded snowflake?  
a) 14cm b) 25cm c) 38cm
28. "A snowball in the face is surely the perfect beginning to a lasting friendship" is a line from which book by Markus Zusak?  
a) The Book Thief b) Never Let Me Go c) Twilight
29. Who wrote, 'I wonder if the snow *loves* the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, "Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again."'?  
a) Lewis Carol b) C. S. Lewis c) Edward Lear
30. The quotes below come from these Biblical books – Isaiah, Job, Revelation, Matthew, Psalms and Proverbs – but which is from which?
  - a) I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow.
  - b) And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.
  - c) Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.
  - d) Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail?
  - e) Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the soul of his masters.
  - f) He gives snow like wool; he scatters hoarfrost like ashes. He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold?



Ashby  
**YOUTH  
FOR CHRIST**

## **Sk8ers**

When Sk8ers returned from half term break we asked the young people; "True or False - God exists"

There was a mixed response, some very quick to indicate they believed that was true, others looked around asking themselves 'what do others believe?', and some didn't really answer. None said 'False'. That was a huge encouragement for us, in one sense. So, these young people believe in something - but what? And how do they understand God?

Later in November, one of our trustees Richard Stanley came to visit and shared with the group about his visits to prisons and how the song 'Father God I wonder' was one asked for each Sunday in the prison church service. He brought the words typed out on sheets and offered them to any Sk8ers who wished to take them away. We were delighted that many young people not only took the words with them, but also asked us to sing it to them.

When Katie was off work due to being positive for Covid one of the young people (yp), who has a history of not getting on with adults, coloured in a picture for her with a get well soon message. The presence of caring adults in the lives of these young people is life transforming. These yp know that not only do the volunteers at Sk8z care for them, they know that you intercessors do too. We tell them they are prayed for. To them this seems to be inexplicable in a very welcome and exciting sort of way.

Please praise God for the exciting power and durability of his word in the lives of these young people. Thank him for the mysterious and wonderful movement of his Spirit in these same lives.

At the start of advent we looked at John 3:16, leading into the Christmas story and simply engaging the young people with knowledge they may have learned at school or nursery, and bringing it to the forefront of their minds.

Please pray for our young people, their families and their friends; that at this time of year, they can perhaps focus on these friendships and love, and a little less of the giving and receiving of gifts from one and other. We know God gives the best gift - the greatest of these, His Son. Pray that this season stirs up questions for these young people about good gifts and where they come from, and how God gives good gifts. Please continue to pray over the health and well being of our young people, their families and our teams at this time - that no more illness stops us from being able to minister to them.

## **Rock Solid**

Recently we have had only young men attending Rock Solid. We are grateful for the development of this group. There is now a lot more ease within it. Since September we have got to know each other and trust has grown. Competition is still vigorous but respect is increasing. Please keep praying that we will discover and deepen a desire to seek and serve the only one entirely worthy of our submission and devotion and who disciplines those he accepts as sons.

Please pray that they will grow in their reverence and excitement when it comes to God's word.

Please pray we adults will be skilled and anointed to support these young people as they hear his invitation to pick up their crosses to follow him. Pray we will display sacrificial, faithful, joyful whole-life worship.

## **Football**

The first week of November was a fairly typical timeline for a Wednesday evening:

16:40 Vernon leaves office with footballs, bibs, water etc.

16:45 Vernon walks through park on the way to the pitch saying 'hello and would you like a game?' to yp he knows. He gets treated to impressive display of scootering.

16:50 Vernon & cheerful gaggle of yp walk to the pitch.

17:00 Warm up kick around while we try to guess when those who will come have all arrived.

17:10 Vernon shares some good news from the Bible, we pray, pick sides and play.

17:30 Players leave following phone summons by parents. Vernon and 2 of the older footballers remain. They practise set pieces. Hilarious.

17:45 Half a dozen other lads arrive. They are invited to form a game. They accept.

Vernon, prompted by one of the older lads, shares some good news from the Bible again, we pray again, pick sides again and play again. It's a very different game - older, faster and more skilful players.

18:00 The next booking arrives and we end the game. Everyone seems happy.

18:05 Debrief with the older lads. I thank them for their faithfulness and flexibility. We agree that we are privileged to be a part of something so fun, frustrating and mysterious. I let them know that there are people praying for



us. They wonder some more.

When COP26 was on we thought about self sacrifice - How much were we willing to give up for the sake of caring for the (God's) planet? We also thought of Guy Fawkes and his willingness to lay down his life for a cause he believed in. We asked if there was anything / anyone for which / for whom they would be willing to give up their lives. No one volunteered anything but that may have been down to their self-consciousness rather than their lack of answers. We concluded by marvelling that God so loved the world that he was willing to give up his life in self sacrifice.



Now that darkness falls before our 17:00 games begin and cooler weather has arrived there are fewer and fewer yp hanging around on the park before football - fewer and fewer yp around for me to invite. Please pray that yp who are around will notice the pitch floodlights or be reminded of our invitation some other way. Pray that as they are drawn by the floodlights they will be drawn by Jesus, the Light of the World. Pray they would want to live in the light of his glory more than they would be tempted to retreat to the safety of the sad and lonely shadows.

I asked for prayers that God will bless my efforts to make contact with parents of players and we have had a visit from the parent of one of the lads who is now a regular player. She arrived at the end of the session and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to see the session for herself and have a brief chat. Thanks for your prayers for this. Please continue to pray for God's blessing on the families of the lads who attend.

Accessing the pitch is currently something of a major quest. Adjacent building work means an indirect, unlit diversion has to be taken to find a way through to the pitch. I know that this has defeated some prospective players. Please pray they will find the way.

Please also pray that they will find the Way (Cf John 14:6). Pray that the revelation of God through Jesus and the ministry of his Spirit would be so compelling that they would be motivated to find and enter the narrow way of salvation. (cf. Luke 13:22). Pray I would be inspired to share rich and powerful truths like an open kitchen window shares stomach exciting cooking smells.

At one session I chatted to a couple of lads who are enjoying their apprenticeships. As well as benefitting from the acquisition of building trades they are gaining support and inspiration from more experienced artisans. I think some of the younger lads whose experience of education has been

continually disheartening were listening hard. Many of these lads have chronically deflated work ethics and self confidence. Their talents are neglected and doubted.

Please pray that as these lads hear the truth about God's rich investment in them, and as they hear work stories from these their near-peers, that they might know hope and gratitude. Pray they would begin to believe and honour their creator who 'knit <them> together in <their> mother's womb.' Pray they would desire him to be their recreator.

## Youth Alpha Day Away

As part of our joint (Swadlincote and Ashby Youth for Christs) Youth Alpha course we have enjoyed a day away together. Thank you for your prayers. It was a rare treat to be with young people for an extended period of time. As well as the planned themes (Who is the Holy Spirit and what does He do?, How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?, How can I make the most of the rest of my life?) we soon became aware of our poverty and the 'truths' (lies) that take advantage of this, e.g. in order to be valuable and a responsible person we must be electronically notifiable; and, we are as good as our achievements. Having let go of these and other lies, as the autumn trees around us let go of their unnecessary baggage, we enjoyed a wonderful time of welcoming God's Spirit. He had been there all the time of course but our clutching on to stuff had prevented us from knowing his nearness and receiving his blessings.

Thank you for strengthening us with your prayers. Please pray that these young people will notice a new / renewed inclination within them - to sit at Jesus' feet, gaze on him and receive his words.

### Answers to Snowy Quiz, page 26

- |                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Nevada                         | 19. 4,059                   |
| 2. Anne of Green Gables           | 20. Tintin                  |
| 3. Advocaat                       | 21. Hans Christian Andersen |
| 4. Six                            | 22. 35 mph                  |
| 5. Jenny Agutter                  | 23. Raymond Briggs          |
| 6. Sasquatch                      | 24. stellar dendrites       |
| 7. Titus Andronicus               | 25. Kate Bush               |
| 8. 1930s (1937)                   | 26. Chionophobia            |
| 9. Himalayas                      | 27. 38cm                    |
| 10. A pig                         | 28. The Book Thief          |
| 11. Japan (in the city of Nagano) | 29. Lewis Carol             |
| 12. Strangers and Brothers        | 30.                         |
| 13. 80                            | a) Revelation               |
| 14. Kit Harington                 | b) Matthew                  |
| 15. David Lloyd George            | c) Isaiah                   |
| 16. Australia                     | d) Job                      |
| 17. Christina Rossetti            | e) Proverbs                 |
| 18. Gary Lightbody                | f) Psalm 147                |

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# Quotes for the Month

'Inadvertently channelling Forrest Gump, Rev Burnett led a Sunday service at her parish and then just kept walking.'

*Article on Cop26 'pilgrims' who walked to Glasgow, The Guardian, October 29<sup>th</sup>*

'If COP26 cannot come to workable agreements ... it will not be for want of praying.'

*Kathy Galloway, daily blog during COP26 – Day 1, Iona Community, October 31<sup>st</sup>*

'We don't celebrate Halloween in our house and I've got to say a huge thank you to Strictly because they enabled me to be a part of that programme without sort of doing'

*Dan Walker, re Strictly Come Dancing's Halloween theme, BBC Breakfast, November 1<sup>st</sup>*

'Be the thing you loved most about the people who are gone.'

*Kissing Fish Book Facebook page, November 2<sup>nd</sup>*

'The Christian tradition is rooted in poetry ... "words that linger, texts that explode"'

*Bishop Nick Baines, De Lacy Arts Lecture, Bradford Cathedral, November 3<sup>rd</sup>*

'When people are in need of food they don't line up outside the council offices, they line up outside our churches.'

*Bishop Mike, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, November 5<sup>th</sup>*

'To celebrate diversity is to celebrate divinity, because each one of us was made in the image of God.'

*Kissing Fish, Facebook, November 8<sup>th</sup>*

'The Gospel means good news. And if it doesn't sound like good news, it's not the Gospel.'

*How Philip Yancey Left Toxic Religion Without Losing His Faith, Relevant Magazine, Nov 8<sup>th</sup>*

'It's easy for us to think everybody is thinking about us all the time & has clear and strong views about the church, be they negative or positive. The majority of people don't think about us at all.'

*Revd Dr Stephen Hance, Church Times podcast, Nov 11<sup>th</sup>*

'Heaven must be going to be a wonderful place, lots of jam because 'God makes preserves and redeems us'.'

*Olwyn Watson, Unvirtuous Abbey Facebook page, November 13<sup>th</sup>*

'Welcome moment of levity during #synod questions as @BishGloucester points out that she is both the episcopal champion for Setting God's People Free and lead Bishop for prisons.'

*Kate Massey, @katemassey77, Twitter, November 16<sup>th</sup>*

This church ... may be navigating shoals and rapids, storms and disagreements but we need to learn to listen to the stranger on the shore, telling us where and how to fish.'

*Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Presidential address to Synod, November 16<sup>th</sup>*

'I have recently moved to Yorkshire and have received the gift of the Spirit, it is bluntness.'

*Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, Presidential address to Synod, November 16<sup>th</sup>*

'A person can become a Christian in as little as five weeks after completing a basic course.'

*Daily Telegraph, Church Under Fire For Helping Asylum Seekers 'Game' System, Nov 17<sup>th</sup>*

'Should we tell them that no courses are necessary?'

*The Church Mouse Facebook page, November 17<sup>th</sup>*

'250 churches achieve net-zero emissions. Only 15,750 to go.'

*Hattie Williams, Church Times, November 22<sup>nd</sup>*

"The fragrance always stays in the hand that gives the rose." - Hada Bejar

*Revd Steve Chalke, Twitter, November 29<sup>th</sup>*

'Church of England to release first ever Christmas single.'

*www.churchofengland.org , November 30<sup>th</sup>*

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