

St Helen's Church Ashby-de-la-Zouch

Loving God, Loving Others, Loving the World



Parish Magazine December 2023

WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR



Hello and welcome to December's Parish Magazine,

The month ahead is certainly set to be a busy one, with plenty going on in church and, no doubt, our own seasonal celebrations too. I hope amongst all the festivities you find time to pause and reflect on the 'reason for the season'.

I think the contributions to this edition do a good job at reminding us of this; Rev'd Sue tells us about the Church of England's advent campaign and reminds us about Jesus being with us whatever we are experiencing and AYFC give us an update on how that is being demonstrated to the young people in our town.

This month we hear from the team of bell ringers and the heritage team about the peal you will no doubt hear as you arrive to church over the Christmas period. Maybe that could be a reminder, as the carol goes, to 'come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord'.

With Blessings for the month ahead,

Emily

REV. SUE FIELD WRITES

Dear friends

As I write this we are not quite into the season of Advent but already many Christmas lights are up, and Market Street in Ashby is looking impressive as we prepare for the Christmas market at the weekend.

I wonder if the dire news that we hear both nationally and internationally, together with anxiety about what the future holds, means that we have to find some brightness in our lives, and Christmas with all its colour and decorations provides one way of doing that?





The Church of England has taken as its theme for Christmas this year, 'Follow the star, join the song'. The star is important in the Christmas story because it was the star that led the wise men to find Jesus. So the star is about light and brightness but it is also about guidance, and in our services this year, we will be thinking about

Jesus bringing light and hope to a troubled world.

The Christmas story also tells us that, after the shepherds had seen Jesus, they returned glorifying and praising God. We imagine that that might have involved some singing, and singing is an important part of our worship. It is also an important part of Christmas so a new version of 'The First Nowell' has been written specially by Bob Chilcott for churches to learn this year, and St Helen's will be one of the churches using that in our Carol Service on 17 December.

For many people, Christmas is a time of mixed emotion and experience. It can be a time of great sadness as we remember family and friends who are no longer with us. It can be a time of anxiety for those who fear they don't have enough money to pay for basics, let alone gifts. It can also be a time of joy as we celebrate with parties and gatherings of family and friends. For most of us, it may be a mixture of all of those things and more.

The Good News of the coming of Jesus is that he is alongside us in whatever we are feeling or experiencing, as one who understands the range of human emotion and who longs to bring us hope, joy and wholeness through our relationship with him.

As we listen to the stories on our news and witness the violence and needless loss of life in the Holy Land and in many other places, more than ever do we need to hear again that story of love and of hope, and to follow the star to the one who is the light of the world.

With my prayers and best wishes Sue



ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?

I wonder how you are feeling about the forthcoming festivities? For some of the asylum seekers in Loughborough, this will be their first experience of Christmas, let alone a British Christmas, and I wonder what the children, now mostly attending school, will make of Nativity plays, Christmas parties and the like!

For one particular group of Christians, currently housed in Loughborough and fleeing persecution in Iran, this will be a 'first' of a very special kind: they are so looking forward to being able to celebrate Christmas openly, for the first time ever. Makes you think, doesn't it?

We're hoping to give each asylum seeing child a Christmas gift and if you can help us with this, it would be much appreciated! If you could wrap the gift and stick a post-it note on it, telling me what's inside and indicating a suitable age group, that would be great! There are children from a few months old, up to teenagers. We suggest a value of £10 at the most– and of course, feel free to share the cost with a friend.

There is a box for your kind donations at the back of St Helen's Church.

And THANK YOU for all the support and encouragement you have given Loughborough Town of Sanctuary this year. It has been VERY much appreciated!

Pat Stafford

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT... THE BELL RINGERS?

Continuing our look at the many and varied things that God does within our church, we hear from the team of bell ringers about their role in our worship.

St Helen's has a small enthusiastic band of bell ringers, however we have to rely on other bell ringers from local churches to help us out. We ring on the 3rd and 4th Sundays for the 10.30am service, on the 2nd Sunday Coleorton's bells are rung. The bells are also rung at weddings and sometimes funerals and for other special occasions, again we have to rely on visitors to ring the bells. There is a national shortage of bell ringers and if anyone is interested in taking it up, we can point you in the right direction. Bell ringing is a team activity that stimulates the brain and helps keep you fit. Ringers come from all walks of life and range in age from ten to their eighties. More information can be found at www.cccbr.org.uk.

St Helen's have a magnificent sounding ring of 10 bells, the heaviest weighing 21 1/2 cwt. There are 3 x 21st Century bells, 4 x 19th century bells, 1 x 18th century, 1 x 17th century and the oldest bell was probably cast by the Leicester founder John Hose c1350. The present tower was build in 1474.

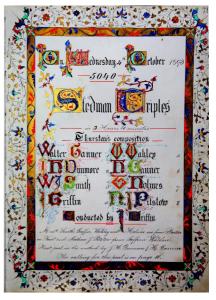
The bells, however, are not the easiest to ring owing to the long length of the ropes, and this puts some people off ringing them, a solution would be to put in place a ringing gallery higher up the tower, a scheme that has been considered in the past, but is becoming more urgently needed if the bells are to be rung more regularly.

Peter Rose

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BELL RINGING

Any occasion provides a good excuse for ringing – births, birthdays, marriages, deaths and anniversaries, to name but a few. World War II silenced the bells of England, when ringing of church bells was forbidden from 1940 onwards because the bells were to be used to signal a German invasion. They were allowed to ring briefly, however, in November 1942, after the battle of El Alamein. A board in the tower commemorates this.

It all started in the 14th Century, when ringers began to experiment with new ways of hanging bells so that greater control could be exercised over them. Eventually, each



bell was mounted on a wheel so that it could rotate through 360 degrees rather than just swing back and forth. The bells were silenced during the Reformation and some were removed, but when they were replaced they were largely hung on wheels in the new manner. Medieval bell founders used often to cast their bells in the churchyard and would tune them by chipping bits off the inside with a chisel! Today a bell is tuned on a lathe. A modern bell is cast in around 23% tin, the rest copper.

During the 17th Century new methods of ringing were devised. Greater control of the bell meant that the order in which the bells were rung could easily be changed, and complicated patterns – or 'methods' were devised. Fabian Stedman, a 17th Century Cambridge printer, worked out the number of variations possible on a given number of bells and drew up rules of procedures, enabling a long series of 'changes' to be rung without repetition. On six bells, the order of ringing can be changed 720 times without repetition. On eight bells 40,320 changes are possible and on 12 the possible changes run into millions. To ring every single change possible on 12 bells would take over 35 years! English bells are unique in that each ring of bells is tuned in a particular key, with bells of differing sizes tuned in to each note. On the Continent bells are not generally tuned and are swung haphazardly. Some continental churches, particularly in Holland and Belgium, possess carillons, which are sets of smaller bells tuned to the notes of the chromatic scale, struck by hammers controlled by a player on a keyboard. England has over 5,000 towers with rings of bells but there are few such towers in other countries. However, Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America and a few other places have ringing societies so there is a healthy export trade.

St Helen's has ten bells. The two lightest, or treble bells, were cast by Taylors of Loughborough in 2006 when the frame was replaced and the bells re-hung. Two of our bells were purchased by voluntary subscription to commemorate the end of the



Napoleonic wars in 1814, with a board in the tower listing the names of donors. Our oldest bell, the 8th, pre-dates the tower in which it hangs. It is inscribed in Latin, "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judeaorum" (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) and is believed to date from between 1352 and 1366 and to have been cast by John Hose in Leicester, who used a fine and distinctive set of decorated letters for bell inscriptions. Our present tower dates from around 1474.

Bell ringing is an ancient tradition. Does it have a future? Bells were silenced for the first time since World War II by the Covid 19 pandemic and some ringers have not returned, but ringing continues. A huge number of towers, including St Helen's, answered the call to 'Ring for the King' when Charles III was crowned in May 2023. The ringers of Ashby are still enthusiastic but maybe not as enthusiastic as their ancestors in 1628, when it was decreed that 'None shall be allowed to ring for pleasure above twice in the week', and that above the space for an hour at a time.'

Julie Starkey

ADVENT PRAYER STATIONS

Throughout Advent you will find in church a series of prayer stations set up around the church, themed around six areas of the advent message: The Preparation, The Announcement, The Promises, The Journey, The Message and The Gift. These are formed from our 'Experience Christmas' materials and will be available for both visitors and members of the congregation to better engage with the Christmas story. Each station is complete with instructions and a guided reflection for you to use as far as is helpful for you.

As ever, church will be open in the day, a space to reflect at the start of a busy season.



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WHAT DID PRG GET UP TO IN NOVEMBER?

Despite the cold and dark evenings, me and five other members attended PRG. Firstly, we discussed the new book club that we are going to run. We chose the book 'The Diary of Anne Frank'. It was the most voted out of the members. Liz, the organizer of PRG, is going to try to get copies from the library so it should be free of cost.

Next, we had burgers and snacks to prepare us for the big task ahead of us.

Liz got out a massive piece of paper that covered the table and we all collaborated to draw and paint a map of the land that Mary and Joseph travelled across to get to Bethlehem. It was great fun and it was put up for the prayer station.

If you, or someone you know, would like to take part in our fortnightly PRG sessions, you're welcome to turn up at the Heritage Centre every other Thursday 17:00 to 18.30.

Ebony



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ASHBY YOUTH FOR CHRIST

<u>LOVE</u>

Last week we thought about love. It was delightful to see some of our members realising that there may well be more important things



than being right, strong, popular, talented.... Thank God for convicting these young people that the greatest treasure to seek is God and His kingdom. Please pray that this conviction would grow so that with fleshy hearts and flinty faces they would walk with him from whatever holds them and through whatever would hold them– and know his love.

We saw God's love refreshing people. Often young people arrive with invisible but very obvious burdens. Their behaviour and presentation give them away. Over the course of the evening we saw initially withdrawn, silent people begin to talk and join in activities. In others we saw anger fade and humility and gentleness begin to bring rest. Please join us in thanking God for so graciously blessing us with his life changing, loving, powerful presence.

Galatians 5: 22, 23. 'But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law'.

<u>WORK</u>

A common topic of conversation amongst our footballers and spectators is work. Most are in work but not all. Its not uncommon for those who do not have work to be absent from football. I'm guessing a reason for this is shame or embarrassment– unemployed players feel uncomfortable to be with their employed peers. There is also the general demotivation that comes with unemployment. It seems to be a paradoxical truth that doing no work saps ones energy and leaves one feeling listless. Please pray for these young workers, that they would develop a grateful, courageous attitude towards work. Pray that as they encounter challenges at work they would know discernment— to know what they should change and what they should accept. Pray God will lead them into fruitful, satisfying work that pleases him and enables them to know him better. Pray for those who are unemployed that they would know a sense of calling greater than the discouraging jeers and cruel temptations. Pray for all of these young people that they would come to know God's delight in them employed or unemployed.

ADVENTURE

Thank you for your prayers for our time away in the Peak District last weekend. Four of our Rock Solid young men enjoyed eating, sleeping, rock climbing, abseiling, bouldering and thinking about Jesus' call on our lives to follow him. We Watched The Chosen's interpretation of Matthew and Simon's struggles and triumphs– as they left behind what they knew to follow Jesus who is distressingly unknowable– apart from his gracious revelation of himself. Please pray for these lads as they, like Matthew and Peter, recognise their limitations– that God will reveal to them his limitlessness.

Vernon, Katie and the AYFC teams





FROM THE ALBUMS





PRG took part in the rather snowy Ashby Santa fun run, in festive attire.







Mary and Joseph set off on their travels to Bethlehem, spending the first night of their travels with Margie.

OUR WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

	am	pm	Wednesday
1st Sunday 3rd December		3.30pm Christingle 6.30pm Advent carols	1st Wednesday– 6th Holy Communion 10.30am In church
2nd Sunday 10th December	10.30am Holy communion		2nd Wednesday– 13th Holy Communion 10.30am Prior park
3rd Sunday 17th December	No service	6.30pm Nine lessons and carols.	3rd Wednesday– 20th Service of the word 10.30am In church
4th Sunday 24th December	10.30 am Holy Communion	5pm Messy Nativity 11.30pm Midnight communion.	4th Wednesday– 27th No service

Regular activities:

Monday mornings	- Little Fishes 9.30 - 11.30am during term time
Mondays	- Monday Group – 8pm
3 rd Tuesday	- MU meeting – 10.30am till 12 noon
3 rd Tuesday	- PCC meeting – 7 till 9pm
1 st Wednesday	- Knit and natter – 2 till 4pm
Thursdays	- Choir practice – 6.30 till 8.30pm
Fridays	- Heart- warming Space 1-4pm
Saturdays	- Parish Prayers – 9.30am in the Hastings chapel

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY // DECEMBER

SPECIAL SERVICES FOR CHRISTMAS:

- SUNDAY 3RD DECEMBER– CHRISTINGLE– 3.30PM
- ADVENT CAROLS- 6.30PM
- SUNDAY 17TH DECEMBER- SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS- 6.30PM
- SUNDAY 24TH DECEMBER– MESSY NATIVITY SERVICE-5PM & MIDNIGHT COMMUNION– 11.30PM
- MONDAY 25TH DECEMBER- ALL AGE COMMUNION- 10AM

CAROLS IN THE CAREHOMES– Tuesday 19th December : come and share in the spirit of Christmas. 4pm Fernleigh Care Home, 5.15pm Ashby Court Nursing Home, Tamworth Road.

SERVICES IN THE FLAGSTAFF FAMILY

Staunton Harold– Friday 8th December– 7pm Coleorton– Thursday 14th December– 7pm Isley Walton– Friday 15th December– 6.30pm Breedon on the Hill– Saturday 23rd December– Lantern trail– 4pm



JP SPRINGTHORPE & C^o

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DECEMBER GARDENING TIPS

In December, things finally quieten down in the garden and it is good time to take stock and plan for next year. There are still a few jobs which need doing, so take advantage of those occasional fine days, wrap up warm and get outdoors. While there is not much going on in the vegetable plot or borders right now, there is plenty of pruning, dead-heading and leaf raking to do.

If you have not done so already, dig over empty borders, raised beds and prepare the soil for the next growing year. Also, put any potted plants together in a sheltered spot in the garden to protect them from any extreme winter weather. You may have to cover the more tender plants with fleece. Preferably, put them in a heated, or unheated, greenhouse if you can.

Hard prune over-grown deciduous shrubs, perennials, and hedges now whilst they are dormant. Leave the faded flower heads on any Hydrangeas until Spring as they provide frost protection to the swelling buds further down the stems. Ensure that climbing plants and shrubs are securely attached to their supports with ties.

Start to reduce the watering of house plants, but keep an eye on any which are located near any heat source as they are prone to dry out more easily.

In the vegetable garden, lift any Leeks, Parsnips and Carrots before the soil is frozen. They can easily be stored either inside or outside. Don't forget to cover Winter Brassicas with netting to protect them from pigeons, and have fleece handy for hardy salad crops.

Container grown herbs can be brought inside such as Chives, Mint, Basil and Dill. They will do best on a sunny window sill.

In the fruit garden lift and divide established Rhubarb clumps, but take the outer sections preferably as these are generally healthier. Replace all Strawberries that are over three years old as these can harbour diseases and tend to lose vigour and productivity. Prune Apple and Pear trees

Ensure that you clean out the greenhouse, if you fortunate to have one. Clear away any snow at the tops of greenhouses to protect the glass. Ensure the gutters are clear of dead leaves and insulate any water butts / taps. On warmer days, ventilate the greenhouse to reduce humidity and risk of disease. Finally, watch out for aphids over wintering on the stored plants.

Keep clearing away dead leaves on your lawn to allow light in and stop dead patches appearing. If possible, avoid walking on the lawn when blanketed by heavy frost or snow as this will damage the grass. Keep spiking lawns to improve drainage and aeration. Ensure you turn off all taps and pack away hoses that are not required.

On a clear day clean out the garden tool shed in preparation for Spring. Clean all tools and give them a wipe of linseed oil on wooden and metal areas to prevent rotting or rusting. Wash and disinfect bird feeders and tables as well as clearing out the bird baths.

If you have a pond, then cover it with fine netting to catch any debris / leaves and remove filters and pond pumps so that they don't suffer damage from freezing.

Finally, if you only do one thing in December, then hang out a bird feeder in the garden where you can easily see it but cats cannot get to it.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You All!

Alan Cross



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CHRISTMAS SNIPPETS

Over the ten years in which have been writing these articles, my December article has usually had a Christmas theme and I have often taken a particular year in the past and described what was going on in Ashby during the festive season then. This time, I have collected together a number of snippets from newspaper articles of the past which are related to Ashby or somewhere nearby.

Firstly, the Daily Mirror of 5th June 1934 announced the death of a Mr. J Hardy, aged 70, who was blind and had lived in Esher, Surrey. The connection with Ashby and with Christmas is surprising. Some years ago, I mentioned in my Christmas article that in 1928, about 200 pensioners in the town had received a ten shilling note in the post from an anonymous donor. Efforts to find the identity of the sender had failed, but in 1934, it was revealed that Mr. Hardy had in fact been the mystery "Father Christmas". For twenty years, it was reported, he had sent a ten shilling note and a printed Christmas card to the old-age pensioners of Ashby, taking care never to reveal his identity. He had lived in Ashby before the First World War and had been a colliery owner in Leicestershire. After leaving the area to live in Surrey, he had retained an affection for the town.

In the past, as now, Christmas was a time for parties, concerts and celebrations. The earliest reference to such jollities I could find came from the Derby Mercury of 30th October 1783 where it was announced that Mr Tunaley's annual ball would be held in Ashby de la zouch at "The Old Place" (I do not know where that was), and that tickets costing 2 shillings and 6 pence could be obtained from Mr Rice at the Queen's Head. A much later celebration was announced in the Leicester Evening Mail of 23rd December 1949. A Christmas Eve Yuletide Dinner and Dance was to be held at the Royal Hotel. Dinner 7.30 to 9pm, dancing 8 to 11.45pm to Wylie Price and his orchestra. Tickets fifteen shillings and a penny or ten shillings and sixpence without dinner.

One has to wonder what some of the Christmas entertainments in Ashby must have been like in the past when one reads this in the Yorkshire Evening Post of 1st August 1936: To be First Turn ay an English music-hall is next to having to play Ashby de la zouch Christmas Week, perhaps the hardest fate which can befall a variety artist.

Perhaps the festivities were not always so lively. In the Leicester Daily Mercury of 26th December 1931 it was reported that:

Christmas Day at Ashby de la zouch was one of the quietest on record. A football match between Ashby Town Juniors and Western Park resulted in a draw and there was dog racing and cinema to complete the holiday programme. At Coleorton Hall, Sir George and Lady Beaumont waited on the children at the tables and Lady Beaumont gave a gift to every child.

A display of largesse by the local gentry and nobility of the area was quite common in the past. On 26th December 1879, the Earl of Loudoun distributed to 168 grateful recipients residing on his estates at Willesley, Packington etc., beef ranging from 5lbs to 8lbs according to the number in each family. His lordship also forwarded to the inmates of the Ashby Union Workhouse a quantity of game, to the Leicester Infirmary twelve hares and six brace of pheasants; and also to the Derby Infirmary twelve hares and six brace of pheasants.

St Helen's Church is always specially decorated for Christmas now as in the past. In 1888 there was:

A very handsome and decorated screen, under the lofty Chancel arch, on each side of which there was a text- the full length- and texts in white letters on a red ground, beautifully decorated, were placed in each of the window sills of the large windows which surround the church. The great feature of the decorations, however, was the east end, the reredos being splendidly adorned the decorating including a magnificent cross of Poinsettias; the cross was in the shape of that belonging to the Church (St Helen's) and was very large and most striking. Hastings Chapel, and other parts of the church were very carefully and beautifully adorned. The pillars of the nave were very effectively decorated, red cloth and variegated holly being placed in each panel.

I will end by wishing you all a very merry Christmas 2023!

Wendy Freer

MESSY CHURCH

Messy Church started preparing for Christmas last month with some angelic crafts. Come along and join them for a Messy Nativity on Christmas Eve at 2pm (Coleorton) or 5pm (St Helen's).





DONATIONS FOR DECEMBER

Donations can be left in the boxes at the back of St Helen's Church, in the porch of Holy Trinity or the Congregational Church, or at any of Ashby's Co-ops. Thank you to everyone for the continued support.

St Helen's Church is part of the Ashby Churches

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This Advent & Christmas join us at St Helen's as we Follow the Star

 Sunday 3rd December 3.30pm Christingle 6.30pm Advent Carol Service
 Sunday 17th December 6.30pm Candlelit Carol Service
 Christmas Eve 5pm Messy Nativity

11.30pm Midnight Communion

Christmas Day 10am All-Age Communion



St Helen's Church & Community Heritage Centre



The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Saint Helen, Ashby de-la Zouch. Charity Number 1200922