



St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch

Loving God, Loving Others, Loving the World



Parish Magazine

May 2025

PARISH DIRECTORY

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St Helen's Church is part of the **Ashby Churches**

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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.



FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM

Dear Friends,

Did you dance around the Maypole on the first of this month and welcome the month of May ? There are and have been many traditions associated with May and Maypole dancing and festivities .

Maypole dancing was not popular with the Puritans and in 1644, the Puritan Parliament in London banned maypole dancing as "*a Heathenish vanity, generally abused to superstition and wickedness.*" Later when the monarchy was re-established under Charles II, the tradition of dancing was continued until the maypoles were restored. Maypole dancing continued until Victorian times in a few locations, but then largely died out.



When I first started teaching (a large infant/junior school in Leicester) the head teacher insisted that the staff performed a maypole dance in assembly on the first of May! We were asked to wear flowery print clothes and it was always a very tangled experience as we had never had time to practice. The children always thoroughly enjoyed watching their teachers get completely tangled up -and I remember that the musicians had to keep playing until we finally released each other. The children were much better at it !

On further research it appears that we had John Ruskin (1819-1900) and his mother Margaret to thank for this . Ruskin looked at the traditions of maypole dancing and decided to encourage it in schools as a “ non-competitive physical education” Here is something to ponder upon -

Christian symbolism

“The maypole dance can be seen to be symbolic of the Christian life. The maypole represents Christianity firmly secured in God, pointing up to heaven and reaching down through Jesus. The dances symbolise how Christ

weaves the threads of our lives into a tapestry, which is not apparent until the end, and all those who hold on tirelessly to the end will be saved. The different coloured ribbons which weave together a pattern, symbolise how Christians although different are united in diversity. Now stripped of any pagan elements, maypole dancing was suitable for Church of England schools and Anglican school fetes."

The month of May is also often dedicated (mainly in the Catholic church) to the Virgin Mary. The Church of England, holds several significant days and observances during May and there is a day of prayer for the national church, this year it is 1st May . The call is for churches to collectively pray for the Church of England. There are also a number of saints' days Philip and James, Apostles (May 1st), and Matthias the Apostle (May 14th) . May holds a real place in the Christian calendar - looking for green shoots and new life.

I have felt a sense of green shoots appearing within the celebrations in our churches and church family in the flagstaff team this Easter . Spring has arrived on our doorstep and we are emerging from a long period of gloomy wet weather, coupled with a troubled world . My hopes and prayers are that - just like the bulbs that are planted in the autumn with hope and expectation -forgotten during the winter months - and then they emerge and push through the soil to defy the darkness and make their presence felt, that you can do the same . Sometimes it is almost painful to let these shoots disrupt our lives and change the gloom which has brought us down and yet in some way we still cling on tight to it. Perhaps it is time like Peter to step out of the boat (Matt 14. 22-33) and discover what more Jesus Christ has on offer for our lives. Stepping out of boats and looking further can be daunting as Peter experienced -but the hand of Jesus Christ can and will be there to catch you (if you let him) and what is more he will keep doing it again and again and again

Let the month of Mary be the time when you let those hidden green shoots have the chance to emerge and thrive .

And yes -The national day of prayer may have passed but I might suggest that it may be good to choose your own day /days and you might

join with a friend for this observance .

Let us pray for Gods s guidance and wisdom for our leaders and all those in positions of authority and for unity and peace in our communities and across our land/our world. Let us pray for much needed healing for the divisions that exist and reconciliation where there is conflict.

Blessings be yours for the month of May and always .

Elizabeth Smith

STREET PASTORS UPDATE

ASHBY STREET PASTORS continues to thrive as we go out each Saturday night to love and care for the people enjoying the night time economy.

This short article is just to let you know that I have (as of our Management Meeting last month) handed the Co-ordinator's role over to Elizabeth Smith who I know will do an excellent job.

I am going to be the Prayer Co-ordinator and so am looking for people to become Prayer Pastors. Briefly the role involves being available one Saturday evening to pray for the Team as they go out that night. You can do that either by coming to the St Helen's Heritage Centre at 9.30pm and praying with us for around 15 - 30 minutes or you can do this from the comfort of your own home via Whats App or mobile phone.

If you would like to know more please get in touch. It would be great if we could the same number of Prayer pastors as Street Pastors which means we need to recruit at least another 9 people. Over to you...

Chris Lewis

A LIGHT IN THE WORLD

The next in our series highlighting the ways we live out our faith as a church, with an Easter reflection from Martin.

We are all unique. What seems spiritually significant and important to me, may not be to another - and vice versa. These significances can be very personal and we are reluctant to share them in case they are dismissed by others and we are left hurt.

Maybe this is why people are often very reluctant to talk about their faith, despite the exhortations from clergy and preachers that we ought to be sharing our faith.

However, the other side of this same coin is that in sharing our thoughts and experiences we can encourage and build bonds with other travellers on the journey of faith. The television programme "Pilgrimage" shown over Easter illustrates this really well.

So in that spirit, I thought I'd share a couple of things that "spoke to me" over the last few days. Firstly, was one of several wonderful choir pieces at the Good Friday evening service. It was a setting by the composer David Ogden, of the words of Teresa of Avila "Christ has no body now but your body". You can find a recording by the Exultate Singers on U-Tube. Peter Rose played a viola part in addition to the piano accompaniment. The combination of words and music had me with tears streaming down my face as I listened, entranced. When I reflected on what had been touched within me to produce such a reaction, I think it was the affirmation of what is important for me in my Christian searching. I have so many unanswerable questions about faith, but one thing that seems definite is that Christians are called to continue Christ's work in the world - and the anthem affirmed that in a most beautiful way.

This same theme of being Christ to each other was echoed in an Easter Blessing shown to me on Easter Sunday. It is by John O'Donohue, an Irish poet, writer, priest and philosopher. It was a blessing he wrote for a gathering at the ruins of Corcomroe Abbey one Easter Morning. I will leave you to read and digest it for yourselves:-

"On this Easter morning, let us look again at the lives we have been so generously given and let us let fall away the useless baggage that we carry - old pains, old habits, old ways of seeing and feeling -- and let us have the courage to begin again. Life is very short, and we are no sooner here than it is time to depart again, and we should use to the full the time that we still have.

We don't realise all the good we can do. A kind, encouraging word or helping hand can bring many a person through dark valleys in their lives. We weren't put here to make money or to acquire status or reputation. We were sent here to search for the light of Easter in our hearts, and when we find it we are meant to give it away generously.

May the spirit and light of this Easter morning watch over us and protect us on our journey, open us from the darkness into the light of peace and hope and transfiguration."

JOHN O'DONOHUE, Dawn Mass Reflections

I hope it speaks to you as it did to me.

Martin Vaughan.



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ASHBY YOUTH FOR CHRIST

If you would like to sign up for regular updates either follow this link <http://eepurl.com/dvVqrj> or email helen.davis@yfc.co.uk. Alternatively you can scan the QR code. Thank you for all your prayers and support.



Rock Solid

Thank you for your prayers. Amongst our Rock Solid members (particularly amongst those who have been longest hearing and seeing Jesus) there is exciting evidence of commissioning. Members are taking responsibility for aspects of God's service through Jesus in the power of his Spirit. God is the champion of the alienated and we saw this last week in the young member who took it upon herself to make sure everyone was included when it was time to find a partner for games / activities. One young man (apprentice) is taking on the role of prayer co-ordinator to ensure Rock Solid is in grateful, bold communication with God. Another apprentice is rising to the challenge of keeping us attentive and receptive to God's word through the Bible, He is working with me in planning our Bible study. If you knew these young people you would thank God for his grace in this. None of them are, humanly speaking, well suited to these roles. Their motivation and evolution can only be explained if God is coming alongside them with his calling and accompanying, even his indwelling.

Thank you Lord for stirring up these young people with desire for you and with direction, courage and equipment to be your co-workers. Please continue your work of commissioning. Build your Church on your Rock Solid teaching; out of humans with diverse and developing gifts, careless of their weakness and discouragement, joyful in your new promise of life by faith and by your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen

Thanks

Iona, Emily, Josiah, Karen, Warren and Vernon

Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 3:4-6

On Friday 1st May, Rock Solid will be raising the AYFC flag on Bardon Hill, as we begin the new term with some outdoor adventure. Keep an eye out for all the locations where our flag will be flying this year as we seek to raise the profile of our centre and funds for our work with local young people.

MESSY CHURCH

Lots of watery fun was enjoyed outside in the sunshine at Messy Church this month on the theme of 'baptism'.

If you're thinking of bringing your child for baptism : don't worry! We promise not to provide you with a poncho and douse you with cold water from a 'super-soaker'!



The next Messy Church will be on Sunday 25th May at Viscount Beaumont's School. All welcome.

Pat Stafford

THE ASCENSION

Let's face it, the years Jesus was here on earth were dramatic, if you want to see things that way. We've just had the pinnacle of his life – his death on Good Friday, and his rising on Easter Sunday. It's perplexing, but the life of Jesus, as recorded in the gospels, is amazing, and for many, beyond belief.

Everything is about Jesus, but what will happen when he's gone? Will his fame suddenly collapse, as the High Priest hoped? Well, a very odd time in history occurred after the Easter Day resurrection. Jesus would appear here and there without any warning and in unexpected places. The stories of this are recorded in the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, but it's difficult to see the reason or the purpose of these appearances.

One explanation is that it's now time for the disciples, the close followers of Jesus, to carry on the good work. Except none of them was even close to the level at which Jesus had operated. The more they reflected on their friend, the more they must have realised he was a different type of human being. Indeed, they started to read the Hebrew bible in meticulous detail in case there was reference to someone similar to Jesus. They found talk of the Son of Man in the book of Daniel, and the Wonderful Counsellor in Isaiah. After finding many such confirmations, they came to believe that Jesus was beyond a great prophet, like Moses or Elijah. They strongly suspected he was the Son of God.

Now let's have a thought for the disciples, who were at a crossroad in their lives. Either stick together and form a club, or revert to their old jobs and their old way of life. They chose to form a club, but it required a metamorphosis because their spirituality was dormant. The challenge for them was as hard as a caterpillar turning into a butterfly or a moth. What was the chance of success of their new venture? We might estimate it to be less than 50/50, as good intentions usually peter out.

For forty days Jesus was in a quasi-state of being able to appear in a room, and then to disappear at will. When you put your mind to it, you realise it's hard to explain what was happening. The disciples also must have been puzzled, but they stayed together through it all. On the 40th day, Jesus

ascends into heaven. At the start of the book of Acts, it says simply: ***After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. There's no mention of a farewell party. The celebrations must have happened in heaven.***

This year, Ascension day is on Thursday 29th May. It's always on the Thursday that's exactly 40 days after Easter Sunday. It gets hardly a mention, even in church circles. You'd have thought Jesus' last day on earth would still be celebrated today, with street parties and a day off work. None of that. PS: don't confuse Ascension with Pentecost, which occurs 10 days later, and we'll discuss that another time.

Coming back to the Ascension, what's the point of it? Was it the day of closure? The forty days were a time for the disciples to consider their future. They had to change their mental attitude from being followers to becoming leaders. It reminds me of watching the fledglings of a bluetit leave the nest one morning in late May. The mother was in a nearby tree and called them out, one by one. Then she took them all to the nearby woodlands.

The disciples never explained what this 40 day period was like. Too emotional? Too confused? Like muddy water that takes time to settle. But at the end was a new life, with a strong spiritual aspect, and Jesus was the blueprint.

So to conclude, the 40 days up to Easter is called Lent, a time of preparation, and the 40 days up to the Ascension is for transformation, our transformation, though we rarely regard it as such.

So Jesus lived, died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Is that it? No, it's not the end of the story, as we'll soon see.

Richard Vann



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OUR WORSHIP IN APRIL

	am	pm	Wednesday
1st Sunday 4th May		3.30pm All age service 6pm Evensong	1st Wednesday– 7th Holy Communion 10.30am In Church
2nd Sunday 11th May	10.30am Holy Communion		2nd Wednesday-14th Holy Communion 10.30am Prior Park Community centre
3rd Sunday 18th May	10.30 am Morning Worship		3rd Wednesday– 21st Morning prayer 10.30am In church
4th Sunday 25th May	10.30 am Holy Communion	3.30pm Messy Church Viscount Beaumont's school	4th Wednesday– 28th Holy Communion 10.30am St Helen's In church

Regular activities:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Monday mornings | - Little Fishes 9.30 - 11.30am during term time |
| Mondays | - Pilgrim group |
| 1 st Wednesday | - We're in stitches – 2 till 4pm |
| Thursdays | - Choir practice – 6.30 till 8.30pm |
| Fridays | - Heart- warming Space 2-4pm |
| Saturdays | - Parish Prayers – 9.30am in the Hastings chapel |
| 1st Saturday | - Pause for Paws– 10.15-12.15 at the tower door. |

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 8th May– VE Day commemoration– 9.15pm

Ashby Town Council is hosting a service outside the West Door (tower) of St Helen's followed by a lighting of the beacon at 9.30pm.

Wednesday 21st May- 'Extra Stitches' workshop– 2-4pm- £10

Mary Tuckey will be teaching small groups the skills of patchwork, embroidery and smocking in a series of workshops this spring and summer. For more information, and to book, visit the 'what's coming up' page on the church website.

Tuesday 27th May- 'We're In Stitches' talk– 7.30pm- £4 on the door

Derby Cathedral Embroidery Workshop- Join Alison Andrews for a presentation about the work of the embroidery workshop in the repair and preservation of ecclesiastical vestments and the design and process of making new ones.

Thursday 29th May– Holy Communion for Ascension Day—7.30pm

Sunday 1st June– Evensong + Recital—6pm

Our soiree series continues as the choir lead us in a service of choral evensong, followed by refreshments and an organ recital by Andrew Chapman. Not to be missed!



Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Taking place between the 29th May and the 8th June, this will be the 10th anniversary of TKC.

Who could you commit to praying for during this time and beyond?

A FORGOTTEN COMMEMORATION IN ASHBY

This month there will be events around the country as well as in Ashby, marking 80 years since VE Day in 1945. May 8th that year brought to an end the Second World War in Europe. To fit in with that theme, but also to offer something a little different, I have written about another occasion, 45 years earlier, when the end of a conflict inspired lavish celebrations in Ashby and across the country, and yet little is remembered about it now.

This was the relief of Mafeking on 17th May 1900. Mafeking, now called Mahikeng, is the capital city of the North West province of South Africa. During the Second Boer War, (1899-1902), the town was besieged for 217 days with several prominent British people, including the British Prime Minister's son, Lord Edward Cecil amongst those trapped inside. The siege was lifted when 2,000 British soldiers, including many South African volunteers, fought their way in and relieved the town.



[Courtesy of Ashby Museum]

The success led to huge celebrations across England. According to The Leicester Evening Mail, recalling the night thirty years later:

“All England may be said to have run amok, so much so, in fact, that ever since Mafeking has become a colloquialism meaning excessive or

indecorous jubilation. The news of the relief of Mafeking went, like strong wine, to the head of all England. It may be described as the greatest - rag - , of all time. The curious feature of that night thirty years ago was that the demonstration of long pentup excitement was not confined to a few centres, but spread like fire among stubble from cities to towns, and towns to villages, until, as in the days of the old beacon fires, all England was ablaze."

The Leicester Chronicle of 26th May 1900 described the celebrations in Ashby as follows:

"There was an outburst of popular feeling, in which, loyalty, thanksgiving and admiration of the bravery of the gallant garrison of Mafeking all found exressipon. The town [Ashby] looked its gayest, and the colliery and other "buzzers" blew their glad tidings to every corner of the district."

A torchlight procession was held commencing in the yard of The Queen's Head where the Hugglecote Band played and the crowd gathered. It was said that 500 torches paraded through the town. An effigy of President Kruger was carried in the procession and subsequently burned on a huge bonfire on the recreation ground (The Bath Grounds?), although apparently some objections were made to this part of the proceedings. Many houses were illuminated and the National Anthem and "patriotic airs" were sung. A collection was made for the Widows and Orphans' Fund.

Such was the significance of the event at the time, that it was mentioned at the Ruridecanal conference of the clergy and lay representatives of the rural deanery of Akeley West, held in the vestry at St Helen's Church, Ashby de la Zouch on 23rd May 1900. Before taking the business on the agenda, the rural dean said he would in the first instance speak of the "natural events, which made that conference different."

Referring to the fact that the nation had not been involved in wars for over 40 year,s he said that:

"now they were engaged in a struggle which was calling forth ail their

resources, and testing the courage and patience, and endurance of their soldiers and sailors on the one band, and of their fellow-countrymen on the other, a sight which he made bold to say had raised England to a greatness and prestige never reached before. They had added to the splendid page of England's story the fact. that the sons and daughters of England at home were one with the sons and daughters of her colonies. The relief of Mafeking would be the event of all future history, and the hero of Mafeking, and the men and women with him, had presented a picture at which the whole world wondered. He begged to submit, a resolution: "That this conference desires to express its thankfulness to Almighty God for the success which has attended her Majesty's forces in the war in South Africa, and especially for the relief of Mafeking. — Col. Partridge seconded, and the resolution was adopted.

Wendy Freer

LOOKING FORWARD TO SUMMER

**May, marvellous May, majestically
And mightily advances with
Youthful blossoms frolicking in the sun.**

**June is bursting out all over!
Unless it's wet which it invariably is.
Nice to see the roses in full bloom at last
Every one smelling and smiling eternally.**

**July the sun is hot, but not
Under the shade of the cool
Laburnum tree that grows in the
Yard by the school I went to.**

Chris Lewis

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GARDENING TIPS FOR MAY

May is the month when the cooler, wetter days of Spring have ended (fingers crossed). The temperature is rising and the warmth of Summer is just around the corner. We hope that we have seen the last of the night-frosts but don't start planting out non-hardy plants too early, or without covering them when there is a risk of frost.

Now is the time to tidy up Spring plants but resist cutting down growth on Spring bulbs to the ground until they have died back, although you can dead-head spent flowers but leave the stems. Also add a liquid fertiliser around the clumps in preparation for a splendid display next year. Plant out Dahlias as well as Cosmos and other half-hardy annuals to fill gaps in the border. Don't forget to pinch out the growing tips of Cosmos to encourage them to branch out lower down the stem, thus producing stronger and sturdier plants.

May is the time to prune early Spring flowering shrubs, such as Forsythia, Broom, Escallonia and Weigela. Start to mow lawns weekly but think about leaving some areas uncut for wildlife. Just as a reminder, if you need to clip hedges you need to ensure that there are no nesting birds in them first. The bird nesting season runs from March to August.

After all risk of frost has passed this month, plant out tomatoes, courgettes and pumpkins that were previously sown under cover. In general, plant out other young plants once conditions are suitable and they have been hardened off for at least 10 days.

For greenhouse owners, make sure you open vents, windows and doors; especially on warm days. Also dampen down the inside so as to increase humidity and deter red spider mites. Optimise your watering of plants by doing it earlier or later in the day to ensure maximum efficiency. Ponds can quickly fill up with algae and pond weed during warmer months (as we know). Keep on top of this regularly by sieving out excess weed. Keep pond pumps and filters clean. Remove decaying leaves from any water lilies and add more aquatic plants to encourage wildlife.

This month should see the completion of potato planting. Those that are showing green shoots above the soil must be earthed up regularly to prevent the crop forming on top of the soil surface. This crop will be green and poisonous so be very careful!

Start planting directly into the ground succession crops such as; chard, lettuce, spinach, rocket, parsnip, turnip carrots and peas etc. Prepare the ground for runner beans early in the month by digging the soil well and incorporating a little garden compost. Also put your supporting canes and nets in place.

At the beginning of the month plant out your strawberry plants preferably in large pots and place nets over them to protect the fruit from the birds. Put straw, small stones or black plastic around the base as well. Herbs can make a good addition to the vegetable plot but not all are ready yet. You can now plant outside mint, rosemary, parsley and thyme but tender ones like dill, coriander, basil and tarragon need to be planted in protected pots (preferably inside) to plant out later.

Get your patio ready for Summer! Decorate your outdoor space with brightly coloured seat pads, cushions, colourful solar lights and hanging chimes etc. Mulch landscape beds adding 2 inches of bark to help reduce weeds and conserve moisture.

Finally start planning your garden and garden show visits. We are planning to visit many more local Open Gardens in the surrounding area. We are also opening our garden on the 7th and 8th of June as part of the Ashby Open Garden Scheme so we would love to see you (you can park in our drive if you have a disability). We will also have many of our plants on sale – all monies going to Charity. Many of the gardens provide refreshments including cakes and biscuits and we also provide some garden fun for children.

Alan and Alison Cross

FROM THE ALBUMS

The 'Experience Easter' event at Breedon was once again a very popular occasion for young families. A team from across the Flagstaff Family of Churches, pulled out all the stops to provide a wide range of activities to take people through the events of Holy Week. A short service at the end celebrated the joy of Easter and of course, introduced the inevitable egg hunt!!!

Thanks to all those who volunteered to help, including providing some delicious Easter-themed refreshments!

Palm Sunday also saw the return of our donkey friends from the Phoenix Foundation as we marked Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with a procession around the churchyard, joined by some of our Messy Church regulars.





During April, we celebrated Harper's baptism, marked our ecumenical walk of witness through the town for Good Friday, were entertained by trumpeter Hannah Matthews, and hosted pupils from Willesley primary school.



St Helen's Church & Community Heritage Centre

On the first Saturday of every month:

Pause for Paws



Drop in on
1st Saturday of the month
between 11:30 & 13:00
at St Helen's church
(west door of the church)
Refreshments will be provided

4 Church Yard, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leics, LE65 1AA



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www.sthelensashby.net



heritage
lottery fund

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