



50p

St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch

FAITH — LOVE — COMMUNITY



Parish Magazine

March 2026

PARISH DIRECTORY

General inquiries: in the first instance, please contact the parish office.

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

Alliance Church	07753 679147
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Ashby Congregational	01530 563301
Ashby Methodist Church	01530 412298
Holy Trinity	01530 412339
Our Lady of Lourdes	01530 412237

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

We are creatures of habit – or so the saying goes! There is truth in that statement though, as we tend to have our own routines and our own habits. Sometimes those are conscious but often we are unaware until someone tells us because what we do or say annoys them!

For most of us, having a routine or a structure to our days is important if we are to function well, and many of those are so automatic we barely pay attention to them until, for some reason, they are disrupted for one reason or another.



We are now well into the season of Lent – a time of preparation for baptism but also a time when we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at Easter. It is a time for self-reflection and penitence maybe leading to some changes in our lives as disciples. It is a time when we can examine our habits of prayer, worship and Bible study as well as our service in the community.

The Church of England's theme for Lent this year is 'Life giving habits for Lent' and, as part of this, it is possible to receive a daily reflection by email. I have found these to be really helpful so far. They are short reflections so would suit even very busy people. You might like to consider signing up by visiting the link on the Church of England webpage. <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/what-we-believe/lent-holy-week-and-easter/draw-near-life-giving-habits-lent>

To quote from the website 'This year's resources have at their heart the theme of a 'rhythm of life' – habits and patterns which help us grow as disciples of Christ day by day, especially as we prepare to celebrate the great mystery of God's saving love at Easter.'

So far we have been thinking about worship and then about various aspects

of worship - confession, thanksgiving, lament – all of which are activities but also ways in which we approach life and worship. I was saying to our Wednesday congregation this week that the disposition of giving thanks, which was the focus that day, is always a challenge and a reminder as it is so easy to be aware of what we lack rather than all the gifts and blessings we have. When we approach our lives in the spirit of thanksgiving to God, everything is transformed – our worship, our outlook and our relationships.

So I invite you this Lent to find some way of deepening your discipleship. This may be by finding a different pattern of worship. It might be using some of the online resources or reading a devotional book. My prayer is that each of us, as we go through Lent, may come to a deeper knowledge of Christ and be able to journey more closely with Him through Holy Week and so experience the joy of resurrection in our lives at Easter.

May God bless you all with His love and His grace.

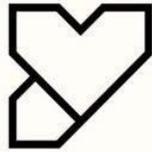
Sue

FROM THE ALBUMS

In February we welcomed Albert and his family to church for his baptism celebration. His older brother, Ernie, was baptised here a couple of years ago too.

**‘Shine as a light in the world,
to the glory of God the Father.’**





Ashby
**YOUTH
FOR CHRIST**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Join us to hear how Jesus is
working in young people's
lives in Ashby

WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH,
2026

REFRESHMENTS 6:45PM FOR
A 7PM START

ASHBY BAPTIST CHURCH,
4 BROOK STREET, LE65 1HA

helen.davis@yfc.co.uk

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.



Hear what our weekly groups have been thinking about in recent times...

Rock Solid:

Last Friday we thought about the Parable of the Sower. We encouraged ourselves and each other to be more vigilant for the enemies of growing seeds. We shared our own tricks and tips that help us be the good soil in which God's word can grow and become fruitful. We passed a bean. We made moustaches. We bowled peas. We performed hand ballet routines.

Sk8ers:

Last week, owing absences due to a critical nails enhancement appointment, our numbers were low. This reduced the scope for conflict and increased the ratio of caring adults to young people. We thought about a well known artist known as the Queen of Rap. I informed the group that she was my sister. I explained my evidence: She has publicly quoted, 'On Christ the Solid Rock I stand'. I read John 1:12. We prayed for another of our sisters who had been in hospital that day. The group seemed to have a desire to be included in this family. They prayed for our sisters in need. Later, after a brief 1:1 Bible study one of the girls said, 'I get it now'.

Football:

An emotive ending to a game between Liverpool and Manchester City provided food for thought before our game last week. Three offences had occurred within a few seconds of a goal being scored at the end of a game. Tens of thousands of angry eyes were on the referee. As a 'referee' my sympathy was with him. Returning to our verses of last week I pointed out that our innate sense of justice was God-given and that we should be more than glad that God honours justice not religion.

ASHBY JOY

Ashby JOY is a group of 20s &30s from various local churches who meet weekly for fellowship and study.

A very big thank you to everyone who came to support our charity coffee morning in February. A fantastic total of £1035 was raised over the weekend and the atmosphere at the event was lovely, with good fellowship being enjoyed by people of all ages.



The money raised will go specifically towards Open Doors' 'Arise Africa' initiative which is currently working to support those being persecuted for their Christian faith in Nigeria and other areas of Sub-Saharan Africa.

About the campaign:

Violence against Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa is unprecedented – and it's driving people from their homes. Open Doors estimates 16.2 million Christians are displaced. Many are persecuted for their faith. 13 out of the 20 most dangerous countries in which to be a Christian are in Sub-Saharan Africa. ARISE AFRICA is run by Open Doors, in partnership with Association of Evangelicals in Africa, among others. It's a four-year campaign which aims to:

- Bring sustained awareness to the problem of extremist violence and its impact on Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- See people like you actively praying and speaking out against violent persecution.
- Support four million persecuted Christians in Africa spiritually, physically and emotionally.

Emily Darlington

ASHBY PARISH LIBRARY: A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE

The Manuscripts and Special Collections Department at Nottingham University holds the books of the Ashby Parish Library collection, aka The Bate Library. There are over 680 books in the collection, dating from the late 15th century onwards. The collection is owned by St Helen's but was put into the care of Nottingham University some years ago.

The Heritage Group was invited to send some volunteers to go and help catalogue the books. This is part of a project to investigate how other owners of Parish Libraries (there are 17 known to the University, which holds 5, including ours and that of Coleorton) might make use of the books. We were to look through the books for scribbles, scrawlings and graffiti.

So in mid February, 9 volunteers went to the Manuscripts Department for two days. The first morning was spent learning about how the books are being cared for and stored, and how to handle these very fragile books. We wore gloves – not cotton ones but latex gloves as these do not let sweat and oil onto the paper. The books have to be carefully lined up on foam wedges, again not what we expected – many TV programmes show books resting on cushions, but these do not protect the spines.

We learnt that a catalogue of the books had been found, compiled by a librarian from Coalville in the 1950s. This is the basis of the computerized catalogue used today. Our job was to look for any writing and enter it onto the catalogue.

What we found was fascinating. In some cases, close handwritten notes in the margin referred to the printed book, suggesting that the reader was putting down their thoughts or



planning a lecture. Thomas Bate wrote in Latin, taxing all of us, even those with some knowledge of the language. Other ancient owners had simply used the blank paper at the front or back of the book to write on. One, called Thomas Cooke, had drawn a representation of Copernicus' solar system together with a list of distances to the planets and the *ursa major constellation*. *This was about 1750.*

Handwriting was tiny and in ink; reading pages of this was very difficult, and transcribing it into a column on a spreadsheet impossible, so we had to decide what it was about and write a summary. In some cases there were factual errors by early writers, which led us to do further research.

Items were found within the books: a letter overwritten with notes; a copy of the letter from the Earl of Huntingdon, introducing Arthur Hildersham to be vicar of St Helens (we will get a facsimile of this); and best of all, a pressed flower, a pansy which still had indications of its colour.

Some of the books were well known: Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, Bishop Jewel's *Sermons* which all churches owned. Many were owned by Thomas Bate, others by his father also Thomas Bate whose monument is on the south wall of the church. Many books were owned by other vicars of St Helen's, and often had more than one owner. We were able to recognize signatures of some owners.

By the end of the two days we had looked through the books brought out of the store for us; these were ones known to have some writing. There are hundreds more books, but they will have to wait. We were all pretty exhausted, but had learnt so much.

There will be an exhibition at the University in October, which will be open to the public. We will advertise the date nearer the time – it will probably feature photos of us working!

Anne Heaton and Julie Starkey

GARDENING TIPS FOR MARCH

By mid-March we are ready to welcome the start of Spring. Narcissus, Snowdrops and Crocuses are bringing much needed colour to the garden with Daffodils and Tulips to follow. The weather is getting warmer and the days longer so there is more time to spend in the garden. This March will be hectic following the floods of January and February so that there are probably more jobs to do than normal. Even though it's getting warmer you have to keep an eye on the weather forecast as March is prone to sudden ground frosts that can damage less-hardy plants.

March is the time for finishing off the clearing of borders (Perennials and Ornamental Grasses) and starting off vegetable plot preparation as well as sowing seeds. It is also your last chance to buy and plant bare-root hedging, shrubs and trees until next winter. Later in the month, start a regime of deadheading Spring flowering bulbs as the flowers finish. Leave the foliage to die back naturally to feed the bulb for next year. Plant summer bulbs such as Dahlias, Lilies and also Snowdrops for next year.

There are lots of vegetable seeds which can be sown directly into vegetable beds such as beetroot, carrot, turnip, peas and spinach. Wait until the end of the month to start growing Broad Beans. Germinate Herbs indoors or in a greenhouse – even the most delicate ones such as Basil, Dill and Coriander can be planted. Start chitting potatoes as the first earlies can be planted from the middle to the end of the month.

Lift and divide perennials such as Hostas, Delphiniums and Lupins to ensure healthy and vigorous plants every year. Finally feed acid-loving shrubs such as Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Camelias and Pieris using a slow-release granular ericaceous plant food.

General soil improvement is essential at this time of year. Ideally, we should mulch the surfaces with at least one inch of organic matter such as garden compost. This will trap moisture in the soil as well as suppress weeds. We are now only buying peat-free compost. When buying look for information on the packaging about how to use it and which plants it is

suitable for. Also look for the Responsible Sourcing Scheme Logo on the packaging which will help you check the environmental rating of that particular compost mix.

As well as plants coming to life, so do the slugs and snails. They love to chew on new Herbaceous plants such as Hostas. We choose to use biological controls as we need to protect our many visiting hedgehogs. Weeds will grow strongly this time of year so keep on top of them in your borders, vegetable plots and pots on your patios. Check tender new shoots for Aphids and remove infestations now before they get worse.

Keep providing birds with fresh water and food. Clean paths, paving, patios and steps with a pressure washer. Finally consider using vinegar, with at least 5% Acetic Acid, to kill off patio weeds and moss. It is an environmentally friendly alternative and works extremely well. If there are areas of your lawn that are in need of a cut, set the blades high and cut on a dry day.

Now is the time to consider cleaning and refurbishing your garden furniture. It is also a good time to be clearing out any outdoor buildings in preparation for the Spring and Summer months. If you have an outdoor pond continue to maintain it and remove any dead leaves etc. Now is the time to consider any changes or additions you may want to carry out. It is worth visiting some local garden centres to gain some ideas. Also, they all tend to have cafes which is undoubtedly a bonus.

Alan and Alison Cross

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Sunday 29th March

10am– Donkey procession in the Churchyard

10.30am– Holy Communion with Reading of the Passion and activities for children.

6pm– Music for Palm Sunday– St Helen’s Choir + string quartet

Monday 30th, Tuesday 31st March, Wednesday 1st April

7.30pm- Compline

Thursday 2nd April

7.30pm Holy Communion for Maundy Thursday

Friday 3rd April

11am– Walk of Witness

4pm– Children’s service for Good Friday

7.30pm Meditation for Good Friday

Sunday 5th April

10.30am– Holy Communion for Easter Sunday

Come and sing with

St Helen's Junior Choir



Come and take part in 2 free singing workshops to prepare for a performance during our Mothering Sunday service on 15th March at 10:30am.

Saturdays 28th February and 14th March
10:30 - 11:30am

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

For more details contact Anna Haines via the Parish Office
parishoffice@sthelensashby.net

OUR WORSHIP IN MARCH

	am	pm	Wednesday
1st Sunday 1st March		6pm Evensong	
2nd Sunday 8th March	10.30am Holy Communion		2nd Wednesday– 11th Holy Communion 10.30am at Prior Park
3rd Sunday 15th March	10.30 am Morning Worship		3rd Wednesday– 18th Holy Communion 10.30am In church
4th Sunday 22nd March	10.30 am Team Holy Communion with Bishop Martyn		4th Wednesday– 25th Holy Communion 10.30am In church
5th Sunday 29th March	10am—Donkeys 10.30 Holy Communion for Pam Sunday	6pm Music for Palm Sunday	

Regular activities:

- Monday mornings - Little Fishes 9.30 - 11.30am during term time
- Mondays - Pilgrim group
- 1st & 3rd 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– see poster

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Lentwise course continues throughout Lent on Wednesday evenings in the heritage centre, 7.30pm. This will run until Wednesday 18th March. The course is following the book of the same title, written by Paula Gooder. Reading this will aid the course but is not compulsory.

Wednesday 4th March– Ashby Youth For Christ AGM– 7pm– Ashby Baptist Church

Join staff and trustees to hear about the year just gone and the year ahead. We will be joined by some of young people who will be sharing about Ashby School's Christian Union and sharing a time of worship and prayer together. Please arrive at 6.45pm for refreshments before a 7pm start.

Friday 6th March– Messy Church– 4.15pm– Heritage Centre

Messy Church offers activities for all ages to learn, play and worship together.

Saturday 7th March– Note-ability concert– 7.30pm

See poster for details on page 16.

Tuesday 24th March– Pudding Bag Productions Showcase– 7.30pm

Three period dramas telling fascinating local stories from the 17th century. Tickets £4 on the door, including light refreshments.

Sunday 29th March– Music for Palm Sunday– 6pm

Music by St Helen's Choir accompanied by a string quartet.

Services for Holy Week on page 12.



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sings

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HERITAGE AT RISK

Last year, St Helen's Church was added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. This is a list of buildings and other sites which are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development, and are most in need of safeguarding for the future. It covers Grade I, Grade II*, Grade II listed places of worship across England and Grade II listed buildings in London.

Regular worshippers at St Helen's (which is a Grade 1 listed building) will not be surprised to find that the church building is not in the best of health. Water has been getting in through the roof, despite the best efforts of a team of dedicated people who clear the gutters of leaves and other blockages. We owe them our thanks; I'm not sure I would want to climb about on the roof! Our building is not suffering from neglect; we have a five-yearly (Quinquennial) inspection by a qualified architect who recognises the work done by volunteers, but also notes the work which needs doing to keep the building safe. This necessary work is then planned over a five year period – you may notice some of the downpipes on the outside of the building have been refurbished, with others still to do, but a lot of other work is carried out each year.

Despite this, we have significant problems. Climate change is causing more water damage than ever before; we think it is getting into the vaults under the Chancel and Hasting's chapel. The church is difficult to keep warm, leading to damp causing problems with the monuments and stonework, not to mention the organ. Above all, the tower and clerestory stonework need significant work. The **At Risk Register** reports that St Helen's is in *poor condition, is declining, and exhibits slow decay and no solution agreed*. You can read the entry here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/13673>

The responsibility for the care of St Helen's – and 15,000 listed historic places of worship - relies entirely on our efforts, that is the people who call St Helen's 'their' church and the community of Ashby de la Zouch. Research published by Historic England in 2025 showed that only 11% of the population appreciate that the responsibility is on local people, not national church

bodies, local councils or heritage organisations such as English Heritage.

You might wonder what help being on the At Risk Register is. We have an adviser from Historic England who is attached to the Diocese and is working with us. It should also flag up to grant-awarding bodies that we are in significant need. We have established a group of people to work on a plan to fix the church, which includes seeking grant-funding. But be in no doubt, the cost of everything which needs doing is very significant. It will not be easy to raise the sums necessary, and it will not be completed quickly - all before we can think about changing the internal layout to make it work better for services, concerts and other community uses.

Our Heritage Project, now over 10 years ago, has proved that people enjoy visiting the building – who doesn't love a church-crawl? - and taking part in heritage activities. But now we have to gird our loins for an even bigger project. We need people in our community – church and town - to be part of a project to make St Helen's secure for the future. Will you be part of it?

Anne Heaton



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WEST AFRICAN PRAYERS

This month we look further afield for Christian prayers, and go to West Africa, mainly Ghana and Nigeria.

Here's a prayer to start the day.

Lord God, creator of all things
We thank you for giving us this morning
Forgive us our sins
Make our hearts holy
And show us the good path to walk today.

Here's a traditional-style Ghanaian prayer for communities.

Supreme God, creator of heaven and earth
You are older than our ancestors
You are stronger than the mountains
We thank you for the gift of family and land
Remove sickness from our midst
Remove division from our homes
Teach us to honour one another
May our work prosper by your blessing
And may our children walk in your truth
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Here's a Ghanaian prayer from the coastal region.

Father God
You who are above all things
Give me wisdom and strength
Help me to love others
And help me to walk in your truth.

Here's a Ghanaian Pentecostal prayer from the last century. You'll notice

the particular Pentecostal twang.
Almighty God
We stand before you this day by the blood of Jesus
Every power that's not from you, be silenced
Every plan of the enemy against our families, be broken
Let your Holy Spirit fill this house
Let healing flow
Let restoration come
Establish your peace in this nation
And let your name be glorified in Ghana.

Closer to home is this Methodist evening prayer from Ghana.
Gracious Lord,
As the sun sets over our town and villages
Watch over us through the night
Protect us from evil and from despair
Forgive the wrong we have done today
Give rest to the weary, hope to the troubled
Bring us safely to the light of a new day
Through Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Conclusion

It's easy to get into a stale repetitive Christian life and these voices from Africa can give a new perspective on God, our communities, and ourselves. The African emphasis is communal, rather than the individual salvation and nuclear families that we get a lot of in the Church of England. Where is the African influence in our church? Occasionally we may sing Kum by yah, but that probably comes from the African Americans of America. Even rarer is a prayer from Africa, and an African liturgy is verging on the impossible. Not invented here. As well as being reflective and meditative, perhaps Lent could be a time to hear from Christians in other parts of the world.

Richard Vann

PRAYER FOR UKRAINE

February 24th 2026 marked the fourth anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine. Here is a prayer from the Church of England which you could use to guide your own time of intercession.



A PRAYER FOR UKRAINE



Most holy God and Father,
hear our prayers for all who strive for peace
and all who fight for justice.
Help us, who today remember the cost of war,
to work for a better tomorrow;
and, as we commend to you
lives lost in terror and conflict,
bring us all, in the end,
to the peace of your presence;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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