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

Parish Magazine

November 2026



Parish Directory

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For more regular updates, find us on Facebook: St Helen's Church Ashby De La Zouch

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.

Ashby Foodbank
Together with Trussell

From the Ministry Team

Rev. Sue's sermon from our 'Time To Remember' service...



Dear friends,
I preached the following at our 'Time to Remember' service at St Helen's on 25 October and I was asked to share it in the magazine. Hence, instead of a letter this month, I offer this.

I don't know about you but once the clocks go back as they did early this morning, things feel very different. The trees are bare and light is in increasingly short supply. But this, of course, is part of the natural cycle of nature. In the UK it is more pronounced than for countries nearer the equator where the distinction between winter and summer is less defined but it gives us a sense of that pattern of life, death and new life, of endings and beginnings, of loss and of hope.

Birth and death are part of nature and they are part of what it means to be human but those of you here today will know how painful the death of someone close is and continues to be, sometimes over many many years depending on the circumstances of death, the relationship we had with the person who died and the age they were when they died.

As a society in Britain, I feel that we do not deal with the reality and certainty of death at all well. In Victorian times, the subject of death was not shied away from. People were in mourning, symbolized by wearing black, for some time and although to us that may seem morbid, I wonder if it was more helpful in terms of allowing people space and time to grieve properly. In other cultures, there is a defined period of mourning with various rituals. I saw that very closely with our African students when I was a University Chaplain in Loughborough.

With direct cremations being advertised so widely now, it seems we are minimizing the impact of death even more and not giving people opportunities in ritual to acknowledge the reality of death and to recognize and own their grief. Symbols and rituals are so important when we deal with the profound impact of death, and when those are taken away, people often struggle for many years with unaddressed grief which can cause lasting damage.

Whilst we may not want to go back to the strict mourning rituals of Victorian times, a failure to really help people grieve and mourn over longer than a week or two, seems to be largely missing from our society.

And part of this is compounded by our very fast moving society and maybe the decrease of social networks in which grief could be spoken about. A few weeks ago, Earl Spencer produced his book about his sister, the late Princess of Wales and it attracted a lot of publicity. We don't know what his motive was in writing that book and it is fairly evident that there are some complex emotions and dynamics at play, but one thing that struck me was the statement from the Royal Family which said that 'the pain of fraternal grief can cloud reason, affect judgement and colour memory'. And that is true of any grief which can lead to all kinds of emotions if it remains unaddressed and unspoken of.
We are all here today because we are in that journey of grief and recognize that opportunities to remember our loved ones, to be upset, to acknowledge the pain are important. Those people who have died are still very much part of our lives even though they are no longer physically here, and we are not the same people that we were before they died.

But in this service, we also listen to words of scripture through readings, hymns and prayers which give us hope that God is with us in life and in death. He understands our pain, comforts us through that and gives us a sure hope that he holds our loved ones in his arms.

Our first reading from the book of Lamentations, Chapter 3, in the Old Testament, we are reminded of the Lord's compassion and of his unfailing love for us. In the version of Psalm 23 that we have just sung, we had the words 'In death's dark vale, I fear no ill with thee, dear Lord, beside me; thy rod and staff my comfort still, thy cross before to guide me.' Words again of reassurance and comfort from a God who loves us and walks with us through grief which is part of our human existence.

And our second reading comes from right at the end of John's gospel (John 20 vv 10-18) after Jesus has died. The disciples have been to the tomb and found that Jesus' body has gone and Mary of Magdala is left there on her own crying when Jesus appears to her. She is so caught up in her crying and grief that she doesn't recognize Jesus and it is only when he says her name, that she realizes who it is. He tells her not to cling to him as he needs to go back to his father but she is to go and tell the disciples that he is returning to his father.

Jesus meets Mary in her grief and is able to help her to move on just a little as she trusts that his body has not been stolen, that death is not the end but there is resurrection.
God is a compassionate and loving God who walks with us in our grief. He doesn't magic it away but enables us to cope each day as we allow our loved ones to rest in His presence.

Today will be painful as you hear the names of loved ones read out and as you light a candle in their memory but you do not walk alone – as well as your loved ones, we can also trust in God's comforting and loving presence with us and, if you feel alone in your grief, please remember that St. Helen's and Breedon churches are open every day and you can come in, be still and light a candle – and many people do that and find that helpful.

'Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning: great is your faithfulness' (Lamentations 3)

With my prayers for all who walk that difficult road of grief.

Sue Field



A Note To Readers

Please be advised that, as of January 2027, the price of the Parish Magazine will be increasing to £1 per hard copy. This is to ensure that we can better meet the cost of printing the magazine. Thank you so much for continuing to take an interest in the life of our church.

Ashby JOY

Our ecumenical young adults group continues to meet weekly on Thursdays. If you are in your 20s or 30s, or know someone who would like to join, please get in touch with the parish office.

We recently celebrated some birthdays with a sports themed party as well as attending a 'Midlands Unite' Prayer gathering. We are about to embark on Pete Greig's course about Hearing God and we are hosting regular discussion nights based on various challenging or relevant topics.



Loughborough Town Of Sanctuary

By Pat Stafford

Thank you so much for your prayers and support for LToS. We recently held our AGM and several asylum seekers spoke very movingly about their experiences. One of the speakers had been a doctor in her country of origin and - following her time In Loughborough - she and her daughter had been moved twice by the Home Office to other locations. Since the meeting, they have been given refugee status. This means they have permission to stay and work initially but must reapply several times before they can apply for citizenship.
Here's what she had to say:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say a few words today.
I have been thinking about what I could say, and I realised that perhaps the most meaningful thing I can talk about is my journey, not only from one place to another, but also my journey within myself.
When we first arrived in the UK, we went through a very difficult and painful time. We were entering a completely different life.
Before coming here, I had worked hard for my education and had built a life for myself. I had my home, my belongings, my clothes, my books, my education, my experiences and my place in society. All of these things were part of how I understood who I was.
When I arrived here, almost all of those things were suddenly gone. At one point, I felt that the only thing I really had was the clothes I was wearing.
But it was not only about losing material things. I also felt that I had lost part of my identity. I was still the same person, but I was in a completely new country and had no idea what my future would look like.
For a while, I felt like a person without an identity.

This reminded me of Victor Frankl's book, Man's Search for Meaning. Of course, I cannot compare my experience with the terrible suffering that Frankl and others endured. But his idea that we can still search for meaning, even when we lose control over many things in our lives, really spoke to me. What was different about my journey was that I was not alone.

I had already begun to learn about Christianity, but the people I met helped me understand it in a much more personal and practical way. They showed me their faith through kindness, patience, generosity and by giving me their time.
Since coming to the UK, I have lived in different places and met many different people. I am grateful for all of those experiences. But Loughborough, and especially All Saint church and John Storer, became very special places for me.

It was there that I began to feel a real sense of meaning and belonging again.

I think one of the reasons is the way people treat each other, the friendships, the willingness to listen, the acceptance, and the feeling that people are allowed to be themselves.
People on the Loughborough Town of Sanctuary English team at John Storer did much more than help me learn English. At a time when I was struggling to understand who I was, they helped me feel seen, valued and welcomed.
I also want to say thank you to the church and to everyone there who supported us and showed us kindness.
I want to mention the Volunteer Coordinator for LTOS and her team as well. They came to the hotel every week and did so much to bring happiness to the children. The time, care and energy they gave meant a lot to us.

I am also very grateful to everyone at Fearon Hall and to all the people who work hard there to support and help others.

There are so many people and groups I could mention, and I am sure I would forget someone if I tried to name everyone. But I want all of them to know that their kindness made a difference to us.
Sometimes, people may think they are simply helping someone, giving their time, or being kind. But for someone who is going through a difficult time, those small things can mean much more than they realise.
They can restore a person's dignity. They can make someone feel that they are not invisible, that they matter, and that they still belong somewhere.
As a new Christian, this was especially important to me. Through these people, I began to understand that faith is not only something we believe. It is also something we live through our everyday actions, through kindness, friendship, patience and generosity.

So, for me, finding meaning came partly through my faith and partly through the people God brought into my life. Looking back, my journey from Loughborough to other cities was not simply a journey from one place to another. It was a journey from uncertainty towards hope, and from feeling that I had lost part of my identity towards discovering a new sense of who I am.

I am still rebuilding my life, and I know that journey is not finished yet.
But when I think about the church, John Storer, Fearon Hall, and all the people who supported us in different ways, I do not just think about places or organisations. I think about people who, at a very difficult time in my life, helped me feel seen again.

And perhaps that is one of the most important things I have learned:
Sometimes, when we feel that we have lost our sense of identity, God can bring people into our lives who help restore our dignity and find our way back to ourselves.
Thank you.



Hearing Loop

By Martin Vaughan

For those lucky folks with good hearing, then a hearing loop is completely irrelevant to you. For those less fortunate, a good hearing loop can make the difference between being able to hear what is being read from the lectern or said in the sermon, and literally missing half of it.

For the last couple of years the amplifier which powers the hearing loop at St Helen's has been intermittently faulty.
Simon Starkey has spent hours, repeatedly trying to diagnose the fault and mend it.
He would think he had sorted it, only for it to fail again.

A new amplifier for the loop in our size of church was quoted at £500. At a time when finances are tight and we may be looking to have a complete new sound system within the next five years, then this seemed a lot to spend.
However Simon managed to find a second hand one for £90 and a donation funded this. He fitted it recently.

Last Sunday was the first service with it in operation and it transformed the service for me - I could hear everything being said, quite clearly, straight into my hearing aids.

So if you have hearing aids but still find it difficult to pick up softer voices in church, then if you have a "loop" setting, I would urge you to give it a try. Compared to the previous amplifier, even when it was working, the new one is a revelation !!

Thanks be to God - and Simon !!

Regular Services In November

Sunday 1st November		**3.30pm- Justice Service**
Sunday 8th November	**9.30am Remembrance Day Service**	
Sunday 15th November	**10.30am Holy Communion**	
Sunday 22nd November	**10.30am Holy Communion**	**7.30pm Compline**
Sunday 29th November	**No Service- TEAM SERVICE AT HOLY TRINITY**	**6.30pm Advent Carol Service**

Wednesday 4th November 10.30am BCP Holy Communion **In Church**	**Wednesday 11th November** 10.30am Holy Communion **Prior Park**	**Wednesday 18th November** 10.30am Morning Prayer **In Church**	**Wednesday 25th November** 10.30am Holy Communion **In Church**

Regular Events:

Monday mornings - Little Fishes 9.30 - 11.30am during term time
Mondays - Pilgrim group
1 st & 3rd Wednesday - We're in stitches – 2 till 4pm
Thursdays - Morning Light– 8.45am
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

Coming Up In November

6th **Messy Church**

4.15pm in the Heritage Centre.

8th **Remembrance Sunday**

Please note that this service starts at 9.30am. Bishop Saju will be preaching at the service.

24th **Heritage Talk**

Rachel Askew presents: *Mercian Sculpture and Breedon Priory Church*

7.30pm. Tickets are £4 on the door, including light refreshments.

28th **Quiet Day**

9.30am, Led by David Newman, held in the Heritage Centre. A day to begin the Advent Season.

29th **Advent Carol Service**

6.30pm

Join us as we welcome the Advent Season with choral pieces, congregational carols and readings, by candlelight.

6th Dec **Christingle**

3.30pm

Advance notice that our Christingle Service, in aid of the Children's Society, will be on Sunday 6th Dec- invite your friends!

From Green To Autumn

By Richard Vann

Now that it's autumn, we're aware of the trees. They're changing from green to yellow, gold, brown, or red. And all the more spectacular on a sunny day.
For our purposes here, trees have a revealing being. In the physical world we preserve them, plant them, and nurture them, especially as this region is called the National Forest. In the world of the bible, trees are often used as a picture for a truth about ourselves, our society, and our God.

Below: Mo's favourite tree at Calke Abbey



For instance, there is the parable of the mustard seed that grows and grows and grows and becomes home to many birds that come and perch in its branches. It's supposed to be about our journey of faith, but it could describe any passion of life, or even a career. In fact anything which has a small beginning that grows and grows and grows. Which big supermarket started as a vegetable stall in London? Others will tell us what the parable of the mustard seed means to them, but what it means to you is the key question. Indeed, what does it mean to you? (You mustn't copy someone else!)

In the book of Isaiah, the trees clap their hands, which is a poetical description, and an original way to make you feel happy, or smile at the words. As an aside, I often imagine trees having a sense of humour, because when I walk past they call me 'Shortie.' Or they say, 'I'm not going anywhere, but I'll still be around when you're long gone!'

In the Garden of Eden there was a tree with forbidden fruit. As soon as you hear that part of the story, you know, you just

know, that Adam will succumb to the temptation. You must then pay attention to the storyline to find out how it will happen, and the consequences - see Genesis chapter 3. Thousands of years later, Paul is still talking about Adam (but not Eve) in his letter to the Romans. Many sermons have been given about Paul's theology of Adam, but this is not the place to summarise them, you'll be pleased to hear.
There are lots more stories about trees, branches, and leaves in the bible, too many to mention. Fortunately they're all available on google or the like, if you wish to look them up. You'll also find trees in poetry, trees in novels, and trees in films. Notably the film Avatar (2009), where Home Tree is viciously destroyed, in spite of it being home to an indigenous people. Avatar is deliberately a metaphor, showing the battle between Big Business and Environmentalism, as well as other things.

We now come to the highlight, to the tree that is centre-stage. The Tree of Life. It sounds like a good thing. It is. The term 'Tree of Life' occurs at the start of the bible, and is also mentioned in other ancient texts. Trees were important in those days, for when you're in a very hot country of the Middle East, being able to shade under a tree is a great relief. Hence the description.

The Tree of Life as a metaphor can represents many things: hope, your life with God, everlasting life, a longing fulfilled, a soothing tongue, and anything that sustains, enriches, and renews life.

That's all very academic. The question is this – what does the Tree of Life mean to you? Do you have a favourite tree in Ashby, or somewhere else? Why is it noteworthy? Is it a landmark?

You'll recall the tree maliciously chopped down in September 2023 – the Sycamore Gap Tree. It lived by Hadrian's wall and it's destruction caused an uproar. Amazingly, seeds from it will be used to grow new trees, and the stump may sprout new branches.
You can therefore understand why the Amazonian people are distressed, because an area about seven times the size of England has been deforested in the last 75 years.
On that sad note we finish. Apart from declaring one of my favourite trees is the quince, partly because the word sounds quirky and quaint, and it's quite rare.

Gardening Tips For November

By Alan and Alison Cross

It is getting wetter and colder as we enter November. Trees are showing their beautiful displays but dropping their leaves rapidly. Our Liquidambar Styraciflua is beautiful at this time of year. As Autumn changes to Winter our main gardening jobs are mostly about protection of Climate Sensitive Plants. You should protect your outdoor containers if there is a risk of frost damage with fleece, bubble wrap or move them into a frost-free place. However, there are still many other jobs to consider such as tidying your flower beds, removing any weeds, reviewing your planting designs, continuing to rake dead leaves (especially those in a pond). You can also plant your Winter flowering plants, bulbs, vegetables and fruit trees.

Squirrels! We bought a hanging feeding station (with a baffle) but! The squirrels weren't baffled. We then wrapped a sharp covering around the pole and the squirrels still managed to get up. They have also managed to unscrew the bottom plate of our nut feeder, regularly, so the nuts fall to the ground, we are Baffled as to what to do next 🙄 Birds need water for drinking and bathing so give them a fresh supply of clean water in a birdbath.

Hardy bedding plants, such as Pansies, Violas, Cyclamens, Primroses and Heathers are great tolerating our frosty British Winter and will provide lovely colour, even when it's miserable outside. Winter berries encourage birds to visit your garden. Particularly suitable shrubs include variegated Holly, Cotoneaster, Pyracantha and Berberis.

November is a good time to plant tulip bulbs in the ground or in pots. Plant 3 times the depth of the bulb in light soil. If your soil is heavy then add grit to improve drainage as the bulbs do not like to sit in water.

Continue to rake up the leaves from lawns, ponds and other areas in the garden – it seems to be a never-ending job! Decomposition of leaves and plants in a pond will raise the Nitrate levels and so reduce the oxygen which is not good for the fish and other pond creatures. As mentioned before, it is worth saving the leaves to make leaf mould.
The Winter months can also be a challenging time for animals, so being prepared to support local wildlife, including birds and hedgehogs, can really make a difference. They need to stay warm and well-fed to survive and this can be a real struggle. Hedgehogs go into hibernation anytime between October and December depending on how mild the temperature is. To prepare for this they often start eating more and building a nest. You should consider installing a hedgehog house in your garden, and providing them with food as long as they are eating it.

It is recommended that you cover your vegetable beds with well-rotted organic matter if leaving them empty over Winter. It will break down in the cold weather to release its valuable nutrients that will improve fertility and soil structure. Leave your parsnips, swedes, turnips and sprouts until the first frost before picking as this improves the taste as it converts the starches to sugar. However, you can sow first Early Peas, Onions, Garlic and Broad Beans this month.
It is lovely to wrap up, take a walk outside on a cold Winter's evening and enjoy your garden. It is well known that good Physical and Mental Wellbeing has strong links to gardening,

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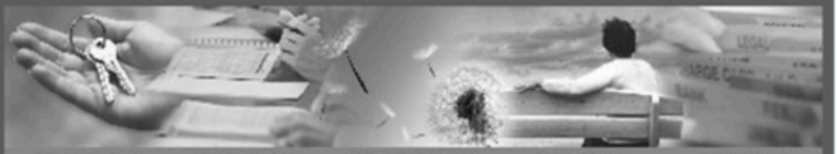
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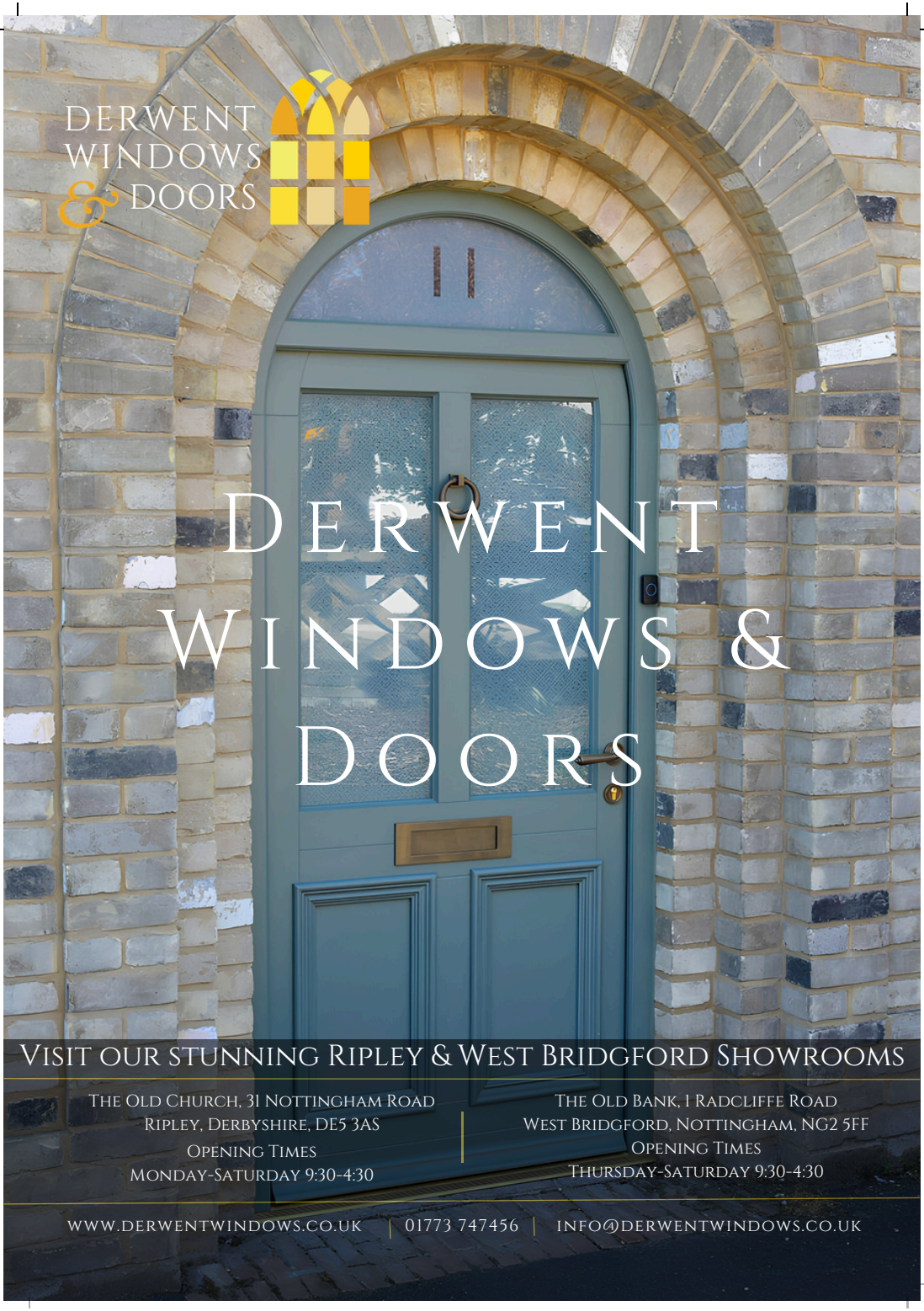
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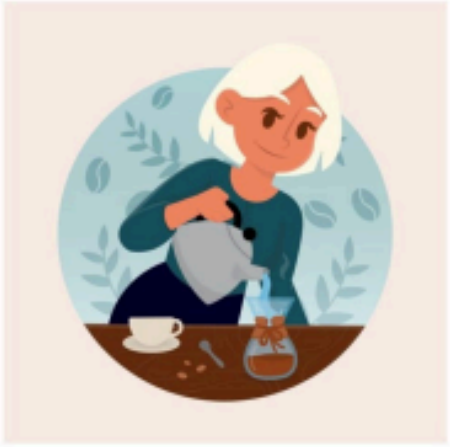
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