



St HELEN'S CHURCH
ABINGDON-ON-THAMES

Sunday 22nd February 2026

The First Sunday in Lent

Lent

Our southern hemisphere brethren could be forgiven for thinking that in many respects they have got the liturgical calendar right. They celebrate the birth of the everlasting light at the brightest and hottest time of the year. Then they remind themselves of their human frailties by observing their Lenten disciplines in their autumn, as signs of life are retreating all around them. One of my Australian friends finds it so counter-intuitive that, at a time when flora and fauna all around us are busy making new life in countless amazing ways, northern-hemisphere Christians are abstaining from things, that she was sceptical when I reminded her that the word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for springtime, and is linked to the idea of the days lengthening. Of course we can tie the calendar to spiritual themes in other ways. The idea of the light of the world being born at the very dead of winter offers a powerful picture of darkness being overcome, and the idea of fasting during nature's time of plenty can be a way of giving our spiritual needs a clear precedence over the physical.

In the church's musical history, there have been many views on what forms of music should be given up for Lent. In J. S. Bach's church, the main service on Sunday mornings would normally include a 25-minute piece for choir and orchestra, but in Lent (and Advent) the good burghers of Leipzig would abstain from these musical riches in favour of plainer fare from the organ alone. (The musicians meanwhile would be busy rehearsing for the extensive musical demands of Holy Week and Easter). Compared with other eras and denominations, standing the choir down for Lent is an unusually extreme form of spiritual discipline. However, the use of music that is simpler and more restrained than during the flanking seasons of Epiphany and Easter is a recurring theme. This Lent St. Helen's is going to explore this in the form of a different version of the music we sing for 'Ordinary' of the communion service – the sung bits of the service that are the same every week, namely the Kyrie, Sanctus and Agnus dei. We are going to use settings of these texts composed for use in the Iona Community by John Bell. This community has a distinctive style of music that is participatory, quite simple, often repetitive, and usually for voices in harmony without instruments. If you would like a copy of the music to help you sing it, please

collect one from the sidesman (and return it for use next week). This music is slightly different in style to the settings of the communion liturgy we use at other times of the year, but I hope it will bring something different and helpful to our Lenten worship.

Dr Peter Foster, Director of Music

WELCOME to St Helen's this Sunday. 8.00 am *Holy Communion*. 10.30 am *Sung Eucharist*. 5.30 pm *Service for Healing and Wholeness*. The 10.30 am service at St Helen's today can be accessed on Zoom from 10.15 am on: Meeting ID: 865 5159 6523; Passcode: 626891.

FOR TODAY'S SERVICE

Readings: Genesis 2.15-17; 3.1-7; Romans 5.12-19; Matthew 4.1-11

Hymns:

Processional: The great litany

Gradual: 97 Lord Jesus think on me

Offertory: 95 Forty days and forty nights

Anthem: Wesley, Wash me thoroughly

Post Communion: 96 Jesu, lover of my soul

Collect:

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

5.30 PM SERVICE FOR HEALING AND WHOLENESS

Reading: Luke 15.1-10

Hymns: Lord Jesus Think on Me (CP97); Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep (CP517); The King of Love My Shepherd Is (CP589, tune St Columba)

THE COMING WEEK AT ST HELEN'S

ON WEEKDAYS 9.10 am *Morning Prayer*.

ON MONDAY 9.30 am *Baby and Toddler Group* in the Parish Centre Hall. 10am *Lighting Group Meeting* in the Parish Centre Lounge.

ON TUESDAY 2.15 pm *Desiring Life Group* in the Parish Centre Lounge. 7.30 pm *Section 12 Meeting* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON WEDNESDAY 10.30 am *Holy Communion*. 7.00 pm *Marriage Consultation Meetings* in the Parish Centre Office.

ON THURSDAY 3.00 pm *Memorial Service for Trevor Pegram* in the church. 6.30 pm *Life Drawing Class* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON FRIDAY 4.00 pm *Abingdon School Bell Club* in the church. 5.00 pm *Young Ringer's Practice* in the church. 5.30 pm *Choir Practice* in the church.

ON SATURDAY 12.15 pm *Parish Lent/Newcomers Lunch* in the Parish Centre Hall. 6.30 pm *East St Helen's Street Resident's Group gathering* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON SUNDAY 8.00 am *Holy Communion*. 10.30 am *Sung Eucharist (first Sunday)*.

PROGRAMMES, EVENTS & NOTICES

AKMA will be giving four brief Spiritual Snacks on 'Inside the Liturgy: Action and Meaning' after the 10.30 am service on each of the first four Sundays of Lent.

Faith Forum: Our February Faith Forum will be today, Sunday 22nd February in the Parish Centre. Continuing our series on liturgy, the Revd Dr Phil Cooke will be speaking on How Music Works in Worship. Lunch will be at 12.20 pm, with the talk beginning at 12.25 pm.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85645633324?pwd=LYbJpGrcqpTWk1ZfNj9VRq4ILHZMda.1>

Meeting ID: 856 4563 3324

Passcode: 656494

Join instructions:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/85645633324/invitations?signature=3oWfaRXIT3BFKG4EkcPvY2CdaCr4qRBgCKUJYMaghxA>

The funeral of Mary Blanks, formerly of St Helen's Court, will take place at South Oxfordshire Crematorium at 3.00 pm on Monday 23rd February.

Church Twinning Barn Dance. Fancy a knees-up, a ploughman's dinner and fun company? Abingdon Church Twinning is organising a Barn Dance fundraiser on Saturday the 28th of February in Trinity Church Conduit Centre. Alan Fisher from Abingdon Baptist will be the caller, and all proceeds will support church twinning. Limited spaces! Put on your dancing shoes, and get your tickets from your Church Twinning reps:

anne.dodd28@gmail.com or Elizabeth Simpson; simpsonem123@gmail.com.

Parish Lent/Newcomers Lunch. There will be a Bring & Share Parish lunch on Sunday 1st March in the Parish Centre at 12.15 pm. It would be especially good to welcome new/recent comers to our congregations. Sign-up sheets will be available in all three churches, please add your name and the type of food you will be bringing, both to give us an idea of numbers and to ensure that we have a balanced spread of food. Drinks will be provided. If you have any questions or can help with set-up, serving, or clear-up, please contact Sue Pemberton, suepem@tiscali.co.uk.

Photos for 2027 calendar: Take a snap of St Helens' church and send with a suggested caption to Mary Anderson at Mary.fulani@gmail.com by the end of the month.

The February edition of the Parish Magazine is available to download from https://abingdonparish.org.uk/P_window.php.

Open Church Stewarding. It is now just six weeks to the start of our Summer Stewarding of the church. Last year we had only ten regular stewards and were unable to fulfil our hopes of being able to have a welcoming presence every morning of the week. If you have been

thinking this is something you could do to support the outreach of St Helen's church family but would like to know more before committing yourself, please talk to me, Elizabeth Simpson, after the service, or email me on simpsonem123@gmail.com. Please do think about this. With thanks.

For your thoughts and prayers:

- We thank God for the ways in which we can support our church - with our skills, our time, our friendship, our money.
- We remember those who are in need of support, who face financial challenges, who feel alone in the world.
- We ask that our eyes may be opened to ways in which we, as a church, can move to help those who are in need.

Please pray for the residents of St Amand Drive, St Edmund's Lane, St Helen's Court and St Helen's Mews.

Intercessory prayer requests to clairembolton@googlemail.com.

For health, consolation & wellbeing: Sarah Stevens, Katie Stuart, Alli, David, Anne Smithson, Loelia Lyon, Vanessa Madden.

Next week's readings: Genesis 12.1-4a; John 3.1-17

Team Rector	The Revd Dr Jennifer Brown jennifer.brown@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk
Team Vicar	Vacant
Associate Priest	The Revd Dr A. K. M. Adam (AKMA) akma@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk
Wardens	Ms Margaret Horton and Mr David Pope
Director of Music	Dr Peter Foster
Assistant Organist	Mr Andrew Shouler
Parish Administrator	Mrs Jackie Cunningham
Caretaker	Mr Robin Day
Parish Safeguarding	Mrs Pat Hudson safeguarding@abingdonparish.org.uk
St Helen's Safeguarding	Mr Emmanuel Chukwuma

The Parish Office is open Monday – Thursday, 10.00 am to 1.00 pm (closed on Fridays).

Phone: 01235 520144. Checked on Fridays, morning and afternoon.

E-mail: administrator@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk; Website: abingdonparish.org.uk/StH

A copy of this Newsletter is posted regularly on our website.