

Welcome to the United Benefice of St. Helen, St. Mary and St. John the Baptist

It's great to gather together as the Body of Christ in this beautiful part of Derbyshire. Though we have differences, we have one Lord, one Faith and one passion for the Gospel. May we spend time this morning praying together and sharing fellowship.

All are welcome to take part fully in our services. If this is a Service of Holy Communion, you are very welcome to receive Holy Communion at the appropriate time. *Gluten free wafers are available. Just ask anyone leading the communion.*

Our Worship today, 17th December, Third Sunday of Advent

11.00am Holy Communion at St. Helen's

4.00pm Informal Carol Service and Readings at St. Mary's

6.00pm Carol Service at St. John's

Tuesday Morning Prayer at St. Helen's, 9.30

Thursday– Morning Prayer at St. John's, 9.30

Mon. 18th Dec. 7.30pm, Home Group, Whitworth House, Dale Rd.

Thurs. 21st Dec. 9.00am, Prayer Meeting, 14 Park Avenue

United Benefice Services for next Sunday/Week

St. Helen's

22nd Friday 6.30pm Carol Service

24th Christmas Eve 4.00pm Family Service/Crib Service

11.30pm Midnight Communion

25th Christmas Day 11.00am Holy Communion

St. Mary's

24th Christmas Eve 10.00pm Holy Communion

25th Christmas Day 10.00am Holy Communion

St. John's

24th Christmas Eve 9.00pm Holy Communion

25th Christmas Day 9.00am Holy Communion

Readings: Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11
John 1:6-8,19-28

Prayer: Fridolin Wieschhues, Robert & Margaret Pearse and family, the Hopper family, the Parnell family, Tony & Marie Thrower, Stan Codd, Dennis Roberts, Dorothy Ash, Stephen Porter, Anne & Susan ChinChen, Lindsey Wilson, Andrew Brown.

Please let Pauline know of anyone you would like to put on the list, and also when someone's name can be removed. For St. Mary's, please pass names to David Gadsby (734922) and for St. John's to Marion Bowler (650261).

Apologies

I've very sorry that the weather seemed to win last week and we had to cancel a few things; not least the Service of Readings and Carols at South Darley. Because of that, we are adapting today's Carol Service at St. Mary's. It will still be quite informal, but with a few special readings to remind us of Christ entering into our human history.

Winster

A lot has happened over Advent in Winster. Not simply services, carols and a Christmas Tree Festival, but sadly four funeral services also. There was a great deal to arrange at St. John's, and I must thank Marion, Bernard, Joan and George for their huge support, and for their Christian charity in helping other people mourn their loved ones. Thank you.

The Christmas Tree Blessing was well supported but there was no-one from our wider United Benefice. Do remember that we're rooted in our parish family, but the United Benefice family is also important. During 2018, let's all try to show a little more support for each other.

Thanks

A very big thank-you to Rev. John and Rev. Audrey, who are gracious enough to help me out in this busy season. Both of these clergy are a great example for all of us.

Does the weather make one think?

A little snow and a great drop in temperature remind us that, as Christians, we must be ready and willing to look after those in need in our communities. I wonder if the members of our Outreach Group, when they meet, could look at a few steps we could follow during bad weather?

A Slight Issue

Occasionally, when we have large services or concerts, the parking of cars is an issue. We've had a few complaints recently about cars partially blocking people's drives, and even instances when residents have been unable to get out of their drives. Please remember it is a Christian value to act always with consideration.

Carols at Whitworth Hospital

We've been asked to sing some carols at Whitworth Hospital and also at the Dementia Centre next door. It's been tricky pinning down a date for this, but hopefully we might have succeed by today – please listen to the pre-service notices and then offer your voice if you possibly can!

St. Helen's Opening Times

We are trying to get a rota of people to help keep St. Helen's open, Monday – Friday, approx. 9am - 4.30pm. We are so very lucky to have St. Mary's open every day. It's a wonderful oasis of peace, somewhere to feel the presence of the Lord. It seems so sad for any Christian Church to be shut for most of the week.

What's Happening This Week...

Carols Galore!! Today, Sunday, 17th Dec., there are 2 carol services:

St. Mary's, South Darley, 4pm. We have '*Choose your favourite Carols*', along with some readings.

St. John's, Winsters, 6pm. A more formal service of Carols and Readings, followed by refreshments.

Advent Night Prayer at St. Helen's. Please support our final Night Prayer, Monday, 18th Dec., 7pm.

Bible Study at St. John's. Our final Advent Bible study, Friday, 22nd Dec., 10.30am.

Everyone is very welcome to all these events.

Advent Collection

Remember we are collecting for Ashgate Hospice throughout Advent. Please do give whatever you can afford to our churchwardens, coordinators, treasurer, or even to me. The hospice desperately needs our support, both with prayer and financially. Thank you.

And Looking Ahead to January...

Messy Church – PLEASE NOTE

The date of Messy Church meeting has been changed. It is now on MONDAY, 29th JANUARY. For details see Margaret.

Do Remember... Ecumenical Holy Communion

The numbers for this service have not been great in recent months. Please try to support our next Holy Communion, at **Darley Dale Methodist Church, Monday, 8th Jan., 10am.** It's so enriching for Christians to pray together.

Intimate Worship

Our first meeting of 2018 will be **Sunday, 14th Jan.** We will then be meeting on the second Sunday of each month on a regular basis.

A Thought

I don't know if you liked, or even remember, the BBC programme 'Blackadder'? It was a historical (hysterical!) comedy about Edmund Blackadder (played by Rowan Atkinson) and a few of his cronies, and was set during different periods of history.

I found the end of 'Blackadder Goes Forth', set in the First World War, to be very powerful. One character, portrayed in a terrible light, was Doctor Samuel Johnson – a pompous and annoying glutton. Of course the real Doctor Johnson died on the 13th December in 1784. His most famous work was his Dictionary, which contained 40,000 word definitions and took him eight years to prepare.

Johnson was also a poet and a public speaker. On one occasion he wrote a very simply phrase: "True greatness consists in being great in little things."

As we move towards Christmas, let us try not to be too stressed by what is inconsequential, but more attentive to the small things; the acts of love and kindness, of selfless charity. These small acts of love remind us that Jesus is born into our hearts and our lives. We are attentive to Him when we serve and value His world, His creation and His people.

I'll finish today with some words of Hellen Keller, which echo those of Samuel Johnson. " I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble."

Lord, keep us open to and aware of the needs of other people. Help us to reverence their lives and their needs, and so may Jesus Christ be born again each day.

With my prayers and love.
Revd. Stephen Monk

Psalm 126

- 1 *When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
 then were we like those who dream.*
- 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter
 and our tongue with songs of joy.
- 3 Then said they among the nations,
 ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’
- 4 The Lord has indeed done great things for us,
 and therefore we rejoiced.
- 5 Restore again our fortunes, O Lord,
 as the river beds of the desert.
- 6 Those who sow in tears
 shall reap with songs of joy.
- 7 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed,
 will come back with shouts of joy,
 bearing their sheaves with them

Please take this pew sheet home for details of what is coming up and also for prayer.