

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, 3rd December, First Sunday of Advent
9.00am Holy Communion at St. John's

10.00am Joint Family Service at St. Helen's
(This is the Guides, Scouts' and Cubs' Carol Service)

Christmas Fayre afterwards, in the church hall.

Tuesday – Morning Prayer at St. Helen's, 9.30

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

Mon. 4th Dec. 7.30pm, Home Group, Whitworth House, Dale Rd.

Tues. 5th Dec 10.15am, Home Group, 5 Joseph Whitworth Lane

Thurs. 7th Dec.. 9.00am, Prayer Meeting, 14 Park Avenue

United Benefice Services for next Sunday

8.00am Holy Communion at St. Helen's

9.00am Holy Communion at St. John's

11.00am Holy Communion at St. Helen's

4.00pm Service of Lessons and Carols at St. Mary's

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.

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 and for St. John's to Marion Bowler .

N.B. St. Mary's Carol Services: 10th and 17th December. My apologies but incorrect times have been put in St. Helen's November magazine. The services are both at **4.00pm**. (Chris Townsend)

2 Special Devotions for Advent

St. Helen's: Each Monday of Advent, 7pm - 7.45pm, Night Prayer, including a time for meditation (4th, 11th, 18th Dec.).

St. John's: Each Friday of Advent, 10.30am, we'll be using bible study to reflect on the Coming of the Saviour. (8th, 15th, 22nd Dec.)

We are all aware of the busyness and even the frantic nature of this time, but please try to make space for these two special devotions.

Calling all singers! (And a reminder about the vocation of Christians.)

We've been asked to sing some carols at Whitworth Hospital and also at the Dementia Centre next door. I know we are all busy, but as a Christian community we must always remember we are called to serve the poor and needy, to support the sick and dying. We are also called upon to live an ordered life, in which we often spend time in prayer and reflection.

Intimate Worship

Our final 'Intimate Worship' of 2017 took place on Sunday, 19th November.

It was a moving evening of sung worship and powerful prayer ministry.

Our first meeting of 2018 will be Sunday, 14th January.

We will be meeting on the second Sunday of the month on a regular basis.

Advent – A time to look back, a time to look forward

We begin the new year of the Church today - the first Sunday of Advent.

This season is a time of expectation and waiting. We are waiting to celebrate the first Nativity, when the history of mankind and the history of God became totally and irrevocably intertwined. God became a man, so that the whole of humanity could be brought into the presence of God. That is a remembrance, a looking *back* 2000 years. But the other element of Advent is also very important; it is a looking *forward*. A looking towards the coming of our Lord in glory. This Second Coming is the time we will be judged on how we've lived our lives. Advent is therefore a time for reflection, for trying to be more prayerful. Each day, let us pray more and let us create some times of silence in our frantic month. And let us remember that we're also called upon to care for our fellow human beings.

During Advent we'll be having some collections at all three of our churches for Ashgate Hospice. If you'd like to give a separate donation, please see your Churchwardens, Coordinators or Treasurer.

More Events This Coming Week

Ecumenical Communion – please support

The numbers at our Holy Communion service have dropped somewhat on the Anglican side. The Eucharist is at the heart of our Christian life and is vital for our growth in faith and service of the Lord. It is wonderful for Christians to break bread together, worship together, and serve our local community.

Our next Holy Communion, Monday, 4th Dec. (tomorrow).

St. Helen's, 10am. Do come to this if you can.

Christmas Tree Blessing at Winsters, Thursday, 7th Dec. 7.30pm

We will be celebrating our biannual Christmas Tree Service. This is a service of blessing with carols, prayers and a short reflection. Please do support. The trees last time looked so very lovely and they remind us of the many blessings Christ pours upon us. It's no accident that when we walk through woods, forests or even a coppice the wonders of nature helps us relax and feel more in touch with our beautiful world.

During Advent, I suggest you try to make time to pop into our churches when they are open. Be at peace. Rest in the Lord. Allow the Lord to wash over you and to give you His peace.

Worship Meeting

South Darley Worship Meeting, Thursday, 7th Dec., 10.30am, at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Gadsby. All are very welcome.

Saturday, 9th Dec.

St. John's, 10am - 12pm, Fair Trade Coffee Morning. Everyone very welcome.

St. Helen's, 5pm, Carol Service led by the district bell ringers. All our favourite carols, sung with gusto!

St. Helen's Coffee morning 10.00am – 12noon. Do join us and enjoy a slice of cake, a cup of coffee and friendly chat.

And for next week:

St. Mary's, Sunday, 10th Dec. 4pm, Community Carol Service. All welcome. We even have a TV star to kick off the carols!!

Joint P.C.C.

St. Mary's, Tues. 12th Dec. 7.30pm. If there are any issues you wish us to discuss, please give them to Mrs. Penny Dakin (Hon. Sec.). I know everyone is very busy at this time, but please do make this a priority.

St. Mary's, Sat. 16th Dec. 7.30pm, our annual Christmas Concert, led by Darley Dale Band and Hillside Choir. This promises to be a great evening. Full of music to lift the spirits.

.....

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.

LGBT+

We've held our first meeting to reflect on and discuss the thoughts raised. Our next step will be in the New Year, when we look at the more thorny questions concerning Christianity and LGBT issues. I was very pleased with the gracious response of the congregation, as well as that of the two ladies representing the Derbyshire Charity which advocates for those who are LGBT+.

Some Reflections

'At this Christmas, when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving others with God's own love and concern.'

'It is now, at Advent, that I am given the chance to suspend all expectation... and instead to revel in the mystery.'

'Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ comes uninvited.'

'The Kingdom of God is the already but not yet.'

A Thought

'Life in a prison cell may well be compared to Advent; one waits, hopes, and does this, that, or the other thing, none of which are of real consequence. The door is shut, and can be opened only from the outside.'

(Letters from Prison - November 21, 1943' Dietrich_Bonhoeffer)

We are all just recovering from news stories about the chaos of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. We've made lists of gifts we need to get or food we need to order. We're trying to finalise who's coming for Christmas lunch or what we can buy on credit. We probably - and when I say 'we', I mean all the people of our county and our country - feel tired before we even get to the first Carol Service, to Midnight Eucharist, even to that first mince pie!! The Church is very wise in giving us this season of waiting. This is a time we should take some moments of every day and be still, rather than run about like headless chickens.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is right when he reflects on Advent; it is a season of waiting and hoping, of trusting that God is with us and that He accompanies us through the darkness of this world. God understands our brokenness. His gift to us is His son, Jesus Christ, given during the Christmas that happened 2000 years ago. Since that time, we can truly say *God is with us*. Jesus walks with us until we enter His Kingdom of Love, Joy and Peace.

Please take time to remember that there is hope, even in this troubled world. To be fully human we need to wait on the Lord. We must allow Him to bless us with the many graces we need. Please do not waste this Advent. It is a time to be still and to know that God is Lord. So try, during Advent, to take time for God, along with your loved ones. And as Christmas arrives, we can truly celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ into our own lives and into our history.

With thoughts and prayer
Stephen Monk

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