

The Grapevine

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF ST LAURENCE CHURCH ALVECHURCH



JULY 2020

Online at www.alvechurch-stlaurence.org/monthly-magazine

St Laurence Church Alvechurch

All our usual services, activities and groups remain suspended until change is safely permitted under the COVID-19 restrictions.

Please consult our website (www.alvechurch-stlaurence.org) for an update on any changes.

In the meanwhile, we hope that you can join us for our weekly recorded services on YouTube - please see page 4 for more details and the link on our website.

GROUPS (suspended as explained above)

Sunday Club - Sundays during term time 9.30am Church & Ark

Choir - Thursdays at 7.45pm in Church (445 3569)

**Bellringers - Sundays at 10.45am
Tuesday Practice at 7.30pm (01527 64077)**

**Ark Tots and Toddlers - Thursdays 9.30am to 11.10am in The Ark
Tiny Tots Service - 10.45am 4th Thursday of the month
(sarah100work@gmail.com)**

Ark Cafe - Thursdays during term time at 12.15pm (447 7017)

Home Group - Thursdays 7.30pm at the Coach House (445 2547)

THE ARK

Enquiries to Ian Price 0121 447 7955

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Revd Richard Bubbers writes...

"Surprised by?"

I wonder what has most surprised you about the pandemic we have all been living through. Is there something you have lost – and should it remain lost or be regained? Is there something you have gained – and should it be retained and developed, or has its time passed?

One of the things which has surprised me is how much I have missed the ability to shake another person's hand; and I was further surprised to find out the reason why anthropologists think that the habit began of clasping and shaking another's right hand with your right hand on greeting someone: when people were used to carrying weapons (and most people did this with their right hand), if somebody approached you with their right hand open (and not, for example, holding a weapon behind their back) it was a sign that they were approaching you in peace and with goodwill, and it was safe to reciprocate.

In a soon to be published book, *"Love means love"*, by David Runcorn, the author sees God as the God of surprises. He uses these words to describe the life and attitude of Jesus: *"An air of astonishment surrounds the ministry of Jesus. His words and actions awakened wonder, shock, joy and scandal in equal measure. The most unsettling surprise was who was welcome in his new community. Familiar social, moral and religious boundaries were ignored. Working this out was not easy..... The church of Christ in every age will always be working out the shock and mystery of God's unfolding ways. To embrace the challenges and receive the newness this brings, requires the willingness to be surprised by God."*

A physician once said, *"The best medicine for humans is love."* Someone asked, *"What if it doesn't work?"* He smiled and said, *"Increase the dose."* The one unlimited and never-ending source of love is God, whom St John describes as *being* love (1 John 4.8)."

My biggest surprise was when I realised the reality that, whatever else may be unclear, God actually loves me and cares for me, as I am and for who I am: the wonderful truth of the New Testament is that God loves each one of us as his much loved daughter or son, beyond our understanding and imagining. This is why Jesus Christ came to the earth, in order to make this known to us.

In his classic book, *"God of surprises,"* Gerard Hughes explores how the God of love is the God of surprises: *"Our temptation.... Is to domesticate God, to create a God who favours us, our group, our nation, our Church, and who overthrows our enemies. But God is the God who has compassion for all creation, whose living spirit is in all; a God who breaks down in us all our comforting prejudices and false securities.... This is very painful for us, but it is the pain of rebirth."*

If you would like to explore this further, please look at the homepage of our website - www.alvechurch-stlaurence.org, which gives details of our weekly services on YouTube. You will be very welcome.

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Spiritual Resources during Covid-19

Whilst our churches have to be closed for public worship, please do look at our weekly recorded services on YouTube : a fresh service becomes available each Sunday morning, and you will find the link to our YouTube channel (St Laurence Alvechurch) on the homepage of our website – www.alvechurch-stlaurence.org

You will also find a link to resources for personal prayer, reflection and worship on the home page of our website (www.alvechurch-stlaurence.org). Please feel free to try whatever you may find helpful.

Lectio365 (www.24-7prayer.com/dailydevotional) this free app is a daily devotional resource that helps you encounter God and shape your life by praying the Bible every day. The readings and the prayers may be read and/or listened to.

Time to Pray (www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/time-to-pray) - this free app presents everything you need for Prayer During the Day, with variations according to the day of the week and the season of the Church's year.

Daily Prayer (www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/daily-prayer) - this free app helps you follow any of Morning, Evening and Night Prayer (Anglican Common Worship). It presents the three services in full with NRSV Bible readings for each day.

If you are looking for a **free reflection/meditation** any day of the week, try the Franciscan Richard Rohr from the Centre for Action and Contemplation: www.cac.org/category/daily-meditations/

If you are looking for a useful resource for **reshaping your daily pattern of living** in a way that fits with how your life is try the Rule of life booklet from St Aldates Church in Oxford: <http://www.staldates.org.uk/about/vision>

The Church of England has launched a new programme to help families to talk about faith and pray together. **Faith at Home** will explore themes including courage, patience, generosity, resilience, love and hope. Faith at Home can be accessed at www.churchofengland.org/faithathome

Other worship at home ideas for children and families: ideas and resources to help you share your faith with your family at home – see the Worcester Diocese website at - www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/children-family-worship-at-home

Online church services across the Diocese – see: www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news/2020/03/21/online-church-services-across-diocese/

Daily chants from Taize may be found at - www.churchtimes.co.uk/coronavirus-resources

Alvechurch WI

Pam Horsfield writes...

Well here we are, another month on, and still no actual meeting of members in sight. Not all is lost though. We had a successful virtual tea and cakes alongside the VE celebrations and from the photos sent to Julie, lots of you decorated your houses and enjoyed yourselves. Those photos were included in our newsletter this month as Julie and the committee have worked hard to update all information and now most members can receive their newsletter by email. Those who can't have one either hand delivered or sent by post. Plus, of course, you have each received our little gift to know we're all thinking of you!

We still meet on our usual monthly meeting time on Zoom and had a quiz set by Julie in May, and another in June led by Leona. Either in July or August we want budding poets, or those willing to read a favourite poem, to share their fun with us. We'd also like your ideas of what you would like to see in our meetings. The next Zoom meeting will be on Monday July 13th at 7:00pm. Certainly one speaker who gave us fabulous photos of Bodenham Arboretum last year is now converting to Zoom meetings, so who knows, we may find others are doing the same.

Sadly this month we have to remember that Jean Taylor, a much loved member and previous committee member, has now moved to live with her daughter near Ledbury and her husband Roy also sadly passed away at the same time. Auriel Hoccom has also passed away, and will be sadly missed as she also had been a member for over 50 years and always had a smile for people. Our love and thoughts are with both families at this difficult time.

We wish you a good month as we venture out. Hopefully we'll see more of our families and friends but 'Stay safe' wherever you go.

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Prayer

Gracious God, help us to keep connected to you and one another during these days of separation:

- stay close to those who feel alone and isolated;
- give reassurance to all whose work or business has disappeared or is at risk, and are concerned for the future;
- encourage those working from home, and keep safe those who cannot, especially those caring for others;
- bring healing and peace to those who are sick or fearful;

This we pray in the name of Jesus, who is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen

God's little acre

A poem by Mary Green

A corner of the churchyard in the May sun
They have forgotten to mow here. It breathes
With waves of pignut, ancient meadow plant
Hiding its sweetness underneath the soil.
Then sorrel, acid-sweet, wakening the tongue,
And speedwell creeping all around the graves
Veronica's flower, on the way to the cross
Called speedwell to send us softly on our way,
And buttercups of course, making children smile.
A piece of God's Little Acre as it should be
The herbs that bring us nourishment and health
Buzzing with bees, fluttered by butterflies.
I walk past and the rest is mowed flat grass
Except around the graves themselves, the dead
Being the source of life in flowering.
Sad that the living, fearing for their lives
Have time to kill the flowers that give them life
Leaving the dead to make the flowers bloom.
To you who keep the churchyard I would say
Consider the lilies. And pignut. And speed well.

Update on Alvechurch Cares

Andy Humphries writes...

The Alvechurch Cares initiative continues to provide valuable support for those in our community needing during the CoVID lockdown. The initial phase saw volunteers recruited, a helpline set up, leaflets distributed round the Parish and insurance arrangements clarified for all involved. A steering group of District and Parish Councillors plus local residents co-ordinated the work. Financial grants were obtained, initially from the Parish Council, then from the West Mercia Police + Crime Commissioner and Western Power Distribution Community Fund, to support essential purchases and help with cash flow.

To date nearly 100 people have been helped, largely with their shopping and picking up of prescriptions, and the helpline has also been used to support some clinically vulnerable members of the community who are self-isolating. In the last few weeks Alvechurch Cares has been able to reduce its input in these areas, as many people have been able to use home delivery services and the offers of help from their families and friends. Alvechurch Cares has therefore extended its services to a wider range of people. Using The Lounge as a virtual base, video conferencing facilities have been made available to a youth group and to those who are part of Friendship Matters, a social grouping for older people. Some specialist technical help has been involved in this but early signs are that the video sessions are being well received. A third offering called Alvechurch and Beoley Stronger Together and covering issues like guided meditation and mindfulness is also being established. The focus here is for those who do not have practical issues of getting their shopping but who are finding lockdown and the social isolation that goes with it, difficult.

Alvechurch is like many neighbouring Parishes and communities around the country, where local volunteers have rallied round to help and support those who are in need during the Coronavirus pandemic. Alvechurch Cares is providing a good example of this, where Councillors and volunteers work together to keep spirits up in the community.

If you are in need of help or can offer help, here are the contact details for Alvechurch Cares, the team of volunteers coordinated by Alvechurch Parish Council:

alvechurchcares@gmail.com or 0121 517 0477 or www.facebook.com/groups/alvechurchcares

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Cultivating thankfulness

By Nikki Groarke Archdeacon of Dudley

As I write this piece for you, at the very end of May, life is still full of uncertainty, and I have no idea what the situation in our country, or in our churches, will be like by the time you read my words. The year to date has been one of unprecedented change – much that we now regard as ‘normal’ would have been unimaginable this time last year. We have adapted our life styles, followed the guidelines, practised social distancing, closed our church buildings and endeavoured to stay alert to slow the spread of a global pandemic and save lives.



I wonder what you have most missed during these months of lockdown. And I wonder how long we will consciously treasure those things when we eventually have them back in our lives. Because we take so much for granted, until it’s suddenly not there, or not allowed. For me, it’s been all about people – my family and friends. Throughout April and May, there were many things we could only do with *‘members of our own household’*. I, along with over eight million other people in the UK, live alone, so until late May I couldn’t do anything with anyone! Apart from my virtual encounters (which fill most days – the wonders of technology have enabled meetings to go on, so the world hasn’t ground to a complete halt). How I have missed being with my Mum and Dad, my wider family, sharing a meal and a hug. How I have craved a face-to-face chat with a friend. How I have longed to mingle with others over a coffee at the end of a church service, after having sung our hearts out in praise and shared communion and a sign of peace together.

Some of those joys are gradually being restored now. I can see my mum in the garden, but not hug her. I can run with a friend and chat to my heart’s content, but running a marathon with thousands of others is off limits. Church buildings are likely to be closed for gathered worship for some time yet. My spirits have been lifted wonderfully by these new freedoms, and I want to keep that sense of thankfulness and joy, never again taking such things for granted.

In his letter to a small church in Colosse, Saint Paul urges his readers to *‘be thankful’*, to *‘sing with gratitude’*. It’s easy to forget thankfulness when we take things for granted, the freedoms most of us have as able bodied people in a relatively affluent part of the world. When the freedom to leave our homes, walk the hills, get a haircut, worship together, hug our family gets wrenched from us, we are perhaps prompted to realise how little we appreciated all that was good. I hope to have an attitude of gratitude long after this crisis is over. I want to be thankful for all the things I have missed, not just for the first few weeks I have them back, but forever.

As we venture into whatever the new normal looks like, let’s cultivate thankfulness and grateful hearts, and never take our blessings for granted.

Being a prison chaplain during the Coronavirus pandemic



Margie Schutte is the Managing Chaplain at HMP Hewell in Redditch. She tells us how their work has changed over the past few months of the Covid-19 crisis.

"Chaplaincy is one of the few services which is still operating in the prison. Education and the library service are no longer happening, the gym is shut, probation is working from home and all family visits have been stopped. However, although all our worship services have been suspended, our team of five paid chaplains have continued to attend the prison daily, offering pastoral care to both the prisoners and staff.

"Because of the virus, prisoners are currently locked up for a significant proportion of the day. They do have phones in their cells and TV channels have been increased, but it is difficult for many. Chaplains are able to go into the house blocks and staff will unlock individual prisoners so we can talk to them face to face. We also see those prisoners in the segregation unit every day and all new prisoners within the first 24 hours. The courts are still open so prisoners continue to come in.

"We are dealing with a lot of death and bereavement in the community. Prisoners are currently not allowed to attend the funerals of even the closest family members and often we are the ones who will be asked to break bad news as well as supporting prisoners through their bereavement. No one else has that skill set. In the last few days we've had five funerals of prisoners' relatives. Sometimes there are webcams so they can be live streamed and the prisoners can access the chapel which remains an open space where they can light a candle and pray.

"We've also been given copies of a booklet on the Lord's Prayer. We've been handing them out as well as leaving them in places where they could be picked up. They seem to be disappearing so we're hopeful they are being read.

"The other side of our role is providing support for the prison staff. We'll often loiter in places where we know the staff will be or chat to them when we're out and about. They really value the fact that we're still coming into the prison and will stop for a short conversation or pop into our office. We're also checking up on those who are self-isolating or have tested positive, offering pastoral care via a telephone call.

"Please do pray for prison chaplains. It's a worrying time for all of us with concerns about our own safety and that we might pass the virus back to our families. Knowing that others are praying for us provides an almost tangible support and this makes all the difference."

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Next year's Bishop's Certificate Course

Because of COVID-19, we're still planning the best way to deliver the Bishop's Certificate Course, and considering whether to plan for mainly online groups, or wait until we can meet (properly socially distanced) for face-to-face group, or perhaps do a mix of both.

However, we are absolutely expecting new courses to start this autumn and winter. If you're considering doing a course, or leading one in your parish, we'd like to hear from you. Drop an email to - training@cofe-worcester.org.uk to express your interest as either a participant or a potential parish group leader, and we'll keep in touch about our plans. If you have a preference for online or face-to-face, then let us know that as well.

If you want to learn more about what's involved, then take a look at the website page - <https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/your-christian-calling/bishops-certificate/>



The Ark Cafe

The Ark cafe remains closed until further notice. We look forward to seeing you all once again when we reopen.

Model Railway Exhibition Cancelled

This had been scheduled for Saturday 11th July 2020 and we are all very disappointed we've had to cancel this event but plans are already in place for next year!

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2021! The MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION is on SATURDAY 10TH JULY 2021

Chaplaincy has always been at the heart of Faith at Work in Worcestershire (FWW), but does it make any difference?

In January and February of this year FWW undertook a survey, speaking to over 100 people to try to measure the impact of workplace chaplaincy. The survey looked at three key groups – those whom chaplains visit in workplaces, the chaplains themselves and their churches.

The feedback has provided real insight into what people think about chaplaincy, most of it very positive. It was found that having a regular visit from a chaplain is welcomed and valued. Those at work feel supported and cared for and that, in their chaplain, they have someone they can confide in. As one person said, "The chaplain puts a smile on our faces, a lovely person. It is good to have someone to listen. We all need a chaplain." From chaplains it was discovered how much chaplaincy helped them put their faith into action, and pushed them to find new depths and meaning of that faith. The conversations with FWW partner churches likewise showed how chaplaincy is a critical way of being outward looking in mission, engaging with people where they are.

Dick Johnson, FWW Development Officer, said: *"The survey shows how much people value their chaplain and what a good news story this is for all concerned. This is the Church in action which, in our present world, is needed all the more urgently."*

The survey shows that what chaplaincy achieves should be celebrated and that, though chaplaincy is very difficult at the moment because of COVID-19, when the economy does resume, however different it then is, chaplaincy will be even more needed – and valued – than it ever has been.

The full Survey Report, and an Executive Summary, are available to download and read on the FWW website - <https://www.faithatwork.org.uk/about-us/does-workplace-chaplaincy-make-a-difference/>

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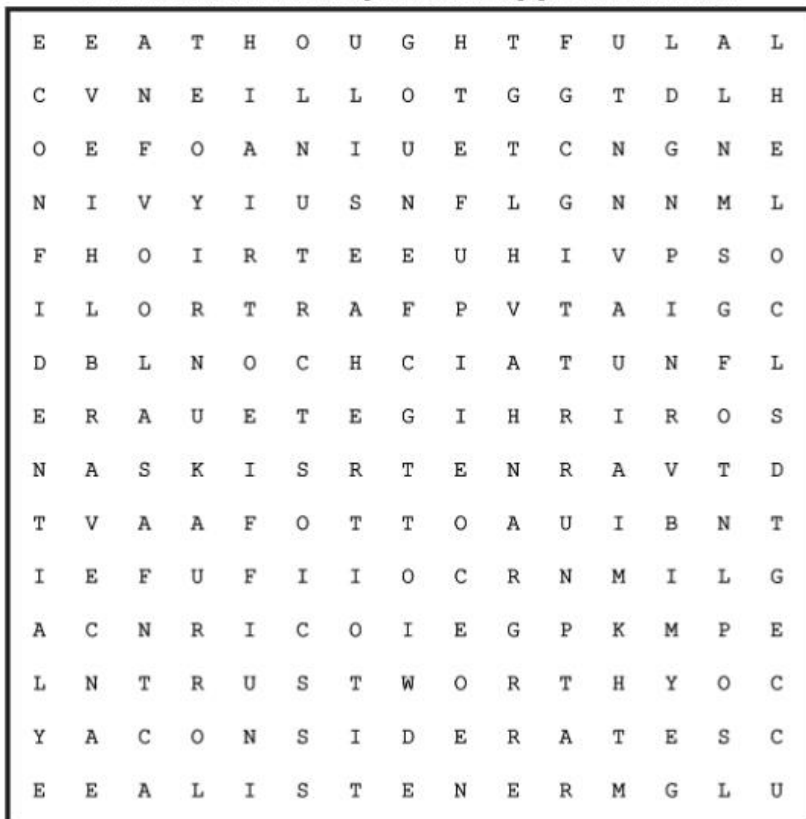
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protective

thoughtful

truthful

trustworthy

Reflecting on history in the news

Richard Bubbers writes...

I have been moved by events surrounding the violent and tragic death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minnesota – the 8 min and 46 seconds video clip of his killing is surely deeply disturbing, and is touching the lives of so many.

Before the events sparked by what happened on 25 May, I had noticed a link in the spirituality of two men, Dr Martin Luther King (assassinated in 1968 in Memphis Tennessee) and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (still alive at the age of 88 in South Africa), whose Christian experience enabled each of them to take non-violent action to influence their own country's legal system for good, and to seek greater social justice, despite violent and sustained opposition.

In his book, *"The Book of Forgiving"*, Desmond Tutu speaks of the practice of *"Ubuntu"* in his country of South Africa (other names are used by different African peoples): *"the word literally means 'humanity' - it is the philosophy and belief that a person is only a person through other people. In other words, we are human only in relation to other humans. Our humanity is bound up in one another, and any tear in the fabric of connection between us must be repaired for us all to be made whole. This interconnectedness is the very root of who we are..... To walk the path of forgiveness is to recognise that my dignity is bound up in your dignity, and any wrongdoing hurts us all."*

This is beautifully expressed in a well-known African proverb: ***"I am because we are."***

This was an essential in the African-American spirituality which crossed from Africa to slavery in the United States. This was the understanding of full humanity which lay at the heart of Martin Luther King's great efforts to develop the *"beloved community"*, which he saw as that *"period of social harmony and universal brotherhood that would follow the current social struggle."* He looked to a time when all would be reconciled and not divided by racial difference and disharmony.

It reminds me of St. Paul on the dignity and worth of every human being who is made in the image and likeness of God : *"Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all"* (Colossians 3:11).

If you would like to see this key area explored at greater length, Tom Wright, a leading Anglican theologian, has written a piece which went online on 8 June, entitled, *"Undermining Racism: Reflections on the 'black lives matter' crisis"* - www.ntwrightpage.com - at the end of the written text there is a link to the author making his presentation on YouTube (*"Undermining Racism – NT Wright"*).

May this be a message for each of us in the community in which God has placed us; and let us hold in our prayers all those affected by racial prejudice, discrimination and violence, and seek for God's love, justice and healing to become known.

"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has launched a free national phone line as a simple new way to bring worship and prayer into people's homes while church buildings are closed because of the coronavirus. Please pass this information on to those who can't access the internet, and would like to hear some hymns, reflections and payers.

Parish Prayers

At this difficult time, we continue to pray for all of our residents, business owners and for those who work in Alvechurch and in particular, for all those who live and work in:

Canal Side – 29 June

Chapel Lane – 6 July

Cooper Hill – 13 July

Crown Meadow – 20 July

Cygnets Close – 27 July



From The Registers



Funerals and Cremations

May they rest in the peace of Christ

| | |
|----------|----------------|
| 30 April | Martin O'Brien |
| 30 April | Sheila Pretty |
| 26 May | Sheila Day |
| 18 June | Auriel Hoccom |

Who's who

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| Churchwardens | Mr Graham Clark, The Coach House, School Lane, 445 2547 Mr Mick Fletcher, 13 Red Lion Street, 447 8451 |
| Deputy Wardens | Mr Colin Bennett, 122 Redditch Road, 01527 64077 Mr David Richmond, The Ferns, Chapel Lane, 445 3569 Mrs Alison Smith, 12 Hollington Road, 447 7293 Mrs Janet Wright, 28 Callow Hill Road, Alvechurch, B48 7LP Mr Andy Notley, 445 5653 Mr Roger Wardle, 55 Birmingham Road, 445 0505 |
| PCC Secretary | Mrs Lysandra Notley, lysnotley@icloud.com, 07989327043 |
| Parish Safeguarding Officer | Mrs Sue Lambert, 7 Cygnet Close, B48 7PX, 07769110608 |
| PCC Treasurer | Mrs Janet Wright, 28 Callow Hill Road, Alvechurch, B48 7LP |
| Organist & Choirmaster | Mr David Richmond, The Ferns, Chapel Lane, 445 3569 |
| Electoral Roll Officer | Mrs Janet Wright, 28 Callow Hill Road, 445 4335 |
| Tower Captain | Mr Colin Bennett, 122 Redditch Road, 01527 64077 |
| Singing Group | Mrs Lynda Wolstencroft, 49 Hinton Avenue, 445 3212 |
| Ark Tots & Toddlers | Mrs Sarah Linton, sarah100work@gmail.com |
| Flower Co-ordinator | Mrs Ann Thurrell, Top Barn, Scarfield Hill, 447 7668 |
| Ark Bookings Secretary & Grapevine Editor | Mr Ian Price, The Ark, School Lane, 447 7955 thearkalvechurch@yahoo.co.uk |

PCC Special Responsibilities

Finance and Standing Committee

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Richard Bubbers | Mick Fletcher |
| Graham Clark | Alison Smith |
| Bob Dale | Janet Wright |
| Peter Freeman | |

Buildings, Fabric and Churchyard for Mission Committee

| | |
|---------------|----------------|
| Bob Dale | Colin Bennett |
| Graham Clark | Peter Freeman |
| Mick Fletcher | Andy Humphries |
| Janet Wright | |

Children and Youth Committee

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Martin Allen | Mick Fletcher |
| Thomas Birchall | Lynne Clark |
| Kate Birchall | Sarah Linton |

Missionary Committee

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Sue Phillips Wardle | Dick Russell |
| Gordon Parsons | Margaret Haste |
| Sally Bubbers | Sue Lambert |

Calendar for JULY



Unfortunately all events are cancelled until further notice.

Tuesday 14 July August **GRAPEVINE GOES TO PRESS:** *articles to -
thearkalvechurch@yahoo.co.uk*

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With our thanks and prayers

Alvechurch PCC - Registered charity number 1131783

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