

The Grapevine

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF ST LAURENCE CHURCH ALVECHURCH



JUNE 2021

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

St Laurence Church Alvechurch

Our in person services in church resumed on 28th March, albeit on a limited basis subject to current safety restrictions. Please see page 12 for more details about our services. Our other activities and groups remain suspended because of the pandemic.

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

We hope that you can join us for our weekly recorded services online - please see page 12 for more details: the link to our YouTube channel is on the homepage of our website - (www.alvechurch-stlaurence.org).

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)**

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

THE ARK

Enquiries to Ian Price 0121 447 7955 (admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk)

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When words are not enough.....

This is my last editorial for the Grapevine, as Sunday 4 July will be my

last Sunday as the Rector of St Laurence's.

After six and a half very full and happy years in Alvechurch I will be retiring from full-time ministry, and Sally and I will be moving to live in North Shropshire. We have both very much enjoyed living in Alvechurch: it is a special place in all sorts of ways, and we have learned so much and felt very settled here.

We are very grateful to everyone who has contributed to our time here - and to God for the opportunity to have been here. We will indeed miss Alvechurch and all those who have been part of our life here.

At a time like this, I am very aware that words are not enough. Perhaps you feel that sometimes too, not least when we are seeking to navigate through the uncharted waters of the pandemic.

I love words, and using language well, no doubt encouraged by my studying Latin and Greek at school and university and then becoming a litigation solicitor. But one of the things I have learnt during our time in Alvechurch is how often words are not enough, and there is the need to go beyond words. When we speak of God and the big mysteries of life (suffering, death, eternity...), all we can do is to use metaphors and pointers. Our language is not adequate fully to describe what is beyond our human understanding. In the Jewish tradition as a reminder of this, there is the practice of refusing even to pronounce the name of God. (It is worth noting that we get our word for mystery from the Greek word meaning "to hush or close the lips.")

The Bible encourages a delicate balance between knowing and not-knowing, between

Richard Bubbers writes...

using words and going beyond words into silence - having humility about words. I find it instructive to remember that the word "humility" comes from a Latin word for "ground/earth": in other words, to be humble is to be grounded, so that we have a firm place to stand.

Especially to get us started in life when we are young, we do need enough knowing. We need a container and structure in which we can safely acknowledge that we do know a bit – just enough to hold us until we are ready for a further knowing. Biblical faith is about the freedom not to know, not have answers for everything, to be able to combine a degree of knowing with a degree of not needing to know - knowing enough, so you can live with the not knowing.

Not only having words, concepts and images, but also being able to go beyond words and images into silence, come together in biblical faith. The ego may want certainty and total clarity, but there is healing to be found in the balance of these two streams of spirituality. It can save us from the danger of having a Christian ideology rather than a Christian faith.

The infinite One, who made everything that is, is actually beyond my human understanding. God is related to, rather than known. So, as the mystics tell us, we know God by loving God, by trusting God, by placing our hope in God. We cannot truly know God objectively like a set of facts to be possessed, but we may relate to God.

Jesus Christ came into the world as God's embodiment – God in human form – to show us what God is like: John's Gospel (1.1) describes Jesus as "the Word". Jesus' life, death and resurrection was and is God's invitation to be in relationship with the One who created and sustains you.

Continues on page 4

AS TIME GOES BY



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The wonderful good news is that this is a relationship of love, and God loves you for who you are and as you are. Writers like the Psalmist (Psalm 25.14), Paul and other mystics, talk about the "secret" or even "*hidden secret*" (Matthew 11.25). The big secret is that an infinite God seeks and desires intimacy with each human soul - and "*soul*" is the Bible's way of talking about the deepest centre of who you are. Here, words are not enough – this is true of any intimate human relationship of love: how much more so in a loving relationship with God.

My prayer is that you will be blessed as you go further on your own spiritual journey, and discover more of God's love for you in a deep, lasting and life-affirming way

Alvechurch WI

Pam Horsfield writes...

At last we can begin to see our way out of the tunnel and are beginning to meet up with one another again. We're very pleased by the number of members who have paid their subs in order stay with us; some of whom have come on line via zoom for our monthly meetings and some are patiently waiting until we get back into the village hall.

This is the month for voting for a new president as Julie is stepping down in order to study a Masters degree. Julie saved us some years ago when we could have closed, so we're very grateful for all she has done to keep us going.

Angela Mawdsley will remain as our Treasurer and the other committee members will now be joined by Alice Wilkinson.

Our speaker for May was Angela who gave a fascinating talk about how we should be caring for our skin...it was an excellent, professional and enjoyable talk.

Next month on Monday 14th June our zoom speaker will be the Baroness of Bolsover (!), a professional speaker who will be advising us on Afternoon Tea Etiquette. Will this raise the standard of any future WI teas which we choose to take part in I wonder?! This meeting starts at 7:30pm with the link available if you contact Julie on - presidentialvechurchwi@gmail.com

Also, don't forget the monthly WI short walks which we're trying to do on the 3rd Monday of the month at 2:30pm. Contact 445 4631 or 729 5877 for more details.

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Resources to connect with Church families from the Diocese

For many churches, our present and ongoing situation with the pandemic has seen a dramatic reduction in connections with our church children, with the challenges of not being able to meet in Sunday schools and church children's clubs.

To help parishes, Worcester Diocese's Calling Young Disciples team have created some interactive resources for children to use each week during church services, or at home.

The resources can be easily accessed via the QR code below, or direct from the diocese website via the website address below. The resources can be accessed using mobile phones, tablets (with internet access) and computers at home, simply point the device's camera at the QR code - it will bring up the link and away you go!

The resources will be updated each week and will relate to one of the readings from the lectionary.

The Bible reading is available to read, with a short explanation to help the children to understand it, and there will also be a short prayer and links to the resources related to the theme that week. The resources are available at different levels: easy, medium or hard.

We hope that these resources will help the children connect with the Bible stories in a new and interactive way!

You can find the Interactive Children's Resources at - www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/interactive-childrens-resources

Here is the QR code. Just scan with your mobile phone -



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The Green Season

A letter from the Dean of Worcester, Peter Atkinson.

As we leave the season of Easter and Pentecost behind, the Church moves into the 'green' season of the weeks after Trinity. Green, because the vestments and altar frontals are of that colour, apart from the occasional variation when a festival or saint's day occurs. Green, too, because as we move from spring into summer, we are all the more aware of the greenery of trees and grass, hedgerows and hills. It's a good time of year for people with green fingers.

Green has other meanings as well. It stands for youth and inexperience ('*he's very green*'), reminding us of the green shoots of spring. Such people are sometimes called '*greenhorns*', which is the American word for immature bulls or oxen. Less pleasantly, green is the colour of envy, derived from Shakespeare's '*green-eyed monster*'. Older people can look with green-eyed jealousy at the greenhorns, who have all their life before them. The greenhorns are too green to know that the old can be envied as well as the young. To the envious person, old or young, the grass is always greener on the neighbour's side of the fence. All this suggests that we might spend the green season of the Church's year reflecting on what makes us envious, what makes us content, and trying to get the balance better.

And then, of course, the colour green has come to sum up the whole environmental agenda, from climate change to pollution, from waste to deforestation, from travel to sources of energy. One of the ways we can implement a green agenda is by living more simple lives, which brings us back to the idea of contentment, and learning to live without envy.

Soon after the start of June we celebrate the summer feast of St Wulfstan which is also the dedication festival of Worcester Cathedral (7 June). In the collect for St Wulfstan we pray that we may '*live simply, work diligently, and make God's kingdom known*' – an agenda for the green season of the Church's year.

Spiritual resources during Covid-19

Please do look at our weekly recorded services on YouTube. A fresh service is available each Sunday morning, and you will find the link to our 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. 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/online-church-services-across-the-diocese.php

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

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Christian Aid STEPS - Update

At the time this article goes to press, we are halfway through our challenge.

We wish to thank you for all your support - it has been such an encouragement to us.

As of 8th May we have together completed 452926 steps, well on our way to meeting our challenge which ends on 31st May.

At the time of writing, we have raised £950 for Christian Aid and are so grateful that because of you, we have been able to help those struggling to live with the challenges of climate change and poverty.

**HERE IS THE LINK TO SPONSOR OUR GROUP -
www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rachel-towers3**

Examples of how Christian Aid might use donations are :

£10 could buy a tap at a water point which will be installed at an earth dam, making it easier for people to fetch water.

£42 could buy 350kg of cement, which is needed for building work.

£335 could pay for a communal water point with two taps, situated at an earth dam, where people can collect water.

£545 could pay for a skilled labourer to work on the construction of an earth or sand dam.

Thank you again for your support.

Veronica and the St Laurence Monday Group



#Stand Together

For dignity, For Equality, For Justice

Climate Sunday resources

Sue and Roger Wardle writes...

There are lots of resources around to help us all think through the implications of climate change and develop our responses as individuals and as a church. The following websites each offer help, ideas and encouragement. We've listed them under the five headings used in our Climate Sunday service on 9th May 2021. We also include some publications that have helped and challenged us.

1. Individual households: <https://creationcare.org.uk/>
2. Church family: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>
3. Local community: <https://www.cleanergreenalvechurch.org.uk/home> ;
Email: incredibleediblealvechurch@gmail.com ;
Survey: <https://freeonlinesurveys.com/s/yrheK1kp#/0> ;
www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/called-to-action--the-time-is-now-.php
4. Nation: www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/ethical-investment-advisory-group

The following websites are recommended by Worcester Diocese:

www.brightnow.org.uk

www.transitionpathwayinitiative.org

www.ccla.co.uk

www.goodmoneyweek.com

www.makemymoneymatter.co.uk

www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/news/called-to-action-disinvestment.php

5. Wider world: <https://traidcraftexchange.org/regenerators>

Publications:

Laudato Si by Pope Frances May 2015

Say Yes to Life: Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book for 2020 by Ruth Valerio

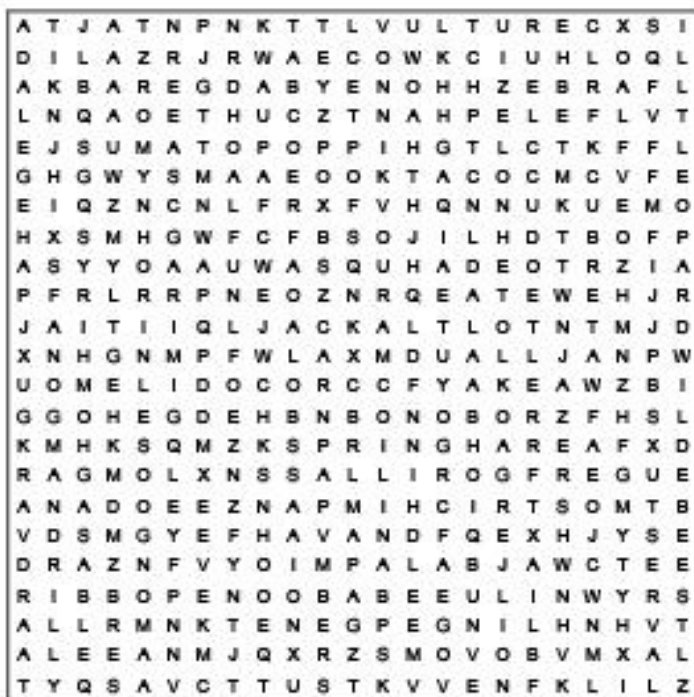
Coivid-19: environment, justice and the future by Ruth Valerio, Margot Hodson, Martin

Hodson and Timothy Howels Grove Book E 198 July 2020



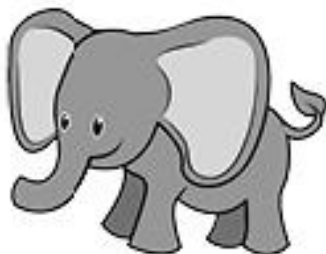
African Animals Word Search

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the African animals in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.



- AARDVARK
- BABOON
- BAT
- BONOBO
- BUFFALO
- CHEETAH
- CHIMPANZEE
- CROCODILE
- ELEPHANT
- GAZELLE
- GELADA
- GENET
- GIRAFFE
- GORILLA
- HARTEBEEST
- HEDGEHOG
- HIPPOPOTAMUS
- HONEY BADGER
- HYENA
- HYRAX
- IMPALA
- JACKAL
- LEOPARD
- LION
- MANDRILL

- MEERKAT
- MONGOOSE
- OSTRICH
- PANGOLIN
- PORCUPINE
- RHINOCEROS
- SABLE
- SERVAL
- SPRINGHARE
- VULTURE
- WARTHOG
- WATERBUCK
- WILDEBEEST
- ZEBRA



Thoughts in a Covid world

Philippa Brakes writes...

Well it seems we really are in the process of being properly released. Is this how prisoners feel as they come to the end of their sentence? Of course, being human that question is nonsense, because even in similar circumstances we all experience totally different emotions. Some of us will erupt out of captivity this summer and resume what was once a normal life. Others will be more hesitant and some may feel so fearful and damaged by the last year's events that they remain trapped by fear, grief or addictions.

Jonah in the bible was so panicked by God asking him to travel to a new place to tell people, who didn't want to know God, the truth, that he ended up hiding in a whale! A bit drastic perhaps, but it is so tempting to hide away from anything that seems to threaten us. *"What if"*; two such intimidating words if used negatively - what if it all goes wrong... but, how wonderful if used positively. What if God just loves us so extravagantly that he wants us to be free to be the people we were born to be. That kind of freedom is available whatever our circumstances – in lockdown or not, we can be free from fear, the dragging negativity of grief, the binding hold of unwanted habits or addictions.

God has made us wonderful promises to hang on to as we go out into the world again.

Deuteronomy 31.8 says *"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged"*.

John 16.33 says *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Exodus 14.14 says *"The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."*

I love that last one! In case anyone thinks I must know the bible extensively to be able to produce all these quotations, I have to admit I that I don't. The internet does much harm, but it is also full of wonderful encouragement. If anyone is in need of God's blessing in any way, you can just search along the lines of *"Bible quotations for times of fear and despair"* or *"encouraging bible quotations"* or *"quotations expressing joy and gratitude"*. The bible is such a wonderful book, so rich in all human experience and emotion and so full of God's wonderful responses.

Always thinking at this time of those all over the world who are still in the midst of their struggles with Covid; may God pour his healing and grace on all those who feel overwhelmed. Amen.

Update on in-person services in church



Following the government's latest announcement on the way forward out of the pandemic, in person services in church resumed on 28th March, albeit on a limited basis subject to current safety restrictions. These services on a Sunday are planned as follows:

1. 9.30am – on 1st Sunday family communion service, and on 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays family worship service.
2. 11:15 am – 1st Sunday morning prayer (Common Worship) and on 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays communion service (Common Worship).

Our recorded services will continue on our YouTube channel. You can find the channel by either searching on YouTube for "***St Laurence Alvechurch***", or via the direct link - www.youtube.com/channel/UCVQ6tgn7g6qT7vJ1Rh3vxpg

We are praying for everyone's safe keeping during this difficult time.

You can access various prayer, bible reading, reflection and worship links on our website by visiting - <http://www.alvechurch-stlaurence.org/resources>

The Rector and Churchwardens may be contacted by telephoning 0121 445 1087 or emailing - stlaurencealvechurch@yahoo.co.uk

Safety restrictions at the time of going to print include our not being able to sing together. Two metre distancing means that we cannot fit in more than 31 people per service in the marked seats, but of course members of the same household/bubble are able to sit together and this will increase the maximum number who may be accommodated. Face coverings are also required, unless you come within one of the exempted groups, or while you are taking part in leading a service. At each service we need to ask for contact details for the government's "*test and trace*" scheme.



Alvechurch Open Gardens

Having been prevented from opening last year, Alvechurch Open Gardens are delighted to be able to invite visitors into their gardens this year. 11 Gardens ranging in size from a small courtyard garden to a 5 acre plot and including Alvechurch Allotments, are opening under the National Garden Scheme which raises money for charity. Appropriately the money mostly goes to support nursing and gardening charities, two areas that have become even more important to most of us over this time of pandemic. A list of beneficiaries for 2019 will be displayed at each garden.



Gardeners are working hard to get their gardens ready for the Open Days - Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th June. Gardens will be open from 1pm until 6pm with a combined price of £6.00. Accompanied children are free. Disability access is very restricted in most gardens as most have steps and/or slopes. No dogs except for assistance dogs or the garden owner's permission. Please be aware that some gardens are near to the river or canals and many have a pond. Deep water will be indicated but you will need to check children are kept safe.

The open days are just before the end of 'Lockdown' so we will need to observe social distancing. This won't be too difficult in the larger gardens and we hope visitors will be patient if they are asked to wait a few minutes before entering any of the smaller plots. This will help to ensure you have a better view as well as keeping you safe.

Tickets can be bought at any of the gardens with cash. Please try to have the exact money to avoid the risk of receiving change. If you don't want to handle cash, you can buy your ticket from a card machine at Wychwood House, Bear Hill. Tickets are valid for both days so you don't need to rush around in just one. A map of the gardens opening will be provided when you pay for your ticket. All gardens will be clearly indicated so you should be able to find them fairly easily.

If you are arriving by car, there is parking available in a field off Old Rectory Lane (not in use if we have had heavy rain!), the main central car park and at the train station, though the latter is a little distance from the gardens opening this year. There is also on-street parking on the wider roads. If you have taken to cycling during the pandemic, this is an ideal way of moving round the village. Don't forget to lock your bike when you leave it. Light refreshments will be provided at The Shrubbery which is a new venue for this. They will have a card machine to make paying easier and safer.

We hope many people will look forward to enjoying wandering around these many and varied gardens. The openers are eager to welcome you to share their treasured outside spaces and to make money for so many deserving charities. Please put 19th & 20th June in you diaries, we will be open come rain or shine though we hope for the latter!

Parish Prayers

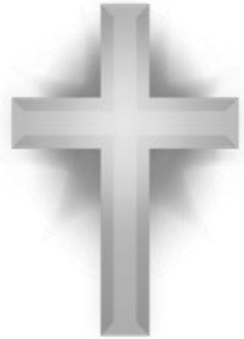
At this time, we pray for all those who live and work in our community and especially those who live and work in:

6 June – The Becks

13 June – The Buckleys

20 June – The Drive

27 June – The Gaunts



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If you plant LAZINESS you will reap STAGNATION
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If you plant SIN you will reap GUILT
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If you plant HUMILITY you will reap GREATNESS
If you plant CONSIDERATION you will reap HARMONY
If you plant FORGIVENESS you will reap CONCILIATION
If you plant OPENNESS you will reap INTIMACY
If you plant PATIENCE you will reap IMPROVEMENTS
If you plant FAITH you will reap MIRACLES

(part of a compilation by Alberto Casing)
extracted from the daily prayers website by Gordon Parsons.

From The Registers



Funerals and Cremations

May they rest in the peace of Christ

6 May	Richard Stephen Partridge
11 May	Christina Dorothy Keeling

Who's who

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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 admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

PCC Special Responsibilities

Finance and Standing Committee

Richard Bubbers	Mick Fletcher
Graham Clark	Janet Wright
Bob Dale	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 JUNE



Please see our church and Ark websites for details of our activities -
www.alvechurch-stlaurence.org and www.thearkalvechurch.co.uk

Monday 14 **JULY 2021 GRAPEVINE GOES TO PRESS:**
articles to - admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

Text Giving for St Laurence Church

Help to preserve the church for future generations by making a donation to the mission and ministry of St Laurence's.

You can make a donation with a quick and simple text message

Text "**STLALVECHURCH 5" to 70085** to donate £5

Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Text "**STLALVECHURCH 10" to 70085** to donate £10

Texts cost £10 plus one standard rate message

Text "**STLALVECHURCH 20" to 70085** to donate £20

Texts cost £20 plus one standard rate message

Or you can also make a donation by scanning
this QR code with your mobile phone



Or please send a cheque payable to **Alvechurch PCC**, posted to our parish office address at The Ark, St Laurence Church, School Lane, Alvechurch, Birmingham B48 7SB.

Or, if you would like to set up a direct debit (under the Parish Giving Scheme), this can now be done over the telephone – please leave a brief message on our church answerphone (0121 445 1087), or email the church email address (stlaurencealvechurch@yahoo.co.uk), with your name and telephone number, so that our church treasurer may contact you.

With our thanks and prayers.

Alvechurch PCC - Registered charity number 1131783

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