



St HELEN'S WINDOW

Living with Cancer

The Revd Christopher Jones

I have entitled this article 'Living with Cancer' for the simple reason that one has to live with it whether or not one survives, and if one doesn't, it is a necessary prelude to dying. My experience over the last two years, of bowel cancer followed by secondary liver cancer now judged to be incurable, makes me think that modern affluent societies tend to deny and evade the reality of death and dying.

The Christian tradition over many centuries has held that preparation for death is highly desirable, and for this reason the Prayer Book Litany prays for us to be delivered from sudden death. I have come to see the wisdom of this, because time for reflection and action has been, for me and others, a major factor in living with cancer so as to prepare for my death. This has been a gradual, and challenging, process.

When I was first diagnosed, in October 2009, the prospect of life-threatening illness was new, and the possibility of dying seemed distant. I reckoned with the possibility, but I hoped and expected to recover and survive – a natural and proper reaction, especially when backed by an encouraging medical prognosis. I have since had to come to terms with the progressive loss of the hope of survival. I was declared free of cancer in September 2010, only for its reappearance in my liver to be detected two months later. This was a devastating blow.

In my view, both living and dying involve four major dimensions; our physical life, which is the foundation of our mental and spiritual life; our human relationships which make us who and what we are; the sense of our life as a story that coheres and makes sense; and our relationship to God our Creator and Redeemer. Living with cancer has transformed each of these dimensions.

Being a cancer patient involves confronting the physical reality of illness, decay, pain and weakness. I have found help in the example of fellow patients ('sufferers') who adapt to it cheerfully. I realise that the trajectory of terminal illness is the gradual failure of our physical functions, increasing dependence on others, and the loss of consciousness – not an easy thought. A huge part of coping with this is the sympathy and support I receive from other people.

I could not have coped without the daily care and support of my wife Jenny, and the wider support of our children and families, colleagues at work, and friends across the country and the world. People are sometimes ill at ease in talking with me about my illness. They ask perfectly reasonable questions like 'Does having chemotherapy hurt?' (Answer: No, but it's boring) but also tricky ones like 'Are you better?' Many try to cheer me up by telling me about people they know who have recovered from cancer. It is important not to impose your own experience on the unique, individual cancer patient, but to let them speak from theirs, and to listen and learn. I also find that people ask how I am coping, but less frequently about Jenny and the children. Spare a thought for the carers and relatives, who bear an unseen and heavy burden.

Having cancer disrupted my sense of the continuity of life. I have had to adjust to the prospect of not living to be 60 rather than living to 85 like most of my family. However, after much struggling, I have come to accept it and to set myself to 'redeem the time' that is left. I am engaged with fulfilling projects at work and spending a lot of time with old friends, re-living the past with enjoyment and gratitude.

Finally, I have reviewed the achievements and failures of my life and handed them over to God. My faith in Christ who passed through death and overcame it gives me hope not just for the next life but for life here and now. My conviction that nothing can separate us from the eternal purposes of God for our good has survived the test of living with cancer. It enables me to live each day in thanksgiving and peace, leaving the future in those strong and compassionate divine hands.

Christopher Jones works at Church House, Westminster, as Policy Adviser for Home Affairs to the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England. From 1995 to 2008 he was an honorary member of the clergy team at St Helen's while serving as Chaplain and Fellow of St Peter's College, Oxford.

The Editors

Jane Baun
Alexandra Green
Sheila Hills
Silvia Joinson
David Pope

Copy for next issue
to Church Office or
via email by 5th of
preceding month

St Helen's Church
Office: St Helen's
Court, Abingdon
OX14 5BS

Tel: 01235 520144

E-mail:
StHelensWindow
@gmail.com

Designed and pageset
in Times New Roman

Special issue - living with Cancer

Jane Baun

The experience of living with the diagnosis and treatment of cancer is something most of us prefer not to think about unless it is forced upon us by circumstances. We are often embarrassed and tongue-tied when faced with the subject. Yet, cancer has touched the lives of most of us in some way, and part of Christian living is learning to face the realities of life squarely, with hope, faith, compassion, and realism.

This month's issue of St Helen's Window, under the guest editorship of our Rector, the Revd Dr Charles Miller, brings together the reflections of four individuals, some of whom have had the experience of living with cancer, and all of whom have thought carefully about the meaning and ramifications of cancer.

The Revd Christopher Jones is no stranger to St Helen's or to the Window: the honest, hopeful reflections on diagnosis and treatment that Christopher wrote for our front page in April 2010, 'Easter God, Easter People', will have been helpful to many struggling with similar experiences. His front-page reflection for this issue helps us begin to understand how we can best support those who have cancer—and, not to forget—

those who care for them. It challenges us take up the traditional Christian reflection on our own mortality, not in a morbid way, but in a spirit of Christian realism and hope.

The Revd Canon Beaumont Stevenson, who has worked for many years in chaplaincy and psychotherapy, takes us further into understanding the psychological processes at work in how we talk about cancer, and the effects the perceptions of others can have on the self-identity of cancer patients.

Finally, two parishioners with recent experience of bowel cancer, Colin Casemore and Anne Faulkner, share observations and reflections on the challenges of living with the disease, and on how their core values and support structures—including family, friends, prayer, church, and pastoral care—have helped bring them through.

The editors hope that this issue will encourage all of us to face some of the issues raised by cancer with honesty, clarity, and compassion, and that it will bring encouragement to those for whom coping with cancer is a daily reality. The articles in it are not ephemeral, but are of lasting significance for us all.

National Cursillo Ultreya

Barbara Earl

Ann Moss and I set off by train on 2 September to attend the National Cursillo Ultreya at Lincoln. Having settled in at our digs in Bishop Grosseteste University, we walked down the hill into the city and arrived just in time for Evening Prayer at the Cathedral.

Saturday morning saw 750 Cursillistas come together at the university to praise God in worship and song. After a picnic lunch we all attended a Eucharist at the Cathedral. The banners from dioceses from all over the United Kingdom were paraded from Castle Square to the Cathedral with everyone singing — 'We are marching in the Love of

God'. At the end of the service the clergy, followed by the banners, paraded back to Castle

Square, where we all sang — 'Thine be the Glory' before dispersing. In the evening, over 100 of us danced the night away to a Ceilidh band, exhausting but great fun.

Ann and I stayed a further night and went to the Sunday Morning Eucharist in St Hugh's Chapel in the Cathedral which included the baptism of baby Liam. What an amazing weekend! We are already planning to go next year to St Asaph's in North Wales.



Norah Jones

by her family

On September 19th we celebrated the life of Norah Jones who had also been baptised, confirmed and married at St Helen's Church.

Norah was born in Abingdon in 1921, the only child of Fred and Louisa Scarrott and lived in Swinburne Road, where her mother ran a sweetshop. Norah met Sam when he was stationed at RAF Abingdon from his home in Ellesmere Port. They married in 1940 and were together for 49 years until Sam's death in 1989.

Their son, Clifford, was born in 1941 and a few months later, Sam was sent to North Africa during the war. Norah did war work at the MG factory and was probably one of the first women in Abingdon to drive a car. When Sam returned, he was stationed in Middle Wallop, Salisbury, and in 1948 their daughter Jenny was born. They returned to live in Abingdon and had another daughter, Sally, in 1958.

During the 1950s Norah worked for the butchers, formerly Fletchers and later Dewhursts, helping in the office and driving the butcher's van. Once, when delivering meat at Abingdon Aerodrome she parked the van by the side of a runway behind a Beverley aeroplane. When she returned to the van, the Beverley had revved up its engines and blown the van over and over across the grass! She also worked at Elliston & Cavell in Oxford, and at Mastervision in Abingdon with her husband Sam, later returning to Debenhams and working for many years on the fashion floor.

Norah loved Abingdon and wanted to help its community by belonging to many different political, charitable and social organisations.

She was a lifelong member of the Conservatives, having joined the Conservative Party in 1937, aged 16. She constantly helped as a volunteer, fundraising, door to door delivering, stuffing envelopes, not to mention heckling Opposition candidates at public meetings! Originally a member of the Primrose League, Norah joined the re-formed Abingdon Ladies Section in the 1950s and later became its President as part of the Oxford West and Abingdon Conservative Association. When Sam became the Mayor of the Borough of Abingdon in 1969-70 she took on her role as the Mayoress, not only with huge pride and conscientiousness, but also with a considerable number of new hats!



Norah became a member of the NSPCC committee in the early 1960s, a cause very close to her heart. She was a past President of Trefoil Guild and past Captain and President of the Ladies Section of Abingdon Bowling Club which she joined at the beginning of the 1970s. She was also on the committee of the League of Friends of Abingdon Community Hospital, a Samaritan, a member of the Women's Institute. She supported events at St Helen's being a member of FOSH a house group and a reserve sidesman.

Norah hugely enjoyed fundraising for all the organisations with which she was involved. Over the years she helped to raise many thousands of pounds with coffee mornings, lunches, dinners, dances, summer fetes and winter fairs, contributing her flower arranging and catering skills. On many occasions she cooked and sliced huge turkeys and hams, baked numerous cakes and apple pies and made rows upon rows of sausage rolls and vol au vents.

Norah and Sam were very active people and had both separate and joint interests. From the beginning of their courtship they loved ballroom dancing and both of them were very good dancers. Later on in their marriage they became keen members of Abingdon Bowling Club together.

In 2003 Norah sadly suffered a stroke but after a spell in hospital, in her true indomitable spirit, she managed to return to her own home. Although forced to be less active, she still enjoyed meetings and card afternoons being held at her house and also being taken to events in her wheelchair, so that she could continue to take a keen interest in all things Abingdon. She also made sure that she picked up the phone to local councillors if she wanted to get something done in the town.

She always loved seeing her family which grew to include 7 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren and never lost her sense of humour and fun.

Her last resident carer, Sue, became a true companion in the last years of Norah's life, as well as being a friend to all the family. As a result, Norah was able to stay in her home and her children were able to be with her when she passed away quietly early on the morning of 7 September.

Cancer: Disease or Identity?

Canon Beau Stevenson

Cancer is not only one of the most distressing illnesses, but in one sense also a unique one. It is in a special category because it is usually described in a different way than other forms of illness. Susan Sontag in her book *Illness as Metaphor* notes that we do not use our normal metaphors when referring to cancer, instead describing it with images of warfare. A person loses their brave battle with cancer. We bombard invasive cancer with radiotherapy to fight it. In short, we battle with cancer; we suffer with haemorrhoids, not the other way around. Why is this change of imagery about this particular illness significant? Perhaps it is because cancer carries with it a strong issue of its own identity.

When an invading army enters a country, and wins, the opposing army tears down the flag of the conquered country and raises its own. It therefore replaces the identity of the invaded country with its own. The people whose country has been invaded are at the mercy of the conquering enemy, their plans and desires are side-tracked to be subject to the will of the conquering enemy. In this 'invasion' we can be separated from those we love at a whim. This often matches the underlying fear of cancer as invader.

There is also a difference between disease and illness. Disease is a specific condition, which we have, while illness has been described as 'when the part takes over the whole.' An illness unlike a disease is something which takes over our identity. For instance, if we go to hospital, we may be described by the staff as 'the broken leg in bay 4'. How thrilling! Imagine your passport picture being replaced with one of a plaster cast. Your infirmity has somehow become your identity.

Cecily Saunders, who was a founder of the hospice movement in this country used to describe a good death as when an 'individual died as themselves.' In other words, they won because their illness did not succeed in re-defining their personhood. This is why valuable organisations such as the Maggie Centres help keep the personal and creative at the centre of the life of persons who also just happen to have cancer.

When St Francis kissed a leper and Princess Diana hugged a child with AIDS, these were both powerful spiritual and psychological identity

changing acts. What those acts did was to make contact with the loveable person behind what others might identify as the sufferers merely possessing the identity of their illness. Having a member of the Royal family doing it, was a very powerful and universally transforming statement.

The central thing is that while none of us may be able to control what happens to us in life, nevertheless we do have 100% control over choosing our attitude towards whatever happens to us. Indeed, while our attitude may change from time to time it is important that the illness not define our essential identity. Jesus on the cross chose to be compassionate towards those being crucified with him and to his mother and John, rather than defining himself as a victim of injustice — attitude being the essential ingredient.

One small lad of 6, who wore a heavy brace because of polio, was constantly irritated when out in public with his Mum when strangers came up and said: 'Aw, poor little thing.' He asked his mother how he might handle this. She helpfully suggested that when it happened he should smile brightly and say 'I'm fine; how are you?'

The attitude we choose is important not only for those suffering with cancer, but also when our body, mind, or faculties 'depart on sabbatical' through aging. Re-focussing on the loving wholeness (holiness) within displaces the illness from being central. We are not the sum total of our imperfections or of our infirmity unless we so choose.

- Perhaps each of us might reflect at this given moment in time, where our own sense of identity currently resides.
- It might be useful to remember what someone close to us may have done to restore that knowledge of who we really were when we may have temporarily misplaced it by incorrectly imagining we had become our infirmity.

Canon Beaumont Stevenson is the Diocesan Pastoral Care Advisor, and lecturer in Pastoral Psychology at St. Stephen's House, Oxford. He served for many years as a Chaplain and on the Staff Support Service of the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Mental Healthcare NHS Trust.

Two Personal Inventories

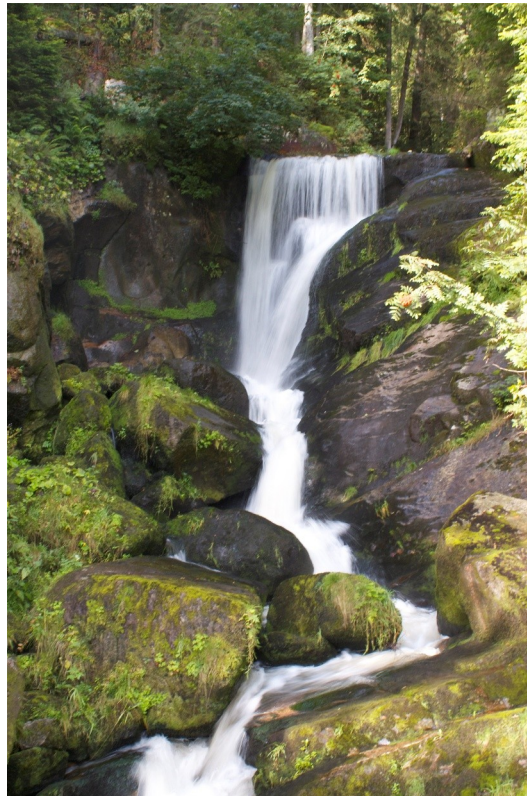
Charles Miller

A number of St Helen's parishioners have had the experience of living with cancer. Two of them, Colin Casemore, diagnosed and successfully treated for bowel cancer in 2001, and Anne Faulkner, currently undergoing treatment also for bowel cancer, agreed to share their thoughts and feelings on five topics related to their experience.

In thinking about the way cancer affected their thinking and feeling about their bodies the diagnosis of bowel cancer didn't have a devastating effect or change thoughts and feelings as would have been the case in the event of other forms of cancer. Anne remarked, for instance, that larynx or breast cancer would have prompted a whole different set of feelings since the form of cancer and its treatment would have had an unavoidable impact on her self-image or public functioning.

So what about one's self-image? Anne, who is still in treatment, doesn't feel differently and doesn't think of this issue as the most difficult, worrying, painful or stressful thing in her life. Colin was surprised that he didn't react in a negative way either.

But 'no man is an island', so what about relations with others? Colin's chief concern was that it seemed harder for everyone else to deal with than it was for him! He found it unsettling to behold others just 'watching, waiting, worrying' while he himself just 'got on with it'. From a different angle, Anne testifies that her sense of the preciousness of family and friends remains constant; the cancer experience hasn't affected that; nor has it prompted the need to re-evaluate the place of those relations in her life. They're at the top; they remain there.



What about life's priorities more generally? Colin soundly re-committed to putting family and friends at the top of all else, but thought it was important not to 'go over the top'; after all, nothing was going to happen instantly, so it was a matter of judiciously re-adjusting time and energy on behalf of relationships. Anne doesn't feel that re-prioritizing is called for; things are already where they need to be.

For a Christian, in any case, the relationship with God matters too. How is that affected? With predictable northern honesty, Anne remarks, 'My inclination, at first, was to shout 'Help' every time I had a spare minute.' She then recalled a piece of advice passed on to her by her sister: 'If you're in trouble—pray. Pray deeply, pray thoughtfully and pray ONCE. Don't nag the Lord. He's heard you.' Good advice. Colin, interestingly, says 'Peace—with some strange feeling that I was not alone....' Both Anne and Colin found the support, practical and prayerful, of their church com-

munity very important. Colin found the ministry of anointing/lay-on-of-hands a means of inner strengthening, and appreciated the care of the hospital chaplain.

Of course, people are different, and it's probably true that we go through the experience of cancer in ways that characterize our lives and dispositions generally. Why should the experience of cancer be different? The perspectives above are therefore just that: two perspectives. The rest of us are not required to conform to those; but we can use those frank testimonies as a prompt for us to consider the issues.

What's on in November

St Helen's Church

Tuesdays 8, 15, 22 & 29 November

Alpha Cafe

10.00 - 11.10 in Church Centre
 Course run by Centre Cluster Churches
 Contact Revd SokHan Yong 520144
 Alpha.sthelens@gmail.com

Tuesday 8 November

Mothers' Union

20.00 in Church Centre

The Children's Society by Carol Worthington

Sunday 13 November

Remembrance Day

10.00 Civic Service

11.00 Ceremony at the War Memorial

Wednesday 16 November

Wednesday Club

20.00 in Church Centre

A First Response David Hunt

Learn about resuscitation & defibrillation.

Saturday 19 November

Jesse Tree Craft Morning

Help needed to make more mosaic prophets for the
 Jesse Tree, materials and inspiration provided.

10.00 - 12.30

Sunday 20 November

17.30 **Choral Evensong** with sermon

Preacher, Bishop Ronald Gordon

Third in series *What's in a Word* celebrating the
 400th centenary of the King James Bible

Readings using 1611 Bible

Tuesday 22 November

Putting up the **Jesse Tree**

Helpers welcome!

10.00 in Church

Thursday 24 November

St Helen's @ Lunch

12.00 at Aston Pottery Aston

For lifts/directions contact Susan Scott 522960

Friday 25 November

Friends of St Helen's

Talk by the Revd Dr Jane Baun

19.30 in Church Centre

Saturday 26 November

Festive Coffee Morning

10.00 - 12.00 in South Aisle

Offers of help to Susan Scott 522960

Sunday 27 November

Advent Sunday

10.00 Eucharist and Blessing of the Tree
 17.30 Service of Advent Music and Readings

Church in Abingdon

Tuesday 1 November

Living the Question

An ecumenical discussion group

meeting in the Abingdon area

on the first Tuesday of each month

November theme, *Creative Transformation*

Details 530480 or capmarshall@btinternet.com

Thursdays 3 & 17 November

Back to 35

10.30-11.30 Baptist Church Hall

Opportunity for fellowship, cake and coffee

November 3 *Advice from the Fire Service*

November 17 *Bring your own photos to share*

Ecumenical House Groups

During the 3 weeks beginning 7 November

Tough Talk — Hard Sayings using material based on
 York Course, details 526089

Sunday 6 November

Annual Bereavement Service

15.00 at St Edmund's Church

Followed by refreshments & an opportunity to find out
 about the Bereavement Support Group

Thursday 17 November

CiA bereavement Support Group

first in new series of 4 meetings

19.30 at Abingdon Baptist Church

More details from Revd Tim Hewes

01865 735646

Saturday/Sunday 26-27 November

Christ Church 50th Anniversary Weekend

Saturday *Come and Sing MESSIAH*

Rehearsal from 10.00, performance 19.00

chriswgordon6@aol.com to join in.

Sunday, the Bishop of Oxford preaching

9.30 & 11.15

December Diary date

Thursday 1 December

Christmas Extravaganza

St Nicolas Church open that evening for refreshments

Various stalls: Traidcraft, BRF

Bible Quiz and Music

Displays about Street Pastors & 'Choose Abingdon'

If you would like an event listed on this page let us know by the 5th of the previous month and we will try to include it. Contact Silvia at alanj@phonecoop.coop or 01235 521247

Oh no! A Numbers Quiz!

It's time for a numbers quiz again! Each question has a number followed by some letters.
e.g., 2 P I a P - 2 Peas in a pod

- 1 90 D I a R A _____
- 2 3 W M _____
- 3 646 S I the H of C _____
- 4 16 O in a P _____
- 5 13 L M in a Y _____
- 6 27 E U M S _____
- 7 2 W I a F _____
- 8 6 L O an I _____
- 9 1966 E W the W C _____
- 10 7 Y B L _____
- 11 20000 L U the S _____
- 12 1 F I T G _____
- 13 9 T O of T _____
- 14 63 Y of Q V R _____
- 15 60 M I an H _____
- 16 40 D I L _____
- 17 15 R B O a S T _____
- 18 1066 B of H _____
- 19 81 S of N _____
- 20 112 P I a H _____
- 21 18 V A _____
- 22 1984 B by G O _____
- 23 4 G I N T _____
- 24 100 Y I a C _____
- 25 88 T F L _____
- 26 52 W I a Y _____
- 27 4 W & a F _____
- 28 8 L O a S _____
- 29 7 D S _____
- 30 1953 C of E _____
- 31 360 D I a C _____
- 32 7 B F S B _____
- 33 25 Y F a S J _____
- 34 64000 D Q _____
- 35 1917 R R _____
- 36 6 W of H the E _____
- 37 50 H a C _____
- 38 10 O of T _____
- 39 12 D of C _____
- 40 6 F I a F _____

Solution to October's crossword by Ian Miles

O	R	D	E	R	S	O	F	S	E	R	V	I	C	E
U		O		E		U		H		E		P		X
T	E	M	P	E	S	T		O	V	E	R	S	E	E
O		I		L		L	A	W		D		W		T
F	U	N	D	S		O		E		S	P	I	R	E
T		I				P	O	U	R	S		C		R
O	B	E	L	I	S	K		S	A	P	P	H	I	C
W			E		A					L		I		A
N	O	W	E	L	L	S		B	L	U	E	T	I	T
B		H				M	E	R	R	Y		U		H
R	O	O	K	S		R		I		C	O	P	S	E
A		E			O	V	A	T		H		O		D
N	O	V	E	L	L	A		T	R	A	I	L	E	R
C		E		V		N		L		N		E		A
H	A	R	V	E	S	T		F	E	S	T	I	V	A

November at St Helen's Church

Divine Services

Please note new times

Sung Eucharist	10.30	Every Sunday with Junior Church (ex. 13 Nov)
13 Nov Remembrance Sunday	10.00	Civic Service
20 Nov Christ the King		
27 Nov Advent Sunday		
Holy Communion	08.00	Sundays (in St Nicolas' Church)
Morning Prayer	09.10	Monday to Friday
Evening Prayer	17.10	Monday to Friday
Junior Church	10.30	Sundays
Silent Prayer	18.10	Mondays 14 and 28 November
Wednesday Church	10.30	Wednesdays, Holy Communion followed by refreshments.

Meetings and Gatherings all in Church Centre Hall unless marked

Alpha Café	10.00	Tuesdays 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 November
Baby and Toddler Group	09.30 & 11.00	Mondays
Baptism Preparation	20.00	Tuesdays 1, 15 November
Beavers	17.15	Wednesdays
Brownies	18.15	Tuesdays
Clergy consultation	19.00	Wednesdays by appointment
Cubs	18.20	Wednesdays
DCC	19.30	Thursday 10 November
Desiring Life reading group	14.30	Tuesdays 8 and 22 Nov. – Lounge
Faith Forum	09.15	Sunday 6 November
Junior Church	10.30	every Sunday – starts in Church
Marriage Preparation	20.00	Wednesday 9 November
Mothers' Union	20.00	Tuesday 8 November
Wednesday Club	19.00	Wednesday 16 Nov. see p. 6 for details

Events (more details on page 6)

Visiting ringers Peal Attempt	10.00	Saturday 19 November (Tower)
Jesse Tree craft morning	10.00	Saturday 19 November (Church Centre)
St Helen's @ lunch	12.00	Thursday 24 November
Friends of St Helen's	19.30	Friday 25 November

The services and events listed here are correct at the time of going to press – please consult the weekly Newsheet if in doubt.

Sunday Evening Services

All now at **17.30**

6 Nov Eucharist
13 Nov Sung Eucharist
20 Nov Choral Evensong <i>in celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible</i>
27 Nov Service of Advent Music and Readings

Faith Forum

Discussion groups for adults and for young people (10 -18)
 Sunday 6 November
 09.15 in Church Centre

Choral Evensong

Sunday 20 November
 17.30

with the Right Reverend
 Ronald Gordon

Last in sermon series
What's in a Word celebrating the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible and using St Helen's own first edition KJB.

Followed by sherry and nibbles.

To arrange baptisms, weddings and funerals contact the Church Office.
 Clergy are available in the Church Office between 19.00 - 20.00 on a Wednesday.
 Call the office to book an appointment.

Rector:	The Revd Dr Charles Miller
Assisting Priest (NSM):	The Revd Tim Hewes
Curates (NSM):	The Revd Dr Simon Thorn, The Revd Dr Jane Baun, The Revd SokHan Yong
Director of Music:	Christopher Fletcher-Campbell
Parish Administrator:	Linda Barker

St Helen's Church Office: St Helen's Court, Abingdon, OX14 5BS
 01235 520144

Normal opening hours 09.00 to 14.15 Mon, Tues, Weds; 09.15 to 14.15 Fri
 E-mail: administrator@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk
www.sthelens-abingdon.org.uk