



Sunday 25th January 2026

The Conversion of Paul/The Third Sunday of Epiphany

Did St Paul *convert* from Judaism to Christianity (as the name of today's feast day suggests), or did he make a different sort of change in his life? The three versions of the Damascus Road story in the Book of Acts (in chapters 9, 22, and 26) certainly suggest a dramatic change in direction, but if we read the New Testament carefully, many details imply that his new faith didn't abandon his former life in Judaism, but that he perceived a twist which nonetheless remained true (from his point of view) to the broad stream of Israel's religion.

When people assail our Jewish neighbours with accusations based in conspiracy theories and bigotry, we should keep in mind that although Paul changed his mind about whether Gentiles might be admitted to the people of God, he never repudiated the Torah ('the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good'; Rom 7:12), nor the people of Israel ('They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Anointed One, who is over all, God blessed forever'; Rom 9:4f). Israel is God's firstborn; we are adopted into God's family. Israel is the trunk and the roots; we have been grafted into the branches.

As we have observed the Week of Prayer for *Christian Unity*, we do well to work also for reconciliation among Christians and Jews. We have a long history with many shameful chapters for which we need to repent, to seek to make things right — to show the world our gratitude for God's grace shown to us in Christ Jesus.

The Revd Dr A K M Adam

WELCOME to St Helen's this Sunday. 10.30 am *Sung Eucharist*. 5.30 pm *Service for Healing and Wholeness*. The 10.30 am service at St Helen's today can be accessed on Zoom from 10.15 am on: Meeting ID: 865 5159 6523; Passcode: 626891.

FOR TODAY'S SERVICE

Readings: Acts 9.1-22; Galatians 1.11-16a; Matthew 19.27-30

Service Setting: Aston

Hymns:

Processional: 233 Jesus calls us o'er the tumult

Gradual: 423 Fight the good fight

Offertory: 376 And can it be

Anthem: Chilcott, Just as I am

Post Communion: 469 I heard the voice of Jesus say

Collect:

Almighty God, who caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world through the preaching of your servant Saint Paul: grant that we who celebrate his wonderful conversion may follow him in bearing witness to your truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Psalm: 67

Response: Let the people praise thee, O God let all the people praise thee.

Let God be gracious to us and bless us:

and make his face to shine upon us,

that your ways may be known on Earth:

your liberating power among all nations. **Response**

Let the peoples praise you O God:

let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing:

for you judge the peoples with integrity,

and govern the nations upon Earth. **Response**

Then the Earth will yield its fruitfulness:

and God, our God will bless us.

God shall bless us:

and all the ends of the Earth will fear him. **Response**

5.30 PM SERVICE FOR HEALING AND WHOLENESS

Readings: Ephesians 4.1-13

Hymns: CP371 (Tune St Stephen) All praise to our Redeeming Lord; CP188 O Holy Spirit Lord of Grace; CP193 Our blest Redeemer 'ere he breathed his tender last farewell.

THE COMING WEEK AT ST HELEN'S

ON WEEKDAYS 9.10 am *Morning Prayer*.

ON MONDAY 9.30 am *Baby and Toddler Group* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON TUESDAY 2.15 pm *Desiring Life Group* in the Parish Centre Lounge.

ON WEDNESDAY 10.30 am *Holy Communion*.

ON THURSDAY 6.30 pm *Life Drawing Class* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON SUNDAY 8.00 am *Holy Communion*. 10.30 am *Sung Eucharist (First Sunday)*.

PROGRAMMES, EVENTS & NOTICES

Faith Forum: The new series of Faith Forum starts today, 25th January, in the Parish Centre. Lunch will be served from 12.20pm and the talk will begin at 12.45pm. In this series, we will be looking at different aspects of liturgy. Our Rector, Jen Brown, will be giving the first talk, 'What we say and how we say it: the words we use in liturgy.' Zoom access:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85645633324?pwd=LYbJpGrcqpTWk1ZfNJ9VRq4ILHZMda.1>

Meeting ID: 856 4563 3324; Passcode: 656494

Agnostics Anonymous will meet on Tuesday 27th January at 6pm in the Parish Centre. The speaker will be Dr Kathryn Wills, talking on the theme of "Can reading literature help us to encounter God?" (Kathryn is an associate member of Blackfriars Hall in Oxford and has researched widely on the interplay between poetry, drama, fiction etc and an understanding of God). The panel of Rev John Barton and Rev Jen Brown will be there to answer questions as well. Everyone welcome.

Team Vicar Appointment & Parish Meeting: The process for appointing a new Team Vicar for the parish will begin soon, with key meetings taking place in February. We want to hear your thoughts on what we want/need in a new Team Vicar. To that end, we are holding a parish meeting on Saturday 31st January, from 3 to 5pm, at St Michael's Church. All are welcome and we hope many will attend. Please note, parking restrictions around St Michael's will be in place. If you can't make this meeting but would still like to have input into the process, please contact a church warden with thoughts on what qualities/skills do you think we need in our new Team Vicar & what particular hopes do you have in relation to the appointment of the new Team Vicar.

Mothers' Union AGM meeting to be held In the Parish Centre on Tuesday 3rd February at 10.30am. There will also be a Bring and Buy.

Shrove Tuesday. We are having a pancake party on 17th Feb at 6pm in the Church Centre, All welcome. Pancakes, choice of toppings, tea/coffee/squash and very friendly company. Tickets (so we know how many pancakes to cook) available after church from 1st Feb or contact Pat Hudson, patricia.a.hudson16@gmail.com.

Our diocese has just begun the process of appointing a new Bishop of Oxford, following the retirement of Bishop Steven in July this year. Anyone living, working or worshipping in the diocese can contribute their views via an anonymous on-line form:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/news/share-your-views-on-our-new-bishop.php>.

We are urged to complete this short questionnaire as the "See in Vacancy" committee is keen to hear from as many people as possible, by 4th Feb. For the direct link to the form and a set of questions see: [Consultation - Diocese of Oxford](#).

Church Twinning Barn Dance. Fancy a knees-up, a ploughman's dinner and fun company? Abingdon Church Twinning is organising a Barn Dance fundraiser on Saturday the 28th of February in Trinity Church Conduit Centre. Alan Fisher from Abingdon Baptist will be the caller, and all proceeds will support church twinning. Limited spaces! Put on your dancing shoes, and get your tickets from your Church Twinning reps:

anne.dodd28@gmail.com or Elizabeth Simpson; simpsonem123@gmail.com

The February edition of the Parish Magazine will be published on February 8th. Do contribute! (by the end of Feb 1st) Material to cheer us up particularly welcome! Email candle@abingdonparish.org.uk

SGN continue to work to repair a gas leak and have had to close the road next to St Helen's church. Due to the complex nature of the work, it is expected that road will be closed for two weeks. Access will remain for residents and businesses, and a signed diversion is in place via Saxon Road>B4017>A415 East Street Helen Street and vice versa.

Please pray for the residents of Reade Avenue, Regal Close, Reynolds Way, Riley Close. Intercessory prayer requests to clairembolton@googlemail.com.

For health, consolation & wellbeing: Sarah Stevens, Katie Stuart, Alli, David, Anne Smithson, Loelia Lyon, Vanessa Madden.

Next week's readings: Hebrews 2.14-end; Luke 2.22-40

Team Rector	The Revd Dr Jennifer Brown jennifer.brown@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk
Team Vicar	Vacant
Associate Priest	The Revd Dr A. K. M. Adam (AKMA) akma@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk
Wardens	Ms Margaret Horton and Mr David Pope
Director of Music	Dr Peter Foster
Assistant Organist	Mr Andrew Shouler
Parish Administrator	Mrs Jackie Cunningham
Caretaker	Mr Robin Day
Parish Safeguarding	Mrs Pat Hudson safeguarding@abingdonparish.org.uk
St Helen's Safeguarding	Mr Emmanuel Chukwuma

The Parish Office is open Monday – Thursday, 10.00 am to 1.00 pm (closed on Fridays).

Phone: 01235 520144. Checked on Fridays, morning and afternoon.

E-mail: administrator@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk; Website: abingdonparish.org.uk/StH

A copy of this Newsletter is posted regularly on our website.