



St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS CHURCH

ABINGDON-ON-THAMES

4 January 2026 Epiphany Regular Service Times

Sundays: Sung Mass, 9.30 am
Tuesdays: Silent Reflections, last Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm (except December)
Thursdays: Said Mass, 12.30 pm
Moving into Stillness, Taizé circle dancing with silent interludes, usually first Thursday of the month, 9.45 am to 10.45 am.
N.B. In January on the Second Thursday, 8 January.

Contacts

Team Rector: The Revd Dr Jennifer Brown
Email: rector@abingdonparish.org.uk

Team Vicar: Vacancy

Churchwardens: Miss Joyce Kelly (01235 533555 / 07833 535768)
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Mrs Louise Heffernan (01235 525412 / 07779 650968)
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Associate Priest The Revd Dr A. K. M. Adam (AKMA)
e-mail: akma@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk

Bookings*: Miss Joyce Kelly (as above)

Parish Office: The Parish Centre Office is normally open from Monday to Thursday, **10 am to 1 pm. The office closed at 1 pm on Christmas Eve and will re-open at 10 am on Monday 5 January**

Administrator: During normal working hours phone or leave a message on:
Telephone (01235 520144) or
Mobile (07395 943957)
e-mail: administrator@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk

Web site: <http://www.stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk>

If you would like to receive this pew leaflet electronically, please email pewleaflet@stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk with the subject line SUBSCRIBE

Items for inclusion in the next pew leaflet to be sent to David Duce by midday on Tuesday.

Telephone 522591

pewleaflet@stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk

[*for Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals please contact the Parish Office]

We welcome the Revd Dr Jennifer Brown to celebrate and preach at Mass on Sunday 4 January

Epiphany

The Feast of the Epiphany (6 January, which we're observing today) commemorates the arrival of the Magi at Jesus's birthplace. That may seem like any old annual celebration, as if it were the day taxes come due, or the day you went to Butlin's and lost your purse (then found it again); as with most aspects of Jesus's life, though, the Epiphany matters in several different, profound ways.

The most weighty significance of Epiphany (though it's easy to miss after all these centuries) follows from its honouring the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles — specifically to people such as most of us, who were 'without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world' (Eph 2.12), as the Letter to the Ephesians says. We Gentiles were not born into the people of God, but have been adopted by God. We were not citizens of the earthly Jerusalem, but we have migrated to the Kingdom (as it were) to receive the innumerable benefits procured unto us by Christ self-giving for our sakes. The Epiphany reveals not only Jesus — with the Star as a sort of luminous celestial finger pointing to him — but more deeply, reveals God's unexpected humanity. God adopted our humanity so that we, by uniting our lives with Christ's, might be adopted into his divinity. A prayer that priests sometimes say as they pour out the wine and water into the chalice expresses this: 'By the mystery of this water in wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.'

But Epiphany also prefigures our practice of observing the holiday season by giving gifts. The gifts that the magi brought would form a tribute offering to the newborn King; while we're always welcome to offer the gifts to the church that the King brought into being, we more often exchange gifts with one another. And we offer them not to curry favour with someone who has power over us, but in the celebratory offerings of equals before the throne of the one eternal King. So, I humbly wish us Gentiles all the blessings of a holy Epiphany, through our union with the King who humbly took on our humanity for our sake.

The Revd Dr A K M Adam

Sunday Worship at St Helen's Church St Helen's will live-stream their 10.30 am Eucharist through Zoom. The Zoom link can be found in the St Helen's Church newsletter (on-line) and on the Publications page at their web site. A recording of the sermon (audio and video) will be made available after the service on the St Helen's web site (<https://abingdonparish.org.uk/StH/StHpublications.html>).

The January *Taizé Prayer service* will be today, the **first** Sunday in January, **Sunday 4 January** in **St Helen's Church** at **5.30 pm**.

Sunday 11 January, 4.30 pm at St Helen's Church: *Epiphany Carols and Blessing of Families for the New Year*. A service of music and readings to mark the baptism of Jesus, followed by refreshments. All welcome; especially families with children baptised at St Helen's.

Morning Prayer is *normally* held at 9.10 am on weekdays at St Helen's Church.

Epiphany Services at St Michael's

Sunday 4 January	9.30 am	Sung Mass for the festival of Epiphany
Thursday 8 January	12.30 pm	Said Mass as usual
Sunday 11 January	9.30 am	Sung Mass for the Baptism of Christ

A full list of services for Epiphanytide is available on the Parish web site:

<https://abingdonparish.org.uk/Christmas2025.pdf> and printed copies are available in church.

Emmaus Oxford Our treasurer has received a letter of thanks from Emmaus Oxford for the donation of £330 made from the proceeds of the Christmas Fair. The letter lists some of the current projects to enhance accommodation and support services for homeless people.

Expand our accommodation. We want to increase the number of people we can help. In 2022 we purchased a property, and this year are redeveloping it to provide 10 ensuite companion rooms.

Companion training programme. We can now offer all our companions a more comprehensive and formal training programme so they can access the qualifications, courses and work experience placements they need to secure employment in their chosen field.

Resettlement Support Project. Helping homeless and vulnerable people in Oxfordshire to move into their own homes, offering a free 'starter pack' of furniture and essentials to enable them to move in quickly and comfortably.

The Albert Park Singers Concert on 7 December 2025 Donations were invited for *Crisis at Christmas* and *St Michael's Church*. The church received £572 with grateful thanks.

Moving Into Stillness circle dancing to Taizé chants with silent interludes on **Thursday 8 January (NB later than usual date)** in the church room from **9.45 – 10.45 am** before the regular circle dancing session at 11 am. Elizabeth Mitchell

will be the teacher. No prior experience/partner needed. Tea and coffee will be provided between the two sessions. Parking permits are available for use in Park Road.

Reflections And Prayers St Nicolas' Church will be open between **10 and 12 noon from Monday 19 to Friday 23 January 2026**, during the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*. The Chancel will offer a quiet place for people's personal prayers or for people to use the reflections and prayers provided for the 2026 theme that centres on Ephesians 4:4:

There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling.

There may also be some prayer stations to help guide prayers. Everyone is welcome. Coffee and light refreshments will be served.

Annual New Year Inter-Church Quiz This will take place on **Friday 23 January 2026, 7.00 pm for a 7.30 pm start**, at **Abingdon Baptist Church**.

PLEASE NOTE Hilary and John Clare will **NOT** be organising a team this year. If anyone else would like to organise a team (of up to six people), please contact the organiser directly by Friday 17 January: Ian Millgate at i.l.millgate@btinternet.com or on 01235 206583. A second team may be provisionally booked depending on space. Entry is £2 per person and all proceeds will go to Sobell House. Bring your own drinks and nibbles – teas and coffees will be provided. If anyone does decide to organise a team, please send an appropriate announcement to the Editor to include in the pew leaflet.

Agnostics Anonymous The first meeting for 2026 will take place on **Tuesday 27 January at 6 pm** in **The Parish Centre**. Dr Kathryn Wills, a member of the Las Casas Institute based at Blackfriars Hall in Oxford, will speak about religion and literature. There will be time for questions and discussion and we plan to finish about 7.15 pm. Everyone is welcome.

Worship

January The celebrants and preachers are: 4 January, The Revd Dr Jennifer Brown, 11 January, the Revd Rosalind Rutherford, 18 January, The Revd Dr Jennifer Brown; 25 January, Fr AKMA (the limit of the current clergy rota).

The festival of Epiphany is being kept this Sunday (translated from 6 January). Saturday is the commemoration of William Laud, archbishop, 1645.

Epiphany Mass opens with the presentation of the figures of the Wise Men and their gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh at the crib. In Matthew's account, Wise Men came from the East to pay homage to the child born King of the Jews, for they had seen his star at its rising (NRSV, Matthew 2.1-2). In some churches, the figures of the Wise Men may be seen on their journey to the crib from Christmas Eve to the festival of the Epiphany, pausing at locations around the church (e.g. on window sills) during this period.

The last verse from a hymn by St Ephrem of Syria:

The Magi rejoiced from afar; the scribes proclaimed from nearby.

The prophets showed his erudition, and Herod his fury.

The scribes showed interpretations; the Magi showed offerings.

It is a wonder that to one babe the kinspeople rushed

with their swords,

but strangers with their offerings.

Blessed is your birth that stirred up the universe!

The collect for Epiphany is based on a collect from an ancient source, the Gregorian Sacramentary (10th century). In English translation:

God, who on this day has revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations by the leading of a star: *mercifully grant that we who know you now by faith may be brought to the contemplation of your Majesty by sight.*

The Common Worship collect is based on the collect in the Book of Common Prayer 1662:

O God,

who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:

mercifully grant that we,

who know you now by faith,

may at last behold your glory face to face;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord...

The italicised phrase "...that we who know you now by faith may be brought to the contemplation of your Majesty by sight" in the translation of the Gregorian Sacramentary collect is due to a New Zealand liturgist. He notes that this is also an insight in 2 Corinthians 5.7 [*for we walk by faith, not by sight*], comparing the Wise Men's leading by the sight of a star with our being led to seeing God by the gift of faith. The connection was weakened in the BCP collect.

The New Zealand Prayer Book contains three collects for Epiphany. One removes the connection to faith.

O God, by the leading of a star
you revealed your Son Jesus Christ to the gentiles;
grant that your Church may be a light to the nations,
so that the whole world may come to see
the splendour of your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord ...

The other two are very different, including this:

Jesus, light of the world,
let your bright star stand over the place
where the poor have to live;
lead our sages to wisdom and our rulers to reverence.

Holy Days and Festivals 2026 There is an interesting ancient tradition associated with Epiphany, dating back to the time when people did not have personal calendars or diaries – the solemn proclamation of the date of Easter and other festivals. This has been revived somewhat in recent years as a web search will reveal. This reminds us of the centrality of Easter and as one liturgical commentator put it ‘remind[s] us that the whole liturgical year takes its meaning from the risen Saviour’. Traditionally a deacon would make the proclamation (ideally sung) either after the Gospel or the sermon or the Prayer after Communion. This version is taken from a New Zealand liturgical source.

Dear brothers and sisters, the glory of the Lord has shone upon us, and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of his return.

Through the rhythms of times and seasons let us celebrate the mysteries of salvation.

Let us recall the year’s culmination, the Easter Triduum of the Lord: his last supper, his crucifixion, his burial, and his rising celebrated between the evening of the 2nd day of April and the evening of the 4th day of April, Easter Day being on the 5th day of April.

Each Easter — as on each Sunday — the Holy Church makes present the great and saving deed by which Christ has for ever conquered sin and death. From Easter are reckoned all the days we keep holy.

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, will occur on the 18th day of February.

The Ascension of the Lord will be commemorated on the 14th day of May.

Pentecost, joyful conclusion of the season of Easter, will be celebrated on 24th day of May.

And, this year the First Sunday of Advent will be on the 29th day of November.

Likewise the pilgrim Church proclaims the Passover of Christ in the feasts of the holy Mother of God, in the feasts of the Apostles and Saints, and in the commemoration of the faithful departed.

To Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come, Lord of time and history, be endless praise, for ever and ever. **Amen. [Amen. Amen.]**

For 2026, the key dates included in the proclamation are (in date order):

Ash Wednesday 18 February

Maundy Thursday 2 April

Easter Day 5 April

Ascension Day 14 May

Pentecost 24 May

[Corpus Christi, Thursday 4 June – not mentioned in the proclamation, but one the Editor always forgets!]

Advent Sunday 29 November

Corpus Christi is celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. The date of the festival of Corpus Christi is an important date for meeting organisers to note. When I was PCC Secretary I once fell into the trap of scheduling a PCC meeting for that evening. Some readers may recall the year when the church was inadvertently let out on the evening of the festival for a concert rehearsal. Corpus Christi that year was celebrated, by kind permission, in the chapel of St Helen and St Katharine’s School. What we had not realised though was that the date coincided with a school open evening. A group of parents emerging from the school’s Main Entrance showed considerable surprise when the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament emerged from the chapel, walked in front of the school entrance and after a short distance returned to the chapel.

William Laud was born in Reading in 1573. His father was a prosperous clothier. He was educated at Reading Grammar School, then at St John’s College, Oxford and became a Senior Fellow in the College. He developed a reputation for getting into hot water over issues such as episcopal orders, church furnishings and ritual. His

persuasion was High Church and he was accused for popery. This didn't halt his progression though and in 1610-11 he became President of St John's but controversy followed him.

He was consecrated bishop of St David's in Wales and later Archbishop of Canterbury. He became powerful at Court but gained many enemies there and elsewhere, especially amongst Puritans. Eventually charges were brought against him covering, "both secular and religious matters (in roughly equal proportion): he was accused of endeavouring to subvert the fundamental laws to bring in arbitrary government, of hindering justice, of altering the true religion and usurping papal powers, of labouring to reconcile England and Rome, of persecuting godly preachers, of sowing division with other Reformed churches, of stirring a war with Scotland, and of alienating the king from his subjects." He was committed to the Tower in 1641 without trial, where at first he was largely forgotten about. However, he retained his authority as Archbishop of Canterbury and that got him into further trouble. His trial commenced in 1644 and has been described as a travesty of justice. He was executed at Tower Hill on 10 January 1645.

Laud has continued to be viewed as a controversial figure and divides opinion. In the Victorian era, for example, he was revered by the Tractarians and some of his works were published in the *Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology*. He was applauded by them as "a defender of the catholicity of the Church of England (often in contrast with the early reformers)". J.R. Moorman in his *History of the English Church* (1973) wrote:

"... he was a man of vision and great moral courage. In the turbulent times in which he lived, when the forces with which he was least in sympathy were daily increasing in power and influence, Laud had a clear vision of a national Church such as he believed had been the dream of the reformers. It was for the well-being of such a Church that Laud gave his life. His methods were open to criticism, and his manner was often unfortunate, but his vision remained always clear, and his courage never failed."

Prayers during another Season of Vacancy

The prayer below is the prayer used for the appointment of a new Archbishop of Canterbury. But it is not entirely inappropriate in the current situation as the next stage of ministry in the parish of Abingdon is discerned.

Heavenly Father, shepherd of your Church,
send us a faithful pastor to lead with wisdom, courage, and love,
proclaiming your Gospel, celebrating the sacraments,
and guiding your people in unity and truth.

Strengthen your Church, we pray, and direct us in your ways; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayers for the Peace of the World

A prayer from the Church of England:

Almighty God,
from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed:
kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace
and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom
those who take counsel for the nations of the earth
that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward,
till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, ...

Readers with internet access might be interested to read Pope Leo XIV's message for the 59th World Day of Peace (1 January 2026), entitled *Peace be with you all: Towards an "unarmed and disarming" peace*.

<https://www.humandevlopment.va/en/news/2025/messaggio-del-papa-giornata-mondiale-della-pace-2026.html>

Please pray for:

- Steven (as he prepares for retirement) and Gavin our bishops in this diocese; Stephen, Archbishop of York, and Sarah, Archbishop of Canterbury designate;
- His Majesty King Charles, Her Majesty Queen Camilla, and all the royal family;
- all victims of war, injustice, and oppression;
- those who perpetrate violence, that they may turn to a new way of life;
- the suffering, especially those who are known to us and who are on our prayer list;
- all who have recently departed, and all whose year's mind falls at this time;
- people living in: Queen Anne Court, Queen Street, Radley Road and Rawlings Grove.

Eucharistic Lectionary

Sun Epiphany	Isaiah 60.1-6	Ps 72.10-15	Ephesians 3.1-12	Matthew 2.1-12
Mon	1 John 3.22-4.6	Ps 2.7-end		Matthew 4.12-17, 23-end

Tues	1 John 4.7-10	Ps 72.1-8		Mark 6.34-44
Wed	1 John 4.11-18	Ps 72.1, 10-13		Mark 6.45-52
Thur	1 John 4.19-5.4	Ps 72.1, 17-end		Luke 4.14-22
Fri	1 John 5.5-13	Ps 147.13-end		Luke 5.12-16
Sat	1 John 5.14-end	Ps 149.1-5		John 3.22-30

Collect (Epiphany)

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord...

Post Communion (Epiphany)

Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek: may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light discern the glory of your presence in your Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Some On-line Resources for Worship

A Church Near You Live Streamed events

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/live-stream/?tags=Livestream&diocese=27>

Parish Communications and Links <http://www.abingdonparish.org.uk/Pcommunications.html>

St Michael's Prayer and Worship resources page <https://abingdonparish.org.uk/StM/StMworshipresources.html>

St Michael's Publications page <https://abingdonparish.org.uk/StM/StMpublications.html>

Oxford Cathedral: Livestream events will appear on the cathedral's YouTube channel, see <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqz9I9-LbZJAPGtje0gQbbg>.

The University Church of St Mary the Virgin (Oxford) live stream, see <https://www.youtube.com/c/UniversityChurch/featured>

Community of the Resurrection: live streaming and recordings of the community's daily round of prayer and praise. Details can be found at the Community web site, <https://mirfield.org.uk/live-streaming/> and *YouTube* page <https://www.youtube.com/@StreamingAtMirfield>. On Sundays Mass starts around 8.10 am, after Matins at 7.30 am.

Walsingham In addition to the daily live-streaming of Shrine Prayers at 6 pm (5pm on Saturdays). the Sunday Mass is live-streamed (usually at 7.30 am, but check the web site).

<https://www.walsinghamanglican.org.uk/whatson-2/livestream/>