

February 2026

Services at a glance:

- Every Sunday 10am Sung Eucharist
- Every Wednesday 10am Said Communion
- Mon, Tues and Thurs 8.45am Morning Prayer
- 5th Sunday 6pm United Service at one of the Sleaford churches.

Directory:
Vicar of Sleaford and Rural Dean

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The Parish Office

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St Denys Bulletin

The church is open daily from 9am

The Collect for Ash Wednesday (Book of Common Prayer)

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Letter from the Vicar, Rev'd Philip Johnson

I am writing this article on Holocaust Memorial Day, an annual event that rarely gets much attention in mainstream media. To be honest, I rarely make much of the day, but this year feels a bit different. There was a multi-faith commemoration in the cathedral this year on the eve of HMD, which is a first in recent years. For many years Jews did not feel welcome in the cathedral and would not enter because of the shrine of Little St Hugh in the south quire aisle. The murder of this young boy in 1255 was blamed on the Jewish community, an example of the ancient blood libel that Jews stole children for ritual sacrifice. This is the origin of the painted red hand (blood on their hands) as a slur against Jews. A recent addition to my library is a history of antisemitism, and that history begins in the pre-Christian era. Antisemitism was rife in the Middle Ages in this country and across Europe. Through the Enlightenment, Jews fared somewhat better but antisemitic sentiment was never far below the surface. But nothing could have prepared us for the events of the 20th century. The musical *Fiddler on the Roof*

is set in an Imperial Russian Pale of Settlement (an enforced ghetto) not long before the Revolution. Many Jewish families fled westward as they became targets of the Revolution – a precursor to Hitler's Final Solution in the death camps at Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen and many other sites. In the early 1930s some Jewish families read the mood of the times and emigrated to England or America. Some were saved by people like Oscar Schindler; some survived the camps and were liberated at the end of the war. But six million Jews were murdered and every Jewish family in Europe was affected. My brother-in-law's family – the Stein's – moved to England in 1932. They were not devoted Jews and assimilated into English culture quite easily (they eventually become Anglicans!). At the outbreak of war, they changed their name to the less Germanic sounding 'Stead' so that the antisemitism did not morph into persecution because they were 'Germans'. In 2024 I visited

Auschwitz and experienced once again the eerie silence that hangs over that place. I find it difficult to comprehend the scale of 'man's inhumanity to man'. The place needs to be preserved so that the horror of that 'final solution' is not forgotten. In this country there is a Holocaust Memorial Centre not far from Newark, the House of Peace (Bet Shalom) and there is the annual Holocaust Memorial Day. But why, for me, does this year feel different? As an Old Testament scholar, I have worked closely with Jewish scholars as we have read the Hebrew Scriptures together. I have learned much from them. Over recent months these friends (many of whom lost family in the holocaust) have been drawing parallels between our world today and the 1930s. An isolated attack on a beach in Australia or a Synagogue in Manchester may seem just that – isolated. But a pattern of rising antisemitism is emerging.

ctd on next page

From the Churchwardens

A YEAR ON!

It has now been a full twelve months since the completion of the revamped Market Place. How has this gone in the eyes of the church?

Well, after the initial decision to allow only three Blue Badge car parking spaces, NKDC listened to our objections and came up with the idea that Blue Badge Holders (BBH) could park in front of the church during our services, on condition the Churchwardens manned the bollards. Also, BBH are permitted to park on three weekdays. After our initial "We're Churchwardens NOT traffic wardens" comments and a few teething issues, in fact we have concluded the parking arrangements are better than before the revamp. This is on account of the fact that BBH have a guaranteed parking spot outside the church gates, especially on a Sunday. The "hope and pray we can find a space" scenario, with the amount of overnight vehicles that had parked up on the Saturday evening no longer exists.

We appreciate that non BBH have to park elsewhere but the Hub and Church Lane parking facilities are not too far away for the able bodied. On the financial and PR aspect the new Market Place appears to have enhanced our public appeal. This is largely due to the Market Place being used for various events throughout the year which we have taken advantage by piggybacking onto. On these occasions the main doors are open and refreshments are offered on a donation basis. We estimate that throughout the year the amount of footfall into the church has possibly quadrupled. As a result we smashed our targeted amount of fund-raising during 2025 to over £2k. Long may this continue.

The other most noticeable positive impact has been the booking of an unprecedented amount of weddings this year - 10 thus far! Having a lovely Market Place aspect rather than a car park outside

the church building may be a strong factor in this regard.

Some of our comments may not be agreeable to some members of the congregation. However, with the events being held throughout the year by NKDC and other local authorities, alongside church run events, we believe the church building has become far more integrated within the town in general, being an open and welcoming space to everyone and anyone.

FUND RAISING

After unintentionally having January "off" we start this year's fundraising with the Churchwarden's Lunch on Sunday, 15th February.

This will be in a format of a hot and cold buffet, with deserts, tea and coffee, all for just £8. There will be a raffle so any prizes would be gratefully received. Also included is a light comedy sketch, a short General Knowledge quiz, a "Name That Hymn" quiz and a fun game that will be revealed on the day, with prizes to the winners. So please come prepared to have a lovely lunch and social time with what we now class as our extended family.

During the year we will be putting on the usual annual lunches and events. The aim is to go bigger and better every year. Pimms and Prosecco, in its third year, to celebrate Wimbledon is starting to really take shape!. If, however, anybody would like to arrange another themed lunch/event please don't hesitate to give us your ideas.



Funerals and Memorial Services

Please remember in your prayers

Joyce Irene Collishaw Aged 91 years

ctd from front page

I never imagined that the medieval 'red hands' would reappear in our days, waved at Jews by protesters in London. Why are some in our Jewish communities considering their escape plan? Why are they wondering where they can move to live in safety?

As we enter the penitential season of Lent I am reminded of the old maxim of 'the standard that you walk past is the standard you accept'. Our penitence is as much for the things we have not done as for the things we have done wrong. What are the things we dismiss or ignore when we ought to speak out? The German theologian and Lutheran pastor Martin

Niemöller frequently spoke out against the Nazi regime but made pejorative comments about Jews whilst trying to protect his own church. He was arrested in 1937 and incarcerated in the Dachau concentration camp. In January 1946 in a speech to a church conference in Frankfurt he said, "First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist... Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me."

Fr Philip

William Alvey School Bishop's Visitor Update

After all the excitement of Christmas and the holiday the new term began early in January and coincided with the onset of some cold, snowy and wintry weather. I'm sure the children will have made the most of it as it doesn't happen so often these days as it used to, but not so welcome to staff and parents travelling!

On two Mondays we have had assemblies led by a group of children in Y's 4,5 and 6 (the older year groups) from the school Eco Club, who have been trying to think of ways to improve the use of energy, nature and environmental issues in the school. They told us we can all do our bit in small ways to save energy use and care for the environment. Things like turning off lights in empty rooms and not leaving litter. They want us

to help keep the planet healthy. They are hoping the school will be holding a celebration for Earth Day in April.

The next few weeks the topic will be about how we might all flourish spiritually and be the best individuals we can be. This is building on recent thoughts about Spirituality, what it is and how we use the "ow", "wow" and "now" moments to learn and grow into better people and make the best of ourselves and our lives.

Meanwhile the daily life of the school continues every day and all day as the children learn and grow in lessons; reading, writing, numbers, history, geography, music, PE and all kinds of subjects while also learning to get along together and help each other along in life under the care of all the staff.

Beryl Risdell

Bible Reading Psalm 130 (KJV)

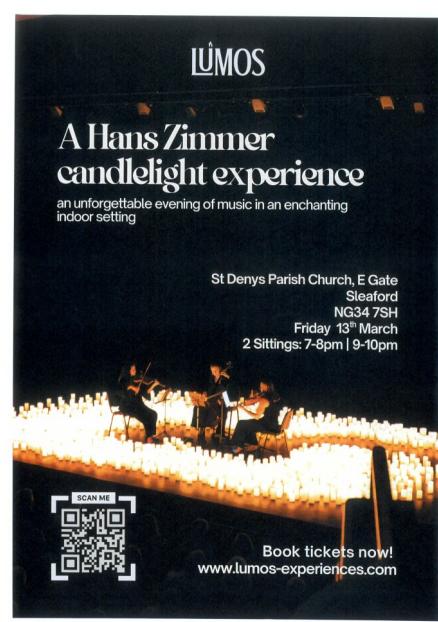
Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Another 'lost' vicar? by Douglas Hoare

In the Lincoln Diocesan Registry is the following: 'New Sleaford - the vicar (George Blackethe) (i) refuses to baptise except on the Lord's day. On 10th August, 1954, he appeared, and denied the objected article (ii) he refuses to sign with the sign of the cross infants whom he baptises, and he refuses to answer to the objected article (iii) on account of such his negligence and recusancy certain

infants have died without baptism, and to the objected article he confesses as far as one is concerned; wherefore the judge suspended him from the celebration of divine service and from the execution of his office (etc), and a commission issued to denounce him.'

The only other known reference is in the Boston Parish Register - baptism: '1605 Feb 9th Susan daughter of George Blacket (Blackethe)'. Does anyone anywhere know any more?



Church Services

(Morning prayer is usually said at 8.45am on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday)
Said Communion every Wednesday at 10am
(1st Weds of the month is BCP)

FEBRUARY

Sunday, 1st February
10am Candlemas
Wednesday, 4th February
10am BCP
Sunday, 8th February
10am Sexagesima
Wednesday, 11th February
10am Said Communion
Sunday, 15th February
10am Quinquagesima
Ash Wednesday 18th February
10am Said Communion,
7pm Sung Communion
Sunday, 22nd February
10am Lent I
Wednesday, 25th February
10am Said Communion
Sunday, 1st March
10am Lent II
Wednesday, 4th March
10am BCP

LENT LUNCHES

23rd Feb - Our Lady
2nd March - Salvation Army
9th March - St Botolphs @ New Life
16th Mar - St Denys
23rd March - Methodist Church
30th March - Riverside

COMMUNICANTS' GUILD

We shall be meeting in the Church Room on **Tuesday 17th February at 2 pm**. Our speaker will be Amy Needham from Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue. You are very welcome to join us.

ASH WEDNESDAY

18th February

HOLY COMMUNION with IMPOSITION OF ASHES

10am Said Communion
7pm Sung Communion

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Friday, 6th March

1.30pm

Our Lady of Good Counsel
Service prepared by women from Nigeria.

SLEAFORD KESWICK BIBLE MINISTRY

Friday, 13th February at 7.30pm
Riverside Church

Matt Stone
Minister of Stag Community Church

Visiting a remote loch isle, my birlinn docks
A ruinous churchyard, steeped in snowdrops, I'm there and strikingly without sound at all.
My footfall on the grassy path goes unheard.
Neither wind, or bird, nor human voice disturb,
All about is stilled, yet in this ancient withal,
this pilgrim walks on, but not quite solitary.
Mysteriously, I discern a hand fall upon me,
some 'angelic' touch, warm and kindly.
The sky now turns grey, heralding twilight
gaining this winter's day.
Yet I'm loathe to retrace my footsteps away;
back to jarring audio, like we hear in shops.
Here on this excursion, steeped in snowdrops
I'm spiritually in self oblivious adoration.
Truly at peace, sensing God and not alone.
Then comes a deep interior longing for home.
Jenny Whybrow
(published with permission of the author)
Submitted by David Birks