

Astley, Tyldesley and Mosley Common



Team Magazine

February - March 2026



Artwork by Francesca Ross

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Hope and Peace. As I write this in a rainy and dark London in January 2026 with a world in turmoil, I fear that there are many boxes of Maltesers in my future - the first thing I do when faced with the threat of global nuclear war is buy and eat a box of Maltesers as there's no point eating healthily if you are going to be nuked! But yesterday I met hope on a shopping street, one like many in our country. It did not start well however, as I was coming out of a supermarket I heard a thud behind me and turned to find a young man on the floor, face down, and soon, bleeding. I went over to the man who was thin, poorly dressed and untidy and gave him some tissues and talked to him. He had been thrown out of the shop by the workers for, he admitted when he could talk, trying to steal food.

Then hope swept in, one lady out walking her dog called for the police and ambulance, whilst the 2 ladies who had witnessed the event were most vocal in saying it was not right to throw someone onto the floor like that. The manager from the other supermarket next door was brought out by another lady and talked gently to the man and then went and returned with drink and food for him. A passer by who was a nurse went to a shop, borrowed the first aid box and cleaned the cuts and bruises on his face and helped to sit him up. The lady with the dog went to the nearby charity shop who provided cushions for the man to sit on as he was too unsteady to stand up and the ground was cold. One older lady popped some coins into his pocket and patted him gently. Many people smiled concernedly at him. No one commented negatively. Eventually the ambulance came. I thought of the Good Samaritan story from Jesus as it drove away.

On a wet London street I saw people with such goodness and kindness, and with them found hope that people such as these, that I know are all over the world, will this year turn that hope into peace.

Andrea Taziker

This Team Magazine is also available on-line and can be found at www.achurchnearyou.com Where it says **Enter your location** type in **your postcode**. A drop-down list of options will appear. **Select your address**. Then click the **Arrow/Find**. A list of nearby churches will appear. Select the one you want. From the Menu select **News and Notices**. Here you will find the up-to-date magazine plus several archived copies.

Please note any views, thoughts or opinions expressed in this magazine belong solely to the person who has contributed the associated article, and not necessarily to the Team Ministry or Editorial team.

A REFLECTION FOR THE SEASON OF LENT

Well, here we are again starting another year in the life of Astley, Tyldesley and Mosley Common, a year in our church lives, a year in our work lives and in our personal lives. What will this new year bring, what do we remember from the last year that we take forward and what's going on in the present?

I don't know about you but I feel that I'm constantly planning for the future, whether that's preparing services, radio reflections or indeed magazine articles for church, doing rotas and preparing reports at work or booking appointments, planning holidays or even renovations at home. All this planning and preparing is always informed by previous weeks, months and years of experience that needs to be considered. Then of course, we need to find time for the present, to just being and re-energising.

We're all holding the past, present and future in a constant tension, which can sometimes tip the balance in a particular direction from time to time, impacting on our wellbeing. We've obviously just emerged from one of the busiest periods of the year and are now entering into a time of spiritual significance during the months of February and March. These months mark the end of winter and the beginning of spring—a time when nature awakens and new possibilities emerge. But also a time when we experience the Lenten season and the beginning of Holy Week, leading to Easter in April.

Lent is a significant period in the Christian calendar, observed as a time of reflection, self-examination, and spiritual growth. Lasting for forty days, it invites individuals to pause, consider their relationship with God, and make space for renewal through prayer, fasting and acts of compassion. As we journey through Lent, we're encouraged to let go of old habits, seek forgiveness and open our hearts to transformation.

This season prepares us for the joy of Easter, reminding us that through introspection and intentional living, we can experience profound spiritual renewal. Jesus himself was no stranger to holding the past, present and future in tension. His life and teachings are deeply rooted in the history and prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures. His birth fulfilling the ancient prophecies, such as those spoken by Isaiah, and his ministry often referenced the experiences and lessons of the past. This connection to the past isn't just historical - it's spiritual, reminding us that God's promises are trustworthy and that the story of salvation is woven through history.

Jesus' presence on earth established a new relationship between God and humanity. The light that shone from the stable, shines today, right now, into every heart opened to believe. His teachings, acts of compassion and the gift of forgiveness are available in the present moment, through the Holy Spirit. This on-going presence means that faith isn't just about remembering the past, but living it actively in the present.

Jesus' message is also forward looking. He spoke of hope, renewal and eternal life. The promise of his return - his second coming- is central to our Christian belief, offering hope for the future and the assurance of ultimate justice and peace.

Jesus' life and message hold these three dimensions in constant tension. We, as Christians are called to remember the past (God's promises and Christ's sacrifice), live faithfully in the present (through love, forgiveness and spiritual renewal), and look forward to the future (the hope of resurrection and eternal life). This cycle is echoed in the spiritual practice of Lent, which invites us to reflect, renew and prepare for what's to come. This dynamic is central to Christian faith and spiritual practice,



encouraging us as believers to live with gratitude for the past, purpose in the present and hope for the future.

February is typically a quieter month, encouraging this introspection. Spiritually, it can be seen as a time to use the calm of winter to meditate, pray, or journal, deepening your connection with your inner self. Just as seeds rest beneath the soil, this is a period to nurture intentions and dreams, trusting that growth will come.

March brings the first signs of spring, symbolising renewal and the return of light and warmth inspires hope and new beginnings. Spiritually, it's a time to let go of what no longer serves you and welcome transformation. As nature stirs, so can your spirit. Take steps toward your goals, engage in acts of kindness, and celebrate the energy of renewal.

Together, February and March remind us of the spiritual cycle: rest, reflect, and renew. By honouring the quiet of February and the awakening of March, you can align your spiritual journey with the rhythms of nature.

The themes woven throughout this reflection—honouring the past, living fully in the present, and embracing hope for the future—can shape our everyday lives in meaningful ways. By remembering moments when we've experienced grace, forgiveness, or resilience, we draw strength from our own history and the faithfulness of God's promises. This encourages gratitude and grounds us when challenges arise.

In the present, these spiritual principles invite us to be mindful—practicing compassion, forgiveness, and intentional acts of kindness. Whether it's taking time for a quiet moment of prayer before starting our day, extending empathy to a colleague or neighbour, or choosing to forgive ourselves and others, we bring the teachings of Jesus into our daily routines.

Looking forward, hope becomes a guiding light. Setting intentions for growth, nurturing dreams, and trusting in renewal—much like seeds resting in winter—reminds us that transformation is always possible. As the seasons change, we too can embrace new beginnings, let go of what no longer serves us, and pursue our goals with a spirit of anticipation.

By pausing for reflection in quiet seasons, and acting with renewed purpose when opportunity arises, we align our spiritual journey with the rhythm of the natural world. In doing so, we live with gratitude for what has been, purpose for today, and hope for what is yet to come.

I came across this short poem that I hope you can hold on to during your time of reflection.



THE LIGHT WITHIN

In moments bleak, when all seems lost,
the light within will bear the cost.
It kindles faith, it fuels our dreams,
in its gentle glow, redemption gleams.

Through trials fierce and battles tough,
the light within will be enough.
It heals the wounds, it soothes the pain,
and in its warmth, we rise again.

So let it shine, this inner flame,
in every heart, it's yours to claim.
For in its glow, we find our way,
through signs of hope, we seize the day.

Rev Debbie Clarke

Where to find worship services across the Team in February & March

Please note that all details are correct at the time of going to press but due to publication dates the Ministry Team had not met to confirm plans. Please note additional information about Lent and Holy Week may be available post publication.

Date	St Stephen's	St George's	St John's	Mission Church
1st February Sunday	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion	2.30pm Sunday service with meal
8th February Sunday	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word	
15th February Sunday	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	2.30pm Sunday service with meal
18th February Ash Wednesday	10am <i>Thursday communion for Ash Wednesday tbc</i>			
22nd February Sunday Lent 1	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion 4-6pm Pizza & Prayers	

Changes or additional information will be shared in church notices, on social media and 'A Church Near You' pages.

For those able to access information online please check out our Facebook page: *Astley, Tyldesley, Mosley Common Worship*. Alternatively, you can find information [including a digital version of the Team Magazine] on the 'A Church Near You' website – each church has an individual section.

Date	St Stephen's	St George's	St John's	Mission Church
1st March Sunday Lent 2	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word	2.30pm Sunday service with a meal
8th March Sunday Lent 3	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	
12th March	10am Thursday Team Communion			
15rd March Mothering Sunday Lent 4	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word [with SGCS tbc]	10am Team Communion	2.30pm Sunday service with a meal
22nd March Sunday Lent 5	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word	
29th March Palm Sunday Lent 6	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	<i>5th Sunday</i> <i>2.30pm service</i>
2nd April Maundy Thursday	10am Thursday Team Communion			
3rd April Good Friday	3pm Prayers at the Cross	9am Prayers at the Cross	12 noon Prayers at the Cross	
5th April Easter Sunday	10am Communion	10am Communion	10am Communion	2.30pm Service with a meal

What's On - February and March

St Stephen's and locally

Feb 10th	House Group meet at 8pm at 33 Ullswater Road hosted by John Howarth. Tel 07471 460 988. The theme is The Disciples and all are welcome. Andrew, Bringing others to Jesus, John 1: 35-42
Feb 18th	7.30pm - St Stephen's Mothers Union - Speaker Davina Woods "Celebrating Sisterhood" a quilt with a story of courage and determination
Feb 21st	10.00am - 12.00pm St Stephen's Coffee Morning - in church meeting room
Feb 24th	House Group meet at 8pm at 33 Ullswater Road hosted by John Howarth. Tel 07471 460 988. The theme is The Disciples and all are welcome. Simon Peter, Defending (and Rebuking) the Saviour, Mark 1: 16-20; 8: 27-38
Feb 26th	3.30pm Communion Service at The Rowans, Lindale Road, Mosley Common M28 1BG
Mar 10th	House Group meet at 8pm at 33 Ullswater Road hosted by John Howarth. Tel 07471 460 988. The theme is The Disciples and all are welcome. Matthew, Drawing in the Outcast, Matthew 9: 9-13
Mar 21st	10.00am - 12.00pm St Stephen's Coffee Morning - in church meeting room
Mar 18th	7.30pm - St Stephen's Mothers Union - AGM and Bring and Buy
Mar 24th	House Group meet at 8pm at 33 Ullswater Road hosted by John Howarth. Tel 07471 460 988. The theme is The Disciples and all are welcome. James, Hating our Enemies, Luke 9: 51-56; Acts 12: 1-2
Mar 26th	3.30pm Communion Service at The Rowans, Lindale Road, Mosley Common M28 1BG

St George's Diary dates for February and March 2026

6th February - The Early Doors Club, 5pm-8pm: Mark Burgess & Stephen Rice

Tickets are available on a Pay What You Can basis - choose a price that suits you best. All proceeds go directly back into supporting live music in local venues through The Early Doors Club. Book tickets via Eventbrite, or contact Susie Mallon on 07873 149627

22nd February - Brass Band Concert: Greater Manchester Police Band

Church doors open 6.30pm, concert starts at 7pm. Tickets £8 each, under 16s free: cash on entry. Raffle tickets available. Refreshments served in the interval.

6th March - The Early Doors Club, 5pm-8pm: Romain Axisa

Tickets are available on a Pay What You Can basis - choose a price that suits you best. All proceeds go directly back into supporting live music in local venues through The Early Doors Club. Book tickets via Eventbrite, or contact Susie Mallon on 07873 149627

22nd March - Brass Band Concert: Astley Bands & Choir

Church doors open 6.30pm, concert starts at 7pm. Tickets £8 each, under 16s free: cash on entry. Raffle tickets available. Refreshments served in the interval

Regular events continue with:

Team Prayers

Every Friday morning 9.30am -10am: an opportunity to join together for a time of prayer -open to everyone.

Place of Welcome @ St George's

Weekly drop in every Friday morning in church, between 10am and 12 noon. Free cuppa and biscuits/toast. An opportunity to come and have a natter with others or just find a quiet space. For the crafty among you bring your knitting/crochet projects and join the group of ladies who 'knit and natter' in church on a Friday morning.

Tyldesley Historical Society: 23rd February & 30th March

Meetings will continue to take place on the last Monday of the month in St George's Church.

Refreshments from 7pm, meeting starts at 7.30pm.

Contact Susie Mallon - 07873 149627 for further details

St John's What's On

Mosley Common Historical Society. There will be no meetings of the Historical Society in February and March. The first meeting will be on the 13th April. Details in next magazine.

Bible Study at St John's - Short letters with big ideas

The focus of this session is on the shorter books of the New Testament. Although these letters are brief, they contain significant and profound ideas that have had a lasting impact.

These sessions will contain the second and third epistles of John and Paul's epistles of Philemon, Jude and Titus. It will be the usual discussion-based study and everyone is welcome. We will be meeting on the following Tuesdays in St. John's Lounge starting at 7.30pm.

The dates are:-

27th January, 10th and 24th February, 3rd, 17th and 31st of March.

Looking forward to meeting you.

Mike Stuckey.

Regular events continue with

St John's Mosley Common. Place of welcome Café

Come and join Jean and Joan for our weekly café in the church lounge

Tuesdays from 10.00 - 12.00

Contact Jean 07817 857988 or Joan 01942 870095 for any queries

St John's Mosley Common. Toddler Group

Thursdays (term time) 9.30 - 11.00am - £1 per person (incl drink and toast)

Welcome to CAMEO. Come And Meet Every One

CAMEO is a local friendship group based in Mosley Common meeting every other Tuesday at St. John's Church lounge from 1:30pm

Everyone is welcome just come along and join in the activities or just have a good chat no admission or membership fees. Refreshments tea or coffee and biscuits only £1. Everyone welcome.

For further info contact Marje on 07519 853279

Social Walks: Boothstown Medical Centre and PPG in association with "Be Well Wigan". Everyone is welcome to join our FREE hour long social walks. Suitable for all including beginners. Wear comfortable clothing and footwear. Meet outside St John's church at 10.30am every Thursday. Refreshments and toilet facilities available inside church. For more information search for www.bewellwigan.org



Words of Wisdom

This is memorable quote from Mother Theresa to think about:

"If you are kind, people will accuse you of selfish motives - be kind anyway

If you're successful, you'll win both false friends and true enemies - succeed anyway

What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight - build anyway

The good you do today most people will forget - do good anyway

Give the world the best between you and God: it was never between you and them anyway.

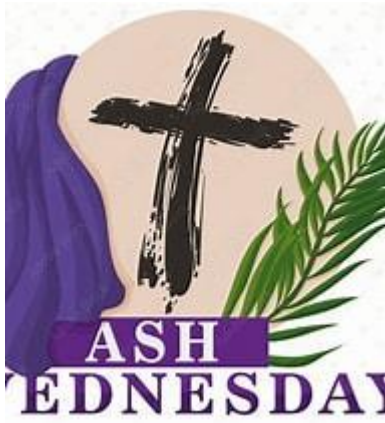


He wrote "your adorable"

I replied - "No - you're adorable"

Now he thinks I like him when all I did was point out his grammatical error.

Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent - the period leading up to Easter when the days noticeably begin to lengthen.

The early Christians really only marked Easter which was THE MAJOR time of year, with the first day of every week (Resurrection, the Lord's Day). People were baptised at Easter and joined the company of believers. To prepare for this new Christians would receive a course of instruction. Soon the customs filled out to cover all 'Jesus' work and became a well-structured liturgy of what we do.

The time of preparation for Easter was set into 40 days as a shadow of the 40 days temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. On the first day people made a point of recalling their repentance for their former life away from God. They often gave up something as a reminder of this.

In the old Prayer Book we had the Communion Service (last section before the Psalms) appointed for this day. It is a denouncing of God's anger and judgement against sinners. In it the Minister read sentences from the Old Testament (cf Deuteronomy ch 27) about God's cursing impenitent sinners. We all stood as we heard them read out (e.g. cursed is he that curseth his father and mother) and we replied firmly AMEN. This was OK of course but it could tempt us to think we were "goodies" and not like those other people. Then we would go home feeling sufficiently chastened.

This developed in the Catholic church into receiving ashes on the forehead and we got it via the "High Church" movement. I think it is OK but a bit like play acting (see Matthew ch 6 v 16-18)

If we choose to fast then we need to use up stuff we don't want during Lent, so we have a party binge the day before - Shrove Tuesday - when we confess our sins and are "shriven" ready for Lent.

I personally value the Lent period and it helps in our keeping of Good Friday and Easter Day. We seem to have weakened most of the old customs this century (COVID finally killed the Lent Course) but maybe we should think about reviving some of them.



Contributed by Michael Williamson



Enough - Religion for a trigger warning !! At the Edinburgh Festival last year ,alongside 'nudity' and 'violence' was seen 'Discussions of Faith'. Faith must now be one of those trigger warnings posted outside venues to protect "over sensitive" audience members exposing themselves to danger - how absurd !!

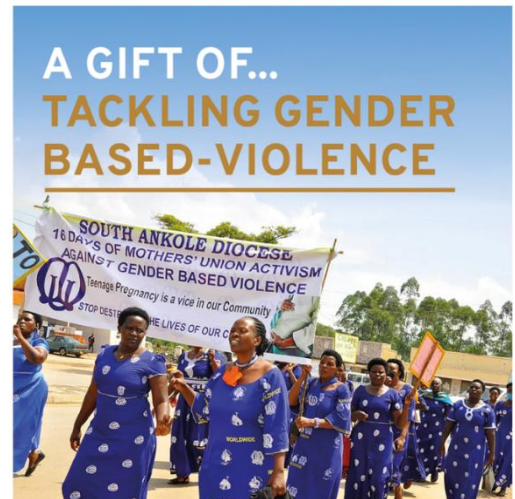
Every year, at our March Mothers' Union meeting, we hold a bring and buy sale to raise money for the Mothers' Union project "Make a Mother's Day". Last year, we were able to pay for 2 ladies in Rwanda to undertake literacy courses and 3 ladies who were funded by us to do business skills training.

We are proud of the fact that our little branch of the Mothers' Union in Astley has, over the last few years, probably transformed the lives of many women in some of the poorest nations in the world.

This year, we are being a little more ambitious. In order to contribute to the international Mothers' Union campaign against gender based violence, we hope to raise as much as possible to help train specialists in this area. They are trained to advocate against harmful practices which enable and perpetuate violence against women and girls in Africa, and also to counsel survivors of abuse in hard-to-reach communities.

The cost of training one specialist is £60. We would like to fund several of these if we can raise enough money. We will continue to hold our bring and buy sale in March and also, hopefully, the proceeds from the Saturday coffee morning at St. Stephens in February.

If anyone else would like to contribute, please see Linda or any member of the Mothers' Union. Thank you.



Linda Leese

WHEN A BABY IS BORN

A child asked God "They tell me you are sending me to Earth tomorrow, but how am I going to live there being so small and helpless?"

God replied "Your angel will be waiting for you and will take care of you."

The child inquired further, "But tell me, here in heaven I don't have to do anything but smile and sing to be happy". God said "Your angel will sing and smile for you. You will feel your angel's love and be happy."

Again the child asked " And how am I going to be able to understand when people talk to me if I don't know the Language?" God said " Your angel will tell you the most beautiful, sweet words you will ever hear, and with much patience and care your angel will teach you how to speak."

"And what am I to do when I want to talk to you?" asked the child. "Your angel will place your hands together and teach you how to pray."

"Who will protect me?" "Your angel will defend you even if it means risking its own life."

"But I will always be sad because I will not see you anymore." "Your angel will always talk to you about me and will teach you the way to come back to me, even though I will always be next to you."

At that moment there was much peace in heaven, but voices from Earth could be heard and the child hurriedly asked, "God, if I am to leave now, please tell me my angel's name."

And God said "You will simply call her Mummy."

Contributed by Marjorie Owen

St Stephen's Monthly Coffee Mornings

As most of us will remember during the Covid lockdown we were not allowed to meet up with others (unless in our "bubble") but once the restrictions were lifted Jane Jones from St Stephen's decided to start up a monthly coffee morning on the 3rd Saturday of each month in the church meeting room - just "because we could".

The proceeds from these coffee mornings were not for church funds but an outreach to various charities, nominations accepted by Jane from people, and over the last 4 years hundreds of pounds have been raised and sent on.

During the last 12 months the very generous people who have attended these coffee mornings have raised the following amounts for these charities:

18 th January	MU - Away from it All Scheme	- £210.00
15 th February	Sepsis UK Trust	- £150.00
15 th March	Mind	- £110.00
19 th April	Barnabus	- £165.00
18 th May	Christian Aid	- £190.50
21 st June	Beauty for Ashes	- £160.00
19 th July	RSPCA	- £192.00
16 th August	DEC	- £200.60
20 th September	Macmillan	- £140.00
22 nd October	Wateraid	- £102.00
15 th November	Operation Christmas Child (7shoeboxes and £4.40 donation)	- £179.40
20 th December	To furnish Worship Cabin	- £226.00



Dec coffee morning - patrons singing (with actions) 12 days of Christmas led by Linda and Jennifer – great fun

This totals up to £2025.50 - an excellent result from those who attended (sometimes many - sometimes just a few) and you raised approximately the same amount for the last 4 years.

Jenny Evans

A great big thank you to all those who have supported our coffee mornings. Many charities have benefitted from your generous donations. Also a special personal thank you to those who have helped me in so many different ways. I am very grateful. You are all very special, generous people.

If anyone has a charity they would like us to support then please let me know.

Jane x x x

Smile Lines

The day I can yell "Where is my phone?" and it yells back "Down here in the couch!" then it will truly be a smartphone.

Football Manager: "We had a good team on paper. Unfortunately the game was played on grass"

Attributed to Brian Clough

God's Kingdom Come

In South Sudan livestock represents social status, income, food and dowries. Cattle raiding is widespread causing misery for many and business for others.

Cattle raiding has been practised amongst pastoral communities for as long as anyone can remember. But now it has become more intense and more criminals use guns rather than bows and arrows,

Unfortunately for many in South Sudan a person's loyalty is to their tribe rather than country (which was only created an independent state about 20 years ago). The tribes fight each other over land disputes etc. People struggle to remember times when they weren't in conflict and the misery of violence, murder and fleeing from one area to another continues.

The Church Mission Society (CMS) is working with local churches to try to train men and women to develop their faith and find identity there rather than in a tribe. Also CMS is offering trauma healing and building relationships between different tribes etc.

There is much concern among all Christians to foster peace in warring communities. The Anglican Archbishop Moses Dong visited many towns and villages speaking at Peace Rallies promoting the special CMS project on relationships, majoring on the theme of love and forgiveness.



At one such rally the Governor of Warrap State, General Aleu Ayleny, attended and listened carefully. He had, handcuffed, in the back of his car a young criminal called Makol. He had been caught cattle raiding and was awaiting execution. He would be killed in front of the crowd in the evening after the Rally as a warning to others.

The Archbishop spoke about peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. When he had finished the Governor stood up and addressed him "I have a living, dead young man in the back of my car... today we could have been making him an example of this young man... but because you have spoken of forgiveness and reconciliation I have forgiven him"

Makol was brought out before the crowd trembling and hanging his head in shame. Then he heard the words "You are forgiven" Makol was overwhelmed. The crowd who should have been witnessing his execution were celebrating with him. He received Jesus and was baptised. Now, four years later, he and his family belong to a local church where he is learning the faith, has a job and provides for his family honestly.

Obviously peace will not be achieved overnight, but CMS is committed to steady, long-term discipling throughout the region. As people are raised up one at a time and lives are changed, CMS are praying that here could be the first green shoots of the peace that God wants for this troubled land.

Michael Williamson



A SERMON FOR PALM SUNDAY

Extracts taken from "Learning to be the Church Again" - Mark 11:1-11

Let me take you to a small rural congregation outside my hometown in South India. This village like many across India, is marked by religious fervour and caste practice. Dalits, Untouchables, like myself are excluded and forced to live on the outskirts of the village. These Dalit communities are at the very heart of Christianity in India, living on the margins, neglected, excluded and seen as religiously dirty.

However, on Palm Sunday, these Dalit Christians dress up, decorate palm leaves and process, singing much like the crowd in Jerusalem during Jesus' time. They joyfully process into the village, shouting 'hosanna' into places where they are excluded. Dalits, whether Hindu or Christian are not permitted to enter into the Hindu temples and holy spaces for fear that they will pollute and taint other worshippers as well as the deity, the God, itself.

However, this Dalit Christian community, living under constant threat of violence and intimidation, proclaims the name of Jesus, and themselves as children of God. In joyous events, reminiscent of that first Palm Sunday, the Dalit Christians bring Jesus with them into the places where they otherwise would not go. Their faith in Jesus emboldens them, Jesus embraced them and made God accessible to them. They know that in the village they are still despised and humiliated, and will face real retaliation, but in Jesus, their human dignity is restored - even if only for a moment.



In Mark's gospel story we see that Jesus' ministry is no longer private. Just before the Passover Jesus decides to enter Jerusalem, the heart of religious, economic and political power. Jerusalem was a colonised city. Many temple authorities were complicit in this occupation. People didn't have freedom. Jesus enters with much fanfare in the midst of many people, apparently fulfilling a messianic prophecy (Zechariah 9:9). This procession along the traditional pilgrimage route is an explicitly political statement.

According to Mark, Jesus had carefully coordinated this event, a 'street theatre'. Jesus is staging a counter demonstration. Mark contrasts the imagery of Jesus' entry as a non-military king riding on a borrowed donkey with Pilate riding a military stallion. When Jesus, the son of David, came into Jerusalem he was not looking to defend the Davidic temple or rehabilitate it, rather disrupt it.

By choosing to ride a donkey Jesus ridicules the powers and principalities, their preoccupation with glory and domination. Jesus' march into Jerusalem is a peaceful, unarmed, non-violent pilgrimage with a clear message to unmask and resist the dehumanising powers.

By entering Jerusalem, an occupied city, Jesus becomes the site of protest, resistance and hope for the community. By leaving the comfort, safety and trappings of power Jesus offers a fresh image of the anticipated messiah. People embraced Jesus as he entered the streets because he embraced their destitution, desolation and hopelessness. He took their pain as his own. People found their voice. People

shouted 'hosanna', because he was there with them. Because he was them. Jesus practices solidarity and justice.

This journey through Jerusalem inevitably leads to the cross. The son of David and the messiah, who is being acclaimed, is going to be carrying the cross on the same street, humiliated, with distrustful and demeaning glances directed towards him, perhaps by the same crowd. In the eyes of the crowd, Jesus was a messiah one day and a suspect another day. Eventually hung on the cross with his dignity taken away. Jesus was stigmatised and abandoned, much like my Dalit sisters and brothers. That is the true identity of Jesus Christ. That's where we meet God. As we know the cruelty of the cross is upended by resurrection.

Through this street demonstration Jesus opens up a new way of experiencing life. In Jesus God was present in the world and the world was open to God. Jesus is not simply the presence of God among the marginalised, more than that, Jesus represents a truly marginalised God. The heart of the Gospel is enacted in these brief moments. The Dalit Christian community I mentioned earlier continues to live it.

The pandemic has fundamentally changed our world and our communities. Besides the immense loss, the pandemic exposed deep social destitution, systemic racism, stubborn economic inequalities and political populism. Across the world, some Christians have been part of it or have abdicated their moral responsibility to try to correct it. The church needs to unmask the inequalities, both within and outside, through our embodied discipleship.

Let's listen to the voices of subversion in an otherwise well tamed text, let's hold before our eyes Jesus as the impoverished messiah riding a donkey. When political ideologies and authoritarian regimes trample on vulnerable people, we cannot be spectators. When my skin colour and race determine whether I belong or not, we cannot normalise such a view.

When Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, he challenged the status-quo. Jesus embodied Peace and Justice. Therefore, for us, the church, it should not be an issue to be addressed and debated. It is the very identity of the church. If we don't have it in us we cannot be the body of Christ. This is a moment of reckoning for us as Christians.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus this Palm Sunday, we have an opportunity to learn to be the church again, be present in the brokenness of the world. This journey is also an invitation for an individual inner spiritual renewal. We need to be born anew in Spirit, to be 'born again'. You and I as disciples of Jesus Christ are called to live like him, and love like him, inside out.

A desire for self-preservation will inevitably short circuit the redemptive power of God. When we make the lives of people redundant, we make Jesus redundant and ultimately God redundant. Unless we can locate Jesus' passion in the real life of people and our emotional lives, we will not be able to understand the meaning of incarnation that resurrection ultimately signifies.

Dear friends, carrying on a long biblical tradition, Jesus showed that salvation comes when ordinary people do God's will, like you and me, when we brave going out, taking our faith and our God with us. May God help us to follow this Jesus and raise a generation to be faithful to his calling. Hosanna.



*Acknowledgement:- Extracts taken from Palm Sunday Sermon by
Rev Dr Anderson Jeremiah, Bishop of Edmonton
www.churchofengland.org*

I Can See



Today, with modern surgery, a person losing their sight because of a cataract, can have their vision restored by a small operation. I have taken two members from church and Linda (my wife) to have cataract surgery. When Linda had surgery and the eye patch was removed, she was watching TV, "I can see, I can see !" was her cry of jubilation, her vision had been restored. When some animals and birds are born, they are blind for the few days until their sight comes.

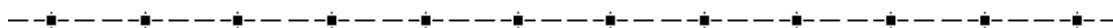
Jesus restored the sight of three blind men who rejoiced when they saw Jesus. From humans to all animals, the ability to see is a great gift.

When we are in church, have we got our eyes open? Do we see anybody get the table and chairs out? Do we see who buys all the tea and coffee? Do we see who buys and arranges the flowers to dress the altar? Do we see who organises the events and sells all the tickets? Do we see the person prepare his sermon for Sunday? Do we see all the church pastoral team visiting people in need? Lastly do we see all the people in preparing the Team Magazine and delivering to homes?

Linda and I want to give you all our support with many thanks and that GOD blesses you for all your dedication.

Stuart Davies

Stuart is a neighbour of mine and is a regular attendee at the St George's Friday Coffee Morning so many of you will know him from there and he wrote this to express his thanks for all the unsung heroes that keep each and all of our churches functioning - *Jenny Evans*



Tearfund

Nigel Harris retired as CEO last June. He joined the staff in November 2015. He had been with Farm Africa and Save the Children before that.

He was inspired to join Tearfund by a visit to Nigeria. Pastor Isaac had planted a church. There was a brand new church building, a school for 100 children, a six bed health clinic and public toilets - all paid for by the community. Nigel thought "Why can't this happen anywhere?"

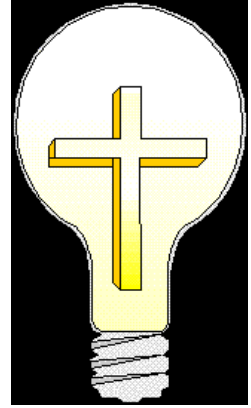
During the last ten years, under his leadership, Tearfund has developed and promoted the idea that "a transformed church transforms it's community" And this has been proved to be possible - (tearfund.org/cctimpact)

Nigel has seen his faith radically develop and his belief in what is possible with God at work in his churches. The church is God's tool for this work, His vessel to transform. When he joined Tearfund he'd already worked with secular agencies and widely travelled, but it was a new concept to see the worldwide family of churches at work, locally doing and being, and he not feeling a complete stranger to it.

Now in retirement he will be supporting and cheering on massively as the work continues. "Thank you, all of you" he says and Tearfund gratefully thank him.

Contributed by Michael Williamson

Prayers



- There is so much happening in the world at present that is confusing and alarming and it's easy to feel overwhelmed by everything we see in the news, feeling that there is nothing we can do to help. Remember, however, that we have a merciful God to whom we can take all our fears and concerns. In Isaiah He says "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand." We have the power of prayer in our hands and our hearts.
- Thank God for the people from Astley, Mosley Common and Tyldesley who, having worshipped with us in the past, now live elsewhere but continue to keep us in their prayers.
- Pray for Bishop Sarah Mullally as she prepares to become our new Archbishop of Canterbury. Ask God to sustain and guide her in the months and years ahead.
- Remember to thank God for the changing of the seasons, the gentle lengthening of days and the first signs of Spring.
- Hold in your prayers all those who will be marking the season of Lent by prayer, study and action.

Contributed by Sara Yarwood



*We pray to the Lord for courage to give up other things and to give ourselves to him this Lent.

Lord, meet us in the silence, **give us strength and hear our prayer.**

*Give your world the courage to give up war, bitterness and hatred, and to seek peace.

Lord, meet us in the silence, **give us strength and hear our prayer.**

*Give us the courage to give up quarrels, strife and jealousy in our families and communities. May the presence of the risen Jesus, bring peace and direction as we live with one another.

Lord, meet us in the silence, **give us strength and hear our prayer.**

*Give us the courage to give up our selfish ways as we live for others, and to give time, care and comfort to the sick. May Jesus bring his healing touch, and may the light of his presence fill their rooms.

Lord, meet us in the silence, **give us strength and hear our prayer.**



ST. STEPHEN'S MOTHERS' UNION

November Meeting

Our speaker this evening was Keith Revill who shared some very amusing stories with us about his experiences as a sales rep.

Jennifer opened our meeting with a service and had done some research of her own. She shared with us that the Patron Saint of sales reps was Saint Lucia of Syracuse, better known as St. Lucy.

Keith then told us some amusing things that happened whilst working as a sales rep. When he started work - being a junior rep. he told us he always got the worst car. He then went on to relate so many very funny experiences.

On one such occasion he had to go to Wales and whilst negotiating the narrow roads he came upon a car stuck in the middle of the road. He got out and discovered three old ladies whose car had broken down on their way to a funeral, so he offered to push their car over to the side of the road so that traffic could pass and he put the ladies in his car.

They hadn't been going long before they realized that they had forgotten their flowers. Whilst being mindful of the time of his own appointment, he took the ladies back for the flowers and then on to the funeral before rushing off for his own appointment. However, when he arrived he was told the person he was supposed to be meeting sadly had gone to a funeral!

Keith kept us laughing with lot of stories with his travels and Jennifer ended the meeting by sharing with us a hymn she had discovered in our hymn books and read a verse from it to us. It reminded her of the time when salesmen would appear from time to time on our streets years ago. They had suitcases full of things to sell and would go around knocking on doors. The hymn she discovered was - The world is full of smelly feet! An amusing ending to an evening full of laughter!

Jean Williamson

December Meeting

Linda led our Christmas Service starting with a short address followed with seasonal Bible readings and carols, starting with 'Unto Us a Boy is Born' and ending with 'O Come All Ye Faithful'. We were lucky enough to have the husbands of Clare and Janet with us and Michael and Cliff's strong voices always enrich our singing.



Five gold rings

Afterwards Linda handed out the 2026 programme of events and the annual subscription fee envelopes. As it was no-ones birthday this month we sang "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. Jennifer and Linda then led an all action rendering of 'The 12 Days of Christmas' and poems were read out.

It was decided to raise money to train 4 women in Africa to inform females in villages that it is NOT alright to accept abuse from their men. This is a project for Mother's Day.

Linda also read out a letter from a pupil at Garrett Hall whose class project was to write a letter to an older person who may be lonely at Christmastime.

The meeting ended with tea, coffee, biscuits and mince pies. A fitting ending to our Christmas Meeting.

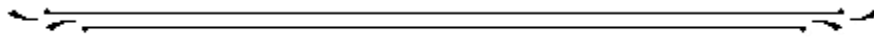
Our meetings are open to all - young, old, male, female, members or non-members of MU and we meet at 7.30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month in the church meeting room at St Stephens (entry round the back of the main church building). Do come along if you are interested - you will be made very welcome.

Our Next Meetings are:

Feb 18th	7.30pm - Speaker Davina Woods "Celebrating Sisterhood" a quilt with a story of courage and determination
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Mar 18th	7.30pm - AGM and Bring and Buy
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Pauline Roberts



Bible Society in Ukraine

"letter adapted from their recent magazine"

This morning there were explosions from the area around our office. The roads were blocked from debris caused by Iranian drones. Children are spending more time in shelters than at school.

We have defense teams equipped with anti-aircraft guns etc to shoot down the drones the enemy uses to terrorize us. My son and daughter and I often bring them hot coffee and sandwiches. Today in a biting cold wind I drove up and offered the soldiers hot coffee. One of them, who looked about 60 years old, noticed a Bible on the dashboard of my minibus. "My grandmother used to read it to me when I was a kid". He asked if he could get one. I quickly handed him the Bible as another raid began. Taking it from my hands he removed his hat recognizing the value of this book. I had to leave without knowing his name.

I am grateful to God that this morning the Lord reminded that even in the horrors of war many are searching for communion with Him.

Thank you, dear friends, for being the answer to someone's prayerful search.

Yours in Christ,

Revd Anatoley Raychynats

I adapted this from the Bible Society's magazine, Word in Action.

Contributed by Michael Williamson

A MEETING POINT AT THE ROWANS

I first heard about the Rowans, Mosley Common in 1974. The local council was building a new development, a residential block of flats with communal facilities and some bungalows.

My parents were one of the first residents in the bungalows, some of my mother's family lived nearby, having worked in the area in the Mosley Common coal mine.

I have been visiting the Rowans for over two years now; going to the Communion service. We have been meeting in a small room, Rev Jonathan with Marje Owen and four or five others. We meet on the last Thursday of each month at 3.30pm. For the last two meetings we have been singing in the communal lounge, comfy easy chairs, tea and biscuits, Rev Eileen and Mike Stuckey led the service.

I was always happy to go to the Meeting Point service at St Stephen's monthly in the afternoon. After singing in the choir for almost 40 years it was helpful to me and others who had respiratory problems, mobility difficulties and found morning attendance difficult. Unfortunately Covid and other factors contributed to the decline of Meeting Point.

At our last meeting at the Rowans we were thinking about how we pray, this led me to look at an old prayer book that I found helpful when I was on the prayer reading rota at St Stephen's.

I remembered this prayer written in the 17th century by a nun and thought to share it with you...

Lord, thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing old and someday will be old.
Keep me from the habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.
Make me thoughtful but not bossy.

Teach me the lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken!

Thou knowest Lord that I want a few friends at the end.

Seal my lips on aches and pains, although they are increasing.

Keep me reasonably sweet, I do not want to be a Saint, some of them are very hard to live with.

Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people.

Give me the grace to tell them so.

Amen

Perhaps as a 1944 war baby I should reflect on this daily!

Christine Darlington



TODDLER GROUP

There are currently spaces available at the Toddler Group

Which meets at St John's Church Lounge

Every Thursday during Term Time

9.30am to 11.00am

£1 each, per child and adult

Includes a drink and toast



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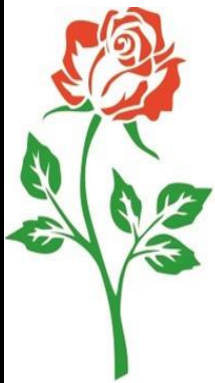
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Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

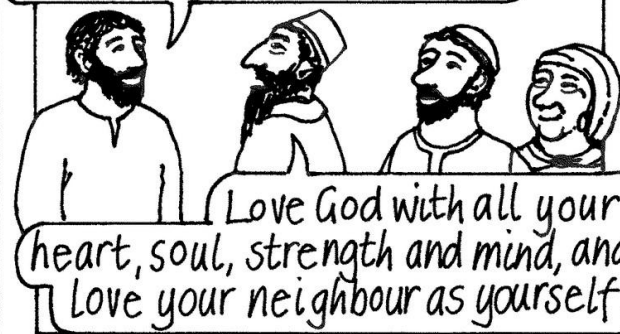
It can be read in the Bible in
Luke 10:25-37

An expert in the Law of Moses wanted
to test Jesus' knowledge of the laws in
the Bible, so he asked Jesus a question.

Teacher, so what
must I do to get
eternal life?



What does it say in the Bible?



Love God with all your
heart, soul, strength and mind, and
Love your neighbour as yourself.

You've got it right.



But who counts
as a 'neighbour'?

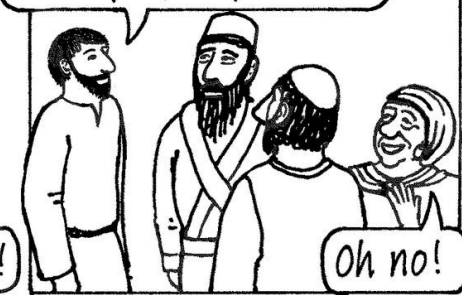
So Jesus told a story -

A man was walking from
Jerusalem to Jericho



That's a dangerous road!

He was attacked by robbers
who left him for dead.



Oh no!

A priest was walking
the same way, and
after him a lawyer.



Oh, they are good
people, they'll help.

They saw the hurt man
but they walked past



I bet it's an ordinary
person who helps!

Then a man from Samaria
came that way...



Oh no! We hate them and
they hate us Jews! That
hurt man is done for!

He felt sorry for the hurt
man, and cleaned and
bandaged his cuts.



What? No!

He put him on his donkey,
took him to an inn, and
paid for him to stay.



So who was a real neighbour
to the hurt man?

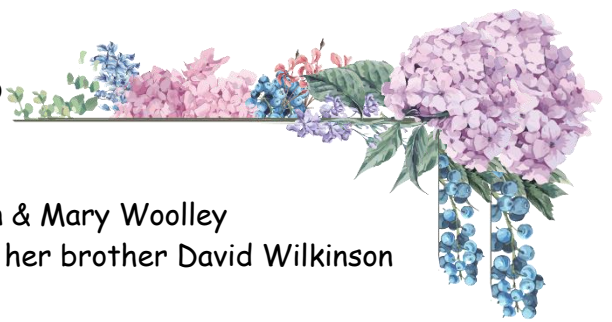


The... the Sss...
the one who helped him.

So go and do
the same.



ST JOHN'S CHURCH FLOWER ROTA 2026



JANUARY	4	Ann Hilton in memory of Roy Hilton & Mary Woolley
	11	Maureen & Tom Knox in memory of her brother David Wilkinson
	Tong	
	18	In memory of Alice Gregory from her family
	25	Susan & Alan Howarth for their parents

FEBRUARY	1	Ann Hilton in memory of Roy & Ida
	8	Joan Taylor in memory of Eddie Taylor
	15	***** VACANT *****
	22	Marjorie & Barrie Owen in memory of her father

MARCH	1	Maureen & Tom Knox in memory of her mother Connie Tong
	8	Mavis Wood & family in memory of Alan Wood
	15	Mavis & Joan in memory of their Mum & Dad
	22	Sybil Hall in memory of her mother
	29	Marian Blundell & family in memory of Maggie Cottrell & Jinnie Walker

APRIL	5	Susan & Alan Howarth for their parents
	12	Christine & David Barnes in memory of their parents
	19	Elaine Kidd in memory of her parents John & Olwen Hill
	26	Andrea Taziker in memory of Thomas Cooper

MAY	3	Marie & Mike Stuckey in memory of her parents
	10	Joanne Haigh in memory of Betty & Derek Jones & Doris
	17	Ann Hilton in memory of Mary & Tom Woolley
	24	Mavis & Joan in memory of their sister Phyllis
	31	Christine & Derek Darlington in memory of their loved ones

JUNE	7	Barbara Wilson & Maureen Anders in memory of Sandra Phillips
	14	Glenys Robinson in memory of her mother, dad & Eddie
	21	David Watkinson in memory of his parents, sisters Elsie, Francis & brother John
	28	Marian Blundell & family in memory of Marianne

JULY	5	Mavis & Joan in memory of their mum & dad
	12	Ann Hilton in memory of her son Martin
	19	Leah Bezeck in memory of Arthur and their parents
	26	*****VACANT*****



AUGUST	2	Sybil Hall in memory of her mum, dad & Auntie Annie
	9	Andrea Taziker in memory of her mum & dad
	16	Susan & Alan Howarth for their parents
	23	*****VACANT*****
	30	Marie & Mike Stuckey in memory of his parents
<hr/>		
SEPTEMBER	6	Phil Wood and family in memory of Else
	13	Glenys Robinson & family in memory of Eddie
	20	Susan & Alan Howarth in memory of their parents
	27	Elaine Kidd in memory of husband Alan and parents John & Olwen Hill
<hr/>		
OCTOBER	4	David Watkinson in memory of his parents, sisters Elsie, Francis & brother John
	11	Maureen & Tom Knox in memory of Johanna Tilson
	18	Susan & Alan Howarth for their parents
	25	Andrea Taziker in memory of Margaret & Alan Goddard
<hr/>		
NOVEMBER	1	Maureen & Tom Knox in memory of parents Connie & Percy, Isa & David
	8	Mavis Wood in memory of Alan
	15	Joanne Haigh in memory of her parents Ann & Victor & their parents
	22	Ann Hilton in memory of James and Edith Hilton
	29	Mavis & Joan in memory of their niece Barbara
<hr/>		
DECEMBER	6	Marie & Mike Stuckey in memory of her parents
	13	Marjorie & Barrie Owen in memory of her mother
	20	Carole Priestley in memory of her parents
	27	Marjorie & Barrie Owen in memory of her mother

Vacant Dates: 15 February, 26 July, 23 August

The Isle of Innisfree by Yeats

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles
made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the
honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

*And I shall have some peace there, for peace
comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where
the cricket sings;*

*There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a
purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.*

*I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by
the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the
pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.*

ST JOHN`S FESTIVE EVENTS 2025

In 2025 St John`s church had a very successful Christmas season packed with fundraising events for parishioners and the community alike.

It began with a Christmas shopping and Live Music fundraising evening at the end of October which was very well attended and which raised £1,100 for church funds. It was all very kindly arranged by Michelle Hall, Director of the local company, Millhall Financial.

Michelle invited several independent businesses to come and set up stalls at church and these included handmade cards, a Jewellery stall, a stall selling hair accessories, a craft stall making blankets, a cheese and wine merchant, a cake stall as well as a stall set up by "Present Trend" from Boothstown which was selling cards, gifts and homeware from their range. Tony Nicholls, a brilliant keyboard player, played and sang tunes throughout the evening to top off the festive atmosphere.



A bar and snacks were available as well as a raffle with some exciting prizes.

Marjorie Owen, St John`s churchwarden, was extremely pleased with the success of the event, not least because the stall holders set up and then dismantled their own stalls so there was minimal work for the church team to do on the night. It was a great event which raised valuable funds for the church.





Let`s hope this great event can be arranged again for later this year!



Photos kindly supplied by Michelle Hall of Millhall Financial.





On 3rd December there was the traditional Carols on the Common for the whole community with mulled wine and mince pies served in St John`s school afterwards.

On 6th December a Christmas Afternoon Tea was organised in the church lounge. There were sandwiches, cakes, scones and prosecco. This was also well attended and raised £465 for church funds.

On 19th December there was a community lunch provided by the ladies of the church who served up home made soup and bread rolls, plus mince pies, for people invited from the local community. There was also a raffle during the afternoon and everyone had a brought a prize to donate. The whole afternoon was very well received by all those who attended.

Contributed by Marjorie Owen



CHRISTMAS EVE AT ST STEPHEN`S - WITH ASTLEY BRASS BAND

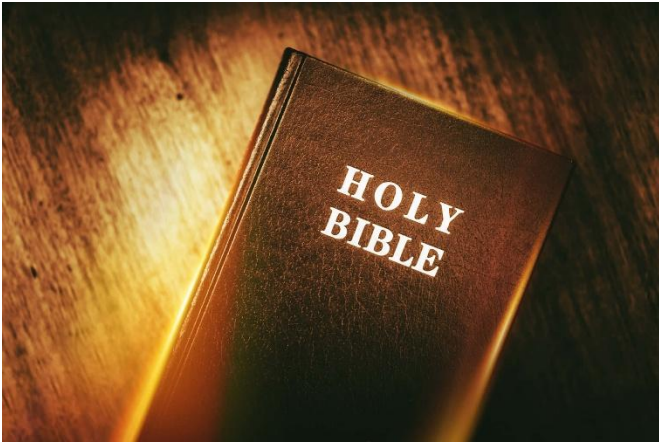
In December the Christmas Eve service at St Stephen`s had a decidedly festive flavour. Debbie presided over a beautiful Team Eucharist service which was very well attended and the school hall was packed with families who had come to join in the service and hear Astley Brass Band play.

At the end of the service sherry, wine, cakes, snacks and mince pies were served as we were entertained by the band playing many familiar Christmas Carols. It was a great start to the festivities and it was good to see so many people there.



*Contributed by
Michelle Lewthwaite*

Open Doors



Bibles are surprisingly powerful in opening people's eyes to the presence and guidance of God. In times of trouble, hurt or disillusionment they are God's key to unlock wonderful new life experiences of His love. They inspire us so that we know for sure God's salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. We learn from them, are warned by them and are shown the right path to life by them. Therefore we can live our lives properly equipped to live them to the full serving Him.

If you were against God's work in Christ you would seek to stop it and contain it. It was so in 1955 when Brother Andrew realised this and saw Christians in Communist Eastern Europe hemmed in by all sorts of restrictions (you couldn't even get a Bible) and depressed at this increasing isolation and persecution.

He started smuggling Bibles to them and developed a whole network of contacts. He used to say God knows no barriers, no doors shut him out. His work was blessed and began to spread all over the world. Now 70 years on, it is under the name of Open Doors that we can see how valued and necessary the work is. One of the workers, Daniel, has been involved for 25 years "I came in contact with Open Doors and look at me now. I'm using all my experience and skills to bring the Bible to persecuted believers" Open Doors say it's too dangerous to explain his methods or say in which country he works, but it's a place God has put on his heart. When he explained his plans to colleagues they took a great deal of convincing, but it worked.

Life for persecuted Christians today is much worse than it was when Daniel first started and very much worse than in the days of Nero in Rome. Perhaps wrestling with lions was more dramatic?

Much less heroically and without drama is my own experience as a student over 60 years ago. In 1962 a college friend and I went to the Soviet Union on a Soviet youth programme arranged with the National Union of Students. We were escorted for 3 weeks and travelled by train through Poland to Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev (Ukraine).

It occurred to me that I could be useful if I took a present of Bibles to believers I met (churches were permitted to open). I had to tell my friend of course, but otherwise I kept it a secret in case I was advised against. I contacted the Bible Society. Books are heavy in hand luggage so I thought 2 Bibles and 6 New Testaments would be enough. They advised me to take all Russian texts rather than use Ukrainian for Kiev, because Russia is dominant there, everyone knows it and Ukrainian is being phased out (if only I had known then what I know now!)



I thought about how I should proceed. Even slim books are easily found by a serious search - so I put my own name and address inside each one to emphasize that I owned them - a possession that I was legally entitled to. Then I laid them casually mixed in with my stuff. It worked. We were waved through with the student party hardly examined. On the entry form there was a place to declare any gifts you

had taken in. I couldn't think what to say if challenged except to bluff - with my glasses I seem to have missed the small print! And hope they see it for what it is - a very petty misdemeanour.

Once inside we had to find a way to deliver. I thought the easy way would be to go to church, but rather than find an individual just go to the pastor and he would know how to proceed. So we did. We had to find a church first! We managed to find the Baptists in each city. We asked to see the pastor - my friend was now a glad collaborator - and I took the Bible and he 2 New Testaments. I think I have never, before or even since, received such grateful thanks and obvious appreciation for a gift I have been able to give.



Today so many Christians are in lands where we are ostracised, tormented or made to feel unwelcome and actual persecution (prison, torture to recant and death) is getting worse. So we can give thanks for

the ministry of Open Doors. They say please keep praying. Our prayers can go where we cannot.

Last year 101 MP's attended the launch of the World Watch List of countries dangerous for Christians that Open Doors produce. Over £14 million was donated to help the work last year.

Michael Williamson



And now a little light relief

Facebook

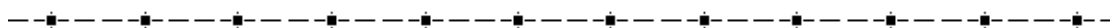


If you don't have Facebook - don't worry - just make friends by sharing with passers-by in the street.

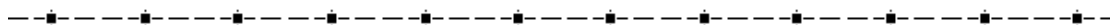
Tell them what you have eaten, how you feel, what you have done the night before and what you want to do later. Show them pictures of your family pets, the garden or you watering the lawn. Show them you doing what everybody does every day. Also listen to their conversation, give them a "thumbs up" and tell them you "like" them.

It works just like Facebook ! People begin to follow you - police officers, psychiatrists, all sorts...

Contributed by Michael Williamson



When a woman says "Correct me if I am wrong" that is not a real invitation. For your own safety - do not, under any circumstances, actually do it.



To get your attention !! Redhorn News (Wiltshire).

Spotted this advert on the side of a van "Mr Bit, the window cleaner - tel etc..... - I passed over it at first ! Do you get it?

WILLIAM TYNDALE 500

2026 is the Quincentenary (500th anniversary) of William Tyndale's masterpiece 1526 English New Testament, which was the first time that the whole of the New Testament had been translated from Greek into English and published. This work is seen as a literary and theological treasure.

William Tyndale (1494-1536) was a pioneering translator of the Bible whose work continues to shape the way it is read today. He was the first to translate the New Testament into English directly from the original Greek and his clear and memorable English style became the foundation for subsequent English translations. His influences can be seen throughout the King James Bible of 1611.

However, Tyndale's work came at great personal cost. Having grown up in Gloucestershire he studied at Oxford and was ordained a priest in London in 1515. At this time it is unlikely that he could have foreseen the dramas that would shake the foundations of the church in the coming decades. The name of the German Augustinian friar Martin Luther had yet to become familiar in England however, by the time Tyndale was settled into life as a tutor to the children of a wealthy Gloucestershire man, Luther's 'heretical' ideas about theology and worship were circulating across Europe.

In 1521 Cardinal Wolsey presided over the burning of Luther's writings near St Paul's cathedral in the heart of London. In the same year the King wrote against Luther for which he received the title of Defender of the Faith from Pope Leo X.

Whilst working in Gloucestershire, William Tyndale began to find that his own thinking was also moving away from the tradition of the church and he felt that the scriptures should be made available to the English people in their own language. At this time the Bible was read in church only in Latin, the scholarly and ecclesiastical language of Europe, which meant nothing to the average worshipper. This led William Tyndale to declare to local priests that if God gave him a good number more years of life he would make sure that the ploughboy understood the Bible better than they did. He soon found himself in conflict with the churchmen of Gloucestershire and he moved to London in 1523.

If Tyndale hoped that the Bishop of London would support his plan for a Bible in English he was to be disappointed. The English church didn't want the Bible in English and translations were directly forbidden. The church feared that if people could understand the Bible they might start to challenge the teachings of the clergy. By 1524 it was clear to Tyndale that if he wanted to pursue his goal he would have to live in forced exile in Europe. He left London with a little financial backing from some sympathetic merchants who were impressed with his theories.

Finally, in 1525, whilst at Cologne, Tyndale completed his dream of translating the New Testament from Greek into English. Printing began but it seemed likely that he would be arrested and so he fled to Worms having managed to save the first part of the printed New Testament known as the *Cologne Fragment*, consisting of the first twenty-two chapters of Matthew's gospel. At Worms the complete edition of the New Testament was finally published and it began to be smuggled into England in 1526.



This is the first time that ordinary people were able to read the Bible in plain English from a printed book. However, the euphoria did not last long. In early 1526 the Bishop of London ordered the collection of as many copies as possible and he lit a bonfire outside St Paul's Cathedral and burned them all.

Undeterred, Tyndale continued to write a number of books between 1527 and 1533. He learned Hebrew, in which the Old Testament was written, and translated the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (known as the Pentateuch) into English. It is likely that he also translated other books of the Old Testament up to 2 Chronicles. With both his translations and other writings William Tyndale was now the most significant Englishman in the movement we know as the Reformation.



The Tyndale Monument, Gloucestershire

His translations gained popularity and he was asked for a second, corrected and improved, edition of his New Testament. In the summer of 1534 he moved to Antwerp which he considered a safe place to complete this task. Whatever the heresy laws in force in Antwerp, it was in general a much more relaxed city than in many other parts of the Holy Roman Empire. He took up lodgings with Thomas Poyntz, an English merchant, and his wife Anna. This should have been a quiet and safe place for him, the authorities were likely to be lenient with English merchants in view of their economic value to the city.

At this time Tyndale was described as being "very frugal and spare of body, an earnest labourer in the setting forth of the scriptures of God". He concentrated on the revised New Testament which was finally published in November 1534. This translation has been described by David Daniell as "*the glory of his life's work*". Once this was completed Tyndale wanted to continue his translation of the Old Testament books from Hebrew.

He had hoped that his future consisted of study, translating, revising, writing, and preaching and this expectation might have been but for the arrival of an English scholar named Henry Phillips. Tyndale apparently brought Phillips to the house of Thomas Poyntz after meeting him at the homes of various merchants where he had been invited to dine. As well as sharing meals with the Poyntz family, it appears that sometimes Phillips stayed overnight. He impressed Tyndale but not Poyntz.

In the spring of 1535, Phillips engineered the arrest of Tyndale from Poyntz's house and his incarceration in Vilvoorde Castle near Brussels. His motives and means, and whether he acted alone or with others, have never been explained. But the fact remains that despite the strenuous efforts of Thomas Poyntz, and others, Tyndale languished in prison for eighteen months before he was taken out, strangled and burned, in the autumn of 1536.

Tyndale is remembered as a martyr who gave his life to ensure that the Scriptures could be read and understood by all. He was a Bible scholar and linguist and his work now belongs to the whole church. His legacy is one of faithfulness to Scripture and he stands as a unifying figure for Christians worldwide who value access to the Bible in their own language.

*Some information contributed by Pat Carroll
Acknowledgement:- Brian Buxton, The Tyndale Society*

The library at St Paul's Cathedral houses one of only 3 original editions of Tyndale's New Testament

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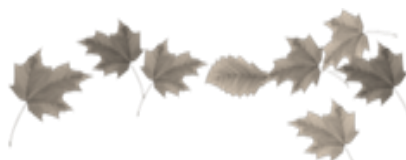
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PANCAKE DAY!

Shrove Tuesday is the last day before Ash Wednesday, which starts Lent, a 47 day period leading to Easter. This year it is on the 17th of February.

Long ago, people would "shrive", confess sins, and then use up rich foods like eggs, milk, butter, and sugar that weren't allowed during Lent, making pancakes to use them up

Lent is a time of getting ready for Easter. When Jesus was just getting started with his work, he went into the desert for 40 days to be all alone with God. He even went without

food and prayed and was tempted away from what God wanted him to do in all kind of ways, but he resisted that temptation. During Lent, Christians often do something different too, like praying every day or reading the Bible or give things up - such as chocolate, or crisps. This reminds us of Jesus' time in the desert to focus just on God and feel closer to him. The good news is that Sundays are still celebration days - so you can take a break from fasting!

Pancake Recipes

Basic recipe for pancakes; 100g flour, 300ml milk, 2 eggs.

Whisk together and let stand for about 30mins then fry with warmed oil or lard in a frying pan, turning the pancake over so both sides are a golden brown. Takes about 1 min per side. You can serve with lemon, lemon and sugar, Maple syrup, Golden Syrup, fruit, cream or all of them at once! And there are many fillings or fillings too!



Toppings and Fillings - the fun part!

Nutella - on its own or with soft fruit that needs using up such as strawberries

Caramelised banana - melt 50g butter in a frying pan and add 50g brown sugar. Stir until the mixture bubbles. Add 3 ripe bananas (older bruised ones are fine), peeled and cut on a diagonal into 5cm pieces and cook until tender. Serve with double cream

Homemade strawberry syrup - mash soft strawberries and brown sugar together and fry in a little butter until sticky

Natural yoghurt topped with blueberries or any berries that need using up

Homemade cinnamon syrup - melt cinnamon, butter and brown sugar to form a syrup

Bananas and leftover toffee sauce

Reduced blueberry sauce with cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger

Grated cheese and ham - Sprinkle grated cheese (any hard cheese that you have is fine) over the pancake as soon as you flip it. When the underside cooks, the cheese will be melted. Season and top with ham and wilted spinach

Chopped nuts and honey - a great way of using up any leftover nuts from Christmas!

STEPHANIE GROVE

In December, the sudden passing of Stephanie Grove, a dear friend and valued member of St Stephen's parish, shocked everyone. She had been an active member of the church for around 35 years.

Stephanie lived and breathed a Christian way of life. She worked in many different ways to bring others in the community and in our school to Christ, as well as using her own beautiful skills of craft and baking to benefit everyone at our church.

Stephanie had been part of the Stepping Up Team since its inception 10 years ago and she enjoyed working alongside the other team members bringing the message of the Bible to children within our communities.

But long before Stepping Up was formed, Stephanie helped to run a thriving Junior Church, which her boys attended when they were young, and she was one of the founding members of St Stephen's Baptism project. Stephanie taught at St George's Central school, teaching children in the Reception class, a job she loved. Stephanie clearly had a calling to work with children and she did this so well.

Stephanie was also an active member of the Café Church team which offers an alternative way of worshipping God and she was part of the team working at the Mission Church in Shakerley, becoming affectionately known as one of the 'Crumble Ladies' who traditionally make apple crumbles for the Sunday afternoon service each month. Stephanie's wreath making workshops had become a lovely Christmas tradition and a chance for her to pass on her love of floristry and crafting skills. These events brought people from all our three churches together for an enjoyable time of fellowship.

Stephanie's many talents included singing and she was a loyal member of the Astley Unlimited Choir, attending rehearsals, concerts, competitions and even taking her family along on tour to the Isle of Man.



At the service on the second Sunday of Advent the congregation of St Stephen's was shocked to be given the news that Stephanie had passed away.

It was very moving when, in a moment of silence, the new Area Dean, the Rev Richard Worsfold, lit a candle on the Advent Wreath at the start of the service. He acknowledged the fact that the wreath had been made by Stephanie's God daughter who has apparently learned the beautiful art of crafting from Stephanie herself.

We will all miss Stephanie. Her passing has left such a big hole in our worshipping community. Stephanie's funeral at Epiphany - 6th January - was attended by hundreds of people. St George's church was full of those who wanted to come and pay tribute to this wonderful person who devoted so much of her time to others. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

*Written by Michelle Lewthwaite
with contributions gratefully received from Angela Dand and Janet Graham*



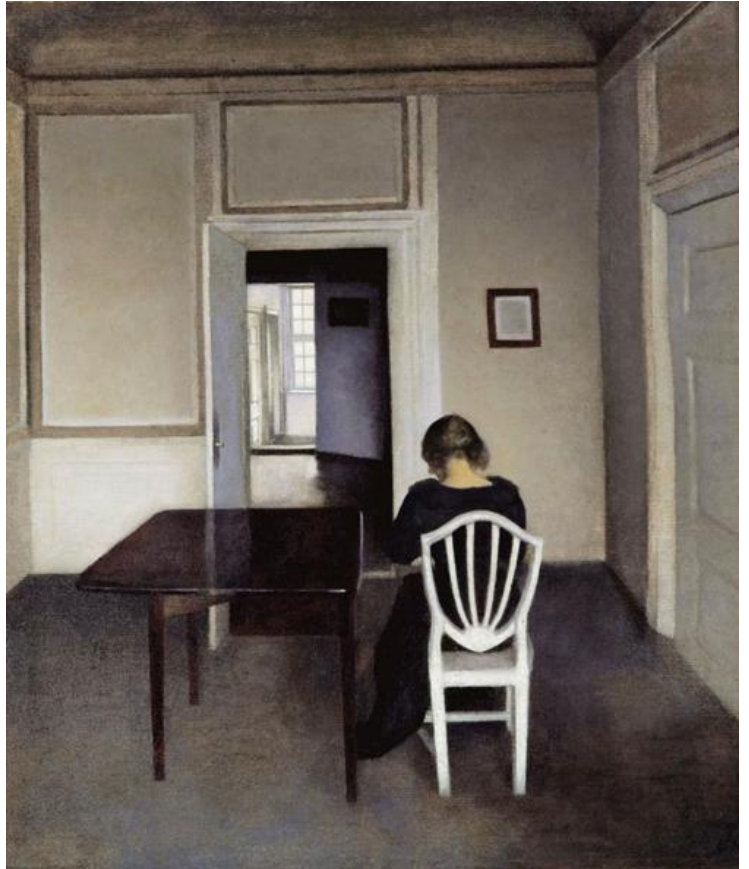
THE ART OF LENT - CONTEMPLATION

This painting, with its powerful sense of solitude and introspection, is titled **Interior with Ida in a White Chair** (1908). It's a painting without action, without eye-contact, without much visual stimulation, and yet it communicates deeply with the viewer. When we take time to contemplate it the result can lead to a meditation on time and the inner life.

This is one of a series of "Interior" paintings by the Danish artist Vilhelm Hammershoi. In December 1898 Hammershoi moved into this old merchant's house in Copenhagen and its rooms were the subject of 60 of his paintings. The model is his wife Ida who he married in 1891. In all these paintings the sense of stillness prevails.

We see that the room is quiet and uncluttered; light enters through a window in another room and casts a glow across the wooden floor of the corridor. The young woman, dressed in modest clothing, sits with her back to the viewer. There is no facial expression to read, Hammershoi doesn't offer explanations, and yet the intimacy of the setting draws us in. We are left only with the suggestion of stillness and silence.

This is Hammershoi's genius - he is able to turn silence into a visual experience. The room appears virtually empty and yet it is filled with atmosphere; there is a sense of timeless calm. The lack of detail encourages contemplation; it invites us to pause.



Some of you may remember Sister Wendy Beckett who made a documentary at the BBC in the 1990's about the messages behind several religious paintings. Following that series Sister Wendy wrote "The Art of Lent- A Painting a Day from Ash Wednesday to Easter". It includes the print shown above.

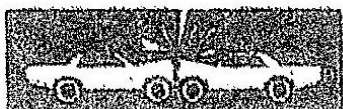
Sister Wendy loved this painting and especially linked it to Lenten themes in her book. She wrote that "it is only when we are still, when we open up to our inner reality, that the things in our life fall into coherence for us. We do not necessarily have to think this out; silence makes the order plain."

To her, the painting represented the fact that we each must choose to find Peace within ourselves. Peace cannot be imposed, it must be our own deliberate choice. It involves ordering our priorities in a moral context, examining our options and evaluating each one. She wrote....

" An acceptance of the vulnerability on which peace is based, and the weighing of significance in the light of eternity, can seem to some to be an abdication from life's everyday realities. Hammershoi's woman sits in an enclosed space, head bent. She could be thought to be imprisoned by her context and weakly complicit in her lack of liberty. Yet the artist shows us door upon door, with a luminous window beyond. Light plays on the woman's form from behind as well as from ahead. If she chooses, she has only to stand erect and walk down the corridor. If she stays motionless (reading?, sewing?), that is her choice. Peace is never imposed; it cannot be. It is a deliberate choice, an ordering of priorities in a moral context. We look at the options and we evaluate them."

Contributed by Michelle Lewthwaite

Acknowledgement - The Art of Lent by Sister Wendy Beckett (SPCK 2017)



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THANK YOU FROM THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

We would like to say a big Thank You to everyone who donated to this year's Team Magazine Christmas Greetings campaign and we hope that Nicky Wallace and family will accept our apology for not including their greeting on the back page of the December magazine. This was an unfortunate error on our part.

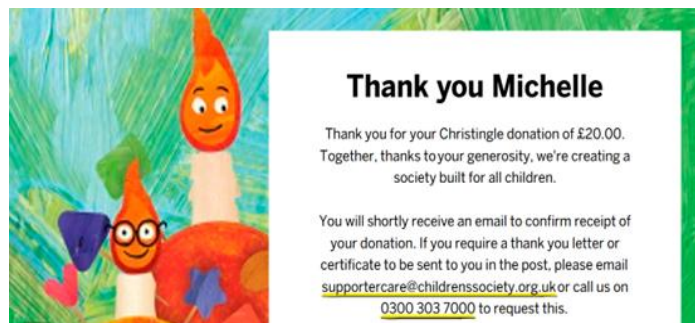
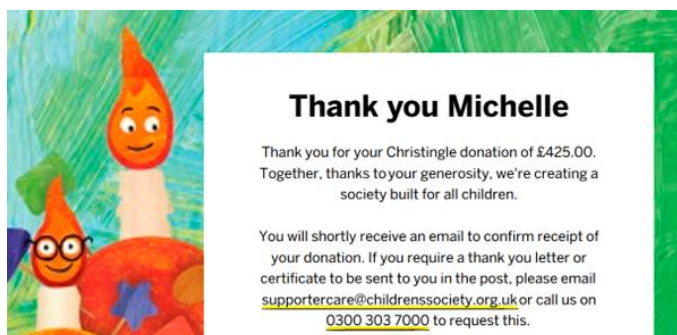
The final amount raised was a fantastic **£445** which exceeds last years' total.

All the money raised went towards the Children's Society Christingle campaign which aims to help empower more young people to make positive changes and rediscover their hope for their futures.

The on- line receipts are printed below.



The Magazine Committee



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THE TEAM MAGAZINE COMMITTEE

INVITES NEW MEMBERS

If you have good typing skills and are comfortable using Word documents and e-mail then please consider joining the Team Magazine Committee.

We are currently looking for new members.

Please contact any of the Magazine Team if you are interested- the contact details are on the inside front cover of this magazine.

The cut-off date for submission of items for the next magazine is:-

MAGAZINE EDITION	EDITORIAL MEETING	CUT- OFF DATE	PERSON COMPILING THE MAGAZINE
April / May 2026	Wed 25 th February	Tues 10 th March	Jenny Evans

RSPB – FEBRUARY BIRDS OF THE MONTH – Which Ones Will You See?



To celebrate World Wetlands Day in February, here are some birds that you might see locally near water such as the Bridgewater canal, Pennington Flash, Bickershaw Country park, Blackleach Country park at Walkden or at RSPB official sites close by, and even as close by as the Damhouse pond and the Ellenor Brook.

Wetlands often have reedbeds which are hero habitats. They lock up carbon, improve water quality, and reduce flooding but they are also home to a whole host of wildlife.

1. Great Crested Grebe

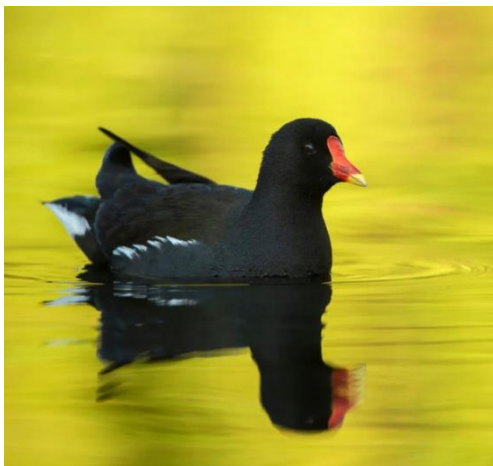
Right now, Great Crested Grebes are ditching their drab winter dress to don a more outlandish look, opting for mane-like plumes in russet and burnt orange. Once decked out in their breeding finery, it's time to take to the dancefloor.

Breeding pairs toss their heavily decorated heads in unison to claim their territory and strengthen their bond. They seal the deal with a romantic proposal. Diving below the water's surface, both birds retrieve some weed and rising out of the water together, pressed chest-to-chest, they offer up their green gifts in a series of headshakes. It's a springtime spectacle you won't want to miss! Great Crested Grebes breed on freshwater pools like our local lakes, ponds, reedbeds, rivers and canals.



2. Moorhen

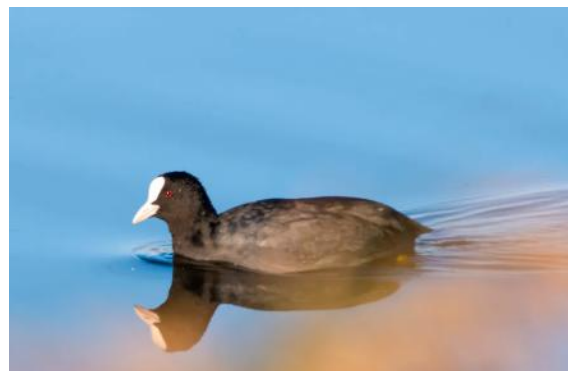
You don't have to travel out into the countryside to get close to nature, often wildlife can be found in built up areas too. Moorhens are one of the UK's most widespread birds and can be found almost anywhere there is water. Their bill, bright red with a yellow tip, makes them an easy species to recognise - although they are a nervous bird and will often scuttle away onto land or into reed beds when spotted. Watch out for them flicking their white undertail as a signal to predators not to waste their energy, as they're ready to make a speedy getaway! Moorhens can be found almost anywhere - take a stroll along a canal, check out the Ellenor Brook and the pond at Damhouse.



3. Coot

Coots are easy to separate from Moorhens because of their bright white facial blaze and bill. Like Moorhens, they glide across lakes all around the UK, diving down to forage on pondweed, algae and invertebrates. On a still day, they can look very graceful indeed. However, chaos can be just around the corner. In the breeding season, Coots become very territorial, and pairs will become aggressive to anyone or anything that crosses their patch. They fend off intruders by splashing across the surface of a pond or lake with their huge feet, whilst beating their wings on the water. A fracas can also signal the arrival of a predator, as Coots make plenty of noise when taking off. Look out for the signs of Otters if birds erupt into a sudden frenzy.

Coots prefer still waters - so keep a look out on reservoirs, slow-moving waterways, ponds and lakes.



4. Avocet

An Avocet's distinct pied plumage, slender blue-hued legs and upturned bill makes it one of the most elegant birds on our shores. Undeterred by watching eyes, they'll comfortably nest near to hides in nature reserves.

In February, Avocets begin to arrive at their breeding grounds - typically an area of lagoons on a coastal marsh. Their eggs will hatch in May. The chicks are precocial which means they're covered in downy feathers and this gives them

a serious cute factor! They can be seen at RSPB Marshside in Southport, RSPB Burton Mere near Neston on the Wirral and RSPB Hest Bank at Morecambe bay.



After previously being extinct in the UK the Avocet's recovery has earned it pride of place on the RSPB's logo. Since recolonising in Suffolk in 1947, they have spread north and west; but this success depends on managed wetlands, with over half of the population breeding on RSPB reserves alone. This is a critical intervention as nesting sites are increasingly threatened with coastal flooding.

Share your bird sightings

We hope you feel inspired to try and see some of these birds this month. We'd love to hear how you get on. Please send your photos to us at NotesonNature@rspb.org.uk We'll share some of the best on our website. Please be mindful when taking photos not to disturb wildlife or habitats.

Acknowledgement RSPB - www.rspb.org.uk



ST GEORGE'S NOTICES

The funeral of Mr James Fearick took place in St George's Church on the 29th December 2025.

Also, the funeral of Mrs Stephanie Grove took place in St George's Church on the 6th January 2026. Stephanie was a much loved member of the congregation at St Stephen's Church Astley.

The funeral of Mr David Caswell took place in St George's Church on the 14th January 2026.

We offer our sincere condolences to their families and friends with the assurance of our prayers.

MR JAMES FEARICK

We were very saddened to hear of the death of Mr James Fearick, who passed away peacefully in Bolton Hospital on the 5th December 2025.

Jim was a loyal member of our Christian community at St George's and his commitment to Christ and his Church was absolute within our church building. His ministry as a choir member, Bible reader, Intercessions leader and Lay Assistant enriched our worship immeasurably. Outside the building, his work as a Teacher (he was Deputy Head of the Mission School for many years) was an abiding influence in the lives of countless numbers of young people, who indeed will not forget his care and kindness in preparing children for confirmation and, one must add, for many years in his role as the quintessential pantomime Dame.

Whatever Jim did, he brought enrichment, knowledge and laughter, living his Christian life to the full and blessing us all in so many ways.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory, and to Lynne, Caroline, Jonathan and their families, we offer our deepest condolences with the assurance of our prayers.

Contributed by Kath Topping



Welcome to the third Newsletter of BMC. We have also been meeting and talking to Bloom groups throughout the North West to learn from their experience and knowledge. This is vital in planning successful projects that provide popular green space development that meets the needs and aspirations of the community now and in the future. However, this also involves lots of meetings and planning, emails, and council consultation and applications for funding and then more meetings and emails! But it is worth it to make our wonderful village and community bloom. It has certainly made us even more appreciative and thankful for the work of Mosley Common in Bloom in the past.

Carols on the Common

This year the weather was supportive and we were on the Common singing our Carols enthusiastically over the noise of the rush hour traffic! The lights on the lampposts and the Christmas tree twinkled beautifully, and the glow sticks made it even more festive. It is so great to be able to come together as a community to celebrate the season on our green Commons! We are hoping to hold more events next year.

The Christmas Tree

As people have noticed the Christmas Tree is not well. We have been informed by tree specialists and council that sadly it will not last another year. The council have also said that this is the third Christmas Tree that they have planted here and that all have died due to the underground drainage conditions. We wanted the tree to have its last Christmas lit up but next year it will be removed. We are upset about this as we hoped it might pick up this year especially after all the rain we have had. However, do not worry, Mosley Common will not be without a Christmas Tree next year, one will be planted in the spring in a suitable area near to the Pit Wheel where it can thrive and grow. We will of course move the commemorative plaque to be with the new tree. The fenced area however will stay as there are plans in the pipeline for a project to use this area as well which we will be asking for your suggestions about early in the new year! So please help us to celebrate this last Christmas with our twinkly tree!

Pit Wheel Bedding Area

This is a challenging spot! You may have noticed that we have been experimenting with various plants to find the best that will thrive in this spot. The changes that we are seeing in our weather are making planting schemes problematic. We tried traditional bedding plants in spring but they shrivelled and died in the drought like conditions we had at this time. We then tried plants from warmer climates such as herbs like rosemary. One is still hanging on but not healthily. So next we are currently planting a mixture of spring bulbs and wildflowers. If anyone has any suggestions for this area please get in touch!

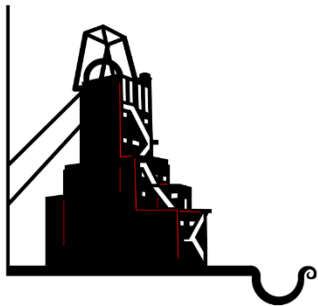
Children's Play Area

In the new year we hopefully will be involved with community support work around the lovely children's play area. This will include some bush trimming and the re-painting of the railings which are looking a little worn. A few other painting jobs, such as the round tree seat and a couple of spots on the pit wheel will also be tackled. The original Community Notice Board will also be refreshed with a lick of paint and new backing board. A good start for the new year!

Wildflowering

We have our wildflower seeds and their planters ready and willing to go but are currently waiting for the Council to contact us about this! So watch this space, once we know what is happening we will hold a pop up exhibition to explain our ideas and ask for community input and suggestions!

Hanging baskets



Hanging basket brackets based on the winding gear of Mosley Common Colliery have been made for Blooming Mosley Common by Stokes of England. We are hoping that in spring these can be put up in public places such as the Beehive and the shopping parade. The baskets themselves have built in water holding reservoirs so they only need to be watered once a week. BMC will be choosing the plants for them, so any suggestions? We know many people are keen and experienced gardeners and we would love you to share this knowledge with us!

'Made you Look'

We are very excited that we are going to be part of this project of 4 new artworks supported by Wigan Council. Blooming Mosley Common is the host for one of these artworks and will support the lead artist in meeting our community to create artworks that celebrate and re-imagine our shared places. We wanted to bring people together to celebrate the area and its past, present, and future. We are at the early stages of planning but will be holding a community event to allow as many people from Mosley Common to have their input and say in the form that the artwork will take and be involved in its creation! This is all very exciting and positive for our community and is the first of several art projects that we are planning for Mosley Common in the future

Remembrance Day Service

At our Community Orchard there was a short but moving service of Remembrance attended by pupils from St John's and Holy Family School and BMC members and local people. Each of the pupils had 2 poppies on which the names of all those from our village had been written by their classmates and just before 11 o'clock they placed one at the bottom of each of the apple trees and then stood next to one of the trees. David Watkinson, born and bred in Mosley Common and an ex-pupil of St John's laid a wreath on behalf of BMC and St John's and Holy Family Schools at the base on one tree.



A little crowd had gathered and we all stood in silence for 2 minutes at 11, on the 11th day of the 11th month when in 1918 the guns stopped.

Each child and each tree standing as mute sentinels to remember those from this village who went to war and never returned.



School Planters



We have had a successful year with vegetables and edible flowers in our St John's and Holy Family school raised beds, especially the Runner Beans and Calendulas! We are now planting some winter crops such as garlic and wildflowers. We have left much of the planting gradually decaying to support soil life and insects which thrive in these conditions! Thus increasing the biodiversity and providing food for animals such as, the increasingly rare, hedgehogs

And Finally...

You may have noticed that Blooming Mosley Common were thrilled to be awarded with a Certificate Level 4 Thriving in the Your Neighbourhood Award at the 2025 North West in Bloom awards ceremony in November!

Thank you so much to all who have helped and supported us in our first year! Please get in touch if you would like to join BMC in our work in the community. We always need volunteers!



O GOD, YOU GIVE THE WINTER'S COLD,
AS WELL AS SUMMER'S JOYOUS RAYS,
YOU WARMLY IN YOUR LOVE ENFOLD,
AND KEEP US THROUGH LIFE'S WINTRY DAYS.



CHRIS LOVES MARGIT

Blessings are on the head of the righteous
Proverbs 10:6



Acknowledgement - photos kindly supplied by Chris Saunders