

## The Parish of Freshford with Limpley Stoke and Hinton Charterhouse – Newsletter – January 2026



### A message from the Rector

Greetings. And a happy New Year!

Well, another year starts – and the Christmas things are being put away for another 11 months. I find this a good, but also complex time. The Christmas season goes by so quickly. Yes, it is good to back into routine, but the new “to-do” lists, the ever-changing (and maybe alarmingly unpredictable) world events coming up on our news feeds, and the prospect of a long cold January all challenge our joy and sense of hope. So how do we cope, and keep our joy and hope?

On New Year’s Day I walked our parish and visited all our churches. After calling in St Mary’s, Limpley Stoke, I went across the fields, over to Pipehouse, then past Hinton Priory to St John the Baptist, Hinton Charterhouse. This took less than an hour – so maybe a summer Sunday walk to church, I thought! Then down to Friary, along the Iford valley, and back to Freshford and St Peter’s. It was a good way to start the year and think ahead to our learning together. I am going to make **Prayer** one of our main themes.

The walk was also daunting – there is so much to think about... and I was back to the question about coping!

My ordaining Bishop would say “Thank God for God!” All things are possible with Him. And on Sunday the readings to start the year were an encouragement. We learnt about the grace of God which he lavished upon us (Ephesians: 3-10) - a picture of exuberant love in Christ’s name. John’s gospel tells how the law [that defines right and wrong] was given through Moses; and grace and truth came through Jesus. To all who believe, Jesus gives life... We were encouraged to remember the feeling we had at our baptism.

On Sunday afternoon, at an Epiphany Service at Bath Abbey we had a chance to renew our baptismal vows. I led the service and explained that blessed water is simply a sign of invisible grace. I was going to bless some water and then sprinkle it around the Abbey to remind us of our baptism. I then said “please don’t worry if you do not get a drop. He is here in Spirit”. We will all be blessed.

We then prayed the following prayer:

*God our Father, your gift of Water brings life and freshness to the earth; in baptism it is a sign of the washing away of our sins and the gift of life eternal. Sanctify this water we pray: renew the living spring of your life within us, that we may be free from sin and filled with your saving health; through Christ our Lord.*

It was a good way to start the year.      *Revd Prebendary Nigel Rawlinson*

### News from St Peter's

We had some wonderful services over Christmas starting with the Community Carols outside the Galleries shop. About 50 people attended and enjoyed mulled wine and mince pies while Nigel led us in some great Carol singing. A big thank you to the Café for leaving their Christmas lights on and allowing us to meet on their terrace.



The following afternoon we had the Christingle service at 4pm, and there was a magical moment as we all stood in a circle with the lights down and our candles lit. The little children gathered together to sing Away in a Manger and we all stood in a circle to sing Silent night. Mulled wine, Hot Chocolate and Mince Pies were enjoyed by all after the service.

Christmas day rounded off our Christmas celebrations with around 175 adults and children joining us for a family service. It was standing room only for late comers and every seat used including the piano stool! This was followed by a much quieter Communion service.

Thanks to those who decorated the church so beautifully and all those involved in serving the refreshments.

### **Finally, a date for your diaries**

Thursday the 12th of February 3pm

A 'Thank you' tea at the Old Bakery for all of you who volunteer on our many rotas at St Peter's. Please come and join us for tea, cake and bubbly!

## News from St Mary's

In December St Mary's hosted the preschool for their Christmas singing celebration. The children delighted their parents with festive songs before staying for snacks and a look at the crib, complete with a three-footed 'Wonky Donkey'. The Sunday before Christmas was our Carol Service with a short Communion. The service was well attended and fellowship continued afterwards with mince pies and mulled wine. Our celebrations were completed with a short Morning Communion service with carols on Christmas Day.

Funerals: the following services of Thanksgiving and Farewell took place took place:

- John Banks on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> of December
- Guy Cottam on Wednesday the 24<sup>th</sup> December.

The funeral of Thomas Bunn will take place at St Mary's, Bathwick on January the 15<sup>th</sup> at 1.30pm.

## News from St John's

St John's had its first afternoon candlelit Advent Carol Service on 7th December. The church looked beautiful and children gathered round the Christmas tree to sing Away in a Manger. Readings were taken from Isaiah to Revelation and Nigel spoke about the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus and our solid hope for the future. This was followed by mulled wine and mince pies and the majority stayed to chat with friends and neighbours. John Banks, who had lived in Hinton for about 15 years had a family only funeral service and burial in St John's on 18th December. A Christmas Eve Communion was held at St John's at 9.00pm and was well attended.

## News from the School

Christmas in our school and pre-school... A delightful end to the year with both the school and pre-school celebrating the Nativity in style! Freshford School held a service in St Peter's at the end of term. The story of the nativity was re-enacted by a group of children and Christmas songs and carols were sung heartily. Nigel was warmly thanked by Ruth Poole (acting headteacher) for his commitment to, and lively participation in, the spiritual life of the school. Big thanks too for Steve Ashcroft operating the audio-visual equipment and all those who had supplied and decorated the Christmas tree, the knitted crib scene and to Sue and Peter King for their loan of the illuminated crib.

Key stage one put on an amazing musical performance of 'Babushka' in the village hall, and Christmas carols were sung in the school playground on the last day of term. The pre-school visited St Mary's Church and entertained their parents to some wonderful Christmas songs, ably assisted by David Sibley on the piano. They also really enjoyed playing with the hands-on nativity scene. In the village hall, the pre-schoolers performed the Christmas story for their families, accompanied on guitar by Jenny Harper. Many thanks to all involved for making Christmas 2025 so memorable and meaningful for our local children. *Penny*

**Services**

4 <sup>th</sup> January 10.30	St John's, Hinton Charterhouse,	Common Worship Holy Communion
4 <sup>th</sup> January 12.30	St Mary's Limpley Stoke,	BCP Communion
6 <sup>th</sup> January 5.30	Liz's house, Hinton Charterhouse	Evening prayer
11 <sup>th</sup> January 10.30	St Peter's, Freshford	Common Worship Holy Communion
13 <sup>th</sup> January 5.30	Liz's house, Hinton Charterhouse	Evening prayer
18 <sup>th</sup> January 10.30	St Mary's, Limpley Stoke	Common Worship Holy Communion
20 <sup>th</sup> January 5.30	Liz's house, Hinton Charterhouse	Evening prayer
25 <sup>th</sup> January 10.30	St Peter's, Freshford	Common Worship Morning prayer
27 <sup>th</sup> January 5.30	Liz's house, Hinton Charterhouse	Evening prayer
1 <sup>st</sup> February 10.30	St John's, Hinton Charterhouse	Common Worship Holy Communion
Vistitation of the Ven. Charles Peer, Archdeacon of Bath		
1 <sup>st</sup> February 12.30	St Mary's Limpley Stoke,	BCP Communion

**Ladies Wednesday walking group**

This year's dates for the walking group are the 14th of January, 11th of February, 11<sup>th</sup> of March, 8th of April, 13th of May, 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 8th of July. There won't be a walk in August.

**Wednesday afternoons - Tea, cake & chat**

Please do come and join us in the Old Bakery on Wednesday afternoons from 2.30 – 4.00 for tea, coffee,

**Zoom sessions**

If you don't get out much and feel like a chat, a small group of us zoom together for 45 minutes on a Monday morning. To give it a try, please contact Penny Jones on [jonespennyg@gmail.com](mailto:jonespennyg@gmail.com). *Penny*

**Need a lift? Think LINK**

A reminder that the Limpley Stoke and Freshford LINK service is available to residents in both villages who lack the means to get from A to B. Volunteer drivers will transport you to a doctor's appointment or local hospital, as well as to shopping or social visits. The service includes the delivery of prescriptions from the Galleries for those unable to collect them. If you have a car and some free time, why not consider becoming a LINK driver. Details at [freshford.org.uk](http://freshford.org.uk) or you can contact the LINK co-ordinator on 07714 169216.

**List of contacts**

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