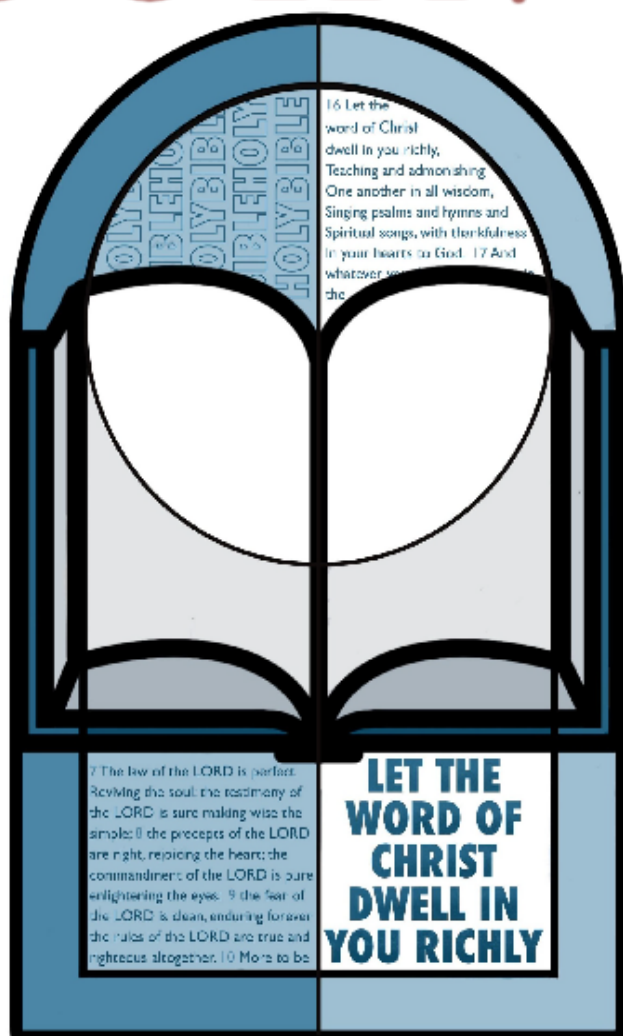


OCTAVO



The Voice of
The Stour Vale Benefice



£1 October 2026 Vol. 25 Issue 2

Additional Services in October

Harvest Festivals

Sunday 4th October

West Stour 10am

East Stour 11am (with Communion and followed by lunch)

Sunday 11th October

Fifehead Magdalen 6:30pm (with Communion)

Sunday 11th October – Baby Loss Service—3:00pm – East Stour.

A service of quiet reflection during Baby Loss Awareness week.

Thursday 22nd October—Deanery Commissioning Service

With Bishop Karen for our new LPAs and LWL

Friday 23rd October – Service in the Pub

11am The Ship, West Stour

Friday 30th October – Light Party

4:00-5:30pm – East Stour

Regular Mid-Week Services / Benefice events October

Every Wednesday

Holy Communion 10:30am East Stour Church

Healing Communion service 2nd Wednesday of the month

Monday 19th

Knit and Natter Group—2:30pm East Stour Village Hall

Tuesday 27th

Benefice Lunch at Lakeside Kitchen Todber 12:30pm

*Pre-order your food by Tuesday 20th - **please check their new menu** before you order—thank you*

Wednesday 28th

Stour Vale Prayer Group 2pm East Stour Church—**please note change of day for this month only**

From the Vicar

Dear Friends,

I've just come home from a lovely break in sunny Verona, and within a day of unpacking I noticed the change in the season. Autumn is unmistakably in the air: the mornings and evenings are damper and chillier, and those of us with arthritis are feeling it in our bones. That includes our cat, Marmite, who is moving more slowly these days and seems to be wondering where on earth the sunshine has gone.



Only a few weeks ago it felt as though the heat would go on for ever and our gardens would never be green again. It is astonishing how quickly the grass comes back with even a little rain — though not quickly enough for our farmers, who will be anxious once more this winter about feeding their livestock. We shall be keeping them very much in our prayers as we gather for our Harvest Thanksgiving services in the next few weeks. Harvest is a good moment to remember that the food on our tables is not something we manufacture but something we receive, and that it depends on soil, rain and sunshine we do not control. And that is the thing about seasons: they turn whether or not we are ready for them. The wise response is not to be taken by surprise, but to notice the change and prepare for it.

We are having to learn that on a larger scale too. Summers of intense heat look increasingly like our new normal, and forecasters continue to warn of a wetter, stormier autumn and winter for north-west Europe due to El Nino. We are being encouraged to build resilience into our lives and to prepare for extremes of weather, both as individuals and as communities — which will mean changing some of the ways we have traditionally lived, worked and farmed. None of that is a reason for despair. It is simply what it looks like to take a season seriously.

All of which might sound rather grim, and we might well wonder where God is in the middle of it. Here our faith does something unusual: it invites us to take the long view, and it insists that difficult seasons do not last for ever.

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted... (Ecclesiastes 3:1–2, NRSV)*

That very well-known passage, so often read at funerals, belongs to the part of the Old Testament we call wisdom literature — writing that teaches us about life and how to live it well. It tells us that nothing is settled for long. Anyone who gardens knows there is a time to plant and a time to pull up what was planted; in the ebb and flow of life we are carried from one experience to the next, and time keeps advancing, bringing fresh challenges, joys and sorrows.

Continued page 8

From the Vicar—continued

The wisdom lies in recognising which season we are in and preparing accordingly. That is on my own mind at present, because next week I shall be attending a pre-retirement course. I want to say plainly that I am not going anywhere just yet — I hope that particular season is still some years away — but a season it will be, and it seems only sensible to think and pray about it before it arrives rather than after. We can prepare for change without fearing it.

We can do that because we are not asked to rely on our own strength. All of us are created in love, with intent and purpose and meaning, by a loving Creator, and the whole of Scripture presses us to trust him in every season, especially the hard ones. People have long turned to the Psalms for exactly this: *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change* (Psalm 46:1–2, NRSV). Notice that the psalmist does not promise that the earth will stay the same. He promises that God will.

Isaiah says something similar to a people facing upheaval: *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you* (Isaiah 43:2, NRSV). Again, the waters are not removed. God is present in them. The security Jesus offers is not a comfortable, trouble-free life, but the certainty that whatever happens — even death — our lives and our purpose are safe in God's hands, and that nothing in all creation can separate us from his love.

And there is more still. In Christ, God is not merely keeping us going until better weather comes; he is at work restoring everything. Paul writes that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains, waiting to be set free from its bondage to decay (Romans 8:21–22), and that Christ raised from the dead is the *first fruits of those who have died* (1 Corinthians 15:20, NRSV). There is our harvest language again, and it is no accident: as the Lammas loaf brought into church indicates the promise of the whole crop, so the risen Christ is the promise of a renewed creation. Easter was not the end of the story but the beginning of it. The One seated on the throne says, *See, I am making all things new* (Revelation 21:5, NRSV) — all things, not merely all people: the soil, the seas, the seasons themselves.

So as we celebrate harvest with services and suppers, as the nights draw in and the clocks go back, let us prepare wisely for the seasons ahead, care for one another and for the earth entrusted to us, and hold on to this: his is the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

With every blessing,

Clare

Thought for the Month

The Amaranthus

‘What are you?

It was long, straggly, vulnerable. Weed! I considered murder.

But, hang on. In all my years of gardening (over 70) I hadn’t seen baby leaves that shape. A reprieve was granted. The babe got larger. It got its own pot. Then another and another until it is now in a huge one with handles.

According to a plant ID app I found, it is a Red Amaranth AKA *Amaranthus Princes Feathers*. I speak to it in encouraging and loving tones (hopefully it has forgotten our first meeting).



I have asked where the Feathers are. It looked aloofly to the heavens and muttered, ‘In my good time.’ That’s plants for you – they won’t be hurried.

Recently I noticed buds. Excitement!

It has been very difficult to keep plants alive during this blistering weather. We (The Gov and I) grow in containers as the ground here is usually like concrete.

The process of germination and photosynthesis has fascinated me for as long as I can remember. How can so much life be sealed in such a small package, considering the size of some seeds? I can recommend it. I wouldn’t have got through the last few years so easily without my plants – very good for physical and mental wellbeing.

We end with a short prayer.

Dear Lord, thank you for our beautiful planet with all its many wonders. Thank you for my lovely plants which keep me sane and give me a purpose. Amen.

Richard LWL Todber

From the Registers—in September

Baptism: Hattie Prichard—East Stour Sunday 20th September

We welcome her into God’s family

Knit and Natter

Whether you'd just like some company and to knit some simple squares, or would like to learn how to make anything from beautiful baby clothes to creative jumpers, then come along to Knit and Natter on the 3rd Monday of the month.



The next meeting is on **Monday 19th October**
2:30-4:30pm in East Stour village hall.

Benefice Lunch Tuesday 27th October—12:30pm

at **Lakeside Kitchen Todber** —do join us for a relaxed chat over a meal in pleasant surroundings.

For bookings: please contact Jill by Tuesday 20th —thank you.

PLEASE NOTE: They have a new menu so please check before sending Jill your pre-order—see website for menus.

Lakeside Kitchen, Manor Farm, Todber, DT10 1JB

<https://www.lakesidekitchen.co.uk/>



Keeping in Touch

To Receive our weekly newsletter by email

Contact Jill: adminsrb@gmail.com with the subject title "Newsletter"



Or follow us on Facebook



search 'The Church of England in the Stour Vale', or use this link
www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089949903748

Or visit the website: <https://stourvalebenefice.org.uk/>

BABY LOSS MEMORIAL SERVICE



Remembering those who have been part of
our lives who died too soon

Sunday 11th October 3pm
East Stour

Sunday 11th October
3pm East Stour

*All welcome to this short
and simple service at
Christchurch, as we join
with people across the world
lighting candles this week in
memory of babies who have
died at any stage of
pregnancy, or during or
after birth, recently or long
ago and in recognition of
their grief.*

Annual Memorial Service **Sunday 1st November at 5pm** Fifehead Magdalen Church



A Service of Thanksgiving for the lives of those who
have passed from our sight, and to treasure before
God the memories of all who meant much to us.

It will be a quiet service of prayer and recollection.

There will be an opportunity to light a candle and the names of
those to be remembered will be read out.

There will be lists for you to add names to in your parish church
during October, or let your Churchwarden know.

Stour Vale Benefice **BREAKFAST CHURCH**

SUNDAY 18TH OCTOBER

Breakfast served from 8.45am

Worship 9.00am - 9.30am

Buckhorn Weston Village Hall (SP8 5HF)



Scan the QR code for more information,

Or contact Fiona Hedges: fjhedges1@gmail.com; 01747 838 942

It's church, but not as you know it!
Join us for a drink, a chat and a chance
to spend some time with God.

Open from 11am for an 11:15 start

Tea and coffee will be provided, and the
licensed bar will be open throughout for
those who would like to buy a drink.

After the service, feel free to leave or stay
for a drink. If anyone would like to stay and
have lunch, we would advise you to reserve
a table in the usual way.



Friday 23rd October

*Stour Vale Benefice
Service
in the
Pub*



The Ship Inn, West Stour, SP8 5RP

For more details, please contact Fiona Hedges on
01747 838942 or stourvalemessychurch@gmail.com

Stour Vale Benefice

Deanery Commissioning Service for LPAs and LWL

We will have the joy of seeing our Pastoral Assistants and another Lay Worship Leader being licenced by Bishop Karen
on

Thursday 22nd October at 7pm

All Saints, Kington Magna

Please come and support Annie Bounsall, Mary Riall, Jan Martin,
Marika Osmond and David Clack.

Stour Vale Benefice

Light Party

for Halloween

Friday 30th October

4pm-5.30pm

East Stour Church, SP8 5LP.

All children welcome, with their adult(s). Come in
fancy dress or as you are.

Pumpkin Fun, Spider Splat,

Games, Crafts, Puzzles.

Hot chocolate and

all the treats, without the tricks!





A New Chapter for Stower Provost Community School

The start of a new school year is always a special time. There is a real sense of anticipation as classrooms fill with excited children, friendships are renewed and everyone begins to look ahead to the opportunities and experiences that a new year will bring.

This September feels particularly special for me, as I have had the privilege of joining Stower Provost Community School as its new Headteacher. While there is always much to learn when joining a new school, I have already been made to feel incredibly welcome by the children, staff, parents and the wider community. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to introduce themselves and help me settle into life at Stower.

The beginning of the term has been a busy one as we have welcomed new pupils into our school family and helped them find their feet. Starting a new school can be both exciting and daunting, and it has been wonderful to see how quickly new friendships have formed and how warmly our existing pupils have welcomed others into the Stower community.

I strongly believe that schools thrive when they work closely with the communities they serve. Education does not begin and end at the school gates. The experiences, knowledge and support found within our local community are invaluable, and I am keen to strengthen those connections wherever possible. Whether through school events, community projects, performances or simply creating opportunities for people to come together, I hope the school can continue to play an active role at the heart of village life.

It is an exciting time for Stower Provost Community School. We have much to celebrate, much to look forward to and a shared ambition to provide the very best opportunities for our children. My role this year is to listen, learn and build on the many strengths that already exist, while ensuring every child feels happy, supported and inspired to achieve their very best.

I am looking forward to getting to know more members of the community over the coming months and working together to ensure Stower Provost Community School continues to flourish for many years to come.

Dave Deane

Headteacher

Stower Provost Community School

Services for the Stour Vale Benefice October 2026



Sunday	4 th October Trinity 18	11 th October Trinity 19	18 th October Luke the Evangelist	25 th October Bible Sunday
Buckhorn Weston		9:30am Parish Communion	8:45am Breakfast Church In the Village Hall	10:30am Morning Worship CW
East Stour	11:00am Harvest Festival Communion	3:00pm Baby Loss Service	6:00pm Evensong BCP	
Fifehead Magdalen		6:30pm Harvest Festival Communion		6:30pm Evensong BCP
Kington Magna		11:00am Morning Worship CW		11:00am Parish Communion
Stour Provost		10:30am Morning Worship CW		9:15am Parish Communion
Todber	9:15am Parish Communion		10:00am Family Service	
West Stour	10:00am Harvest Festival		10:30am Parish Communion	

CW – Common Worship

BCP = Book of Common Prayer

Breakfast Church is open to the whole Benefice – more details from Fiona.

Sunday 11th October – Baby Loss Service –3:00pm – East Stour
a service of quiet reflection during Baby Loss Awareness week.

Readings for October 2026

Harvest Thanksgiving Services

Deuteronomy 8.7–18
2 Corinthians 9.6–end

Psalms 65
Luke 12.16–30

4th October

Isaiah 5.1–7
Philippians 3.4b–14

Trinity 18 (Green)
Psalm 80.8–16
Matthew 21.33–end

11th October

Isaiah 25.1–9
Philippians 4.1–9

Trinity 19 (Green)
Psalm 23
Matthew 22.1–14

18th October

Acts 16.6–12a
2 Timothy 4.5–17

Luke the Evangelist (Red) (Trinity 20)
Psalm 147.1–7
Luke 10.1–9

25th October

Nehemiah 8.1–4a [5–6] 8–12
Colossians 3.12–17

Bible Sunday (Green)
Psalm 119.9–16
Matthew 24.30–35



1st November

Revelation 7.9–end
1 John 3.1–3

All Saints Day (Gold or White)
Psalm 34.1–10
Matthew 5.1–12

Harvest Festivals

Sunday 4th October – West Stour 10am

– East Stour 11am (with Communion and followed by lunch)

Sunday 11th October – Fifehead Magdalen 6:30pm (with Communion)
(Harvest Supper Saturday 10th)

Other Services in October

Thursday 22nd – Deanery Commissioning Service for our LPAs and LWL 7pm
(See page 15 for more information.)

Friday 23rd – Service in the Pub – 11am The Ship, West Stour.

Friday 30th – Light Party – 4:00–5:30pm – East Stour