OCTAVO



The Voice of
The Stour Vale Benefice

£1 Dec 26 - Jan 27 Vol. 25 Issue 4

Regular Mid-Week Services / Benefice events December & January

Every Wednesday
Holy Communion 10:30am East Stour Church
Healing Communion service 2nd Wednesday of the month

Monday 18th January
Knit and Natter Group—2:30pm East Stour Village Hall
(no Knit & Natter in December)

Friday 29th January
Stour Vale Prayer Group 2pm East Stour Church
(No Prayer Group in December)

Benefice Lunch—will restart in the New Year



Key to Christmas Services

Some of our services are especially family friendly.



Those marked with a pencil include crafts and puzzles for children to do while they sit with you in the pews.



Those marked with an angel encourage children to take part in the service, if they would like to.



At our more traditional candlelit carol services, marked with a candle, we will reflect on the true Light of the World, Jesus Christ, who came to be with us, bringing hope, love and light to overcome the darkness in our lives.

Christmas Services

Friday 18th December



6:30pm, Carol Service, All Saints', Kington Magna.

Saturday 19th December



3:00pm, Carol Service, St Andrew's, Todber.



6:00pm, Carols by Candlelight, St Michael and All Angels', Stour Provost.

Sunday 20th December



5:00pm, Carols by Candlelight, Christ Church, East Stour.



6.30pm, Carols by Candlelight, St Mary Magdalene's, Fifehead Magdalen.

Wednesday, 23rd December



4:00pm, Crib Service, The Village Hall, Stour Row.

Christmas Eve



4:00pm, Christingle & Crib Service, St John the Baptist's, Buckhorn Weston.



5:00pm, Christingle & Crib Service, St Mary's, West Stour.



11:30pm, Midnight Communion, , All Saints', Kington Magna.

Christmas Day



10am Christmas Service, St Andrew's, Todber.



10.30am Christmas Family Communion Service, St Michael and All Angels', Stour Provost.

From the Vicar



Dear Friends,

Last Christmas I received a lovely pop-up card, which I have kept. It shows an idyllic rural scene: a shepherd herding a flock of sheep through a snowy street in a picturesque village. Snowflakes are still falling, but you can see the church in the background. Faint lights gleam through the cottage windows, the doors are adorned with holly wreaths, and there is a post-box in the wall of one cottage, perhaps a sign that the post office is still open. It could be any one of the Stour Vale villages in days gone by.

The scene reminds me how quiet and calm it often is when it snows. Snow absorbs the sound, and the world seems to slow down, even stop for a while, as it adjusts to its new surroundings. Snow may be disruptive, but there is a peace in it which draws you in.

Our climate is changing, and we no longer seem to get those cold winters. It certainly has not snowed since we moved here three years ago. Funnily enough, we seemed to get more snow in south-west Birmingham. I'm no geographer, but I believe it sits on a fairly high plateau, because it seemed we were often digging the cars out of the drive to get to work!

A white Christmas seems unlikely given recent weather patterns, and to be fair, snow is very inconvenient when people are travelling all over the country to celebrate with loved ones. But although we may not long for snow, we can still long for the peace and calm that a snowy landscape gives us a glimpse of. Real, deep and true peace comes only from Christ, and peace is one of the themes of our Advent preparations as well as of Christmas itself.



Advent gives us four themes to travel through together. During this season we light a candle each week, which marks both our preparation for Christmas and a different theme.

On the first Sunday of Advent, we focus on hope. We think about the Old Testament patriarchs and matriarchs and how they experienced God's promises in their own lives. This kind of hope is not blind optimism, nor does it deny challenge or sadness. It is rooted in God, in trust in his unchanging nature and his promise, through Jesus, to restore the whole of creation one day. We are called to be hopeful and to share that hope with others.

Continued page 8

On the second Sunday, the emphasis is on peace. This is the peace that comes from Jesus, who works to overcome the things that divide and oppress us. He reconciles all things to himself, offering healing and restoration through love and forgiveness to all who are willing to receive them. As he said:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." (John 14:27, NRSV)

We too are called to be peacemakers, joining Jesus in breaking down barriers and showing love to our neighbours.

The third Sunday is sometimes called Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin for "rejoice", and is marked by the pink candle on the Advent Ring. We think of John the Baptist, who called people to turn back to God as he prepared the way for Jesus. This joy is not a passing happiness. It grows from a deep security and trust in God and his promise that one day every tear will be wiped away:

"he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4, NRSV)

The fourth candle symbolises love. This is not the romantic love of those rom-coms we see every Christmas, but a "Love Actually" of a different kind: the self-giving love shown by Jesus. It is a choice and a commitment to treat others as we would wish to be treated. It means seeing the image of God in those around us, loving our neighbour as ourselves, and turning that into action.

Advent is more than a countdown to Christmas. It is an invitation to follow the way of Jesus: to wait with hope, work for peace, discover joy even in difficult times, and share God's self-giving love in a world that still suffers.

On Christmas Day we light the white candle in the centre of the ring, to symbolise the light of the world. In the birth of Jesus, each of us is given a mysterious gift that brings the hope, peace, joy and love for which we all, deep down, long. Over the coming weeks, I invite you to join us in church as we journey through Advent, Christmas and Epiphany and reflect on what the story means for each of our lives. May you receive hope, peace, joy and love, and share them with others.

Christmas blessings,

Clare



Compline for Advent

via Google Meet

7.30pm
Tuesday 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd December

A short, reflective online service to end the day

Scan the QR code,

click the link
https://meet.google.com/wfd-buid-wxg

or email
stourvalemessychurch@gmail.com and we'll send you the link

Stour Vale Prayer Group

We meet once a month for a short prayer meeting in which we bring our own concerns and the needs of the world in these troubled times.

Please join us on the Last Friday of the Month—2pm at East Stour Church.
All welcome!
(No meeting in December)



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 18th January**
2:30-4:30pm in East Stour village hall.
(No meeting in December)

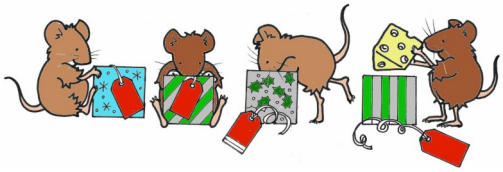
Stour Vale Singers:

Stour Vale Singers choir meet weekly on Tuesday afternoons (2 o'clock for 2.30 until 4 o'clock), in West Stour Village Hall.

Whilst some music reading skills are desirable this is by no means essential, enthusiasm and commitment (but not obligation) being far more important.

*All are welcome. if you are interested, do contact me for more information: (*dagrierson@hotmail.com*)*

David



Keeping in Touch



To Receive our weekly newsletter by email
Contact Jill: adminsvb@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/

Thought for December and January

In the spirit of William Shakespeare

As December's holy bells ring out with cheer,
We celebrate the birth of Christ our Saviour dear.
For in a manger, humble, meek and mild,
God sent His greatest gift, His blessed Child.
The angels sang throughout the starry night,
Proclaiming peace, goodwill and heavenly light:

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." *Luke 2:11 (KJV)*

And as December fades and January draws near,
A fresh new chapter doth appear.
Let not the past bring sorrow or dismay,
For God shall guide us on our earthly way.
Through joy and grief, through sunshine and through rain,
His love endureth, steadfast shall remain.
Let faith be strong, let kindness light our way,
And trust in Him through every coming day.

For God declares: **"Behold, I will do a new thing."** — Isaiah 43:19.

A Prayer
O Heavenly Father, bless this Christmas tide,
And in the New Year, ever be our guide.
Comfort the sorrowful, the lonely bless,
And fill each heart with love and tenderness.
May Christ's great light within our homes remain,
And give us hope through sunshine and through rain.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.



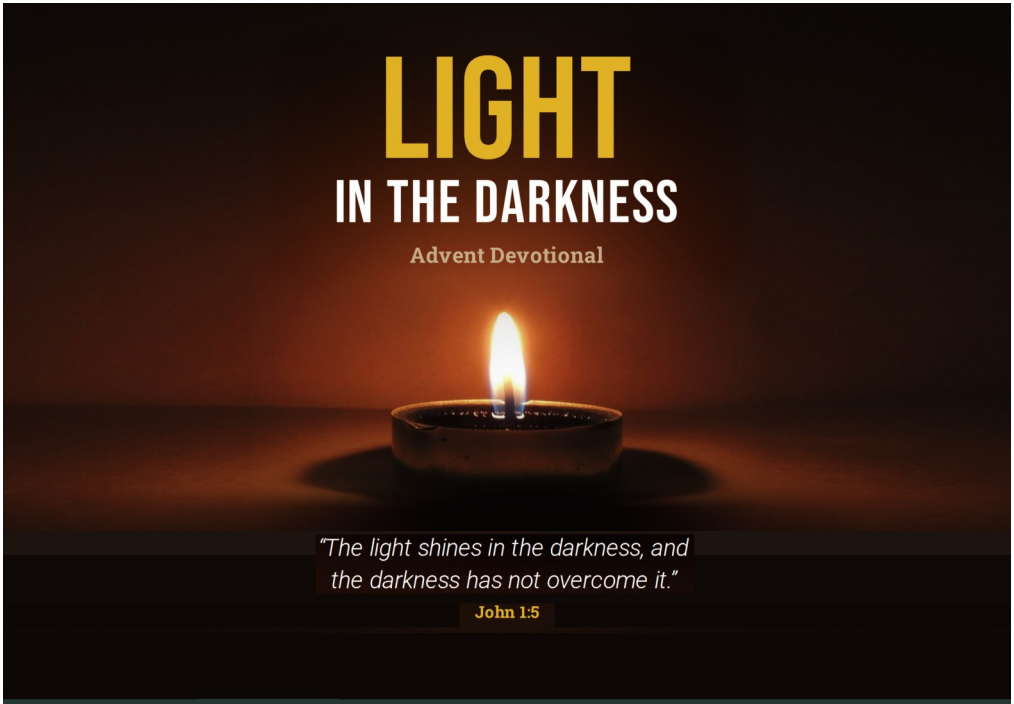
May Christmas bring us love, January bring us hope, and God's grace sustain us throughout the year.

Richard King with assistance from ChatGPT

***From the Registers*—Funerals & Thanksgiving services**

October: Mark Hoskins—Kington Magna
Margaret Miller—West Stour
November: Daphne Watts—Buckhorn Weston
December: Gill Townsley—Kington Magna
Eoin Ashton Johnson—Stour Provost

May they rest in peace and rise in Glory



WALK THROUGH ADVENT WITH THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Read the same devotional, on the same day, as believers in hostile regions of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Written by *Help The Persecuted* Field Ministers, these reflections share stories of believers who have lost homes, family, and freedom and still choose to carry the light of Christ into the darkest places.

Sign up to receive each devotion emailed to you daily starting on Sunday, 29/11.

HTP.org/litd

HELP THE PERSECUTED

Stour Vale Benefice

BREAKFAST CHURCH

CHRISTMAS



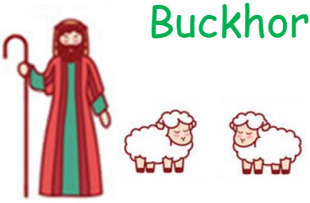
CELEBRATION!

SUNDAY 20TH DECEMBER

8.45am to 9.30am

Buckhorn Weston Village Hall

(SP8 5HF)







Scan the QR code for more information,
Or contact us on stourvalemessychurch@gmail.com



Celebrating a Successful Term and Looking Forward to Christmas

As we approach the festive season, it is a pleasure to reflect on what has been an incredibly positive and successful term at Stower Provost Community School.

Our pupils have continued to impress us with their enthusiasm, kindness and determination. From achievements in the classroom to sporting successes, creative projects and wider community involvement, it has been wonderful to see our children embracing every opportunity and taking pride in their learning.

We have also enjoyed welcoming prospective families into school, sharing the warm and nurturing environment that makes Stower Provost such a special place to learn and grow. As always, we are grateful for the ongoing support of parents, governors, volunteers and local residents who play such an important role in our school community.

The coming weeks promise to be especially exciting as we celebrate Christmas together. Our calendar is packed with festive activities, including Christmas performances, a whole-school Carol Service, Christingle celebrations, our Polar Express Experience and, thanks to the generosity of our PTFA, a special pantomime trip for every child in the school.

We are also looking forward to our Christmas Hamper Raffle, which is raising funds for both the school PTFA and the Meningitis Research Foundation. The funds raised will help us continue our work to improve play opportunities for our children and support plans to develop a sensory garden for pupils who may benefit from a quiet space for reflection and wellbeing.

At the heart of everything we do is our commitment to providing the very best experiences for our children, and the festive season is a wonderful opportunity to come together, celebrate achievements and create lasting memories.

On behalf of everyone at Stower Provost Community School, I would like to thank our families and the wider community for their continued support throughout the year. We wish you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Dave Deane
Headteacher
Stower Provost Community School



Stower Provost Community School
Evening Carol Service



Date: 17.12.26
Location: St. Michael and All Angels, Stour Provost Church
Time: 6pm-7pm

Everyone is welcome to join us for an evening of festive cheer and community celebration!

Christmas Services in the Stour Vale Benefice

Family Communion

St Michael & All Angels Stour Provost



Christmas Day 10:30am

Readings for December 2026



6th December *Advent 2 (purple)*
Isaiah 40.1–11 Psalm 85.1–2, 8–13
2 Peter 3.8–15a Mark 1.1–8

13th December *Advent 3 (purple)*
Isaiah 61.1–4, 8–end Psalm 126
1 Thessalonians 5.16–24 John 1.6–8, 19–28

Sunday 20th December *Advent 4 (purple)*
2 Samuel 7.1–11,16 Canticle : Magnificat
Romans 16.25–end Luke 1.26–38

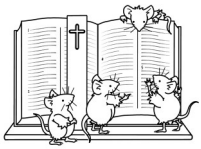
Friday 25th December 2026 *Christmas Night (Gold or White)*
Isaiah 52.7–10 Psalm 98
Hebrews 1.1–4 John 1.1–14

Friday 25th December 2026 *Christmas Day Gold or White*
Isaiah 9.2–7 Psalm 96
Titus 2.11–14 Luke 2.1–14

27th December *John, Apostle and Evangelist (1st Sunday of Christmas) (White)*
Exodus 33.7–11a Psalm 117
1 John 1 John 21.19b –end

Readings for January 2027

3rd January *Epiphany (Gold or White)*
Isaiah 60.1–6 Psalm 72. 10–15
Ephesians 3.1–12 Matthew 2.1–12



10th January *Baptism of Christ (White)*
Genesis 1.1–5 Psalm 29
Acts 19.1–7 Mark 1.4–11

17th January *2nd Sunday of Epiphany (White)*
1 Samuel 3.1–10 Psalm 139.1–5, 12–18
Revelation 5.1–10 John 1.43–end

24th January *3rd Sunday of Epiphany White*
Genesis 14.17–20 Psalm 128
Revelation 19.6–10 John 2.1–11

31st January *Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Gold or White)*
Malachi 3.1–5 Psalm 24. 7–end
Hebrews 2.14–end Luke 2.22–40

Services for the Stour Vale Benefice December 2026



Sunday	6th December 2nd Sunday of Advent	13th December 3rd Sunday of Advent	20th December 4th Sunday of Advent	27th December 1st Sunday of Christmas
Buckhorn Weston		9:30am Parish Communion	8:45am Breakfast Church In the Village Hall	
East Stour	11:00am Parish Communion		5:00pm Carols by Candlelight	
Fifehead Magdalen		6:30pm Parish Communion	6:30pm Carols by Candlelight	
Kington Magna		11:00am Morning Worship CW		
Stour Provost		10:30am Morning Worship CW		
Todber	9:15am Parish Communion			
West Stour	10:00am Morning Worship CW		10:30am Parish Communion	10:30am Benefice Communion

CW – Common Worship BCP = Book of Common Prayer

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

For full list of Carol Services, Midnight Mass and Christmas Day see page 5

Services for the Stour Vale Benefice January 2027



Sunday	3rd January Epiphany	10th January Baptism of Christ	17th January Epiphany 2	24th January Epiphany 3
Buckhorn Weston		9:30am Parish Communion	8:45am Breakfast Church In the Village Hall	10:30am Morning Worship CW
East Stour	11:00am Parish Communion		10:30am Morning Worship	
Fifehead Magdalen		6:30pm Parish Communion BCP		6:30pm Evensong BCP
Kington Magna		11:00am Morning Worship CW		11:00am Parish Communion with baptisms
Stour Provost		10:30am Morning Worship CW		9:15am Parish Communion
Todber	9:15am Parish Communion		10:00am Morning Prayer	
West Stour	10:00am Morning Worship CW		10:30am Parish Communion	

Other Services in January

Sunday 31st January *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*
5th Sunday – East Stour 10:30am