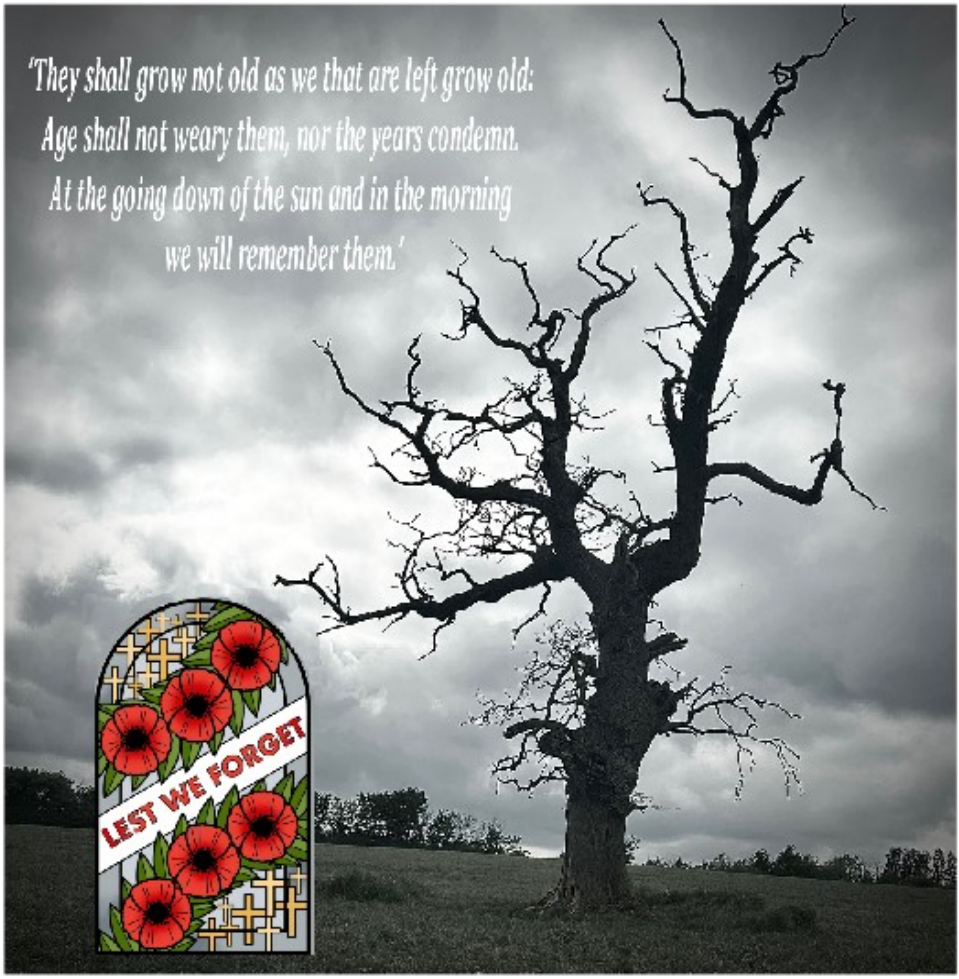
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The Voice of
The Stour Vale Benefice

£1 November 2026 Vol. 25 Issue 3

Annual All Souls Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving

You are warmly invited to join us on

Sunday 1st November at 5:00pm

St Mary Magdalene Church, Fifehead Magdalen

This special service is an opportunity to give thanks for the lives of those we love but see no longer and to hold before God the precious memories we carry in our hearts.



It will be a quiet, reflective service of prayer, thanksgiving and remembrance.

There will be an opportunity to light a candle in memory of someone special, and the names of those we remember will be read aloud.

All are welcome, whether your loss is recent or from many years ago. We hope you will find comfort in sharing this time of remembrance with others.



8th November
Remembrance Sunday

Said Communion at 9:15am East Stour

Remembrance Service at 10:30am

Buckhorn Weston

29th November
1st Sunday of Advent

Benefice Holy Communion 10:30am

Stour Provost



Carol Service for Advent

with the Stour Vale Singers 3:00pm Buckhorn Weston

From the Vicar

Dear Friends,



Today is a sad day at the Vicarage, as we are reluctantly having to say goodbye to our cat, Marmite.

We recently discovered that Marmite was seriously ill. Sadly, the vet found a lymphoma affecting one of her kidneys. Marmite was only twelve, so the diagnosis came as a shock, and naturally we are very upset. She had been losing weight and struggling to eat, and we thought it might be a problem with her teeth, only to discover that it was something much worse.

The vet gave her a steroid injection to improve her quality of life and stimulate her appetite, but we knew that her time living comfortably and pain-free was limited. We had been monitoring her carefully, wondering and praying about when the right time would come to have her put to sleep. Over the last few days, Marmite has eaten very little and has seemed increasingly uncomfortable.

We take comfort in knowing that Marmite was a rescue cat who enjoyed her last few years in Kington Magna, frolicking in the Vicarage Garden and exploring the surrounding area. She was not, however, the ideal Vicarage cat! Rather timid and suspicious of the many visitors, she preferred to sneak off rather than be friendly and welcoming.

Our pets have a special place in our families, our homes and our hearts. They give us companionship and comfort, and when they become ill, we find it deeply distressing, especially because they cannot tell us how they feel. They are family members, and when they die, they are greatly mourned. In the homes I visit through my ministry, there are often photographs not only of human family members but also of much-loved pets.

So many of us, and children especially, find ourselves asking: what happens to our pets when they die?

Our animal friends are very much part of God's creation. In Genesis, we read that God made the wild animals, the cattle and everything that creeps upon the ground, and “God saw that it was good”. God loves all that he has created.

It was once widely believed that the natural world existed primarily for human beings to exploit. Today, we recognise that our flourishing is closely linked to the flourishing of the world around us. The psalmist says of God, “you save humans and animals alike, O LORD” (Psalm 36:6).

Continued page 8

From the Vicar—continued

Jesus taught that “not one” of the sparrows is forgotten in God's sight (Luke 12:6). God cares for the whole of creation and asks us to do the same. St Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) is remembered as a friend of the natural world, calling the birds, animals, sun, moon and stars his brothers and sisters. We may find the stories of him preaching to the birds or making peace with a wolf hard to believe, but they point to a deeper truth: a respect for animal life and a recognition of how much we share as fellow creatures. We belong together in the complex web of life.

In the book of Job, we are invited to “ask the animals, and they will teach you”, and reminded that the life of every living thing is in God's hands (Job 12:7–10). The world was not made simply for human beings to use as we please.

Our pet blessing service is always very popular, and anyone who has attended one comes away with a wonderful sense of connection with our fellow creatures. The love of a pet, and its ability to enjoy simply “living in the moment”, can teach us a great deal about how to live ourselves.

This is especially true of animals that serve others: guide dogs, therapy animals that visit older people and those living with dementia, and the horses involved in Riding for the Disabled. These animals transform lives, offering companionship, confidence, comfort and freedom.

What, then, does Scripture promise us? One of the clearest passages to turn to is St Paul's letter to the Romans. He writes that “the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God”, and that “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God”. He goes on to say that “the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now” (Romans 8:19–22).

Paul is not speaking only about human beings. The whole of creation groans with us, and the whole of creation is included in God's promise of renewal. Jesus came to redeem and restore all that God has made. As Paul writes elsewhere, God acts through Christ “to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Colossians 1:20).

The vision of the new creation in Isaiah, where the wolf lives with the lamb, and in Revelation, where God declares, “See, I am making all things new”, points in the same direction.

None of us can say for certain whether we will see our beloved pets again. Scripture does not give us a definitive answer.

From the Vicar—continued



Yet, if the God who notices every sparrow is going to restore all creation in Christ, it would be strange if the pets we have loved, and who have taught us so much about love, were simply left out of God's renewed creation.

For now, let us give thanks for the animals who bless our lives, for the companionship and joy they bring, and for the love we share with them. And let us entrust them, as we entrust all that we love, to the goodness and mercy of God.

With every blessing,

Clare

Thought for the Month

Once again, Christmas is just around the corner, with Advent starting on 29th November this year.

For many people, Advent starts with a celebration of consumerism – Black Friday, on Monday 30th November this year, marks the start of the Christmas shopping rush.

Will you be joining them? There are always some great price reductions available, if you can find them in time, but it can be hard to avoid the risk of spending too much, or buying things we don't really need, caught up in the bargain-hunting frenzy.

Instead, or as well, will you join in with 'Buy Nothing Day' on Friday 27th November? It can be harder than you think to not buy ANYTHING, even for just one day. Could you go without that cup of coffee on the way to work, the quick drink with friends, the one item you forgot for dinner tonight?

There's nothing wrong with shopping, but it's important we maintain a healthy attitude to our finances and our possessions. We need to make sure we are honouring God with both, using them as he would want us to.

Perhaps this year we can think of those who will struggle to afford Christmas, to provide the expected presents and food we may take for granted. Perhaps a better bargain than we might find online would be the long-term investment in our eternal future, storing up riches in heaven by helping those in need here on earth?

With love, Fiona

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 16th November**
2:30-4:30pm in East Stour village hall.

Benefice Lunch Wednesday 18th November

At 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 Wednesday 11th —thank you.

PLEASE NOTE: Different Day this month and 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: 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/

Prayer for November



Generous God
My list is full, as usual, with all the things I need,
But I'm leaving some space today for you to fill
I've written down three headings:
Justice, kindness, humility

As I shop today, could you fill those columns as we go?
Maybe I can pay a little extra to make sure something is ethically sourced,
Or pop something into the foodbank basket,
Or put something back which I don't really need.

Or maybe you want me to bite my tongue when the person in front of me takes the bargain I had my eye on,
Or to smile at the harassed parent whose toddler careens into me with her trolley
Or to share a word of encouragement with the bored teenager who serves me at the till.
Whatever my basket holds today, help me to focus on your list, not mine.
Amen

Rhona Cathcart, www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk

Regular Mid-Week Services / Benefice events November

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

Monday 16th
Knit and Natter Group—2:30pm East Stour Village Hall

Wednesday 18th
Benefice Lunch at Lakeside Kitchen Todber 12:30pm
*Pre-order your food by Wednesday 11th - **please check their new menu** before you order—thank you*

Friday 27th
Stour Vale Prayer Group 2pm East Stour Church

You are warmly invited to

Carols and Readings for Advent Sunday



29TH NOVEMBER 3PM

Marking Ralph Bowden's retirement as organist

St John the Baptist Buckhorn Weston

Stour Vale Benefice

Seven Churches, One Body, One Benefice

Stour Vale Benefice

BREAKFAST CHURCH

SUNDAY 15TH NOVEMBER

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

A Warm Welcome and Autumn Reflections

The first few months of the academic year have flown by, and what a positive and productive start they have been. The energy, enthusiasm and kindness shown by our children, staff and wider community have made this a rewarding and enjoyable beginning to the year.

Our new Reception class has quickly settled into life at Stower Provost, and it has been wonderful to see our older pupils take them under their wing, helping them to feel welcome and included from the very beginning.

The school hosted its first Open Morning in September, and I was thrilled to welcome ten local families who are considering us as their primary school. Choosing a school for the first time is a difficult task for any parent, myself included. It has therefore been particularly pleasing to receive such positive feedback, with a number of families returning for a second visit. Our second Open Morning is on Saturday 14th November from 10am to 12pm, so if you would like to come and have a look around the school and see what we have been getting up to, please do join us.

As part of the North Dorset School Games programme, groups of children from the school have participated in netball, football and junior leadership festivals led by students at Gillingham Secondary School.

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A Warm Welcome and Autumn Reflections—continued

For me, participating in sport and leading an active, healthy lifestyle is hugely important. It helps young people develop a wide range of skills while building character and supporting their wellbeing. Although our pupils have represented the school impeccably, what has made me most proud is their eagerness to continue playing these sports during lunchtimes and the enthusiasm shown by younger pupils who are keen to learn and take part. Listening to and valuing pupil voice is key to developing our culture, and I look forward to supporting this further as the year progresses.

On Tuesday 20th October, our Year 6 children participated in the North Dorset Schools Choir event at Sherborne Abbey. Since the start of term, they have been rehearsing a number of songs, culminating in a fantastic performance alongside ten other local primary schools, the Yeovil and Bovington Military Wives Choir, and the Welsh Guards Military Band. It was quite a spectacle in a wonderful venue, and I was immensely proud to see our pupils contributing to such an important event within our community.

During the final week of term, the children have been learning about and celebrating the Harvest Festival. As part of this, we held a collection for Gillingham Foodbank and invited parents into school to showcase the wonderful work the pupils have completed this half term.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to introduce themselves and make me feel so welcome within the school community. It has been a pleasure getting to know the children, families and wider community during my first half term at Stower Provost, and I am incredibly grateful for the warm welcome I have received. I wish you all a restful autumn break and look forward to everything we will achieve together in the months ahead.

Dave Deane
Headteacher
Stower Provost Community School

From the Registers—in October

Weddings:

Hugo Carmedy and Pandora Yates – Saturday 10th October at Kington Magna
Tom Bishop and Heidi Standfield – Saturday 17th October at East Stour

We pray for your lives together

Congratulations to:
David Clack, Jan Martin, Annie Bounsall and Mary Riall.







Services for the Stour Vale Benefice November 2026



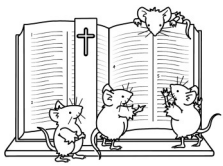
Sunday	1st November All Saints Day	8th November Remembrance Sunday	15th November 2nd before Advent	22nd November Christ The King
Buckhorn Weston		**10:30am Benefice Remembrance Service**	8:45am Breakfast Church In the Village Hall	10:30am Morning Worship CW
East Stour	11:00am Parish Communion	9:15am Said Communion	10:30am Morning Worship CW	**3:00pm Songs of Praise for Christ the King**
Fifehead Magdalen	**5:00pm All Souls Remembrance service**			6:30pm Evensong BCP
Kington Magna				11:00am Parish Communion
Stour Provost				9:15am Parish Communion
Todber	9:15am Parish Communion		**3:00pm Thanksgiving Service**	
West Stour	10:00am Morning Worship CW		10:30am Parish Communion	

CW – Common Worship BCP = Book of Common Prayer

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

Readings for November 2026

1st November	*All Saints Day (Gold or White)*
Revelation 7.9–end	Psalm 34.1–10
1 John 3.1–3	Matthew 5.1–12
8th November	*Remembrance Sunday (Red/Green)*
Amos 5.18–24	Psalm 70
1 Thessalonians 4.13–end	Matthew 25.1–13
15th November	*2nd Sunday before Advent (Red/Green)*
Zephaniah 1.7, 12–end	Psalm 90.1–8 [9–11] 12 [or 90.1–8]
1 Thessalonians 5.1–11	Matthew 25.14–30
22nd November	*Christ the King (Red/White)*
Ezekiel 34.11–16, 20–24	Psalm 95.1–7
Ephesians 1.15–end	Matthew 25.31–end
29th November	*1st Sunday of Advent (Purple)*
Isaiah 64.1–9	Psalm 80.1–8, 18–20
1 Corinthians 1.3–9	Mark 13.24–end



Other Services in November

All Souls Remembrance Service 1st November
5pm – Fifehead Magdalen

Remembrance Sunday – 8th November
Said Communion at: East Stour 9:15am

Remembrance Service at: Buckhorn Weston 10:30am

29th November – 1st Sunday of Advent
Benefice Holy Communion 10:30am – Stour Provost

Benefice Carol Service for Advent with the Stour Vale Singers 3:00pm
Buckhorn Weston

Monday 30th November
St Andrew's Day service Todber 7:00pm – lay led Compline