

Together

Benefice Magazine

Cheddar, Draycott and Rodney Stoke



**The Lord always replenishes, no matter
how empty we feel**

February 2026

£1

BENEFICE INFORMATION



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(St. Peter's & St. Leonard's information on inside back cover)

Pastoral Letter – Julie Sims



Dear Friends

As I write this morning, the grey murk and rain has given way to beautifully crisp bright weather. The shortest day is behind us and the days lengthen as Spring approaches.

Ending the Christmas season, the church celebrates Candlemas on 1st February in our services. The bible reading from Luke's Gospel relates the story of Jesus being presented at the temple on the 8th day as was the Jewish custom. Here, he is greeted by Simeon and Anna, two older folk who have been looking forward to meeting God's anointed one. Simeon declares prophetically that Jesus is the light of the world that will save his people; hence the lighting and blessing of the candles at Candlemas. It is a sign of hope.

February can feel as though there is a bit of a lull, but maybe we can catch a feeling of expectation. Nothing seems to be happening on the surface but beneath the earth - the miracle of Spring is happening silently, quietly; yet again. Spring bulbs are resiliently breaking the surface - those which were not confused by our strange summer and autumn - and soon life will break forth.

This year, as Easter is early, we take a very quick leap into Lent, a time of preparation for Easter. Maybe we can begin to sense a stirring deep below the surface in our own hearts. A seeking after light like the new bulbs as they push their way heavenward. A time of discovery that we can be enfolded, rooted and grow in this season - to know the joy of Easter following a period of growth.

If you would like to join a group to explore this, the details are elsewhere in this magazine. If you prefer to study this at home, resources are available for free in church.

Go and grow and then have a blooming good Easter.

Every Blessing,

Julie

Bishop's Letter



Time to learn to pray

'Lord, teach us to pray.' In Luke's Gospel it's these words, spoken by the disciples, that cause Jesus to give them the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-4). Jesus says to his friends *'When you pray say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.'*

Many of us think that we should be able to pray automatically. And that if we can't, it's either because 'it's not our thing' or because we're failing. Yet in Luke's Gospel, the disciples still need to ask Jesus how to pray, even after they've been knocking around with him for ages. So maybe we should give ourselves a break and accept that working out how to pray is not obvious and that all of us need to learn.

In 2026, I'm asking all of us across our diocese of Bath and Wells to make the year one of especial focus on prayer. I'm hoping we'll all be able to say the words *'Lord teach us to pray'* and that together we'll all grow in our experience, understanding, insight and practice.

How can we learn about prayer? We have to make a start. We need to make some mistakes. We need to learn from others. It doesn't happen in the abstract. Prayer is a 'learning by doing thing' where if we stick at it, we grow and change.

How might you learn to pray more this year? There isn't a master plan designed to get everyone on their knees. Most action will happen locally where we can identify what we need, work out who can help us, and then get underway. Some simple resources designed to be helpful are being made available. More importantly, please do talk to your vicar or other church leaders about what might be possible where you are.

Together, let's say these words in the year that is to come: *'Lord, teach us to pray.'* A very happy New Year to you all.

Bishop Michael

READINGS AND SERVICES

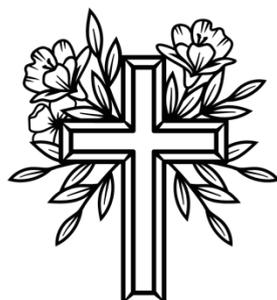
	Cheddar	Draycott	Rodney Stoke
1st February Candlemas	10am	9.30am	11.15am
	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
8th February 2 before Lent	10am	9.30am	11.15am
	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion
15th February Sunday before Lent	8am BCP Communion	9.30am	11.15am
	10am Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
22nd February Lent 1	10am	9.30am	11.15am
	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Matins

	Psalm	First Reading	Second Reading
1st February Candlemas	24:	Malachi	Luke
	7-end	3: 1-5	2: 22-40
8th February 2 before Lent	136	Genesis	Matthew
		1: 1-2:3	6: 25-end
15th February Sunday before Lent	99	Exodus	Matthew
		24: 12-end	17: 1-9
22nd February Lent 1	32	Genesis 2:15-17; 3: 1-7	Matthew 4: 1-11

FROM THE REGISTERS:

Funerals:

Our prayers are with those who mourn the death of Richard Pavey, Edna Lindsay-Smith, Thomas Dunsmore, Mary Woodhouse and Marion Burnell RIP.





HYMNS – the ‘local’ connection.

If there’s one common element you’ll find in any Worship Service you attend, it’s sure to be hymns – or Worship Songs - but after you’ve sung these, I wonder if you ever have the time, or the interest, to find out where and when that particular one was written, and maybe something about the author (note that I’m not mentioning the composer of the tune, since, strictly speaking, a hymn is a religious poem of praise to God – the tune being added to the text later on).

Local? Well, let’s start just 21 miles away, at Charles Street, in Bristol. It was here that Charles Wesley (1707-88) lived for over 20 years, and where he wrote some of his 6,500 hymns, including such well-known ones as *Lo! He Comes With Clouds Descending* and *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*.

Around the same time, and a bit closer to us, *Rock Of Ages* was written by Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-78), then curate at Blagdon church. He had been visiting Burrington Combe when he was caught in a storm and had to shelter under one of the large rocks, later reputed to be the inspiration for the text of the hymn – *Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.....*

But much closer to home is a gravestone in St. Andrew’s churchyard where lies local resident W. Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)* , who lived in Cheddar for the last three years of his life – and I wonder how many of you made that connection as you recently sang his hymn *As With Gladness, Men Of Old* or, as we also did at St. Peter’s, in the same Service just two weeks ago, *What Child Is This, Who Laid To Rest?* to the well-known *Greensleeves* melody.

As far as I’m aware, there aren’t any hymn texts connected with Draycott or Rodney Stoke, but at least we have a musical connection with the edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* that we all use – I’ve just had a look in the composer index and realised that I’ve actually written the music for 5 of the hymns in there!

Barry Rose

PS. A special thank-you to everyone who supported our post-Christmas concert in St. Peter’s. We raised the splendid sum of £880.00 for the Fabric Fund.

* see Ade’s forthcoming booklet on Dix

BYSTANDERS CAN BE LIFESAVERS



An event took place in November in the Draycott Memorial Hall which I feel deserves to be written about, if somewhat belatedly. I am referring to the session about basic life support which was organised by Rodney Stoke and Draycott WI for the benefit of the local community.

Every year the National Federation of Women's Institutes puts forward a resolution voted for by its members. In 2025 the resolution was Bystanders can be Lifesavers. Institutes were encouraged to do everything possible to promote knowledge of lifesaving techniques, namely CPR and the use of the defibrillator.

Some 50 people attended this event, not only from Rodney Stoke and Draycott but also from Cheddar. I had been warned that attendance might be disappointing so it was heartwarming to see so many people in the hall. The session was in the hands of two very expert exponents, Annette Wills and Penney Long.

Annette is the local administrator for the three defibrillators in Rodney Stoke and Draycott. With the help of a group of volunteers she is responsible for the maintenance of the defibrillators. Her enthusiasm is infectious and we are grateful for all her dedicated hard work. Thanks to Annette, we were able to engage the services of a very experienced practitioner in the field of basic life support.

Penney lived in Draycott for many years and like Annette is well known locally. She is a registered nurse for both adult and paediatric nursing and is a qualified teacher. One of her many roles when working for the NHS was that of resuscitation officer, requiring her to teach emergency responses to medical staff of all levels. We knew we were lucky to have the benefit of her considerable knowledge.

Between them these two ladies demonstrated CPR and use of the defibrillator with great skill. Attendees were encouraged to have a go and everyone left the meeting feeling more confident about using these life saving techniques. We are very grateful to both of them for giving us their time and sharing their expertise.

Susan Peel

CHURCH ROTAS

FEB.

	Feb 1	Feb 8	Feb 15	Feb 22
CHEDDAR (St. Andrew's)	<i>MP</i>	<i>HC</i>	<i>HC</i>	<i>HC</i>
Sidesperson (8.00)	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	Marie	<i>n/a</i>
Sidesperson Team Leader	Fiona	Richard S./Gill	Ken B.	Ade
Sidesperson 1	Rosemary	Gill	Marguerite	Frankie
Sidesperson 2	Anne L.	Helen	Adrian	Anne L.
Sidesperson 3	<i>n/a</i>	Peter	Jo	Anne H.
Sidesperson 4	<i>n/a</i>	Ellen	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Cleaning 1	Davies fam.	Ade	Rosemary	Mo
Cleaning 2	Davies fam.	Frankie	Karen	David
St. Nectan Chapel Flowers	Mo	Mo	Mo	<i>Lent</i>
Church Flowers - Altar	Ann B.	Jean N.	Jean N.	<i>Lent</i>
Church Flowers - Table	Ann B.	Jean N.	Jean N.	<i>Lent</i>
Brass Cleaning	<i>n/a</i>	Gerry	<i>n/a</i>	Dawn
Coffee/Tea 1	Ann B.	Anne L.	Jim	Deborah
Coffee/Tea 2	Frankie	Pam B.	Mary	Hale fam.

	Feb 1	Feb 8	Feb 15	Feb 22
DRAYCOTT (St. Peter's)				
	HC	MP	HC	HC
Organist/Music	David	Ian	Barry	David
Reader 1	Roger	Jeff	Martyn	Gill
Reader 2	Sue	Tricia	Lynda	Iain
Sidesperson(s)	Roger	Jeff	Gill	Chris
Coffee/Tea	Roger + Sue	Tricia + Jeff	Gill	Chris
Cleaning	Karen + Chris	n/a	Heather	Tricia
Flowers	tba	tba	tba	Lent

	Feb 1	Feb 8	Feb 15	Feb 22
RODNEY STROKE (St. Leonard's)				
	HC	HC	HC	BCP
Sidesperson	Alan	Steve	Megan	Ann
Reader 1	Angela	Steve	Joanne	Jo Symes
Reader 2	Alan	Heather	Megan	Ann
Organist	Joanne	Joanne	Joanne	Barry
Cleaning	Jenny			
Flowers A	see Vicky email	see Vicky email	see Vicky email	Lent
Flowers P	see Vicky email	see Vicky email	see Vicky email	Lent

For All The Saints...

Josephine Bakhita (c.1869 - 8th February 1947)

The first black female Saint - (celebrated on 8th February)

Born c.1869 in Darfur, in 1877 Bakhita was abducted by Arab slave traders and forced to walk 600 miles to El-Obeid. On the way she had been made to convert to Islam and had been bought and sold three times. At El-Obeid she was purchased by a wealthy Arab as a maid, being treated reasonably well until she was attacked by her owner's son and left so badly injured that she was confined to her straw bed for a month.

She was sold then to a Turkish general whose wife and mother in law were notoriously cruel to their slaves. Bakhita later said '*she could not recall a day which passed without some type of wound*'. She was scarred in a most cruel fashion as she was marked with 114 intricate patterns over her body. After an attack on El-Obeid by Mahdist revolutionaries in 1883, the general and his family returned to his home in Khartoum, taking Bakhita with them.



In 1883 Bakhita was sold to the Italian Vice-Consul, Callisto Legnani. He was kind to Bakhita. Two years later when he returned to Italy she begged to go with him and, in 1884 they escaped Khartoum with his friend Augusto Michieli, travelling 400 miles on camels to Suakin, a port in Sudan. In 1885 they arrived in Genoa. Bakhita was then given to Augusto and his wife Turina as nanny to their daughter Mimmina at their villa 16 miles from Venice. After 3 years Augusto acquired a large hotel in Sudan, his wife joined him there and left Bakhita and Mimmina in the care of Canossian nuns in Venice.

While there Bakhita converted to Christianity and refused to leave when Turina came to collect them. After 3 days of trying to persuade her to leave, Turina appealed to the Attorney General of the King of Italy and the nuns sought help from the Patriarch of Venice. On 29th November 1889 an Italian court ruled that as the British had outlawed slavery in Sudan before Bakhita's birth and Italian law had never recognised slavery, Bakhita had never legally been a slave.

Bakhita remained with the Canossians, and was baptised on 9th January 1890 as Josephine Margaret Fortunata (the last name being a translation of the Arabic *Bakhita*). On the same day, she was confirmed and received Communion from Archbishop Giuseppe Sarto, Patriarch of Venice and later Pope Pius X. She then joined the Canossian convent at Schio. For the rest of her life she visited other convents in the order telling of her experiences and preparing young sisters for their work in Africa.

She was finally stricken with ill health and pain, eventually being confined to a wheelchair. When asked how she was, she would reply 'As *the Master desires*' and display her ever-present smile. She died on 8th February 1947.

Thousands of people came to pay their respects as she lay in her coffin for 3 days.



Feast Day of Saint Josephine Bakhita

O Saint Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery; Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released from their chains of captivity. Those whom man enslaves, let God set free. Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and let them look to you as an example of hope and faith.

To Love and Serve the Lord



Josephine Bakhita is the patron saint of all victims of human trafficking.

Pat Groves

-oOo-



St. Andrew's Church **Flowers**

Nobody will disagree that beauty of our church is enhanced further by the wonderful flower arrangements of Ann Burstow and Jean Neville.

If you would like to join the rota (or donate for flowers to be provided: Ann and Jean will happily arrange them), please contact Ann.

Ann: (01934) 743483

Ascending in stages

Paul Handley reads an archidiaconal memoir

First in Line: One woman's groundbreaking path to ordination in the Church of England

Judith Rose

Kevin Mayhew £12.99

(978-1-83858-221-0)

Church Times Bookshop £11.69



ALTHOUGH it is only 30 years since the ordination of the first women to the priesthood, many in that first generation of women had been working in various forms of diaconal ministry for many years before that. Thus they are reaching, or have reached, the ends of their lives.

It is good, therefore, to have this first-hand account from one of the most prominent of these women, Judith Rose, now approaching her 90th year (Notebook, 7 November). It is a short and marvellously matter-of-fact account of her life, in which the story of her ministry is interwoven with anecdotes about the longevity of a drop-leaf table and a near-arrest in Yugoslavia for wearing a two-piece bathing suit.

These inconsequential details rub shoulders with examples of the discrimination and prejudice that Rose

faced during the years from when she started as a parish worker, in 1966, to after she was the first woman to be appointed archdeacon, in 1995. And this is absolutely the right context: the discrimination was hurtful (and still memorable decades later); but, then and now, it is not allowed to dominate Rose's story.

She records that she was a member of the campaigning group the Movement for the Ordination of Women, but her chief method of campaigning was to perform each of her tasks in ministry with notable proficiency and grace.

As she points out, the pattern of her career was to be appointed to tasks of increasing seniority, and then wait for the C of E to catch up and give the title that her male peers enjoyed. This applied even to her last post: she had to start as Acting Archdeacon of Tonbridge, because the Synod had been slow to recognise diaconal ministry as a qualification for higher office, and she had not clocked up enough years as a priest.

Despite her calm and unpolemical approach, it is still shocking to read of the hindrances placed in front of such an obviously competent servant of Christ. But one closes this book with an overwhelming admiration for the courage and faithfulness of its author.

Paul Handley was editor of the Church Times 1995-2024.

(A deservedly good review but we think there's plenty of life left in our Judith yet – Ed.)

BELL RINGING

A new year, a new hobby, perhaps?. Rodney Stoke bell ringers are looking for new members. Maybe you have rung in the past and would like to take it up again, or you are a complete novice looking for a new challenge? Either way, you will be welcome. It makes an ideal interest or skill for DoE and full training is given.

Why not come to one of our practice nights on Thursday evenings at 7.30 PM.

For further details contact **Judy Pearce 07719219972**.

CHURCH CURIOSITIES



In this instance, an **ex**-church curiosity. For nearly all of the 19th century, the building shown in Coomb End, Radstock functioned as a Wesleyan Methodist chapel. Hardly surprising as Methodism was by far the most popular strand of Christianity for the many miners and their families who comprised the vast majority of the workforce in the area.

With the gradual closure of the many pits, and the replacement of this building with a more aesthetically pleasing and more prominently-situated Methodist church nearby (happily still extant), the congregation moved to the newer building, freeing the Coomb End original for other usage.

It became a cinema, renamed as The Variety Theatre, in 1912, being overseen by Mr. Albany Ward. Although no pictures of the interior are known, either as a chapel or a cinema, many pews were initially retained for the use of patrons, despite much else being altered. Just two years later it was renamed again, this time as The Radstock Picture Palace, and now run by Ronald Trueman Dicken and, on his demise in 1952, by his son.

Upon closure in 1956, it served for many decades as a carpet warehouse, retaining the old initial address line of 'The Old Cinema'. Like so many buildings, its future remains uncertain but the external pictures here clearly show its' origins. How peculiar it must have seemed to Methodists who'd attended the church to now being seeing a screen in the same position where once stood a pulpit.

Ooh...
BESPOKE

Wedding Fayre

In partnership with St. Andrews Church
& Cheddar Village Hall

Saturday 28th February - 11.30am - 4.30pm



**WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY – TUESDAYS @ 11 PM, The Den
(Parish Office)**



It's not just for dogs....(whatever Buddy Holy thinks)

OH! WHAT HEAVY BURDENS WE BORE (LITERALLY)

Leaving aside any definitions of 'style', image was all-important to the mid-teenaged male of half a century ago. For many such would-be fashion followers, one of the keys to attaining such a look was Laurence Corner.

Corner wasn't a man but the name of the Army & Navy surplus stores shop, on a side-street of Oxford Street. It sold overstock and no-longer-required items from the Forces. The items were second-hand but many were so durable that they passed muster as brand-new. Which brings us to the greatcoat...

Like all fashions, nobody knows *why* or *where* the trend started. Rather like the Tony Hancock sketch where he explains to an incredulous Bill Kerr/Sid James that the existentialists he now belonged to, who all "*wanted to be different*"; hence them all wearing the same black clothing, many of us chose to proclaim our individuality by er...wearing the same style of coat.



Most available greatcoats came in varying blue-grey shades and, for some reason, Canadian Air Force coats seemed to proliferate. You could tell where your garment had originated from, as they all bore a printed label with such information, at the bottom of the right inside. Even amidst such seeming uniformity, there were subtle differences in colour and types of buttons. Silver buttons always had a higher cachet amongst we demented youngsters.

An acquaintance of mine – never a 'friend', as he was two years younger and *ergo* waaaaay too immature to be included in our gang, procured a bottle-green variant, with gold buttons but he was brashly dismissed as not understanding the requirements. In truth, we were all rather envious.

These inch-thick voluminous garments were very warm but the wool meant that if the wearer was caught in a rainstorm, it was like walking around with one's personal pneumonia blanket. It also took about five years to completely dry out.

The term 'greatcoat' was appropriate: an ultra-heavy (approximately three stone!), garment that enveloped the wearer from shoulders down to mid-shins. Like having something created from solid brick surrounding you. One questions their effectiveness in, for example, the trench warfare for which they were originally devised, keeping wind out but locking damp in. One can only pity the poor troops having their lot worsened by such conditions. Oh, and the weight doubled to about six stone when drenched, too.

But did we care? We tucked our LPs under our arms and strode around, misguidedly assuming the girls would both admire our taste in outer clothing and music. Those were the days? Well, perhaps...

Ade Macrow

Supporters of St Peter's Church (SOSP)

There's another full calendar of events planned for the year ahead. Below is a taster of what's coming up in the first part of 2026. Full details will be confirmed nearer the time, so please look out for posters and future editions of this magazine for more information.

As always, we will be hosting our monthly Coffee and Cake morning on the first Saturday of each month, from 10.30 AM to 12 noon. We look forward to welcoming old friends and new, villagers from near and far, and visitors to our lovely area.

Upcoming events:

♥ 13th February – Valentine-themed **Curry Night** at the Strawberry Special
(see separate listing)

7th March – **Lent Soup Lunch**, following **Coffee And Cake** at St Peter's Church (see separate listing)

25th April – **Jumble Sale**

Please start sorting any items you would like to donate and bring them to the Strawberry Special on the day. As always, no electrical items or furniture, please.

May – **Big Breakfast** for Christian Aid

We hope you can join us at one or more of these events, and thank you for your continued support of St Peter's Church.

Rev. Thea

The Strawberry Special

Valentines Curry Night

Friday 13th February (7.30 PM for 8.00 PM)



Tickets £15.00 from:

The Community Shop & The Strawberry Special

Rev Thea Oliver (07767892313)

All profits will be used towards supporting St Peter's Church

Lent Soup Lunch

Warm soup, warm hearts

Saturday 7th March 12.00 noon to 1.30 PM

St Peter's Church

Raising funds for both Christian Aid and St. Peter's Church

Hosted by: Supporters of St. Peter's

Come for good food, good company, and support a good cause

**SATURDAY
28TH FEBRUARY**

Coffee Morning

with cake, of course!



10.30 AM – 12.00 noon

St. Leonard's Church Hall

In aid of Church Funds

WILLIAM CHATTERTON DIX
A Brief Biography



MR. W. CHATTERTON DIX.
(Author of "Come unto Me, ye weary.")
From a Photo. by Lordon Hall, C/Am.

COMING SOON

A brief biography of William Chatterton Dix, local hymn writer and poet. Written by Ade Macrow, with all profits in aid of St. Andrew's church funds.

Available in all good churches* everywhere.

(* St. Andrew's, St. Peter's and St. Leonard's)

A Less Benign Time

Despite the constant propaganda emanating from Yorkshire, everyone fortunate enough to live in England's prime county appreciates the glorious sights and scenery in Somerset. 'twas a time when living here wasn't so pleasant, though....

There was major flooding in Somerset around 9 AM on the 20th January 1606, although in the modern calendar this is the 30th January 1607. The event is recorded on plaques in a number of churches, including those at Kingston Seymour in Somerset, and in Monmouthshire at Goldcliff, St. Brides, Redwick and Peterstone. The coastal population was devastated with at least 2,000 fatalities according to one of the contemporary sources. Burnham-on-Sea was particularly badly hit.

Modern thinking is that this was caused by a tidal wave, rather than a storm. Some historical accounts indicate that the weather was fine e.g. *"for about nine of the morning, the same being most fayrely and brightly spred, many of the inhabitants of these countreys prepared themselves to their affayres"*

The wave appeared as *"mighty hilles of water tomling over one another in such sort as if the greatest mountains in the world had overwhelmed the lowe villages or marshy grounds. Sometimes it dazzled many of the spectators that they imagined it had bin some fogge or mist coming with great swiftness towards them and with such a smoke as if mountains were all on fire, and to the view of some it seemed as if myriads of thousands of arrows had been shot forth all at one time."*

The wave varied in size from 18 to 25 feet in height, with a speed of 32 miles per hour. The flat coastal areas meant the huge wall of water was able to penetrate a considerable distance inland: just under two and a half miles in Somerset. The fact that the floodwaters reached further inland in places, such as to the foot of Glastonbury Tor (14 miles inland) is due to the fact that the land surface actually slopes landward in many of the coastal wetland areas, such as the Somerset Levels, so once the wave collapsed the water flowed landward under gravity rather than back to the sea.



Lent - Ash Wednesday. February 18th

On Ash Wednesday there will be two Holy Communion Services with the imposition of ashes for those who wish to receive ashes as a sign of penitence.

11.00 AM - St Andrew's Church, Cheddar
6.00 PM - St Peter's Church, Draycott.

Lent Study Groups 'The Bread of Life Given for You'

Bible studies and discussion on some aspects of our Holy Communion Service. Five weekly studies starting the **w/b February 23rd**.

1. 'Coming' - The significance of meeting together
2. 'Confessing' - and Forgiveness
3. 'Hearing the Word' - The importance of Scripture
4. 'Receiving' - and Remembering
5. 'Going' - Our Commission

Group venues/times:

Monday 2.30 PM (Brierley, Lower North Street)

Leaders: Hilary Thomas and Judith Rose

Monday 6.30 PM (Zoom)

Leaders: Thea Oliver and Chris Green

Tuesday 11.00 AM (Parish Office aka Den)

Leaders: Stuart Burns and others

Tuesday 7.00 PM (9 Goosander Grove, BS27 3FY)

Leaders: Hilary Thomas and Martyn Higgs

Weds. 7.30 PM (Parish Office aka Den)

Leaders: Ruth Motion and others

You are invited to join a group and sign the appropriate list in your church. Study notes will be provided.

The time lapse between the Dec/Jan double issue and this edition means that news of Christmas events can seem passe by now. Nevertheless, it would be unseemly and mean-spirited to leave all such events unreported.

To avoid a surfeit of similar material, one church will have its Christmas celebrations featured in each February magazine that ensues. This year it is St. Leonard's; February 2027 will see the activities in St. Peter's highlighted and St. Andrew's will feature in 2028.

(Please note that this does not mean all Christmas events cannot be advertised in Together, as usual. Ed).

Christmas at Rodney Stoke

Christmas started in early in Rodney Stoke on the 15th of November with the Christmas Fayre organised by Honor Neave and Karen Percival. There were many wonderful stalls, such as the arts and crafts, preloved, Lesley Davey's beautiful ceramics, cakes and produce, jewellery, tombola, raffle and lovely refreshments. It was an extremely busy and very well supported event. Many thanks to Honor and Karen for their hard work in making it such a success.

The Christingle Service was led by Ruth and as always was very entertaining, informative and joyful. Everyone had a lovely time in creating their own Christingle to take away with them.

Joanne Turner

A large congregation was welcomed to St Leonard's Candlelit Carol Service on Christmas Eve. As always, the ancient church was beautifully decorated, and the flickering candlelight and Christmas carols set the scene for an atmospheric service led by Rev Stuart.

Our soloist, Alex, sang beautifully and the readers, including Darcy and Neve, skilfully told the Christmas story through traditional Bible readings, poems and an amusing recollection of Christmases past written by Steve.

Angela Hall

Thank you to everyone who made our church look so beautiful and contributed in any way. The collection was donated to the Connect Centre in Wells who support the homeless and others in need.

A selection of photographs from St. Leonard's can be seen here and on the following page.





St. Andrew's Church Reordering Project

Raise funds for us for **FREE**

with  easyfundraising

Join as our supporter for the Reordering Fund today at:-

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause

Just search for St. Andrew's Church, Cheddar



So far, we have 10 supporters from the Reordering Committee (including their families and friends) who have raised £28.17 at no expense to themselves when shopping online.

Safeguarding Sunday

In November St. Andrew's celebrated Safeguarding Sunday, which is a reminder about what Safeguarding means and, more importantly, what we are actually doing to keep people safe in our Benefice. Safeguarding is concerned not only with protecting children from abuse – a child being anyone under 18 – but also vulnerable adults too.

You may wonder, what constitutes a vulnerable adult? It could in fact include any one of us at some point in our lives, any person, for example, who has a physical or mental illness, who has suffered a traumatic event, such as a bereavement, a breakdown in a relationship or job, who is the recipient of domestic abuse, or who is elderly and maybe confused or feels isolated.

Vulnerable adults are far more susceptible to being manipulated or exploited, perhaps physically or psychologically, or very often financially, through online fraud and scams. Caring for people and keeping them safe is, of course, at the heart of our Christian faith. Jesus condensed the Commandments into two all-encompassing laws: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself.

When asked, "*Who is my neighbour?*" (Luke Ch.10) Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, a story which highlights a stranger, distrusted by most Jewish people, going out of his way to help someone in need, when others passed him by. Jesus spent his ministry helping the poor and the sick, and showed great compassion, particularly to those on the margins of society.

Jesus was also a vulnerable adult himself, despised by many, especially the religious leaders, betrayed by one of his followers, abandoned by his friends, and finally tortured and brutally executed by the Roman authorities. He sacrificed his life for us all, and, while we cannot be as good as Jesus, we can all be inspired by his example and his message to help others less fortunate than ourselves.

A central theme of Safeguarding Sunday is that keeping people safe is not just the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer or the Rector or the PCC – it is the responsibility of us all. We hear so many stories about the abuse of children and adults in the news, whether it is in institutions, such as care homes, or schools, sports clubs or hospitals or even the Police. Recent items have focussed on grooming gangs in the North of England and the ongoing saga of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor and the sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. But each year there are many and varied cases of abuse in Somerset too, and we are not immune.

Together we must remain vigilant and aware of issues around us. Of course, one of the most shocking institutions involved in sexual abuse and cover-ups is the Church, involving not only members and clergy but those at the very top of the Church hierarchy.

People are justifiably angry and astounded at a series of terrible events. However, not forgetting the serious nature of these cases, the vast majority are historical, and in recent years the Church of England has put in place a wide range of policies designed to protect the vulnerable and keep everyone safe in future.

As a consequence regular checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) must now be carried out by any church member working with children, or who is in a leadership role e.g. clergy and the ministry team, and other groups in a supervisory role of children, such as PCC members.

There is also a comprehensive bank of Safeguarding Training courses, which are delivered at three different levels according to the particular role the church member plays. For those in leadership roles there is a two-day Safeguarding Leadership course in Wells, which is compulsory, and also an online version. In addition there is also a Foundation Course and a Basic Awareness Course, which are also mandatory for everyone working with children.

Revs Ruth and Thea provided excellent face-to-face training earlier this year for Benefice members, although these can also be accessed online via the Church of England portal, which is an entry route to the Safeguarding Training at: <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>. If you need instructions on how to get started, please contact me via my email address: reevejm@btinternet.com and I can send you details. The Basic Awareness course is in fact useful for any church member - you do not need a specific role - and it gives you an introduction to Safeguarding in relation to the Church.

So, let us make good use of the resources and measures provided by the Church so that we can continue to keep everyone safe in our church communities. Remember: **Safeguarding is the responsibility of us all.**

Jim Reeve

Safeguarding Officer, St Andrew's Church, Cheddar

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Also highlighted were the astounding talents of 14 year old Beatrice Pooley (oboe and singing) and William McConnell – singing at a mere 9 years of age.

The programme was the much-loved mix of classical and lighter music, with the traditional 'surprise item' from Barry towards the end of the evening. Nicola – in no need of extra star quality – nevertheless sported a stunning green-sequined jacket, in honour of the occasion.

There's no list of the actual programme contents here: those of you who were present will remember each piece long into 2026 and as for those who were absent, you'll need no further incentive to discover the myriad delights for yourselves.

An enormous 'thank you' to Barry, Nicola, Beatrice and William, along with everyone who helped oversee such a musical pick-me-up at St. Peter's Church.



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