

CANALSIDE NEWS

for DECEMBER 2025



The Canalside Parishes

Thought from the Rectory



New Year's celebrations. Think about Lent. What are you giving up? Before you know it, it's Easter. Big celebration! Too much chocolate. Into the summer. Hot. Holidays. Sun and seashores. Back to school. Autumn, falling leaves, frown at the Halloween decorations in Sainsbury's. Suddenly it's Advent and we're getting ready for Christmas, the end of another year.

I don't know how 2025 has been for you, but it certainly seems to have been a blur to me. As we gear up for Advent 2025, and even for what's to come in the New Year, it's hard not to look back on another year that has flown by.

During Advent, the Church of England follows a sequence of four Sundays to remember the patriarchs and matriarchs, the prophets, John the Baptist and Mary, Jesus' mother. This year, we're also using an alternate sequence that is used by other church traditions: as we light the four Advent candles, we remember Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. In our preparations for Christmas, and at a time when we look forward to Jesus coming again some day, we tell a story of those four things.

Reflecting on this year, it definitely feels good to remember Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. They are all there, if I look back. It's just that I didn't always take the time to notice them. In the busy-ness of the year, in the frenetic pace of life and when trying to balance all the different things we do (church, family, schools, trying to do some exercise, remembering to answer Michael's emails about the newsletter), we sometimes overlook basic things.

This all counts as we look forward to 2026, as well. What do you hope for? What gives you peace? Where will you encounter joy? When might you receive, or need to offer, love?

A final thought. I don't know what Christmas films you reach for each December, but my three I watch every single year are Die Hard (yes, it's a Christmas film and I am absolutely willing to fight over this), Nativity and Home Alone. Maybe it's just because we're searching for those feel-good vibes, but (perhaps leaving Die Hard to the side), so many Christmas films are all about

people searching for those four things: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Whether it's George Bailey, consumed by despair but given new hope by the end of the film or Ebenezer Scrooge, setting aside selfish miserliness for shared joy and love with others (I do err towards the muppets' version of A Christmas Carol), these films embody things that, in church, we are finding in the story of Jesus.

Enjoy your Christmas films this year. And I pray that you each find Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, spotting where it showed itself in 2025 and receiving it in present-loads for 2026. *Rev. Chris*

Thankyou for your Support



We are so grateful to everyone who supported, in whatever way, the recent Christmas Festive Fayre at St Mary Magdalen's. It was a wonderful turnout and the event raised an amazing £997 (incl donations) for parish funds. Last year's Fayre raised £632. We also raised a further £435 at the Quiz Night - £1,432 in less than a week – that's pretty good going. That's the good news – sadly despite all our best efforts we are still forecasting an end of year deficit of around £15,000. This hasn't been helped by a couple of unforeseen problems at St Mary's recently – the heater in the chancel has had to be replaced and the kitchen roof has had to be repaired after rain water leaked in. The total cost of the heater and roof repairs is about £3,000. Many thanks to everyone who has responded to Chris' letter last week, setting out the financial situation that we now face. Already we have received some very kind one off donations and I know that some of you are reviewing your giving to church. THANKYOU ALL. *Michael*

Special Visitors



On the afternoon of Sunday November 9th at St Katharine's Church in Holt it was such a privilege to meet in person Archbishop Ezekiel of Sudan and Bishop Hassan of the Kadugli Diocese (South Kordofan) – here in the UK to highlight the plight of their war ravaged country.

Following welcomes by the Rev. Andrew Evans, singing and prayer, first the Archbishop and then Bishop Hassan spoke in words very wide-ranging. So

many factions – local, national, international – at war in their land. A very complex picture. Some factions supported by weapons from other nations. So much destruction. 12 million people displaced, many thousands killed. Unspeakable, brutal atrocities.

Questions were then invited. One question: “What are your two main needs?” The Archbishop replied : “Food and Advocacy”. (for “Food” read all humanitarian needs). Advocacy – the World has been slow to recognise, to respond to, what many call this “Forgotten War”.

The Archbishop and Bishop Hassan were off to Westminster early in the week. On Monday I rang my MP’s office asking him to do what he can in Parliament to “raise” the plight and needs of Sudan.

Despite all this darkness what is abundantly clear is the Faith and Hope of these two priests – and of their “flock” – and of how important to them is the link between the Episcopal Church of Sudan and Salisbury Diocese. The Deanery of Bradford on Avon they call Bradford on Heaven. A sentence from the Archbishop which will stay with me : “Our children are your children; your children are our children.”

To quote the Archbishop again : “Please do not grow tired of praying for Sudan”. *Jo Davis*

Used Postage Stamps

No doubt we will all be seeing more post in your letterboxes in the next few weeks. It would be great if you could save the stamps and pass them on to Bill and Marilyn Stubbs who in turn pass them on to the Bible Society. Please keep them coming and use the Storehouse church porch containers for dropping them off.

100 Club News

Congratulations to the winner of the November 100 Club Draw: Dawn Charman

Bill Stubbs

Unfortunately Bill is currently unable to drive as he awaits some treatment needed to his eyes. We wish you well Bill and hope that you are back on the road very soon. In the meantime enjoy a well deserved rest. Whilst Bill is confined to barracks we are looking for a volunteer to take any donations from the Foodbank box at St Mary Magdalen's in Horse Road to Storehouse in Union Street, Trowbridge. If you would like to take this on for a while please let me know. Many thanks to Keith and Janet Waring who emptied the box for us last week.



Christmas Services Flier

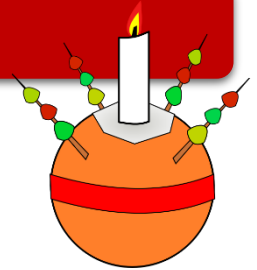


On the back of this newsletter you will see this year's poster of our Christmas Services. Sadly we don't have the resources to deliver a flier to every home in the Benefice but if you could deliver some to neighbours, homes in

your own road or neighbourhood please let me know how many fliers you would like and I will get them copied for you and in church for Sunday 7th. I will also need to know in which roads you will be delivering to avoid any duplication. The fliers need to be distributed before the Christingle and Carols event at St Mary Magdalen's on Sunday 14th. Many thanks. *Michael*

Christingle and Carols

On Sunday 14th December our Christingle and Carols event will be held at St Mary Magdalen's at 3pm. At 9.30am on the Saturday (13th) the Christingles will be prepared at St Mary Magdalen's. If anyone could help with the preparation please let me know as soon as possible. *Joy*



TROWBRIDGE STREET PASTORS

How would you like to have fun with Jesus? Are you being called to help people in need? Would you like to find a different way to talk to people who wouldn't normally go near a church? Then maybe becoming a Street Pastor is exactly what you need to do.



I'll be honest – it is a calling and it is a commitment, including undertaking extensive training, having an interview and a DBS check. We need people who really feel called to go out on the streets of Trowbridge late at night, talking to strangers, listening to them and helping them. You may feel nervous or unsure about it, but do give it a try and see if you perceive that call and, truth be told, we really need you!

There has been a Street Pastors Initiative operating in Trowbridge since 2009, but our numbers have gone down, especially since Covid. Currently we have 9 active Street Pastors and have had to reduce our patrols to every fortnight, on a Saturday night. However, each Street Pastor would, generally, only go out on patrol once a month.

Our Chair, David Goldstone, always says that we have fun with Jesus out on patrol; and that is true. I have seen potentially confrontational situations turn into something completely different, even ending in laughter. We certainly each know that we absolutely could not do this without Jesus being with us, or without the Holy Spirit within us. *The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.* Deuteronomy 31:8 NIV UK.

One of the great privileges of being a Street Pastor is that we are on the front line between the world and God's Kingdom and we meet people on *their* patch. We can have really good conversations about why we do what we do, for no pay, which is so counter cultural that people are really taken aback. We have the opportunity to show people God's love, in action, which is truly wonderful. So, if you would like to know more then please contact the Coordinator, Julia Wade, on 01380 870137 or email trowbridge@streetpastors.org.uk If you would like to hear a short talk about our work in your church, then ask your leader to book us. You are welcome to come out as an observer to see for yourself what we do, without any obligation to take it further.



Prayer Requests



It is important that we pray for all who seek our support.
Please let Michael know of anyone who particularly needs our prayers.
Do ensure that you have their permission.

This month we pray for..

+ Alison Meader
+ Amelia-Lily and family
+ Andrew Margetts
+ Audrey Sheppard
+ Barbara Tucker
+ Bob Cradock
+ Catherine
+ Cathy and Ian
+ Chloe Stevens
+ Colin Jackson
+ Collette Miyagawa
+ Colston Carpenter

+ Dave, Rosemary,
Matthew & Family
+ Eve and Jim Banks
+ Hannah, Ash, Oliver
& baby Leo
+ Heather
+ Helen Thomas
+ Hilary & Mark Heaton
+ Irene Hicks
+ Isabelle & Family
+ Jeannette
+ Joanna Martin
+ Laurence & Family
+ Maggie & Family

+ Maureen Mitchell
+ Michelle
+ Mike Aldridge
+ Mitchel and Divine
+ Richard Marshman
+ Roger Emes
+ Rosa Light
+ Tanya
+ Val, Phil and family
+ Viv and Jan



- We pray for all those who are mourning the loss of a loved one at this time especially the friends and family of Pat Butler.
- We pray for the people of Sudan at this time of conflict, including Archbishop Ezekiel as he leads the Anglican Church there.



Foodbanks Update

Together with many other Foodbanks across the country both Melksham and Trowbridge are desperate for more donations, as the demand is very high at present, so please give as generously as you are able.

Storehouse Foodbank



HELP!

If you can donate any food or hygiene items PLEASE, pop them in our trolleys or come on down and bring them to us. If you are a little flush; you can do online shopping with ASDA as they will deliver to us on your behalf. Please drop into the building as we now do a breakfast for the homeless so eggs are always needed plus cheese, butter bacon etc as we have a fridge freezer, and fridge. Fruit and vegetables are always welcome but do not put in a trolley. Please continue to donate to us so we can keep blessing the people of Trowbridge. Thank you all.

Please use the collection boxes in the porches of St Mary Magdalen's and St Michael's to drop off food donations etc.

If you prefer you can make a one off financial donation or support Trowbridge Storehouse regularly, please follow the link below and select storehouse.

<https://westwiltsvineyard.churchsuite.co.uk/donate/fund/zk54op3a>

Storehouse is always in need of carrier bags



Melksham Foodbank continue to need all items but in particular at the moment require : biscuits, tinned meat, sugar, and in addition to all the usual stuff are collecting

some 'treat' items for Christmas, including 100g bars of Chocolate, and Christmas foods with dates well into January.. The demand for support is very high (please ensure all items are well within the best before date). They can also take large bags of rice, tea bags, sugar & pasta as these can be decanted into smaller bags for distribution. Please take your donations to the porch at St George's, Semington before 6pm on Wednesday.

Our continued support of Melksham FoodBank and Trowbridge StoreHouse is vital, and a part of our response to God's generosity to us.

CANALSIDE DIARY

Please pray for all events taking place in the next few weeks

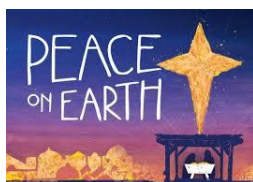
Day	Date	Time	Event details	Location
D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 5				
Tu	2 nd	0930	Hilperton/Staverton Morning Prayer https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89678887943?pwd=IKy2vBYNviwibNcoWUpqTtf4hpwQTA.1	Online
		1450	Collective Worship	St George's School
W	3 rd	1000	Midweek Morning Worship	St Michael's
		1430	Collective Worship	Hilperton School
Th	4 th	0900	Semington Morning Prayer https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88553953942?pwd=1EHGGg18bBqqYKytMMRbYvZ5JZFZNm.1	Online
F	5 th	0930	Toddlers@theTin	St Mary Magdalen's
Su	7 th	1030	Service of Holy Communion	St Michael's
		1500	Service of BCP Holy Communion	St Mary the Virgin
		1800	Semington Christmas Lights	High Street
Tu	9 th	0930	Hilperton/Staverton Morning Prayer Use link above	Online
W	10 th	1000	Midweek Communion	St Michael's
		1430	Open the Book	Hilperton School
Th	11 th	0900	Semington Morning Prayer Use link above	Online
		1045	Open the Book	St George's School

		1430	Friendship Group	St Mary Magdalen's
		1445	Open the Book	Staverton School
F	12 th	0930	Toddlers@theTin	St Mary Magdalen's
Sa	13 th	0930	Preparation of Christingles	St Mary Magdalen's
Su	14 th	0930	Breakfast Church	St George's Church
		1030	Service of Holy Communion	St Mary Magdalen's
		1500	Christingle and Carols	St Mary Magdalen's
Tu	16 th	0930	Hilperton/Staverton Morning Prayer Use link above	Online
W	17 th	1000	Midweek Morning Worship	St Michael's
		1730	Carols by Candlelight	St George's School
Th	18 th	0900	Semington Morning Prayer Use link above	Online
		0930	Hilperton School Christmas Service	St Michael's
		0930	St George's Sch Christmas Service	St George's Church
		1530	Staverton Sch Christmas Service	Staverton School
F	19 th	0930	Toddlers@theTin	St Mary Magdalen's
		1030	Carols at Staverton House	Staverton House
		1800	Whaddon Carol Service	St Mary the Virgin
Sa	20 th	1100	Trowbridge Living Nativity	Civic Centre
Su	21 st	1030	Service of Holy Communion / Crib	St Mary Magdalen's
		1500	Semington Carol Service	St George's Church
		1800	Hilperton Carol Service	St Michael's
Tu	23 rd	0930	Hilperton/Staverton Morning Prayer (NOT online – IN PERSON)	St Michael's
W	24 th	CHRISTMAS EVE		
		1000	Midweek Communion	St Michael's
		1400	Christmas Celebration	St George's
		1700	Crib Service	St Michael's
		2330	Christmas Midnight Communion	St George's
		2330	Christmas Midnight Communion	St Michael's
Th	25 th	CHRISTMAS DAY		
		0930	Christmas Morning Communion	St George's
		1030	Christmas Morning Communion	St Michael's
F	26 th	BOXING DAY		
Su	28 th	1030	Service of Holy Communion	St Michael's
		NEW YEAR'S EVE		

W	31 st	1000	Midweek Communion	Online
JANUARY 2026				
Th	1 st	NEW YEAR'S DAY		
Tu	6 th	EPIPHANY		
		0930	Hilpertont/Staverton Morning Prayer Use link above	Online
W	7 th	1000	Midweek Morning Worship	St Michael's
Th	8 th	0900	Semington Morning Prayer Use link above	Online

CANALSIDE CONTACTS

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Associate Priest	Rev. Joy Albone	07931638524	revjoyalbone@gmail.com
Office	Michael Gamble	07795400262	canalsideoffice@gmail.com
Churchwardens			
Semington	David Wildsmith	c/o 01380 870784	c/o jackbev.woodward@gmail.com
Hilpertont and Staverton	James Newton	07803904947	jpnwton@churchmouse.org.uk
	Martyn Carpenter	07831309377	martyncarpenter55@gmail.com
Website	canalsidebenefice.org.uk		
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/canalsideparishes		



Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed: kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

St James' Church Trowbridge

Christmas Tree Festival

Tuesday 2nd to Saturday 6th December 2025
Open daily 10am until 5pm (4pm on Saturday)

All Welcome - Free Admission
Refreshments available

ST JAMES' CHURCH
www.stjamestrowbridge.co.uk | 07565 977441



CHRISTMAS *in* CANALSIDE



Sun CHRISTINGLE AND CAROLS

14 3pm : St Mary Magdalen's, Horse Road, Hilperton

Fri CAROL SERVICE

19 6pm : St Mary the Virgin Church at Whaddon

Sun CAROL SERVICE

21 3pm : St George's Church, Church Street, Semington

CAROL SERVICE

6pm : St Michael and All Angels' Church, Hilperton

Wed CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

24 2pm : St George's Church, Church Street, Semington

CRIB SERVICE

5pm : St Michael and All Angels' Church, Hilperton

CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT COMMUNION

11.30pm : St George's Church, Church Street, Semington

CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT COMMUNION

11.30pm : St Michael and All Angels' Church, Hilperton

Thu CHRISTMAS MORNING COMMUNION

25 9.30am : St George's Church, Church Street, Semington

CHRISTMAS MORNING COMMUNION

10.30am : St Michael and All Angels' Church, Hilperton

PLEASE COME AND
JOIN US AT ANY OF
OUR SERVICES
THIS

CHRISTMAS
YOU WILL BE VERY
WELCOME

