



SVB Outlook

February - March 2023



The magazine of the churches of The Sodbury Vale Benefice:
Chipping Sodbury, Old Sodbury,
Little Sodbury and Horton.

www.svbcofe.org.uk

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Dear Friends,

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'

This passage from Isaiah 43: verses 18-19 popped up on my Bible app the other week and I realised how pertinent it is in Sodbury Vale Benefice at the moment. As we continue our search for a new Rector, a new year has begun, and Spring is well on its way. Bulbs have pushed their way through the soil, sheep gather together in the fields bringing the promise of new lambs, and the daylight hours are lengthening. All these signs bring hope. Despite the uncertainties and challenges we're still facing, we can spend time imagining and reimagining what we hope for; our hopes for ourselves, our friends and families, and certainly our hopes for our Benefice.

As the signs of Spring remind us of brighter days to come, so we can prepare ourselves, together and individually, for our new Rector when he or she is appointed. The bulbs have been growing and blossoming and you too, can stretch, grow and blossom. You are all a work in progress, and God always has plans for you no matter your age.

“May you know God’s presence and peace as we continue moving forward into this new year.”

Do not dwell on the past, as God is ahead of us all, making a way through and waiting for us to catch up. Spring is a perfect time to reflect on how you can grow, to try something new perhaps, or even reimagine something you've been doing for many years. To spend time in prayer; to perceive God's plans for you as we work together in this Benefice to bring about his Kingdom.

May you know God's presence and peace as we continue moving forward into this new year.

Jane



Ukrainian Art Exhibition and Concert

at St John's Church, Chipping Sodbury November 2022

An approach from SG Council asking whether we could host an exhibition of Ukrainian Art, History and Culture at St John's around the weekend of 26th November has begun a journey of relationship.

Over 3 days visitors were welcomed, could ask questions and hear explanations from one of the organisers, a passionate and knowledgeable guide. Exhibits included art work, costumes, textiles, photographs, cultural artefacts and explanatory notes.

On 25th November there was a concert of Ukrainian songs - a young singer performed modern and traditional songs. In a short talk, a Ukrainian lady shared an account of Holodomor, a word we had not heard before: it means 'death by hunger' in Ukrainian.

Holodomor Memorial Day is 26th November - the next day was the 90th commemoration of the start of a period of Stalin's plan to terrorise the Ukrainian 'peasant' class of subsistence farmers who were resisting Soviet policies. It included demanding ever higher quotas of crops for export to fund the '5 year plan' and culminated in the confiscation of seed kept for the next

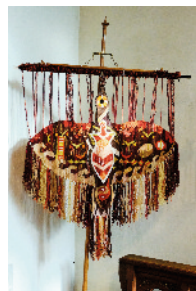
year's crop. Levies of meat and potatoes were enforced when villages could not meet increasing quotas. Protests were ignored and in 1932/33 in Ukraine 4 million people died of hunger, 31% of whom were children.

Folk songs concluded the concert - it was moving to hear Ukrainian voices raised together as they sang. Over refreshments there were animated discussions amongst us, our ignorance of the word 'Holodomor' and attempts to recall what we knew of that era.

Two British journalists were witnesses who reported what was happening: Gareth Jones, who was murdered during his investigations and, writing anonymously, Malcolm Muggeridge reported for the Guardian about what he'd seen.

Footnote: at our Carol Service, we welcomed a choir of Ukrainian women and girls to join us, some wore traditional costume and they sang Ukrainian carols including 'The Carol of the Bells'.

Helen Hope-Bell



An Evening with Miranda Keys



Music for Christmas

An evening of Festive Music
with
Miranda Keys

What an evening! For those who joined Miranda on Saturday 3rd December in Chipping Sodbury it was a really lovely start to the festive celebrations.

A mix of arias, sacred, familiar and not so familiar; together with songs from the musicals and festive music.

During the second half of the evening, Miranda had us all singing along to well-known Christmas carols and songs; then at one point encouraging us to retrieve our phones, turn the torch light on and sing along to... wait for it....!! Westlife's "You raise me up"!

Mad, but so much fun.

Then one other 'highlight', during a rather splendid aria the rope holding the bell wheel against the wall snapped, sending the wheel sliding down the wall to precariously balance on the radiator. Miranda wondered if her next aria would send the wheel rolling down the north aisle towards the organ, thankfully it didn't !! It is such a special occasion being entertained by Miranda, so much so that she will be returning to St John's Chipping Sodbury at a date in 2023 to be confirmed; so look out for the announcement.



Thanks for your kindness

I would like to thank friends, acquaintances and "Tea and Chat" ladies for their kind "Get Well" messages sent to me during my recent illness. I am thankful to be feeling stronger each day as I count my blessings.

This is surely why we put kindness out there into the world – not knowing for certain what good it will do, but trusting it will find its own wonderful purpose. **Joyce Cains**

Do you have an eye for detail?

Can you spot mistakes in texts like this magazine.? If so perhaps you would like to help us by being one of our proof readers who review the magazine for errors before it goes to print. We still mis some things so we need help. If you are interested contact Michelle in the church office for more information.

Copy Deadline

Please send all copy for the February-March issue to the Church Office by **Monday March 20**

Front Cover: Tintern Abbey at a slight angle. The abbey is upright, the camera wasn't

St John's Mead School sails through inspection

The inspector found that:

St John's Mead is a school defined and driven by its deeply embedded Christian vision. As a result of consistent and comprehensive application of the vision and values, leaders have created an environment where all are empowered to be the best they can be. Pupils have a keen sense of self-worth because their vision teaches them to value themselves. Celebrating their unique value and welcoming all who attend creates a harmonious and loving school. Consequently, everyone is treated with respect.

Worship unites and nourishes the whole school community. Explicit connections are made between the vision and biblical messages leading to a deeply loving culture of everyone being welcomed and valued. Pupils confidently articulate how worship inspires them personally to challenge views, respond and make a difference in the world. They are empowered to change behaviour or value all relationships in school. Staff talk of worship as a time for coming together as a family, and as a reminder of all that is good.

Pupils are exceptionally confident at leading worship, making it creative and memorable using drama and a range of media. Due to a vacancy within the parish, the school has embraced visitors, 'Open the Book' and use of 'I-sing Pop' resources further enhance worship. As a result, pupils animatedly express their enjoyment saying how it leads to thoughtful and respectful approaches in their own lives. Worship during the pandemic surpassed parental expectations when the school reached out virtually, gathering online to spread words of hope. Pupils relish the lighting of the candles, welcoming and hearing response as a time for silence to open their hearts and minds to God, should they wish to do so. They have a secure understanding of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy spirit. Invitational as well as spontaneous prayer, along with reflection opportunities develop a rich culture of spiritual growth.

Leaders ensure the curriculum reflects the school's vision and values so children realise their potential. Parents who have known the school for many years say the school's vision creates an atmosphere conducive to growing, loving and learning. Staff work tirelessly to improve outcomes for pupils to enable each child to flourish regardless of background.

Many congratulations to our Chipping Sodbury Church of England school, St John's Mead which recently had a successful statutory inspection report that focused on the impact of the Church school's Christian vision on pupils and adults within the school community.

Restorative conversations are used to learn forgiveness and as a result behaviour at St John's Mead is exemplary. Extending the school vision out of class is part of the inherent ethos at St John's Mead to enable all to flourish. Leaders make courageous decisions so that pupils think of others locally and globally. Staff, local residents and parents offer many clubs or extra curriculum activities for pupils, modelling how they can make a difference to others. Pupils learn from these values and become leaders in school. Church members organise events such as the Christmas trail or Experience Easter.

Charity work and support for the community is frequently suggested by children who challenge inequality and injustice and are strong advocates for change.

The Christian vision at St John's Mead determines the outstanding pastoral care within school and as a result staff morale is high and pupils enjoy coming to school. This leads to a school where all flourish as they are treated with dignity and respect.

Religious Education is led with passion and an unerring dedication to make sure children have the very best experiences. The RE leader ensures a mixture of resources so that staff are well supported. Consequently, pupils are offered a creative and media rich curriculum. Careful planning, with a focus on learning age-appropriate vocabulary, allows children to learn about theology, philosophy and human science. As a result, pupils talk confidently about a range of religions and differences of belief are accepted. Links are made between Bible stories and Christianity as a living faith to enable discussions about tackling bullying and racism.

The vision and values are at the heart of St John's Mead School. As the vision is lived out in all the activities that are shared, adults and pupils in school flourish, and church members and families grow together.

The report can be read in full on the Gloucester Diocese website.

<https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SIAMS-Framework-September-2023.pdf>

Lent Course

We are planning to hold a Lent Course this year:

Wednesday evenings (on Zoom)

Thursday mornings (in the Church Centre)

Starting on March 1st. We'll be using the "Difference" course sponsored by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The sessions will be led mainly by the Reverends Steve Abbott and Colin Lunt.

More details will appear on SVB mailings and the website nearer the time.



Bishop Rachel's message for 2023

I know that journeying can be an overused metaphor when we talk about faith, but it seems a good one as we begin a new year and recall the visit of the Magi and the unfolding of the season of Epiphany.

I have done a lot of journeying recently – some of it good and some of it more challenging due to adverse weather conditions, train delays and unexpected incidents. I think a five-hour journey to travel from Down Ampney, near Cirencester, back to Gloucester in the mid-December snow might be something of a record; and for various reasons Guy and I experienced a lot of uncertainty in our travelling over the Christmas period. Amid it all we commented on the time we spent on Christmas Day with Iranian Christian brothers and sisters enjoying an English Christmas meal with generous friends at St Lawrence's Barnwood. We reflected a little on the poignancy of their journey as asylum-seeking Persian Christians as we recalled the Christmas journeying of the Persian Magi seeking the Christ-child. All of it full of uncertainty and yet much faith.



As Guy and I and experienced frequent unexpected changes to travel plans with many hours of waiting, we repeatedly commented with thankfulness that at least we knew our destination and the warmth awaiting us. Furthermore, our longing for home and resolution was nothing compared to the many people across our world fleeing in fear, journeying with no sense of destination, and facing uncertainty regarding the future.

As we all venture forth into 2023, we are surely aware of much uncertainty regarding what lies ahead, not least with so many national and global issues, the challenges facing the National Church, and all we are immersed in concerning the people and places of our local contexts. Perhaps some of it seems confusing and bewildering, yet let us not allow that to close our inner selves to holy mystery.

The very meaning of Epiphany challenges us to look beyond what seems to be, and to open our hearts and minds to the mysterious presence of God, and to yearn to see and hear the signs of God's certain kingdom.

Every New Year's Day, I remember that poem by Minnie Louise Haskins which was quoted by King George VI in his 1939 Christmas broadcast (it has been said that the late Queen Elizabeth II handed it to her father as a child):

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown".

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way".

Amid all the knowns and unknowns of the coming year, let us not forget the certainty of our home in God, and may that certainty give us peace amidst anxiety and restlessness. Hundreds of years ago Augustine of Hippo famously wrote "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."

***And I said to the man who stood
at the gate of the year:***

***"Give me a light that I may tread
safely into the unknown".***

And he replied:

***"Go out into the darkness and
put your hand into the Hand of
God.***

***That shall be to you better than
light and safer than a known
way".***

I hope and pray that as we journey into 2023 we will marvel afresh at the journey of those restless, curious and faithful gift-bearing Magi who were utterly focused on following that mysterious star as they sought out the new-born King; and that we will keep our minds and hearts focused on the mystery and wonder of God's certain love and forgiveness. It won't remove all the pain, uncertainty or struggle, but it will free us to be joyful in the unchanging hope we

have in Jesus Christ. My prayer is that we will be generous in living and sharing this transforming hope in our various contexts. It is a gift more precious than gold, frankincense and myrrh. May we carry it with us as we journey through the coming year.

Bishop Robert and I give thanks for the privilege of journeying with you in the months ahead.

With my thanks and prayers, **+Rachel**

Live Streaming

Who can forget the good memories we share of our first experiences with Zoomed meetings? In those days during lockdown it brought us much encouragement and pleasure to see one another's faces and share in worship and fellowship together. Zoom opened for us a new world of experience and opportunity...

Today Zoom continues to provide added dimensions to our SVB church experience – both in the Morning Prayer meetings led by Jane on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (8.30am), and in the streamed services from St Johns CS every Sunday at 9.30am. Zoom is possibly here to stay!

Welcome to St John's Church, Chipping Sodbury in the Sodbury Vale Benefice



You will also have observed that we offer an alternative to Zoom – a YouTube feed for the Sunday service. This allows for greater flexibility in viewing – either live or at any time after the event. Zoomed meetings are time

dependent and must be caught as they happen, but YouTube streams endure. They also have higher quality sound and video. We would like to encourage more people to view on YouTube where possible as this works better for our technical capability. The Zoom and YouTube links are emailed to the Benefice each Saturday. They are also posted every Sunday on SVB's Facebook page and attract a wider audience outside of our church community.

You will be pleased to know that we continue to move forward to provide a better experience. These include improved audio quality for Zoom and expanded video. In recent weeks we have been able to provide a 2- or 3-camera experience. The video feed from our main camera is supplemented by shots from the back of the church and also other locations – all without the need for further wiring. This, we believe, makes for a more involving experience for those on-line and gives the feeling of "being there" in church with the congregation.

And what about the other Benefice churches? We have begun to extend streaming to cover events in the village churches but one of the major challenges has been the availability of wifi. This was tested recently when we covered the funeral of John Myers at Old Sodbury.



Happily, we were able to borrow equipment that would provide a temporary wifi hotspot that enabled delivery of both Zoom and YouTube. The latter failed after 30 minutes due to the poor connection, but we were able to provide a delayed feed which had more than 120 views – worldwide. For the New Year's Benefice service from St Adeline's, Little Sodbury, we could not provide a live

stream, but we recorded the service and uploaded it to YouTube within two hours of the end of the service.

But we need to see beyond the technical and are beginning to assess the potential that these resources provide to reach into our communities and the wider world.

In the meantime, we would like to expand our technical team beyond the two of us – Richard Hore and me. We really need two people for each event otherwise there is a lot of pressure. Recently we have had a few occasions when we were down to one. We would therefore welcome interest from anyone who might be motivated to help on a regular basis. Let us know by email to <admin@svbcofe.org.uk>

Frank Gray

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Living with integrity

The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity. **Proverbs 11:3**

Whoever fears the LORD walks uprightly, but those who despise him are devious in their ways. **Proverbs 14:2**

The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favour with him.

Proverbs 11:1

In the Bible, integrity is a big deal in our relationship with God. These three short extracts from the book of Proverbs remind us that God values faithful and honest dealing very highly, and that dishonesty shows a contemptuous disregard for God.

I was once travelling by plane from Brisbane to Sydney. Relaxing into my seat, I noticed an official looking folder in the seat pocket in front. It contained the confidential board papers for a major company, which had been left by mistake by a director on the previous flight. It was a company I was interested in, and I had a great desire to read what was inside.

Thinking of myself as a person with reasonable integrity, I was surprised at the intensity of the moral battle that started waging in my head. Would I like someone to read my private papers if I had left them on a plane? No! That seemed to settle it.

But then another little voice started up. 'Perhaps I should just take a peek so I know what's in them when I return them' – trying to rationalise bad behaviour!

'Perhaps this is a God-given opportunity...' Where did that thought come from?! Happily, that little battle of integrity was won. I resisted temptation and returned the papers to a very thankful board member when I arrived in Sydney.

All of us face daily choices which test our integrity, whether in big ethical decisions in professional practice, or simple tests of honesty when you might be tempted to steal other people's ideas, when the shopkeeper undercharges you in error, or when you find something of value left on a plane!

In whatever situation we are in, each of us has to decide where to draw our line.

The psalmist prayed: 'May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, LORD, is in you' (Psalm 25:21) – a great prayer to take to work with us every day.

Graham Hooper (Graham is a Company Director and former Senior Executive with a global infrastructure company. His latest book *Proving Ground – 40 Reflections on Growing Faith at Work* is published by Christian Focus.)

Source - London Institute for Contemporary Christianity www.licc.org.uk.



Meet The Head

Old Sodbury CofE Primary School



1) What is a church school?

Goodness me, this is a big question as it can mean many things to different people! For me a church school is a place where the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of the children in its care are at its heart. With the support of the Diocese, a church school is a place where priority is given to the health and wellbeing of all its families, staff and governors. A church school looks wider than itself, it reaches out and looks at how it can make a difference to others in the local, wider or global community. It provides opportunities to demonstrate excellence in the service of others.

2) What do you think are the main differences between church schools and other primary schools?

Church schools are distinctively Christian in their ethos. Our visions and values reflect this and that is the main difference. We have daily collective worship rather than assemblies, and bible stories and references are often used to support themes and values. Children are encouraged to reflect more, to think about actions and how positive contributions to supporting and looking after each other can be made each day. Children play an active part in leading and responding to collective worship; it is not something done to them but something that they are very much part of. At Old Sodbury for example we have worship teams and the children lead and create collective worship weekly for all our children at the school. It is quite wonderful to see.

3) How long have you been Head at Old Sodbury and what drew you to apply for the job?

I have been Headteacher at Old Sodbury CE Primary School for 14 years now. I have always had both of my feet firmly planted in a love and passion for small schools. I think small schools are very special places for staff, families and children. Old Sodbury is a Church of England school and that was really important to me. Once I had looked around and met governors, staff and children, I knew it would be

a place I could call home for a good many years. Although always changing and developing, it still feels like a home, a safe place and I hope all our children, families, staff and governors feel like that too.

4) Could you explain a little about the ethos of the school and the part that Christian values plays in the daily life of the school?

At Old Sodbury our school vision ***“Let your light shine”*** Matthew 5:16 permeates all the work that we do at school with our children and our families. We believe that every child has the right to know what it feels like to be successful and for our children to understand how special and unique they are. We want them to know that they have the power to change the world and at school we encourage them to be the best versions of themselves and to know and have knowledge of God’s love.

Our core Christian values of Courage, Compassion and Respect encourage our children to be **Courageous learners** who seize opportunities, challenge themselves and have high expectations of what they can achieve; **Compassionate individuals** who support one another to stay safe, healthy and happy and who are empowered to make positive contributions; **Responsible citizens** who value diversity and show respect for themselves, the environment and their community.

Our distinctive Christian vision and values shape our school and make it the happy and vibrant learning environment that it is today. It is a massive part of who we are.



5) In what ways does the school maintain links with the church at Old Sodbury?

Our relationship with the church continues to be a strong one. Old Sodbury Church is a place where children go to worship during celebrations at different times during the year. Our annual RE afternoon provides opportunities for members of the church and school community to come into school and see our ethos in action. RE lessons and acts of collective worship run by the children can

be seen. Regular visits by the vicar into school to lead collective worship take place and members of the church community are members of our school's ethos committee, a committee that looks and monitors the Christian distinctiveness of our school. All of this work ensures that our links with the church are strong and positive. The school feels very well supported by the church and the Diocese.



6) Is there a way in which the church and the local community could support the school?

The school, over the years, has grown considerably and recently a reconfiguration of our classes took place as part of a capital building project from the Local Authority. Unfortunately, plans to install a wooden building onto the school field



were dropped as funding was reduced and this provided the school with logistical problems with a lack of space. We are in desperate need of this extra classroom for intervention and support work with our children and so we have started a massive fundraising campaign to raise money for this building

ourselves. Any support spreading the word and helping us fundraise for this building would be greatly appreciated. It would make such a massive difference to our school and the provision and support we offer our children and families. More information about our project can be found via the link below.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/finish-building-our-much-needed-extra-building>

Chipping Sodbury Mothers' Union

14 of us braved the weather in December and visited The Wishing Well in Codrington for our Christmas meal. Our numbers were diminished due to illness and the snowy conditions but for those of us who went we had a great time. So great, in fact, that we forgot to take any photographs!!

Our meetings are held on the second Monday of the month in the Church Centre, Wickwar road. You don't have to be a member to come along, and this year we have an interesting and varied programme of speakers and events. We are a friendly group and look forward to seeing some new faces. **Hilary Hurley**

The Extended Team

Honorary Assistant Ministers

Meet the members of the extended team who support our worship. They consist of retired clergy and lay readers, who take services and help with other events across the benefice.



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