



SVB Outlook

December 2023 - January 2024



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

www.svbcofe.org.uk

Our Team



Lay Reader

Tania Manners

07546 995751

mannerst@gmail.com



The Rector

The Revd. Chris Butler

07985 708707

rectorchris@svbcofe.org.uk

(Rest Day - Friday)



Associate Priest

The Revd.

Jane Jones-Williams

07498 878164

revjanejw@gmail.com

Churchwardens

St John's, Chipping Sodbury

Anne Vickers

01454 850942



Paul Jones-Williams

07980 240103



St James', Horton

Tina Hildick-Smith

01454 320380



Richard Needs

01454 329890



St Adeline's, Little Sodbury

Linda Hurst

01454 319183



Brenda Cordy

01454 316447



St John's, Old Sodbury

Karen Hunter

01454 319903



Richard Purdom

07340 242990



Administrators

Michelle Jenkins, Trish Gailey
and helpers

Outlook Advertising

Volunteer required

Safeguarding Nominated Person

Hannah Saunders 07515 915976

hcsaunders-home@talk21.com

Contact Hannah if you have a concern about suspected abuse of a child or a vulnerable adult

Rector's Rambles



I wanted to start by thanking everyone for the warm welcome I have received since I moved here. It is currently November but already the adverts are encouraging us to try and find that perfect Christmas. I suspect that perfect Christmas is not the reality for everyone: for many it is just a month of pressure leading up to the big day, as we try to recapture the excitement that we felt many years ago.

I wonder what helps you find that feeling of excitement? Is it the sound of familiar carols, the smell of pine needles or turkey roasting? Or maybe it's friends and family getting together, or looking at children as they can hardly contain themselves? Maybe excitement is something that you only experience at other times of the year as Christmas fills you with dread.

Whatever Christmas is for you I hope you will be able to join us at one of the many special services we hold around the Benefice. Why not take time out to capture the excitement of that first Christmas and to be reminded of the life changing presence of Emmanuel 'God with us'? (As you would expect, details of all the services are in this magazine)

'the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.'

I suspect the first Christmas was filled with as much apprehension and excitement as Joseph and Mary went on the long journey to Bethlehem and all the events unfolded. Suddenly they had this tiny helpless baby to look after, who would change the world forever. What a responsibility! I don't think their faces would have been as serene and

peaceful as they always seem to be on Christmas cards. How often is our own journey like that? We may appear calm and serene on the outside but so many things are chasing around our brains, all our hopes and our fears. This year, in particular, we are seeing the horror of conflicts around the world and especially in the Middle East. We watch the lives of many innocent families being changed forever. In the carol 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' it reassures us that:

'the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.'

God understands our hopes and our fears. My hope is that wherever you are, you will be able to give Jesus those hopes and fears and find Him journeying with you through Christmas, New Year and beyond. **Chris**

We Love Storkies

Storkies is a friendly and inclusive group run for pre-school children, their parents and carers on Tuesday mornings in term time, from 9.15-11 15 am in St John's Church, Chipping Sodbury. We provide play and craft activities for children 0-4 years. We share food together and enjoy stories, songs and music. There are opportunities to give thanks to God for the blessings in our lives and to pray for each other.



Storkies offers a welcome and hospitality to all who come and we provide the opportunity for parents, grandparents and carers to play and learn with their children and for the children to socialise with their peers. Parents speak with gratitude of the range of activities we provide and the chance to meet with others in an informal setting. We see Storkies as part of the mission of the whole church reaching out into the community. We have 50 families on our register with a weekly attendance of about 20 children. We keep in touch through our Facebook page.



The Group leaders are myself and Sophie but we really need another leader and would be pleased to hear from anyone who would occasionally be able to run the group when circumstances demand and from someone who might enjoy craft work with the children. We are grateful for help from the Mothers Union with the preparation and serving of food, and to Ivor our treasurer and welcomer and to Cherie who helps in so many ways. We all enjoy running Storkies and it is wonderful to see the children grow and change over the time they spend with us.

We were very touched to receive this wonderful testimony to the work of the group from a mother who left us when her child started school in September.

To the Storkies family-

What can I say-----7 years of wonderful memories with both my girls, I don't know how I would have gotten through the long challenging days without your wonderful support. My girls and I have made so many friends and special memories in the walls of the church, It will forever be an incredibly important place in my life. Thank you for all you continue to do for our local community and families. We love you all!

Rev Catherine Coster

Chipping Sodbury Wedding Fair October 2023

Wedding Ministry is supported by the Church of England Weddings Project. The resulting website www.yourchurchwedding.org is an up-to-date website written by the Church of England as a detailed guide to marrying in church. Do look at it for a comprehensive guide.

Our Benefice, Chipping Sodbury, Old Sodbury, Horton and Little Sodbury Churches have been represented at the Chipping Sodbury Wedding Fair regularly, thanks to John Myers' dependability and enthusiasm.

It is important we continue this Ministry. The next fairs are 18th February and 29th September 2024. Michelle Jenkins and Karen Hunter provided all the resources, which have been returned to the office so anyone in the Benefice can feel confident of representing the churches in future. It is a really joyful area of outreach into the community and Kathryn Thompson and myself really enjoyed the event. Thank you to Wayne Smith the organiser. Also thank you to Future Brides whose beautiful models posed in our photograph.



We provided photos of the churches and discussed the beauty of marrying directly in front of God in a church. We can welcome non church attendees, second marriages, and an alternative of prayers for single sex couples. Please get in touch and we can talk about your own personal circumstances. The price is approximately £500/£600 and the couple are not held to a strict timetable unlike some venues such as a Registry Office, which have multiple weddings scheduled in a day. We offer a meeting with our Rector and members of the church months in advance. Also, a rehearsal close to the big day. Many couples were really interested in the topic of a church wedding.

As Christians we have the beautiful Biblical instructions for Christian households in Ephesians 5 and 6. We should seek to encourage Wedding Ministry and the Chipping Sodbury Wedding Fair is a super event for the Benefice to participate in.

Kylie Thomas.

I'm dreaming of a Green Christmas- Some suggestions for an Eco – Friendly Christmas



Advent calendars

Invest in a reusable advent calendar and fill it with your own small handmade truffles, or support overseas farmers by ensuring that your advent calendar, and any Christmas chocolate, is Fair-trade.

Cards and wrapping paper

Look for cards and wrapping paper made from recycled or FSC-certified paper.

Avoid plastic ribbon and tape or foil-backed wrapping paper.

Choose cards that you can recycle (this means no foil or glitter!).

Reuse gift wrap where possible -Use old cards to make gift tags

Use tape sparingly, or not at all so that more of the wrapping paper can be reclaimed or reused.

Gift bags can be made using fabric scraps, or wrapping can be made using comic strips from the paper, old calendars, maps, posters and more. Recycled brown paper has a much lower ecological footprint than Christmas wrapping paper.

Young children might enjoy decorating it.

Opt for plant-based, vegan glitter.

Gifts

Gift an experience - You could buy tickets to shows, concerts or events.

Gift a home-made coupon book.

Make a restaurant reservation or give a gift card.

Look at the materials gifts are made from and keep sustainability in mind. Ensure wood and paper gifts are made from recycled or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified materials.

Avoid single plastics items that can't be recycled and look for things like Organic-certified food and clothing.

Buying second-hand items saves on resources needed to make new products.

Vintage clothes and home furnishings, and refurbished technology can make great sustainable gifts.

Visit your local charity shops for party-wear, Christmas jumpers and recycled gifts

Ask children to pick three toys they no longer play with and donate them to a charity

Avoid toys that need batteries

Many beauty products contain palm oil. Its production causes mass deforestation, air pollution and human rights abuses. Read labels carefully. Avoid products with unsustainable palm oil.

Gift time -just make a 'gift of time gift voucher' and put it in a card for them..



Food and drink

Be realistic about how much food you need and use up leftovers. Instead of cling film, use plastic storage, for leftovers.

Drink more organic wine and rent glasses free from Waitrose for a crowd!

Invite others who might be alone to share food with you.

Decorations

Many Christmas crackers are not recyclable, and the toys inside are often made of plastic. Instead, look out for FSC-certified crackers. Reusable DIY crackers are another great option. Fill them yourself with sustainable options (like chocolates) and personalised festive favours.

Avoid single-use tablecloths and napkins.



Make your own decorations from holly, ivy trails, pine cones, rose hips etc.

If buying a plastic Christmas tree, make sure that you're going to reuse it for at least 10 years. Otherwise, it would be better to buy a living tree from a sustainable forest. If buying a real tree, make sure it's FSC-certified. Live trees are usually locally grown and sold, saving both transportation costs and added air pollution.

Know how to dispose of your tree once the season is over. Check your local council website for their sustainable collection services. Purchasing a potted tree is a good solution as you can reuse it each year! Why not go a step further and rent a Christmas tree? This is where you care for a tree over the festive period and return it to be replanted for use again the next year.

Dress up a living tree in your garden – add lots of bird feeders and fat balls, and some outdoor fairy lights to make a feast for your eyes and the birds. Avoid wreaths adorned with plastic accessories and glittery decorations. These can be harmful for birds and wildlife if hung up outside. Go for a real, fresh wreath made using seasonal, natural foliage and adornments.

Lighting



Use LED lights for house and Christmas tree lighting

Reduce the size of outdoor lighting displays

Outdoor mini-lights will also save energy. A 100-light string uses only 40 watts. If you're buying a new set of lights, compare based on equal 'lighted lengths'. Some higher priced brands have 100 mini-lights for only 8 1/2 feet of length, while some 100 mini-light strings cover up to 40 feet in length. For the most efficient outdoor holiday lighting, consider the new solar LED strings now available.

Turn off tree lights and outdoor house decorative lighting at bedtime

Use eco-friendly candles made from beeswax, soy or other vegetable alternatives – avoid paraffin-based candles.

Choose one change to make this Christmas that will enable you to be more eco aware – be realistic, but challenge yourself too.



Catherine Coster -Eco Church Group

SVB Strollers

For the first time since we started, nearly a year ago, we had to cancel the walk due in September, as storms and torrential rain were forecast and indeed arrived as promised!



The October walk saw six of us set off on a rather indifferent day from Hunter's Hall to walk down through Kingscote village and across undulating fields, typical of the Cotswolds, before taking a path through Kingscote wood. Unfortunately, rain had started, although not too heavy.

Descending from the wood across fields we came through

Horsley playing fields to reach the Community village shop and our stop for coffee and homemade cakes. Just right for the upward journey back!



Leaving Horsley on a bridleway through Horsley wood we crossed the valley bottom and started the steady climb up through Fishponds Wood to reach a series of fields growing what looked like giant radishes. There were lots of pheasants about here which Willow delighted in chasing. Reaching the



road back through Kingscote village we arrived back at Hunters' Hall, for a well-deserved lunch.

Do come and join our friendly group on the third Wednesday of the month. Details on the web site.

Christingle Crib Service



Christingle with Crib Service

Christmas Eve 2023

Join us at St John's Chipping Sodbury

3pm and 4:30pm

We look forward to welcoming you again on Christmas Eve as we celebrate our Christingle and Crib Service together, at 3pm and 4:30pm. So many people told us how much they'd missed

these services during the pandemic and we were delighted to be able to hold them again last year.

What happens at this service? We involve our guests (both young people and adults) in telling the story of the birth of Jesus, but don't worry, you can simply sit and enjoy the performances. As well as the story telling, there are songs and a time of reflection, as we think about what the Christingle represents.

In 2022, over 2,000 Christingle services were held across the country, and £700,000 was raised to support vulnerable children through the Children's Society. Hopefully, the figure will increase this year as we work together to raise more vital funds.

Paul Jones-Williams

Shepherd's Hut Fundraising afternoon - News from Revd David Powe's exciting new venture.

For those of you who kindly attended the fundraising afternoon on Saturday 14th October. what a great time was had by all.

Thank you so much for everyone's generosity and positive comments. Over £700 was raised after expenses, which is an enormous amount of money. £500 has gone towards the structure of the prayer reflection and peace garden which is in a separate Shepherd's Hut account. The other £200 will be towards ongoing running expenses, especially as it will be getting a lot colder shortly.

Many enjoyed winning in the 'really useful raffle' whilst others munched their way through scones and egg & bacon flan.

The aim of the Shepherd's Hut is to provide a safe space for those who are interested in Christianity but not quite ready for church. By the time you read this article we will have had two meetings in November for those people and I will report back at a later date.

The next fundraiser will be Saturday 23rd December for Cocoa and Carols, followed by burgers and hotdogs. Look out for further details closer to the time.

Finally, if you wish to receive a prayer letter about the Shepherd's Hut or would like to make a contribution, please email Thomas Powe, thomas.powe@bishoproadschool.co.uk, who is our co-ordinator.

Thank you all so very much for your prayers, good wishes and monetary support.

David Powe



Photo by Annie Spratt -Unsplash

Ian Yemm - Canon at Llandaff Cathedral

Many of you will remember Ian who led services around the benefice when he was a lay reader with us some years ago. Now Ian has been appointed as the next Canon Precentor of Llandaff Cathedral.



Father Ian is currently a Vicar in the Garth Ministry area. He will bring a wealth of musical experience to the cathedral, including as a professional singer, with, among others, the Welsh National Opera. For eight years he was Coordinating Chaplain at the University of the West of England. In addition to his theological and musical training, he has a Master's degree in Christian Spirituality.

The Dean, Father Richard Peers, welcomes Father Ian's appointment saying:

"Music is at the heart of our mission as a cathedral and Ian's musical expertise will further enhance our music department. Ian also brings a deeply prayerful model of priesthood to the cathedral and understands the role of the canons as being a prayerful community of priests at the heart of the diocese. We look forward to welcoming Ian and his husband Bernhard to Cathedral Green as part of our community."

Fr. Ian responded:

"There is an inspiring culture of openness and hospitality at the cathedral and I feel hugely privileged to be invited by the Dean to take up this special role. Music underpins our common life and worship and I am excited to be joining a dynamic team, nurturing the gifts we enjoy, and furthering our musical reach to younger generations."

We hope that Ian will be installed early in the new year to begin his role here.

Linda Hurst

Spam/Phishing Emails

I don't know about you, but I have received an increase in suspect emails lately, and I think someone received one purporting to be from me. The latest one has come from various friends' emails and has the title 'Catch up.' It says something like 'Hi, I hope you are well, not sure if you got my last email but do you order from Amazon, please let me know.' **Chris**

Bishop Robert's Christmas Message

Saint John proclaims that the light, the word of God in Jesus Christ, shines in the darkness.

I don't know about you, but as I look at our world at the end of this year in Israel and Gaza, in the Ukraine, in the lives of so many struggling in this and all nations, the darkness seems often very dark indeed. But John goes on, 'the darkness did not overcome it'. This is the good news that we tell in our Advent preparation and Christmas celebration as we join with John the Baptist in bearing witness to the light, the baby born in the stable to live among us, who will open his arms on the cross, face darkness and death, and live! We have seen how St John goes on to say God's glory, 'full of grace and truth'.

"John goes on, 'the darkness did not overcome it!'"

This is why I pray that even as we face the darkness of this winter, we may celebrate with every fibre of our being and all the resources we can muster the wonder of this season. Not setting aside all that troubles

us but bringing it to the heart of what we do so the world may know that in Jesus Christ it is love that will win, and that this is our greatest and surest hope.

May God grant you joy in your celebration as we tell again the good news of the Word made flesh, of the birth of the promised one who brings life to us all.



Copy Deadline Please send all copy for the Feb-Mar issue to the Editor or the church office by

January 19

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Winter scene by Takahiro Taguchi - Unsplash

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The Children's Society Box Collection January 2024

Well that year has certainly flown by quickly!!!

This is a gentle reminder that The Children's Society Box Collection will take place in January.

As many of us are still not dealing with cash, I am more than happy to accept cheques made payable to The Children's Society. Of course if you have boxes, I am more than happy to open them also.

If your circumstances have changed and you are no longer able to gift aid your donation or you are now able to, please let me know, and I can amend your records.

I look forward to meeting up with those of you that I haven't seen for a year!

Hilary Hurley Local Secretary for The Children's Society

A Last Beatitude

And blessed are the ones we overlook;
The faithful servers on the coffee rota,
The ones who hold no candle, bell or book
But keep the books and tally up the quota,
The gentle souls who come to 'do the flowers',
The quiet ones who organise the fete,
Church sitters who give up their weekday hours,
Doorkeepers who may open heaven's gate.
God knows the depths that often go unspoken
Amongst the shy, the quiet, and the kind,
Or the slow healing of a heart long broken,
Placing each flower so for a year's mind.
Invisible on earth, without voice,
In heaven their angels glory and rejoice.

A Children's Society prayer

Generous God,

You have entrusted the world to us and made us stewards over your creation and all who live in it.

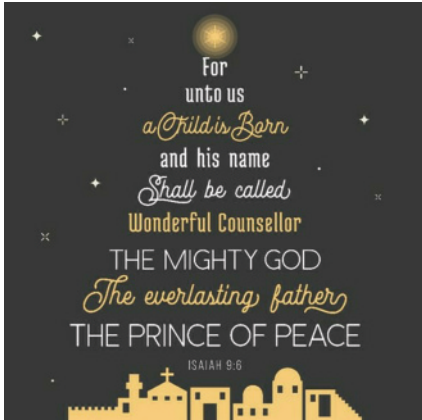
We thank you for the gift of children and young people. Help us to see all children and young people as precious and loved by you.

May we be faithful stewards of the resources you have given us so that we can use them to your glory and to building a better world.

Inspire in us your vision of a world where every child is cherished, protected, and given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

We pray this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

This poem was sent to Linda Hurst by a visitor to St Adeline's, Martin Stanisstreet, who thought of this poem by Malcolm Guite, from his book "Sounding the sonnets – Seventy Sonnets for the Christian Year", when he saw the ladies working faithfully to prepare the church for Harvest festival.



*We wish you every Blessing for Christmas
and the New Year*

Below are the details of all our Christmas services in our Benefice. Everyone is very welcome to any of our services, and we would love you to come and join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Chris Butler

Rector

Jane Jones-Williams

Associate Priest

If you are unable to get to church and would like to receive Holy Communion at home this Christmas please contact one of the Clergy, or the church office and we will arrange to bring Communion to you.

Sunday 17 th	11.15am	Carol Service	Horton
	5.00pm	Carol Service	Old Sodbury
	7.00pm	Carol Service	Chipping Sodbury
Friday 22 nd	6.00pm	Carol Service	Little Sodbury
	3.00pm	Crib Service	Old Sodbury
Sunday 24 th Christmas Eve	3.00pm	Christingle	Chipping Sodbury
	4.30pm	Christingle	Chipping Sodbury
	6.00pm	First Communion of Christmas	Horton
	11.30pm	First Communion of Christmas	Chipping Sodbury
Monday 25 th Christmas Day	9.30am	Christmas Communion	Chipping Sodbury
	11.15am	Christmas Communion	Old Sodbury

A Christmas Blessing

*The wisdom of the wonderful counsellor guide you,
the angels of the Lord of hosts guard you,
the strength of the mighty God uphold you,
the love of the everlasting Father enfold you,
the joy of the Prince of peace be yours,
this Christmastide and for ever.*

Ian Cowie

Regular Church's Service Pattern

	St John The Baptist, Chipping Sodbury	St John the Baptist, Old Sodbury	St James the Elder, Horton	St Adeline, Little Sodbury
Service Time	09:30am	11:15am	11:15am	6.00pm
1st Sunday	St John's Praise Child friendly informal service	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Evensong
2nd Sunday	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	Holy Communion	Evensong
3rd Sunday	All-Age Communion	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Evensong
4th Sunday	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
10:00 am every Thursday Holy Communion at St John's, Chipping Sodbury Church Centre				
8:30 am Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday Morning Prayer via Zoom. Details from Jane				
10:30 am on any 5th Sunday Holy Communion in one of the four churches				

Chipping Sodbury Music Society

Tuesday 6th February 2024

7:30 pm Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

Valencia Baryton Project

The Valencia Baryton Project is a unique trio formed by colleagues from the opera orchestra of



Valencia, Spain and Montpellier, France. At the heart of the ensemble is the traditional baryton trio -baryton, viola and violoncello, for which Haydn wrote 123 works of outstanding beauty during his time as the court composer for Prince Esterhazy of Austria

Yate Choral Society

Presents



Carols



and Songs for Christmas

Tuesday 12th December

Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

7:30pm

Conductor Carol Cook

Accompanist

Diana Williams

More audience participation this year

Tickets £10.00 Tel 01454 313907

Also Chipping Sodbury Tourist Centre and Choir Members

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.



Revd. Steve Abbott
abbott.steve@btinternet.com



Revd. Pauline Green
pauline.green936@gmail.com



Revd. Canon Rob Axford
rob@robaxford.plus.com



Revd. Chris Mason
revd.chris.mason@gmail.com



Revd. Christine Axford
chris@robaxford.plus.com



Revd. David Powe
[01454 777745](tel:01454777745)



Revd. Canon Catherine Coster
catherinecoster3@gmail.com



Revd. Colin Lunt
colin@lunt.co.uk



Mike Swain (Reader)
swain189@btinternet.com



Revd. Sue Gent
revsuegent@gmail.com

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