



SVB Outlook

February - March 2024



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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Rector's Rambles

Our annual journey through Lent is beginning and at the end we have the great celebration of Easter.

Do think about signing up for one of our Lent groups, or maybe take up your own Lent challenge. Our groups this year are based around the film *The King's Speech* (the one with Colin Firth not King Charles III) to help us think about finding our own voice (details on page 14).

The other part of Lent is preparing ourselves for Holy Week where we will think about the last week of Jesus' life and try and understand some of his journey; from the triumphant entry to Jerusalem, the Passover meal, the emotions in Gethsemane, the depths of betrayal, and the pain of the crucifixion before the miracle of Easter Sunday

It is this journey through the week that is so important to understanding our faith and our God. Some of the services may not be easy, especially those on Good Friday, when we are led into thinking about, and maybe sharing, some of the pain and betrayal of Jesus (obviously just a small echo), but how can we truly celebrate Easter Sunday unless we have shared some of those depths? So please do come and join us when you can – full details of the services are in the magazine on page 6.

Chris



“Our annual journey through Lent is beginning and at the end we have the great celebration of Easter.”

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is on 14th February this year. This is the traditional start of Lent, the season leading up to Easter. In the Benefice there will be two communion services which will include the opportunity for ashing for those who wish to do so. This is an ancient tradition when ashes are made out of last year's palm crosses and the sign of the cross is made on people's foreheads. It is a symbolic reminder of our need for God's forgiveness in our lives.

How the gospel makes sense of life

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God – the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who, as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord...

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile

ROMANS 1:1–4, 16

In the past, I've known what it feels like to be 'ashamed' of my faith. But studying Romans has lifted off some fear and increased my confidence. Here's why:

First, the gospel is a rooted story: 'promised beforehand... in the Holy Scriptures.'

Throughout Romans, Paul frequently references the Old Testament. I find this deeply reassuring. The gospel is not a new philosophy that a brilliant mind made up. Its plot line traces all the way back to Abraham. God called

him into a covenant relationship that might restore blessing to all creation. Where Israel failed, the Messiah succeeded and now calls his people to fulfil this global mandate. The gospel story unlocks the larger story.

This increases my confidence for the same reason being roped to a big boulder reassures me when climbing. It means I'm connected to something much bigger than myself. In Christ, we're joined to a great story that stretches back to creation and forward into eternity. Our fragile lives are anchored to a faithful God who won't break his promises. Can you feel the tug of the rope?

Second, the gospel is a relevant story: 'salvation for everyone who believes.'

The gospel is relevant to every inch of life here and now. Jesus was crucified to end the curses of this old creation, and raised to life to inaugurate a new creation. His decisive victory is good news at every level.

The gospel confronts those who claim to rule the world and fix our problems. In Paul's day, this meant Caesar and the Empire. Today it includes expansionist states, Big Tech, and political ideologies. The gospel announces that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar or Google. That's why Romans relates the gospel to every sphere of life, including sexuality (Romans 1), the environment (Romans 8), revenge culture



(Romans 12), state authority (Romans 13), church relations (Romans 14), and global mission (Romans 15). Nothing sits outside the remit of the gospel.

We may imagine the gospel to be a small, isolated truth. But when we really understand it, we encounter the ‘power of God’ that brings transformation to every sphere of life. No amount of technology, science, education, or activism can fix what’s broken with our world, and you and me therein. Only Jesus Christ can do that.

The gospel is more *rooted* and *relevant* than we’ve dared to imagine. There’s nothing to be ashamed of. In our interactions with friends, families, neighbours, and colleagues this week, let’s live it out and share it on.

What’s one way you’ve seen the gospel make a difference in your context?

Dr Andrew Ollerton (Author of Romans: A letter that makes sense of life)

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

Bishop Rachel’s New Year Message

In these early days of 2024, I have enjoyed the beauty of creation whilst also being aware of the devastation of wind and earthquake, and storm and flood, not least within our diocese. Indeed, I’m sure that each of us has begun this year acutely aware of the pain and turbulence in our world, whether that be locally and in our own lives, or whether it is the horror of what is going on in Gaza and across Israel and Palestine, or in Ukraine and elsewhere.

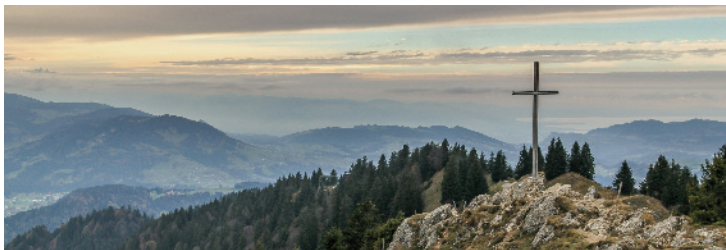
Last week, I was struck by someone saying how they were beginning this new year feeling overwhelmed by everything in the news.

Then in contrast that same day, someone else expressed how overwhelmed they were by their relentless ‘to do’ list and the ever-growing pile of administration as 2024 began. She said that she wished she had a New Year magic wand.

Well, there is no magic wand to remove the world’s pain and our engagement with it; and there is no magic wand to wave over all that needs to be done, however mundane; but there is the possibility within it all of lifting our eyes to the mystery of God so that we see differently. With my thanks and prayers as you journey into 2024.



Holy Week and Easter Services



Palm Sunday 24th March

10.30am Benefice Communion St John's, Old Sodbury

Maundy Thursday 28th March

7.00pm Holy Communion St John's, Chipping Sodbury

Good Friday 29th March

T.B.A. Walk of Witness

3.00pm Meditation Service

Easter Eve 30th March

To Be Confirmed

Easter Sunday 31st March

T.B.A. Easter Dawn Service St John's, Old Sodbury

9.30am Easter Holy Communion St John's, Chipping Sodbury

11.15am Easter Holy Communion St John's, Old Sodbury

11.15am Easter Holy Communion St James', Horton

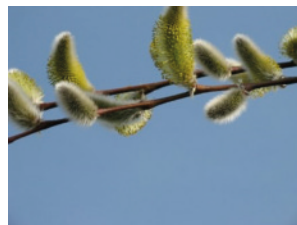
6.00pm Easter BCP Holy Communion St Adeline's, Little Sodbury

Some Services and times are still to be confirmed and will be announced through the usual communication channels

Spring Green

These monthly tips are from A Rocha's 2024 Easy Eco Tips Calendar.

Small actions can lead to significant impact, and the Eco Tips Calendar focuses on easy-to-implement tips, ensuring that everyone can contribute, regardless of their lifestyle or schedule.



As well as running the Eco Church project, and their work on land management, A Rocha UK also supports individuals and families. The Wild Christian programme provides information and resources for all who try to live sustainably.

February



Go green for Lent. The weeks leading up to Easter are a time for self-reflection, repentance and emulating Jesus' obedience to the Father.

Is there something you'd like to give up or take up during Lent that will enable you to reflect on God, contribute to our planet's well-being and enhance others' lives through sustainable, eco-friendly living?

Explore some of these changes at

<https://arocha.org.uk/go-green-for-lent/>

March

Celebrate Spring. Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the season – breathe in the fragrance of blossoms, observe budding catkins, note different bird songs, spot footprints, or use the PlantNet app to identify spring flowers.

Nature can boost our happiness, so spend time in your garden, on your balcony, and in local green spaces.

Dedicate quality time to appreciate creation's beauty, and thank God for the hope that spring can bring.



You can download the Easy Eco Tips Calendar for yourself at:

<https://arocha.org.uk/easy-eco-tips-2024-calendar/> and, for more practical ways to enjoy, nurture and defend nature, you can sign up to A Rocha UK's Wild Christian email: <https://arocha.org.uk/wild-christian>

Chris Axford

Soup Supper.

On the 6th of December we held a Pay as you Feel Soup Supper

Nearly 40 of us gathered in the Centre for an evening of fun, food and fellowship; it was a lovely occasion with much laughter. Special thanks to Tina for making all the soup, Brenda for bringing all the bread, and Trish for providing mince pies and everybody who helped to clear away. You can see by the empty tables that all the food was enjoyed! I forgot to take a photo early enough to show any soup!!!

Michelle



A Return!

Remember This?



After a number of years resting, and an annual pleading by the residents and local businesses, the time is right to hold the Crib Festival at St John's Church, Chipping Sodbury again.

The plans are in their infancy and if you'd like to be part of the team organising this exciting event, please do get in touch. We'll be holding the festival at the end of November 2024

For more information.

Contact Paul Jones-Williams, M: 07980 240103 or E: pjandjj81@outlook.com

SVB Strollers



November saw the Strollers group heading for the Westonbirt area and having parked at the Hare and Hounds we set off across fields, which were all part of the estate and now mainly used to keep horses, possible polo ponies with the playing arena close by. The footpath across these field follows outside the boundary of the Arboretum but still with good view in! Some of the colours were still vibrant even well into November. We then entered the Arboretum, dropping down the hill and into the café for coffee.

Due to the heavy rain previously and a flooded footpath at the far end we had a slight detour to get out of the Arboretum before crossing the road and heading through Westonbirt village and then into the grounds of Westonbirt school, where of course the original arboretum started. As you can see we had a lovely sunny day, ending back at the pub for lunch.



Despite our next walk being on December 20th we escaped the hectic Christmas preparations and set off for Frampton on Severn. Travelling through the village and across a field on the old church path, through what must have once been a magnificent avenue of Chestnuts. We went past the church and crossed the canal at Slad. As you can see we were again blessed with a dry if brisk day, all well wrapped up! An easy walk took us back

along the canal and up to Saul junction for coffee. Where we read that the junction was where the Stroudwater canal met the Sharpness canal and the plans to try and reconnect them. Then back to Frampton for our customary lunch.

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

A Message from Bishop Robert.

I love maps. On a day-to-day basis, GPS is great for getting me from point A to point B in the shortest time, but I love maps, especially if I am going somewhere new. With a map, I have to think about the journey – where I am beginning, how I want to travel, what I might see and learn along the way, as well as where I hope to arrive.

As I think about the journey, I need also to plan. Some of this is practical. Having an electric car, I need to think where I might need to stop and charge the battery, and what I might do while I wait. If I am going up a mountain, not that it happens often, do I have snow chains or socks? If it's going to be a long journey, do I have some snacks to keep me going (very important!)? Other parts of my preparation are more about what I might see on the way, who I might meet, not to mention who I might travel with.



Jesus' ministry, of course, is marked by a number of journeys. As an infant from Bethlehem to the temple and to exile; as a child back to Nazareth and then the temple; in his ministry around Galilee and beyond; eventually to Jerusalem and around the city to the High Priest, Pilate, Herod; to the cross; and to the empty tomb of the resurrection. We are invited to join in this journey. We have already begun keeping Advent and Christmas in the Epiphany but now our eyes turn with Jesus to Jerusalem and the journey we will keep in Lent. It begins in just under a month with Ash Wednesday on 14 February, as we walk the way of the cross with its destination of resurrection life.

Like all journeys, to do it well we need to prepare, to find our place on the map, to know how we are beginning and what we need to do along the way. To do it well asks of us some honesty about the state of our lives, our life of prayer, our care for the planet and its people, not least those on the margins of society. That will help us reflect on the markers we should look for on the way, to study the route, and know what we might take up and give up. We look for the things that will give us the courage to make the journey with Jesus, to stay the course, arrive at our destination and find life renewed in the resurrection dawn.

The good news is that we are not quite yet at the start of the journey. There are still four weeks for preparation before we set off, and that gives us the time we need to think and plan for how we will live it. Even better, we are not without help in making those plans. Do look out for what is being organised locally in your parish, community or deanery, a study group, an opportunity for corporate prayer, to go alongside whatever personal discipline is right for you – perhaps a daily time of prayer and reflection, or abstaining from some food or activity. You might join in a national campaign, for example with Christian Aid who are focusing on climate justice, details on the Christian Aid website.

Whatever is right for you, it's good to start to think now, so when it comes, we begin Lent well and keep the journey – finding life not just for ourselves, but for our world and its people, a life renewed.

+Robert

Book Sale

Join us for our regular book sale between 10am and 12 noon on Saturday 16th March and Saturday 11th May at the Church Centre. Enjoy delicious cake and hot drinks while you browse.

Thank you to everyone who supported the book sale in November. It was great to see so many people browsing the books and enjoying tea, coffee and cake. We have a wide selection of books - fiction, biography, nonfiction and children's books. We are delighted that this will now be a regular event in the Benefice, so please do join us at the Church Centre for future book sales as detailed above .

Michelle



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Mr Bates vs The Post Office:

The Christian view

'We're here because the Post Office told every single one of us sat here today, told us over and over, "You're the only one." And that was wrong. That was a lie, actually. Because... Well, look at us. Here we all are. And from this moment forwards, none of us will be the only one ever again.'

It's hard to believe that ITV's *Mr Bates vs The Post Office* isn't just a true story, but one still being played out. The horrendous injustice suffered by hundreds of sub-postmasters caught up in this scandal, including the one local to me, has been described as the biggest miscarriage of justice in British legal history, with enormous human cost.



Horizon, the computer system rolled out to each post office, incorrectly showed huge account shortfalls. These were then blamed on sub-postmasters, who were told that nobody else had had any issues, that they were the only one. Except they weren't – and the Post Office knew this. How frightening to believe that, facing a sudden debt of thousands of pounds and the possibility of bankruptcy or prison, you were utterly alone.

Alan Bates emerges from this story as an heroic figure. An unassuming but tenacious man, he led the fight against the Post Office for over 20 years, a David against a seemingly all-powerful corporate Goliath. Unwilling to stand by and watch others endure injustice, he stood up for, and stood by, those who had no fight left in themselves.

To show them they were not alone.

The outcry against the Post Office is welcome. We all – individually and collectively – cry out for justice. We want to live in a society where justice is done.

As Christians, this should be close to our hearts. The Lord is a God of justice. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne (Psalm 89:14). And Christ stands by those who suffer. He doesn't look on from a distance, but as one who, at the cross, has experienced it himself.

It's through his people, reflecting his character and his priorities, that he reveals this.

We may never have to battle like Alan Bates and the sub-postmasters. But, each of us will, in some way, be called to be a mouthpiece for truth and justice in our workplaces, homes, or community. In doing so, we show what God is like. And we show those facing unfairness and injustice that they're not alone. We are there with them. God is there with them.

Jules Gadsby (Church Engagement Specialist, LICC)

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

Lent Groups

This year we are using the film “The King’s Speech” as the basis for our Lent groups. Each week we will be using extracts from the film and Bible passages to look at things that help and hinder us finding ‘our voice’. All groups will start week commencing **19th February**:

Monday 2pm (if sufficient interest) location to be decided later

Wednesday 7pm Chipping Sodbury Church Centre

Wednesday 7pm Zoom Group

Please sign the lists in church or email sodburyvalebenefice@gmail.com. If you would like to join online, please include your Email address. This will give us some ideas of the numbers we might expect.

The book we will be using is called “Finding a Voice” by Hilary Brand and is £5.99 to buy although we can get 5% discount. Please also indicate on the form if you would like us to get you a copy.

If you get a chance to watch or rewatch the film that would be helpful.

Chris

Advance notice – Date for your diaries:

On 14th April we will be holding a Benefice united service and celebration day in Horton Village Hall where we will take time to share all the positive things that are happening in our Benefice. Further details will follow but please put the date in your diaries.



Copy Deadline: March 15

Please send all copy for the **Apr - May** issue to the Editor or the church office by this date.

Front Cover:

Daffodils in a churchyard

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



Chipping Sodbury Music Society

Tuesday 12th March 2024

7:30 pm Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

Mithras Trio

Violin, cello and piano

Current BBC New Generation Artists, the Mithras

Trio, recently lauded in the Arts Desk for their "exhilarating, highly toned performance", perform Beethoven's monumental Archduke Trio alongside trios by French composers.



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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*This magazine is brought to you **Free** by the four churches of the Sodbury Vale Benefice. If you would like to make a small donation towards printing costs which are 65p a copy that would be most welcome. **Thank you.***

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