



SVB Outlook

April - May 2024



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

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A word from Jane

I was going to point out the exciting news in this copy of Outlook, of the forthcoming Confirmation service in Chipping Sodbury on 12 May with Bishop Robert, and the visit to the Diocese by the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Reverend Justin Welby, at the end of May.

Instead, I wonder if you've seen the rabbit in the Church Centre garden in Chipping Sodbury. What, do you ask, has a rabbit got to do with these major events? Well, maybe nothing, but we see the rabbit so often these days, we've started to greet it and then it got me thinking about the environment which is clearly attracting it. The beautiful garden which Eirwen tends, the churchyard across the road, the work of the Eco Church team and strangely, the shelter provided by the cars in the neighbouring garage. The cars.... gasps from passersby as the rabbit attempts to cross the main road to find alternative treats. 'Look, a rabbit!' But the rabbit seems to realise the danger of the oncoming traffic and darts back until it's safe to cross.

"The rabbit has a lot to do with the major events reported in this edition."



Rabbit's footprints

"Nature can boost our happiness and dedicating quality time appreciating creation's beauty and thanking God."

In the last edition of Outlook, Chris Axford's article with Easy Eco Tips urged us to celebrate Spring and immerse ourselves in the sights and sounds of the season. That nature can boost our happiness and to dedicate quality time appreciating creation's beauty and thanking God. Seeing the rabbit certainly makes us smile as it's such an unexpected place to see it, and then we look further at the beauty of the plants and flowers there. We can definitely tick the box on the Eco Church questionnaire, that the land is managed for the encouragement of native wildlife!

So, the rabbit has a lot to do with the major events reported in this edition. The Confirmations, the Archbishop's visit and the fact there are great things going on as we continue the work of EcoChurch. *Also, Chris has more Eco Tips for us this time.* If you would like more information, or to help the small team, please get in touch with Rev Chris Axford, whose details are on the back cover.

Jane

Save the Parish

Have you heard of the Save the Parish (STP) campaign?

This national campaign sees the parish as the heart of the Church of England and its goal is to return clergy, financial security and local strength to the parishes, all of which have been in decline over the last forty years.



Its argument

is that the parish system is the best means of evangelism and so the campaign seeks to encourage the redirection of a greater proportion of the churches' money and resources to the parish system and to reverse the centralisation of power and resources.

Among the recommendations the campaign suggests (some of which are less relevant to the Diocese of Gloucester than others) are:

1. Ban on linking the provision of clergy to the payment of parish quotas in an individual benefice. The parishes least likely to be able to pay are often the poorest and should not be the first to lose their parish priest.
2. A church commission to be established to see how the long term funding of church repair and maintenance can be supported.
3. The parishes to receive all the fees for occasional offices regardless of where they take place. Currently the diocese receives 100% of the fees for non-church cemetery and crematorium fees.



Whether you agree or disagree with the campaign there are lots of interesting facts and figures contained in its website - www.savetheparish.com. Please have a look if you can.

This article was submitted to Outlook earlier but was held back so that the

Gloucester Diocese could reply to the points raised. Their reply is printed opposite.

Christine Stephens



Save the Parish - Diocesan Response

We want to thank a parishioner from the Sodbury Vale Benefice who contacted us to ask about the Save The Parish (STP) campaign and find out how it applies to the Diocese of Gloucester.

We spoke to Robert McNeil-Wilson, who sits on General Synod and is a member of Bishop's Council in our Diocese, as well as being churchwarden of Saint Peter's in Willersey and a member of the Save the Parish campaign, to get his views.

Robert said, "Save The Parish exists to ensure that the parish system – its people, clergy and churches – are recognised as the bedrock of our Church by its leadership and to ensure it gets the resources and support it needs to flourish, now and for future generations."



Cathedral's Great East Window

These STP messages and values underpin all that we do and are committed to here in the Diocese of Gloucester.

Robert continues, "Looking at how this applies in our diocese, in my experience, our diocese, Bishops and diocesan secretary are the most parish-oriented in the country. We're doing some great things within the Diocese of Gloucester to address the gap between the money we have and the money we need – and rolling them out nationally. Many of them happen to be specific Save The Parish aims, including in the past setting up the Parish Giving Scheme to optimise donations, and more recently managing glebe land and funds to get the best returns on our Diocesan Stipend Fund [restricted funds to pay for priests] and innovative developments to create endowments for parishes ... but the point is that we shouldn't have to.

"Historically, money to pay for clergy used to come from the national Church, but this is no longer the case. Clergy stipends are now funded by donations from congregations and Boards of Finance (dioceses) do not have enough money available to contribute sufficiently to the cost of clergy."

Robert and Benjamin Preece Smith, the Diocese of Gloucester's Diocesan Secretary, are taking a proactive approach to rebalance resources in favour of stipendiary ministry and churches. They are looking to ask our Diocesan Synod to call on General Synod for the release of £2.4bn of Church Commissioners (national) funds to support, maintain and grow nationwide parish ministry.

In our diocese we also focus on ensuring that the most deprived communities have the right parish ministry.

So what of the suggestion that there is a lot of spend at diocesan level (known as central services) which needs tackling? Robert explains, “While challenging spend at a diocesan level is important, it won’t create a large enough sum of money to make a difference to local parish funding.”

The Diocese employs around 40 full time equivalent staff who are all committed and passionate about supporting all 400 of our licensed clergy (of which 140 are stipendiary or paid posts) and volunteers such as churchwardens, treasurers, PCC members and many more who give their time to serve the Church. The money comes from a small proportion of Parish Share which provides worshipping communities with support services, such as safeguarding expertise, legal advice, buildings advice, and training. The focus is on parishes and ensuring that they are equipped to serve their communities.

The cost of central staff is also heavily offset with income generation.

One of the unique strengths of the Church of England is that it is known for having a Christian presence in every community, with a church as a base. Many people think that church authorities or the government pay for the upkeep of our church buildings, but in reality, it is up to each parish to raise the money for repairs and maintenance themselves.

Over the last few years, every deanery in the Diocese of Gloucester has been creating their own strategic plan to shape their ministry for the challenges and opportunities of the next 10 years and beyond. This vision has been thought out locally and is both locally owned and locally led.

A key part of these plans has been the upkeep of our church buildings, which aligns with the goals of Save the Parish. We are committed to the long-term sustainability of our church buildings as an essential element of our public ministry, part of our valued heritage and a base for worshipping communities to meet.



Cathedral
Gargoyle

Our Gloucester Diocesan Secretary, Benjamin Preece Smith, is leading a project to provide support and guidance in the maintenance and preservation of our buildings, alongside our parish and Deanery representatives.

If you have any more questions about how the Diocese of Gloucester is supporting parishes and what our plans are to ensure the thriving of the local church, please do send them to Katherine Clamp on kclamp@glosdioc.org.uk



Bishop Rachel



Bishop Robert

God turns up at the BAFTAs

The decline of the new atheism movement has shown we still all have a God-shaped hole.

‘I believe in God.’

Those words made me sit up and listen when they were uttered by Samantha Morton during her acceptance speech for the BAFTA fellowship award on Sunday night. Morton, who has starred in blockbusters such as *Minority Report* and *Fantastic Beasts*, also directed the 2009 movie *Unloved*, which she said was about ‘faith, hope and forgiveness’.

Morton is a committed Catholic. And she’s not the only celebrity who has been willing to share their faith from a public platform.

A few years ago, Hollywood actor Chris Pratt shared his Christian faith, saying ‘God is real. God loves you. God wants the best for you. Believe that.’ Likewise England football player Bukayo Saka frequently gives thanks to God in post-match press conferences.

This increasing willingness among public figures to talk about their faith marks a change in the spiritual atmosphere in recent years. During the height of so-called ‘New Atheism’ in the mid-2000s, it was rather unfashionable to admit you believed in God. Bestselling atheists like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens were pouring scorn on anybody who admitted to having a faith.

So, what’s changed?

In part, the new atheist movement itself became over-zealous and shouty. But, it also turns out you can’t eradicate the religious impulse. Indeed, even in our very secular age, I’m surprised by how many thinking people are converting to Christian faith.

One of them is Paul Kingsnorth, a celebrated writer and poet, who says that the search for the divine ‘has always been at the centre of every culture... except this one... which has decided to pretend that’s not real for a bit.’

Whether God gets celebrity endorsements or not, I think the tide is turning in our post-Christian culture. Think about your everyday life – you might just be surprised where God turns up next.

Justin Brierley

Justin Brierley is a broadcaster, speaker, and author. Find him at www.justinbrierley.com.

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



Chipping Sodbury Music Society

Tuesday 7th May 2024

7:30 pm Chipping Sodbury Town Hall
CarmenCo - A Pocket Opera



CarmenCo trio was formed when international solo guitarist Francisco Correa joined the Andrew-Massey Duo. A programme of gorgeous Spanish inspired music for guitars, flute and voice.

Quiet day and celebration service

Horton Village Hall - 13th and 14th April

On Sunday 14th April we are having a United Benefice Service in Horton village hall. I am hoping many of you will be able to come. It will be at 10.30 and will be a time to celebrate all that is happening in our parishes and benefice and afterwards share coffee and cake.

On Saturday 13th I would like to offer a quiet morning at the same location. If you haven't been to one before, it is a time to come away from our ordinary lives and spend time in God's presence. The usual format is a couple of short talks and large periods of silence, when you can choose to go for a walk, sit in silence or take advantage of some of the craft material which will be provided. I am hoping this will become a regular thing so do put the date in your diary and come along. **Chris B**

Wedding Fayre

A couple of weekends ago I joined Kylie and Kathryn at the Chipping Sodbury Wedding Fayre. It was great to meet so many brides-to-be. The main topic of conversation was that they were not only allowed but encouraged to consider getting married in their local Anglican Church. It really brought home that many people do not understand what the term 'Parish' means anymore, they seem to think it meant it was only for the members of the Church rather than anyone living in the parish. As the Church of England, we clearly have some work to do getting that message out there! **Chris B**



Visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Gloucester Diocese

On the weekend of 24th -26th May Archbishop Justin is visiting our Diocese. Although he is not coming to our Benefice, there is a service at the Cathedral at 3pm on Sunday 26th May (Trinity Sunday).

I am waiting for more details but hoping many of us will be able to join him for that service.

Copy Deadline: May 15

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

Front Cover:

Spring flowers in Ridgewood

Message from Bishop Robert

Tucked away in the midst of the grand drama of Holy Week, full of dramatic events – the triumphal entry, the last supper, arrest, trial and crucifixion – is one much quieter, deeply human moment, almost tucked away in the garden of Gethsemane.



After he has shared the supper with his disciples, Jesus waits for the soldiers. He waits for betrayal and for arrest. Jesus takes himself a little distance from his friends, throws himself to the ground and three times he prays 'let this cup pass from me' adding but 'let your will be done'. (Matthew 26:36– 46) In this moment, we see in agony and obedience, the beauty of the humanity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Word made flesh.

The reality of the cross was starkly plain before Jesus' eyes. Yes, there was the hope of resurrection overcoming death, but nonetheless, it demanded of the fully human Jesus the courage not to run away, to stay and say 'My Father, your will be done'.

We, of course, know the story, we know that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and his burial is not the end but rather the great saving work that brings him and us to Easter morning, to the stone rolled back and the dawning light of the resurrection. And yet still, as disciples of Jesus Christ, courage is demanded of us too. It is very tempting to ask that the cup might also pass us by, that we might jump straight from the Last Supper to resurrection. However, to discover anew the true depth of the reality of the new life Jesus promises, requires of us the willingness to say 'yes', as Jesus says 'yes', to the cross. To say 'yes' to walking with Jesus through the darkness, to plumb the depths of despair and even abandonment, that the true majesty of the resurrection with its overwhelming power, might be made ours also.

This invitation was extended to us again this Palm Sunday to 'go with Jesus in faith and love so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life'. This is an invitation extended to us in the context of an anxious and fearful world, a world of war and strife, of suffering and hunger, the context of our own struggles of loss and pain. It is not an invitation to walk away from or avoid the reality of this pain and separation, but rather to take this with us on our journey and to discover again that even amid the darkness is the promise of life. The resurrection is our sure ground for hope and we know that darkness will turn to light.

The invitation to walk with Jesus requires our courage. The courage to hold firm to the sure promise of hope. This knowledge wonderfully gives us the courage to make our 'yes' with Jesus... to say, 'your will be done'.

I hope Holy Week was a blessing to you, that entering the way of the cross with Jesus, you may find life indeed.

+Robert

Confirmation classes

You may remember we mentioned we were looking to run Confirmation classes in the coming months. I'm pleased to let you know, we have four candidates, one of whom will also be Baptised at the same time. Bishop Robert will conduct the service in Chipping Sodbury at 9.30am on Sunday 12 May and we'll include a report in the next issue. In the meanwhile, look out for further information in the coming weeks. **Jane**

Church Centre Quiz Night

At the end of February we welcomed 50 brave participants to the Church Centre for our quiz, where over the course of two hours we stretched our brains trying to answer questions through 10 varied rounds with Ivor as our quizmaster and adjudicator.

Congratulations to the Broken Stays, the eventual winners in a tight contest with several close runners up. Special mention, too, to the two teams with younger members- Unholy Vickers and Team Parsons - for their high scores. To those concerned at their low scores in the 'Life in the U.K.' round, in the actual test (for applicants for British citizenship), a choice of four possible answers are given. Hope that makes the scores look better.

It was good to see church members and friends of all ages having an enjoyable and sociable evening. Thank you to all who helped run the event, which raised just under £500. Watch out for the next quiz - but probably not before the Autumn.

Christine Stephens

Sponsored Abseil down 100ft tower of St. John's Chipping Sodbury on Saturday June 8th. For how to take part contact Anne on a.e.vickers@talk21.com.

STOP PRESS!

As we were about to go to print, Bev Hope-Bell started to walk the Cotswold Way in aid of St David's Hospice in Newport, who cared for Bev's son Joe until his sad death 6 years ago. Bev's walk both celebrates Joe's life, and also marks Bev's 80th birthday. There'll be an update in our next issue, but here's a photo as Bev started his walk in Chipping Camden on 14 March. If you would like to support Bev and make a donation to this very worthy cause, please follow this link: www.justgiving.com/page/bev-hope-bell-1709136783976



A fairly new member's impression of Mother's Union.

Forget elderly ladies, busy making cakes all the time – though we turn out some good ones, forget a load of gossiping over tea - though we enjoy meeting each other, forget people losing touch with real issues, coasting along with our faith, settling into a backwater of nostalgia.

I have found a group of believers still wanting to make a difference in the world, overseas and at home, seeking to raise awareness of issues like domestic abuse: (MU's Rise Up campaign), homelessness, human trafficking (linking with Clewer Initiative), dangers of social media, conditions in prisons, painful issues which women and children face. Our magazines both local and national have many stories of MU members making a difference in their communities, their nations, overseas.



How does this translate into a local Branch? - through fund raising to help MU projects promoting literacy, parenting skills, education for mothers and children, giving to holiday provision for families to get Away From It All (our local MU AFIA has helped families of children with special needs to have days out together). Learning what key issues are and asking how we might help. Helping at Storkies with snack time,



Spiritual growth is important, too: we can attend retreats, quiet days or mornings, pray together. We seek to help pastorally, practically and by nurturing faith in one another.

Some basics: we are a Christian group, we pay an annual membership fee, all are welcome – visitors are not charged. We meet 2nd Monday in the month at the Church Centre 2pm. Come and talk to us,

invite us to speak at your meetings - there's too much to share here!

We hope we reflect our founder, Mary Sumner's prayer:

All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen. **Helen Hope-Bell**

E mail: bevhopebell@btinternet.com

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More from A Rocha's 2024 Easy Eco Tips Calendar.

Visit <https://arocha.org.uk/wild-christian/> for more eco tips.

April

Fit more active travel into your day and daily routine.

Re-evaluate your journeys: explore walking or cycling options, or modify your route to include some form of active travel, i.e. disembark a stop early and complete the remaining part of your journey on foot, indulge in a leisurely stroll, or opt for a bike ride along a cyclist-friendly route. Consider connecting with your local Ramblers or cycling group for shared experiences.

Use the extra steps or the changed travel arrangements as a prompt to pray for God's creation, nature's preservation and the reduction in fossil fuel usage.



May - say no to the mow.

Mowing your lawn less and letting parts grow long saves you time and helps give nature a home. If you want to make an even bigger impact on wildlife, wait to mow your lawn or a section of it until August to support even more animals.

Contribute to citizen science and get to know what (and who!) lives in your church's green space - sign up to take part in Churches Count on Nature (8-16 June 2024) at

<http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/churches-count-on-nature-faqs/>

Chris Axford - Eco Church Group

The Children's Society Box Collection 2023

Thank you to all my box holders, throughout the Benefice, for another year of generous donations. This year you have raised £660.85. All monies have now been sent off to The Children's Society. If anyone would like a box to start collecting, please give me a ring 07970902391 and I will get a box to you. Hilary Hurley, Local Secretary. Thank you.

Hilary

Thankful villages of Gloucestershire

The title “Thankful villages” came about when it was discovered that war memories did not mention soldiers that came home and carried on with their lives.

The term was popularised in the 1930s by the writer Arthur Mee, a children’s newspaper editor, who in 1936 began to recognise that there were 32 villages throughout the country with no war memorial, so he wanted to learn more.

Following WWII it was realised that several of the originally identified villages had in fact been ‘doubly thankful’ because there were no recorded death in either war. There are 17 of these in England, including three villages in Gloucestershire, Coln Rogers, Upper Slaughter and Little Sodbury.

Thankful Villages Chelwood Bikers Tour



During the summer of 1984 Medwyn Parry was visiting the village of Colwinston on his motorcycle when the heavens opened with a torrential downpour, so he sheltered in the church where he noticed a plaque stating that this was one of the Thankful Villages. This encounter led to a fascination that lasted 30 years and became a huge charity fundraiser.

After an initial ride to the 3 Welsh Thankful Villages raised £2500, the main ride visiting 51 villages was organised for 2013. It was an unforgettable experience, took a lot of organising and could not have been done without each and everyone who contributed.

The trip started in Llanfihangel y Creuddyn near Aberystwyth with 60 bikers in convoy, each donating £5 for the experience and each choosing a distance to ride. Little Sodbury, was the first overnight stop.

The unbelievably friendly village residents were generous with their support, accommodation, refreshments and CAKE! So when we were, on occasion, hours late, they were still waiting patiently in the rain and failing light to welcome the bikers after another gruelling day.

Medwyn Parry and Dougie Bancroft bust a gut trying to keep to the schedule and keep people informed, which, at times, was challenging, but remembering their ultimate goal of delivering all 51 plaques, it was well worth the effort, especially as the ride raised £51,000 for the Poppy Appeal and continues to raise money

Brenda Cordy



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 9th April 2024

7:30 pm Chipping Sodbury Town Hall
Roaring Fork

"Best of British with the Roaring Fork Wind Quintet"



A selection of original pieces and arrangements for wind quintet celebrating the Best of British, with music by Elgar, Warlock, Malcolm Arnold and more.

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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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