



# SVB Outlook

*February- March 2025*



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

[www.svbcofe.org.uk](http://www.svbcofe.org.uk)

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



## Rector's Rambles

This month I am delighted to announce that we are launching a new series of articles in our magazine looking at pastoral care. For those of you who are not sure what that actually means, it is an overarching term for the way the church comes alongside people in need, offering a non-judgemental listening ear, often over a cup of tea or coffee. In the Bible there are so many examples of Jesus coming alongside those in need, He is referred to as the Good Shepherd who cares for his flock. We hope to continue to come alongside people, whether they have a faith or not.

Many of us have times in our lives when our journey becomes difficult, whether caused by grief, loneliness, sickness or a major life transition. Sometimes it is helpful to talk to someone slightly removed from the situation who can come alongside and offer that listening ear. However, many of us are better at offering help than asking for it. When I was on crutches a few years ago I found it so difficult to bother people even to take me down to the Doctor's for an appointment, so I understand how difficult it is, but I also saw how much it gave people pleasure to help.

Our pastoral care team is made up of clergy and lay people who would be only too happy to visit. If you or anyone you know would benefit from a visit, please do contact us.

Over the next few issues we are going to explore the different aspects of pastoral care in a bit more detail so do watch out for those articles.

***"We are launching a new series of articles in our magazine looking at Pastoral care."***

## Dates for Diary

March - Please note the United Benefice service will be on 4th Sunday (23rd March). The 5th Sunday is Mothering Sunday and it was felt that churches would want services in their own church to celebrate.

**Easter Services** See page 15.

# Reflections of a Volunteer Prison Chaplain

My first year as a volunteer Chaplain at a local women's prison has been very interesting and, at times, a challenging journey. Here are a few reflections...

Imagine yourself walking through the many corridors and on to the residential wings. Make your way through both internal and external iron gates, which must be unlocked and then locked again and "proved" to make sure they are firmly shut and locked.

I have been helping with the 'Living with Loss' course since last April. During each 2-hourly session (*once a week for five weeks*), we get to hear from the inmates about their individual grief journeys and then offer them tools to navigate through their grieving process. Many have suffered loss and separation from family and friends. They are then better equipped to listen to others who may be going through similar experiences, showing empathy and kindness.

All staff need to be constantly updated with communications from Security. I received training for using a hand-held radio for staying in touch. Messages are heard through the radio's earpiece, which means one must learn to listen constantly in case your own Call Sign is mentioned. If it is, you must immediately answer. It's straining and tricky at times, with all the noise from the corridors and on the wings, but it's amazing how one adapts and gets used to tuning external noise out when the radio is transmitting.

2024 ended on a happy note, with many of the inmates attending the Carol Services and the Christmas Quiz on Boxing Day. The inmates really entered into the spirit of these events.

Just before Christmas, I and two other volunteers were nominated by the Chaplains for the 'Volunteer of the Year' award. We each received a letter from the Chaplain General and Head of Faith Services [HM Prison & Probation Services] for "*service in forging relationships built on unconditional positive regard, respect and empathy*". And so another year begins!

**Tania Manners.**



# Bishop Rachel on sentencing policy

Bishop Rachel, in her role as Anglican Bishop for Prisons, is calling on the Government to change the way sentencing policy is decided, ensuring Ministers make life changing decisions based on evidence and expertise.

In a paper released in January “A new approach to making sentencing policy”, she recommends the establishment of an independent advisory panel on sentencing. Currently Ministers often agree sentencing policy in an emotionally charged context based on a distorted public perception of crime and the safety of our streets. Her aim is to support Ministers to make objective, evidence-based policy in the midst of the pain and loss that comes through crime.

Bishop Rachel said, “Current penal policy is largely failing victims and offenders and indeed their network of relationships and wider society. In proposing a new approach to sentencing, I want to be part of the solution to this problem. We are at a significant point in time regarding sentencing policy and the implications for both the criminal justice system as a whole and the fabric of our society. We need to expand our imaginations while resisting the expansion of prisons and the prison population.”

The model builds upon the House of Commons Justice Select Committee’s 2023 recommendation to set up an advisory body on sentencing, but proposes an additional step to increase transparency in decision-making and to link funding to policy changes.



**Copy Deadline: April 16**

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

**Front Cover:**

Robin by Frank Gray

# Plough Sunday

We enjoyed a new (*old! Dating back to medieval times*) service on Sunday 12th January, Plough Sunday.

We shared this with our friends from Little Sodbury church, and many thanks to The Wilkie Family who provided the plough and Chris Needham for the tractor! This is an ancient festival which was revived by the Victorians. Traditionally it is celebrated on the first Sunday after Epiphany (*so we were spot on there!*) where a plough is blessed and prayers are offered towards the promise of a good harvest ahead. It's a way to honour and support the farming community, especially as they face modern challenges like climate change and rising costs.



Historically, villagers would walk through their village collecting alms before gathering at the church for the Blessing of the Plough, (*but we skipped that bit.*)

The church was decorated with farming related items and looked very attractive.

Fifty in the congregation with a collection split between the two churches and the Farming Community Network ([fcn.org.uk](http://fcn.org.uk)).

We have had some very positive comments about the morning so I am sure this service will

form part of our normal calendar in years to come.

**Martin May**



# SVB Strollers

Strollers have had mixed fortunes with the weather lately and we had to cancel October's walk around Oldbury, but the sun shone brightly when we set out to walk from Shipton Moyne in November. Following footpaths and a long bridleway away from the village we turned into the Escort estate, home to a number of beautiful horses. The estate office shown below.



After our well-earned coffee we continued through the horse paddocks and then via fields back to the Cat and Custard Pot, where we were treated like royalty. What a lovely name for a pub!



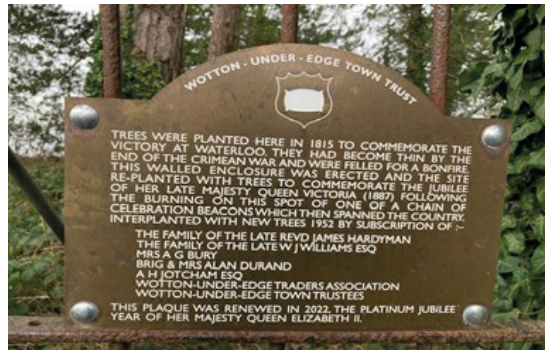
In December, Ivor and Catherine Coster led us in a walk around Wotton-under-Edge. Strolling past the church, initially following the Cotswold Way, we headed along the stream towards Coombe before climbing the escarpment and gaining a spectacular view back towards the town. Contouring along the edge and getting our breath back we eventually emerged on the top of Wotton Hill.

For the history lovers this plaque tells all about the distinctive plantation of trees, seen for miles around.

We descended down into town and adjourned to the pub at Wickwar for lunch.

Do come and join us in February for a walk near Stroud.

**Anne Vickers**





[pastoralmentor.regenerate@gmail.com](mailto:pastoralmentor.regenerate@gmail.com)

Regenerate is the biggest joint evangelistic outreach that the local churches are part of, reaching over 3000 children EVERY term in 12 schools in Yate and Sodbury, with the good news of Jesus: that's six times a year! We are the local churches' ambassadors of our Christian Faith, welcomed into the schools to lead a Collective Worship each term! What a privilege and joy!

Regenerate was created by the churches of Yate and Sodbury as your charity in 2007.

Our amazing team of volunteers from at least 6 different churches is led by Rachel Rogers and Deborah Williams. We deliver Collective Worship each term and we also put on 3 big events each year called Wonder Spaces. This involves a school's whole year group coming into a church and looking deeper into Christmas, Easter or Transitioning from yr6 to yr7.

Over the last few years, we have further developed and been able to provide Pastoral Student Mentoring to four schools. We work one to one with the children to support their wellbeing, and the need schools have to provide additional emotional support that so many of their children require. This year we now have four mentors working with 17 children each term. Our vision is to offer every school a Pastoral Mentor.

Please pray for the work that we do, we send out a termly prayer letter, email us to find out more or be added to the invaluable prayer Warriors.

## **Benefice Pastoral Assistant Course**

In September, five members of the Benefice, Richard and Linda Hore, Edna Cooper, Christine Stephens and Hilary Hurley, enrolled on a Pastoral Assistant Course which would last until December. The course was facilitated by Rev. Pauline Godfrey who was absolutely excellent.

The course covered many aspects of pastoral care and included, visiting and befriending, the importance of marriage and baptism preparation, bereavement visiting, the patterns of grief and good parenting.



We also looked into our own reactions to certain situations and it was considered by us all that it was a very informative and interesting course.

We will be working to incorporate what we have learnt into our various pastoral duties in the benefice, including our pastoral care team's involvement with Tea and Chat on every fourth Tuesday of the month and our Home Communion visits.

Please remember the Pastoral Care Team is there for you and only a phone call away. For an initial contact please phone Richard Hore on 07894 248151 or Hilary Hurley on 07970 902391.

## **'We are here and we care'**

**Christine Stephens and Hilary Hurley**

### **CribFest 2024**

CribFest 24 has been and gone, but we have the memories of this wonderful event that for many is the start of their Christmas celebrations. All our visitors were thrilled to see its return and enjoyed their time with us and maybe took away a little nugget of what Christmas is all about; Joy came down at Christmas through the birth of Jesus Christ.



We welcomed over 2000 members of the public and many children from the local primary schools were able to visit as part of their daily activities.

***“The CribFest Team are pleased to announce CribFest 25”***

The CribFest Team are pleased to announce CribFest 25 will be coming so look out for more details in the weeks to come as we start the planning process and don't forget if you would like to loan your nativity for display or even feel creative and would like to make one for the festival, then please do get in touch via the

Sodbury Vale Office on 01454 325160. Thank you.

We look forward to seeing you all at CF25.

**Paul Jones-Williams**

# God and Art making

*The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.  
They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.  
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.*

## Psalm 19:1–4

Human beings have always made art. It's not just something we do on the side once we've sorted life out: people make art in lean times as well as rich. When we make useful things, we often also make them beautiful. In all its various modes – visual, musical, literary, embodied, and sculptural – art is a human impulse, one that profoundly shapes our common life. So, where does art-making fit into God's purposes?



In the first place, let's consider *delight*. The world is full of colour and sound, light and form. It is excessively beautiful – and it draws delight out of us like nectar from a flower. We are captured by the undulations of a cloud formation, we are arrested by a blackbird's evening song, we keep glancing at the tree outside, its repose and light-filled form. The world is beautiful, eloquent with meaning. This delight offers us an

important clue about art's place in the big picture.

Artists often want to respond to the world's beauty by *joining in*. Indeed, our delight in the world can make us want to respond to its source: to express awe and gratitude, praising the Artist behind all this beauty. Psalm 19 does exactly this. The world, it claims, isn't random but is a creation: the work of the glorious Creator. Despite the travail of sin and evil, this world is fluent with delight. In its purpose-filled radiance, it offers its life back to the Maker, declaring the glory of God.

What is our part in all this? And where does art come in? Well, Psalm 19 is itself a poem – a memorable, beautiful, work of art. Scripture frames human beings as God's image-bearers, stewards of God's good rule who are uniquely placed to represent creation to God in a free response of love. Indeed, as theologian Jeremy Begbie has explored, human beings are made to voice creation's praise – and art-

making is key to this. Alert to the beauty of the world, artists are called to respond by giving voice to creation's praise and also – as the rest of the Book of Psalms so clearly shows – to its lament. Art can't be merely for its own sake. Rather, art is one distinct way that we express creaturely life to God and before God.

There is of course more to say! But here, as you move forward stay alert to delight: it's an invitation to join in on the concert of creation.

### **Dr John Dennison**

John is a poet, essayist, and Director of Resources at Venn Foundation. He's the author of *Letter to An Artist*, a beautiful, practical, and readable reflection on the nature of art-making and its place in God's purposes

***"In what everyday ways do you delight in the created world? How might you voice creation's praise, participating with a sketch, song or poem?"***

Source - London Institute for Contemporary Christianity  
[www.licc.org.uk](http://www.licc.org.uk).

## **Eco friendly Church in Tetbury**

St Mary's celebrated Christmas with a nature-friendly tree that's now set to live on beyond the festive season.

As part of the Sustainable Church Flower movement, the church embraced an eco-friendly approach, choosing a locally sourced tree within Tetbury that was adorned with natural and wildlife-friendly decorations.

Threaded monkey nuts replaced traditional tinsel, while cranberry rings, pinecones filled with fat and seeds, and dried oranges and spices served as ornaments. It was topped with a handmade star crafted from natural materials.

After Epiphany, the tree will be repurposed as a gift to local wildlife. Once it has been stripped of its lights and bird ornaments, it will be placed outdoors to provide food and shelter for animals, extending its life to support the environment long after Christmas.

Rosemary Bailey from St Mary's said: "Our church is part of the Sustainable Church Flower movement, so our Christmas flowers were as sustainable as possible. We also decided to create a nature-friendly tree.

"This could be an eco-friendly idea for other churches to adopt next Christmas."

Source Diocesan website



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MANY OF YOU ARE ENJOYING THE NEW  
STREAMING OF OUR SERVICES ONLINE ...

# Lent and Ash Wednesday in our churches

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of our journey through Lent. It is a principal feast in the Church of England and traditionally is a time of fasting and penitence. This year Ash Wednesday falls on 5th March and there will be 2 Holy Communion Services in our Benefice, one in Chipping Sodbury Church at 10.00am and one in Old Sodbury Church at 7.00pm.

The name Ash Wednesday comes from the practice of burning ashes made from the palm branches which were blessed on Palm Sunday the previous year. The ashes are then put on the foreheads by making the sign of the cross and saying the words "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return". Ashes were used as a sign of grief in the Old Testament and are now used as an external sign of repentance as part of this service, they are a symbolic reminder of our journey through the solemnity of Lent to the joys of Easter. We shall be offering this opportunity in our churches this year as part of the Ash Wednesday Communion service. If you would rather not be anointed with ash please do still come for communion.

During Lent we will also be running our usual Lent Course. We are still finalising the details, so please look out for further information during February. **Rev. Chris**

## Mothers' Union



Our Christmas meeting in early December took the form of a bring and share lunch. It was a lovely occasion for us all to get-together, enjoy good food and each other's company. The room was beautifully decorated and helped get us into the 'Christmas mood'.



# Holy Week and Easter Services



## **Palm Sunday**      **13th April**

Regular services in each of our churches

## **Maundy Thursday**    **17th April**

10.00pm	Holy Communion	Church Centre, Chipping Sodbury
7.00pm	Holy Communion	St John's, Chipping Sodbury

## **Good Friday**      **18th April**

2.00pm	Service at the foot of the cross	St John's, Chipping Sodbury
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## **Saturday**      **19th April**

7:00pm	Easter Vigil	St Adeline's, Little Sodbury
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## **Easter Sunday**      **20th April**

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

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

## Please Help!!

I cannot believe that I have been the local secretary for the Children's Society for the last 23 years and it is with much sadness that it is time for me to put down my pen and calculator and say that this January count will be my last one.

I am hopeful that someone within the **Sodbury Vale Benefice** will be able to take up the role so that we can be represented within the Society. I have to say it is not an onerous task (once a year) and I am more than willing to talk it through with the person who is happy to take over. You do not need banking or likewise experience.

Please, please consider this post and contact me on 07970 902391 if you are interested and you would like further information.

**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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*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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