



SVB Outlook

August - September 2025



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

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

Rector's Rambles



Back in the spring, hundreds of little bugs appeared on my fence; having never seen them before I looked them up and found they were ladybird larvae. Sure enough they are now slowly transforming and adding to the many ladybirds which appear to be around this season.

Being a curious sort, that led me to look up why they are called ladybirds. One theory suggests that in the middle ages they were named "Our Lady's bird" because Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was often portrayed wearing a red cloak at that time; another says there were so many aphids that farmers prayed to God and Mary for help and many ladybirds appeared to eat up the aphids so they called them

'beetles of our Lady'. Either way they eventually became ladybirds. Yesterday I was rather horrified to see about 10 had fallen into the small pool I had to keep my dog, Charlie, cool in the heat. When I looked closer I realised they were all happily swimming about (even one upside down seemed ok when I turned it over). Who knew they could swim? And yes, I did rescue them all and cover the pool! I don't know about you, but I love finding out new things about our wonderful creation and celebrating its beauty.

"I love finding out new things about our wonderful creation and celebrating its beauty."

In the Church, one of the ways we do that is by celebrating the Season of Creation. The website for this year says this:

'Each year from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family unites for this worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home. It is a special season where we celebrate God as Creator and acknowledge Creation as the divine continuing act that summons us as collaborators to love and care for

the gift of all that is created. As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common call to care for Creation. We are co creatures and part of all that God has made. Our well-being is interwoven with the well-being of the Earth.'

What a great opportunity to join with Christians throughout the world, this year's theme is "Peace with Creation," which emphasizes the need for harmony between humanity and the environment, from the tiny ladybirds in my garden to the giant whales which roam our ocean.

Rev. Chris

SVB Strollers

In May Strollers enjoyed a largely flat walk of just under five miles, led by Rosie and starting near The Anchor in Oldbury. We headed towards the sailing club to access the embankment along the River Severn, with a splendid view of the bridge. Despite some concerns, the rain held off. We travelled northward along the embankment until just before the power station, where we were lucky enough to hear a cuckoo sounding forth from the small patch of woodland. Turning right to pass the lake we then headed across fields to Oldbury Naite. A short section along the road before we turned on to a bridleway which took us all the way back to Oldbury, past the village shop and on to the Anchor for lunch.



Six stalwarts set out for the Strollers June walk in perfect conditions for walking; dry, sunny, and pleasantly warm. Beginning at The Dog in Old Sodbury, we climbed the escarpment above Old Sodbury with magnificent views over towards the Bristol Channel and beyond. Our walk then took us across open farmland to the beautiful Jacobean Mansion, Lyegrove House. This has had a chequered history in recent years involving a long running family dispute

through the courts around ownership. We spent some time admiring the lovely setting of the main house, gardens, and other buildings. A shaded spot for coffee break was found nearby before the push for home! Across more farmland, through Little Sodbury Iron Age hill fort and we were soon back at The Dog for a very nice lunch where we were joined by two of our walkers' other halves. A good time seemed to have been had by all!

Do come and join us on the third Wednesday of the month, it really is a stroll and you would be most welcome!



Anne Vickers

Pastoral Care – Bereavement

After the death of a loved one, visitors and offers of help are plentiful especially before and after the funeral. But gradually life gets back to normal for those not so deeply affected by the death and loss.

Members of the Pastoral Care team here in the Sodbury Vale Benefice are happy to visit the newly bereaved, and even those whose bereavement is not so recent, who would like a visit and chat with someone outside of the family.

Once a year in November we hold a service for the bereaved which is held in St. John's Chipping Sodbury. This service is a gentle opportunity to remember someone who has died, light a candle for them and be thankful to God for their memory.

Please contact us if you would like to arrange a visit from the Pastoral Care Team or know of someone else who would appreciate it.

For an initial contact e mail Office@svbcofe.org.uk

For an urgent response please call Richard on 07894 248151 or Hilary on 07970902391

Hilary Hurley

Things are 'Changing' at the Centre.

If you've popped into the centre recently you will have noticed a new baby changing unit in the hallway. The old unit in the downstairs toilet had, after years of service, broken beyond repair and a new solution was required.

After investigation a permanent unit in the same situation encroached on the space needed for users of mobility aids. Therefore the best solution was a portable unit which could be wheeled into the toilet when needed and stored just outside when not required.



Michelle

Teas at Horton

Thank you to all of those who came. It was such a happy time. Visitors from the Netherlands, Germany and Austria walking the Cotswold Way.

Four beautiful polo ponies stayed outside the church for an hour while the riders sat on the wall and ate cake. Local people came. Everyone stayed outside. It is wonderful to see the Church with so many visitors around it and all sharing conversation.

Tina

Quiet days

On **Saturday September 6th** we will be holding our next Benefice quiet day. As this magazine goes to print, the details are not yet finalised, but they will be appearing on the pew sheets. Please do come along if you are free, it's a great opportunity to leave behind our usual routines and to experience being together with God. **Rev. Chris**

St Michael's Mount, Penzance

St Michael's Mount is a tidal island in Mount's Bay near Penzance. It is linked to the town of Marazion by a causeway of granite setts, passable (as is the beach) between mid-tide and low water. It is managed by the National Trust, and the castle and chapel have been the home of the St Aubyn family since around 1650. When the causeway is not passable, boats are in operation from Marazion – the boat trip takes



around five minutes and costs £3.20 each way (access to the island is free for NT members, otherwise £16 for adults). The boarding point varies, as the sea height can vary by up to around 5 metres (16 ft) between low and high tide. Boats depart from either Chapel Rock, which is near the causeway, or Gwelva or Top Tieb which are the other side of the causeway. When you book a ticket for the castle you are given a display of walking/boat times and prompted to buy a boat ticket if appropriate (you can buy a return ticket at the same time, or later, as you leave the island). There is a car park nearby in Marazion, and also a bus stop (the U4 which runs hourly to and from Penzance). The paths on the island are steep and uneven, and quite a challenge for walking, but as with other NT properties, there are toilets, shops, cafés and a visitor centre. In addition to the castle there is a subtropical garden, where frosts are a rarity (£12 for adults). The gardens are open until August 29 and are closed on Sundays. There is also a live webcam: <https://stmichaelsmount.co.uk/explore-the-mount/live-webcam/>

There is evidence of people living in the area during the Neolithic period between around 4000 and 2500 BC. St Michael's Mount may have been the site of a monastery from the 8th to the early 11th centuries. Edward the Confessor (c.1003–1066) gave the site to the Benedictine order of Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy and it was a priory of that abbey until the dissolution of the alien houses as a side-effect of the war in France by Henry V. Subsequently, it ceased to be a priory, and was reduced to being a secular chapel which was given to the Abbess and Convent of Syon at Isleworth, Middlesex, in 1424, a monastery of the Bridgettine Order, thus ending its association with Mont-Saint-Michel. It has been for a long time a destination for pilgrims, whose devotions were encouraged by an indulgence granted by Pope Gregory VII in the 11th century. The earliest buildings on the summit, including a castle, date to the 12th century. The present building was largely rebuilt in the late-14th century.

Nowadays the church, dedicated to St Michael the Archangel, has its own chaplain, and services are held on Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Day, on Sundays from Pentecost until 28 September at 11:15, and on St Michael's Day (29 September). The

church has a modern bronze sculpture of St Michael defeating Lucifer. If you are a pilgrim or a member of a pilgrimage group and would like to visit the church for prayer and reflection, you are invited to contact 01736 887822. This phone line is open Monday to Friday from 10am–2pm.

Colin Lunt

Confirmation ?

Are you thinking about Confirmation, or do you know anyone who would like to be confirmed? We're looking at running a confirmation course, so please let Rev. Chris or Rev. Jane know if you're interested.

Rev. Jane



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Welcome to Wickwar's new Priest

On Monday 14 July, Rev. Chris and I joined members of the Deanery Chapter and other Priests and Readers to welcome Rev. Catherine Coomber as she was Licensed and Installed as Priest-in-Charge of Wickwar Benefice. Bishop Robert and Archdeacon Hilary led the joyful service in front of a packed church, with friends old and new there to support Catherine.

Catherine served her Curacy in St George and St Cyr in Cam and Stinchcombe parishes so is well known to us through both Deanery Chapter meetings and our training.

Cake and wine were definitely the order of the evening at the end of the service as we celebrated this happy occasion together. We welcome Catherine and her husband Paul as our new neighbours in Wickwar. You might even spot them in Waitrose (other supermarkets are available!). We look forward to continuing our relationship with Catherine over the coming years.

Rev. Jane



Farewell to our Head Teacher

Earlier this year we heard that Nicola Berry, Executive Head of Sodbury Vale Foundation - St John's Mead and Horton Primary Schools - would be leaving at the end of the summer term. After 30 years service, with 17 at St John's Mead and 7 with Horton, Nicola is taking a well-deserved break. In the message we received, Nicola says:

'I love my wonderful children – past and present and it has been a continual joy to see them flourish and grow into fabulous young men and women who are respectful, caring and responsible members of society committed to making the world a better place by whatever paths they choose to take. It has been a privilege to work alongside colleagues who share the same passion to nurture our children and enable them to thrive, working alongside our dedicated governors, PTA, community and parents. Thank you, parents who have been with us, through pandemics and changes, helping and supporting with kind words and deeds. I have enjoyed our working parties and for all the support and care you show and this is reflected in your children who are a credit to you.'

Nicola will be missed hugely. Her dedication to both schools and the Christian ethos is immense and the Federation has thrived under Nicola's leadership. She was very supportive of me before Rev. Chris arrived, and as a Benefice we have enjoyed working alongside her either as Governors, Bible Story Tellers (Open the Book as was) or through Collective Worship. We send our love and blessings to Nicola and her husband for the new chapter in their lives.

Looking forward to September, we will be welcoming Dean Hudd as Nicola's replacement as Executive Head Teacher of the Sodbury Vale Federation and hope to introduce him in our next edition of Outlook.

Rev. Jane



Nicola at the recent leavers' service at St John's Church, Chipping Sodbury

Bishops call on government to take action over settler violence

Bishop Rachel has joined with the bishops of Norwich, Southwark and Chelmsford in writing an open letter to The Guardian over settler violence against Palestinian communities, particularly in Taybeh, the last remaining Christian-majority town in the West Bank. To read the letter use the web address below.

<https://gloucester.anglican.org/2025/70172/>

Sodbury vale safeguarding updates

I decided it was an opportune time to write a brief article for Outlook - given that I needed to get my updated contact details published.

My name is Hannah Saunders - and I have been your Safeguarding Officer at SVB for nearly 10 years now. The last time I wrote introducing myself - I lived in Chipping Sodbury and worked as Clerk to Dodington Parish Council. Since then, not only has the role of Safeguarding Officer changed - but my husband, Steve and I, have moved out of Sodbury. We now live in Cromhall. I still worship regularly within the benefice (normally at Old Sodbury as I find the later start easier).



My son was studying at Chipping Sodbury School and I was spending a lot of my spare time supporting the Greenpower Initiative that he was involved in. He has now graduated with a Maths degree and is about to start his Masters. I have recently left my full-time position at Dodington Parish Council - to try and achieve a better 'balance' to life. Turning 50 earlier this year - I found myself at a crossroads. I am currently navigating life at a slightly slower pace and establishing my new normal!

Something Rev. Chris and I have been talking about for a while is the complexity of the Safeguarding role....particularly if you are looking after a benefice and not just a parish church. We have investigated whether there are better ways of working - as I was getting pretty snowed under. Following discussions with Michelle Jenkins in the office - we have agreed that admin tasks such as DBS applications / updates / ID checking will be carried out from the office at the Church Centre in Chipping Sodbury.

This will make it easier for people to pop in with ID - as Michelle has regular hours when she is in the Church Centre and has access to a computer etc. It will free me up to ensure that all necessary policies are in place - and keep up to speed with what the diocese and CofE require from Safeguarding Officers.

The Safeguarding team at Gloucester Diocese recognise as well that Safeguarding Officers out in the parishes need support - and there will be more collaborative working which I feel will be excellent - and am keen to explore - so that I can be as proactive as possible for SVB.

Hannah Saunders

My new contact email is:- safeguarding@svbcofe.org.uk

Copy Deadline: Sept 15

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

Front Cover:

Summer flowers by
Michael Stephenson

Struggling with prayer?

Perhaps it isn't surprising that more and more people who, aware of a spiritual dimension in their lives, are searching for something to learn about contemplative prayer.

This wish can spring from an uneasy feeling that the kind of prayers we have been taught at home, school or church seem a little unreal now and ... well, wordy. The experience of prayer may feel like it has become a duty, an obligation to be fulfilled through some 'prayer drill' or technique; there seems so much to be done, effort expended in thanking, praising, confessing and endless intercession – however worthy these things are in themselves. Like so much of our liturgy in worship, we have heavily invested in the production of *words*, *Words* and more *WORDS* until we are lost in a sea of words. ----->

*In the beginning was THE WORD
But where is it now?
So many words to explain one WORD
Written and spoken and thought
Until THE WORD IS BURIED IN WORDS
So that some Say There in no WORD
So I offer you, lord My silence -
And in the silence you alone shall teach me
Teach me the WORD And I will live it
What greater thing can I do for your world
Than ponder your WORD
And try to live it?
For THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND
DWELT AMONG US (Ivy Bishop)*

If some of this resonates with you, you are in good company as many people are rediscovering an ancient tradition of contemplative prayer with its roots in the Christian communities of 4th century Egypt, Syria and Turkey which has long been neglected in the teachings of the institutional Church.

The word **contemplative** comes from the Latin root **contemplari** which means “to gaze attentively, to observe or consider”. It comprises the prefix – **con** meaning “with or together” and **templum** meaning a space for observation, originally a sacred space or temple.



Contemplative prayer is described as a journey that moves from meditation (me and God), to contemplation (God and me), and finally to communion (only God), drawing Christians deeper into the experience of God's presence. The story begins with the biblical example; Jesus himself often withdrew to quiet places to pray, seeking solitude and silence to commune with the Father (see Mark 1:35). In the early Christian era, the desert fathers and mothers and saints like St Anthony followed this path, emphasising that it was in **silence** that the mysteries of God were revealed and spiritual growth occurred.

Contemplative prayer is **not** about emptying the mind – for we can never switch off the relentless chatter of the mind - but about being present with God, listening in stillness, and surrendering control—allowing God to take the initiative. This practice helps free Christians from the constant noise and distractions of daily life, making space for the “still, small voice” of God (1 Kings 19:12).

The need for contemplative prayer is rooted in the Christian desire for intimacy with God. It is through this silent, attentive presence that believers can be transformed by God’s unconditional love and grow in their faith. As one writer puts it, “No other habit can do more to transform your life and offer a deep, inner peace that enables you to withstand the turbulence of the world.”

In summary, the story of contemplative prayer is the story of Christians in both East and West seeking to move beyond words, distractions, and self-direction, into a deeper, quieter and more profound relationship with God.

What now? If this appeals to you, you could try joining an online meditation session with Chris Whittington on a Wednesday evening or Saturday morning. This website provides more information: <https://schoolofcontemplativelife.com>

Or, you could watch a 9 minute short video of Fr. Richard Rohr, an American Franciscan priest and well-known writer talking about contemplative prayer. If this appeals, let me know and I will email you this link for you to copy into your browser:

<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-sz-002&ei=UTF-8&hsimp=yhs002&hspart=sz¶m1=2450184029&gdpr=1&p=what+is+contemplative+prayer&type=type800571788360247#id=2&vid=cc659dc28efd6c80ef237dcf1f67a84f&action=click>

Alternatively, if you feel drawn to exploring this further, please do get in touch to express an interest in joining a conversation with other like-minded people in the Benefice and we can see where it takes us! Shalom

[revd.chris.mason@gmail](mailto:revd.chris.mason@gmail.com) (or 07749 903 658)

Chris Mason



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Chipping Sodbury Music Society

Tuesday 14th Oct. 2025 7:30 pm
Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

Ensemble Renard -Wind Ensemble



Ensemble Reynard comprises five outstanding young musicians. Together, they exist to explore a wide range of timbral possibilities within modern chamber performance. Their frequent collaboration with composers and guest instrumentalists allows them to showcase a prismatic variety of colours.

Tea and Chat

Regrettably the July Tea and Chat meeting was our last before we paused our social afternoons in the Church Centre.

For almost fifteen years we have met monthly for tea, cake and conversation with anyone in the wider community who felt the need for company. Together we have celebrated Christmas, numerous national occasions and birthdays, as well as welcoming choirs from our local junior schools. It has been a privilege to share time with others but we feel the time has come to have a break. Many of our helpers are now unable to join us and it has become increasingly difficult to maintain our original aims so it was decided that July would be our last afternoon.

Our thanks go to all those who have helped make such a success of this outreach - helpers and guests- who over the years have set up tables, poured tea, made cakes, washed up and most of all CHATTED.

Christine Stephens, for Benefice Pastoral Care team



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Chipping Sodbury Street Treasure Trail

On Saturday 12th July we launched the Treasure Trail; the plan was that lots of people would choose to do the trail on that day and join us for tea and cake in the centre when they had finished. But the hottest day of the year seemed to discourage too many takers. However, we have designed the trail so that it can be done at any time, so please follow the trail in your own time and see if you learn something new about Chipping Sodbury!



Here is a taster of the first 17 steps, pick up a full copy of the trail from the Church Centre.

Start at Wickwar Road River Frome bridge, Waitrose side.

1. Who looks after this unseaworthy boat?
2. What walkway can you enter from either side of the road?
3. Who are the clergy at St. John's Church?

Turn right onto High Street

4. Name the shop below the trotting horse.
5. Which shop is a Certified B Corporation here?
6. You should be able to find a friend here

If you have reached the Chemist you have gone too far.

Now go Into Hatherell's Yard

7. How many doors are there altogether in Barnardo's and The Sodbury Florist?
8. What reading material will you find in this corner Garden?
9. Who is the barber here?
10. Does this shop sell Australian dress material?

Back to the High Street

11. Looking up, how many false windows are there above the Wool Cellar and Heather Norman? *(Be careful as you step back to look.)*
12. Is there a cleric's hat here?
13. How many studs in the top panel of a very old door.
14. What is the name of the company that makes you "HAPPY".

15. What is the name of the cul-de-sac?

Cross the road and start back down the High Street

16. Who serves Traditional Italian Cuisine?

17. What was CAMRA Pub of the Year in 2024?

We hope you enjoy the trail and possibly discover something you never knew about Chipping Sodbury.

If, having completed it, you've enjoyed the trail please consider making a donation to help us keep the beautiful church building open and serving our community.

You can send a donation by BACs payment to '**PCC of St. John the Baptist Chipping Sodbury**', **Lloyds Bank Sort Code 30 99 50, Account Number 44695960** using the reference TRAILDONATION please.

Alternatively, if you'd like to donate by cash or card come and see us in the Church Centre when we are open, [opening details at the bottom of page 2] or in the church at any time. You can leave a cash donation in the churn (by the main door) or use the card machine (on the book case next to the visitors' book).

The answers are available on our website and on the notice board at the centre and in the porch of Chipping Sodbury Church

Michelle

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 Until Oct 25
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 the Church Centre, Wickwar Road, Chipping Sodbury				
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				

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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Revd. Pauline Green
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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.***

For more information scan this code

