



SVB Outlook

December 2025 - January 2026



The magazine of the churches of The Sodbury Vale Benefice:
Please take this free copy away with you to read at home

Chipping Sodbury, Old Sodbury,
Little Sodbury and Horton.

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

We all say that as we get older the years seem to go by quicker, that is certainly my experience, every year I can't believe how quickly Christmas comes around, and I suspect I'm not alone in this. I read a theory once that this is because as children and young adults our lives are filled with "firsts" that create vivid, detailed memories. As you age, life becomes more routine, and your brain doesn't need to work as hard to store information, leading to fewer new memories. If that's true I wonder if we can slow life down by planning some new experiences in 2026.

*"And I said to the man
who stood at the gate of
the year: "Give me a light
that I may tread safely
into the unknown."*

And he replied:

*"Go out into the
darkness and put your
hand into the Hand of
God. That shall be to you
better than light and
safer than a known
way."*

*So I went forth, and
finding the Hand of God,
trod gladly into the
night. And He led me
towards the hills and the
breaking of day in the
lone East."*

But first, it's Christmas time and one of the wonderful things about Christmas is the old traditions. On our website you will find an advent calendar which each day will reveal some people's memories of Christmas, do have a look, and as usual we have a number of services over the Christmas period, details of which are in the magazine. We are reintroducing another midnight service at Old Sodbury on Christmas Eve to join the one in Chipping Sodbury (or if that is a bit late, why not go to Horton for the 5pm service). These services both evoke memories of time gone by, and also remind us again that 'Love came down at Christmas' as Christina Rossetti wonderfully put it. I hope in all our busyness we still find time for the wonder of Christmas, whatever that is for you.

And, as we get ready for 2026 we step into the unknown of a New Year. To the left is the beginning of a poem written by Minnie Louise Haskins published in 1908; it was used by George VI for his Christmas address in 1939 after his daughter (our late Queen) gave him a copy. It always feels very appropriate as we enter a new year with all its hopes and fears, dreams and worries, pressures and joys.

May you have a very happy Christmas and a peaceful start to 2026 and may we all make some new memories to treasure in the year ahead.

Rev Chris.

Pastoral Care Group

'Loneliness at Christmas'



Photo by Photo.com on Freeimages.com

Christmas can be difficult for anyone, at any point in their life, but if you are newly bereaved, you might be struggling this year for the first time. Or you may have found Christmas difficult in the past, and you're dreading it again this year.

Firstly, it is good to talk and let someone know how you are feeling. We here in the Sodbury Vale Benefice have members of our Pastoral Care Group who would be very happy to talk with you or you may prefer to speak to someone outside of the church.

The local Baptist Church run the Oasis coffee shop Monday to Friday 10am – 2pm when there is always someone there to chat to.

The Marmalade Trust, with headquarters here in Bristol, is a voluntary charitable organisation, who help people, whatever their age, through times of loneliness not just at Christmas.

Their most long-running project is their annual Christmas Cheer lunch in the Bristol, South Glos. and North Somerset area for their 'project members', vulnerable older people who would otherwise be by themselves on Christmas Day.

They also welcome younger volunteers; the only requirement is that they are able to drive. The volunteers transport people to and from their homes to the venue for their lunch and they also help serving food.

They also run the Marmalade Connections project. Trained volunteers empower and support older people to find new activities, social connections and friendships in their local community.

They can be contacted - info@marmaladetrust.org 07566244788

Web site: marmaladetrust.org and their address is :-

Marmalade Trust, Unit 2. St Pauls Learning Centre,
94 Grosvenor Road, St. Pauls, Bristol. BS8 2XJ

Pastoral Care Group

12 Days of Christmas.

A memory verse or secret code?

There is a long running debate whether this song was a nonsense memory rhyme for Children or a secret code when religious Christmas celebrations were banned. Feel free to make up your own mind, but for those who like the latter explanation here are the alternative meanings:

Partridge in a Pear Tree: The partridge represents Jesus Christ, who is seen as a symbol of salvation and peace.

Two Turtle Doves: The two turtle doves are the Old and New Testament in the Bible.

Three French Hens: The French hens are interpreted as being the virtues of faith, hope and love.

Four Calling Birds: The birds represent the four Gospels in the Bible: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Five Golden Rings: The five golden rings are thought to represent the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Torah or Pentateuch.

Six Geese a-Laying: The six geese refer to the six days of creation, as described in the Book of Genesis in the Bible.

Seven Swans a-Swimming: The swans represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit also known as the seven sacraments in Christianity. These gifts are understanding, wisdom, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

Eight Maids a-Milking: The maids are meant to represent the eight Beatitudes—the blessings listed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Nine Ladies Dancing: The ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, including love, joy and peace.

Ten Lords a-Leaping: The 10 lords represent the Ten Commandments.

Eleven Pipers Piping: The pipers represent the 11 apostles (excluding Judas Iscariot).

Twelve Drummers Drumming: The 12 drummers are meant to represent the 12 points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.



Rev Chris

Our Interactive Advent Calendar

A special SVB novelty this year is the interactive Advent Calendar on our website. Beginning December 1, it offers a box to be opened each day till Boxing Day. Each box when clicked will play a short video clip – one of which many of you have been recording.

But you cannot cheat and get ahead! It will only become available on the specified day.

Here is what it looks like if viewed on a laptop computer:



You will note that each of the pictures in the boxes are scenes from the 2024 Crib Festival. If you access the Calendar from your tablet or smartphone, it will look slightly different, but each of the boxes will be in the right order.

It provides a wonderful way in which we, as believers in Jesus, can express what Christmas means to us or recall happy memories of Christmases past.

Join the fun. We may even have a few vacant slots to fill in the run-up to Christmas.

Here is the link:

<https://svbcofe.org.uk/cribfest-2025/#calendar>.

Or if you prefer a QR code:



Frank Gray <admin@svbcofe.org.uk>

Bishop Robert to be C of E Lead Safeguarding Bishop

Bishop Robert is to be the Church of England's new Lead Safeguarding Bishop, taking over from Bishop Joanne Grenfell who leaves the role at the end of March 2026, when her three-year term ends.

Bishop Robert will work closely with the National Director of Safeguarding, Alexander Kubeyinje, and other members of the National Safeguarding Team which provides specialist expertise on casework, policy development, training, evaluation and survivor participation.

Bishop Robert is currently one of the Deputy Leads for Safeguarding and chairs the Theology and Safeguarding Group. He also chairs the Task and Finish Group which scrutinises the work the Church is undertaking in response to the Makin review recommendations, and was also chair of the Task and Finish Group set up after the Scolding Report.

In his new role, Bishop Robert will chair the National Safeguarding Steering Group, the delegated House of Bishops body responsible for making national safeguarding decisions.

Bishop Joanne Grenfell, who is to be welcomed as Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich in January, will move into the role of Deputy Safeguarding Bishop with responsibility for the ongoing work on Safeguarding Structures, which is a programme of work strengthening Church safeguarding. When she takes up her role as a member of the House of Lords, Bishop Joanne will also speak on safeguarding.

Bishop Rachel warmly welcomes Bishop Robert's appointment to this role. She said "Bishop Robert will bring his wisdom, insight, ability to engage with challenging issues, and his pastoral heart, to this role. I believe that his leadership in this significant national role will be a gift not only to the wider Church but also to us here in this diocese."

Bishop Robert said: "I am looking forward to taking on this role alongside my ongoing ministry in the Diocese of Gloucester. I accept this invitation with a profound sense of calling to contribute to the development of healthy cultures across all areas of Church life. Through my involvement in the Scolding and Makin reviews, I have learned a great deal from victims and survivors—wisdom that will continue to shape and inform all that I seek to do in this new role."



Gloucester Diocesan web site

Archdeacon Hilary

Many of you may have met Archdeacon Hilary since she took over as Archdeacon of Gloucester seven years ago. Sadly, she has decided the time has come to resign her post and we recently said goodbye to her at a special evensong at Gloucester Cathedral. Ever since I joined the diocese she has been a great support and font of all knowledge!

I am sure you will join me in wishing her well for the future, but it also occurred to me that you might not really know what an Archdeacon does. They are the Bishop's representative and the Church of England describes the role of an archdeacon as 'being a good steward so that others are freed to be the worshipping, witnessing and ministering Church.'

The Diocese website says this 'The Diocese of Gloucester is divided roughly down the middle with the Gloucester Archdeaconry to the west and Cheltenham Archdeaconry to the east. Archdeacons have a wide variety of responsibilities, each contributing towards the healthy mission and ministry of the parishes and worshipping communities within their areas, as well as sharing in the wider strategic life of the Diocese. They support clergy, churchwardens and PCCs in both their spiritual and practical exercise of mission in their local context. Archdeacons work closely with Area Deans and Deanery Lay Chairs and have a particular role during a vacancy (i.e. when a member of clergy has moved or retired) and in the appointment of clergy.'

Archdeacon Hilary says this as she leaves us: "My overwhelming feeling as I look back is one of gratitude. It's been a privilege to serve both as Archdeacon of Gloucester and as a Residentiary Canon of Gloucester Cathedral. There are many treasures I will take away. Here are just three. I've been moved by the way that difference and diversity is lived in this diocese, underpinned by strong relationships and mutual respect. It's a gift we can never underestimate and should always cherish as we learn from one another. I've been awed by the often costly faithfulness of individuals and worshipping communities, serving their wider communities diligently through times of joy and significant challenge. And I'm so thankful for the friendship, kindness and support that has come from relationships forged in this place."

The recruitment process for a new Archdeacon of Gloucester has now started so watch this space for an announcement in the coming months. **Rev Chris**

Copy Deadline: Jan 19

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



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Chipping Sodbury Music Society

Tuesday 10th Feb. 2026 7:30 pm

Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

Francisco Correa & Asaka String Quartet



The prizewinning Quartet joins our international guitarist for an exciting and hugely varied programme ranging from Boccherini's "Fandango" quintet to newly premiered Wynwood Walls by Welsh composer Stephen Goss. Programme also includes Mendelssohn's quartet Op 12 in Eb major and Tarrega's fantasia on themes from "La Traviata".

YATE CHORAL SOCIETY

Hark the herald Angels Sing

Seasonal Carols & Readings



Join us for some
Family friendly
Christmas Cheer!

Graham Coatman
Musical Director

Nick Sherwood
Accompanist

Tuesday 9th December 7.30pm

Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

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The Children's Society

Sadly no one has come forward to continue collecting boxes on behalf of The Children's Society, next year. It is still not too late to volunteer, just contact me for information.



I would like to share with you what supporters have made possible during 2024/25.

- Directly supported more than 57,600 young people when they were struggling, so that they could transform their lives
- Run 77 services for young people and their families, including early support and responding to risk.
- Supported 8,037 young people across all the early support hubs. *Time for Young People and Pause services.*
- Support 3,547 parents and carers, through one-to-one sessions, events and group work.
- Work with more than 15,800 professionals, enabling them to better support young people at risk of abuse and harm or struggling with low well being.

We pray ...

"Loving Lord, we thank you for the work of The Children's Society, which reaches out to young people in pain and injustice. We pray for wisdom to listen to their voices and for strength to create a fair and just society where all children can know your love.

- *Bless the staff and volunteers as they support those who are homeless, in prison, or facing problems in the community.*
- *Grant safety and a better future to children who are not safe at home, are living in poverty, or are suffering from fragile mental health.*
- *Help us to work with children and young people to create a society where they can thrive and be protected from harm.*
- *In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen".*

Hilary Hurley

Chipping Sodbury Harvest Supper.

On Friday 10th October the Church Centre was filled with people connected with Chipping Sodbury Church to celebrate the Harvest: as last year, the tables were decorated by Kathryn Thompson and looked lovely. We enjoyed the Harvest Loaf bought locally and a hot meal including fruit crumbles made by willing volunteers. A big thankyou to all who helped and to Anne Vickers for planning the event and for all her hard work. Anne also read, so expressively,

'Diary of a Church Mouse' by John Betjeman. Rachel Clarke sang beautifully, accompanied by Jamie Knights on piano. Rachel got most of us singing songs from her teenage years. I admit to being very moved by Edelweiss as I remembered the scene of the von Trapp family making their escape while the whole audience sang with them and as the lights went down the singing continued. I leave it to some of our guests to comment on the evening: 'a very enjoyable evening', 'just the right balance for a Harvest Celebration – simple food, good fellowship, finishing with a short entertainment we could join in with if we wanted', 'we both came and had such a lovely evening: good food and good company'.

If only the washing up had disappeared while we were singing Edelweiss!!

Helen HB



Horton Harvest Lunch.

The 26th of October saw the end of British Summer Time and the Horton Harvest Lunch held in the Horton and Little Sodbury Village Hall. The hall was at capacity with members of St James', Horton, Horton villagers and a contingent from St Adeline's, Little Sodbury. The food was excellent and plentiful and was eaten in a friendly and sociable atmosphere. The event was rounded off by a raffle with a wonderful selection of prizes including the

"star" prize of a load of logs for wood burners. A huge thank you must go to Tina and her team who produced such a delicious spread of food, even catering for food intolerances.



Michael Stephenson

Why I'm not ashamed to cry at Christmas ads

It's time for me to admit that I, a middle-aged white man, cry at Christmas adverts.

Wait! Can't I see that they are weapons-grade emotional manipulation, deployed by the capitalist superstructure to manipulate me into spending money, in turn fuelling a system that not only exploits me, but the very cultural heritage it purports to celebrate?

I absolutely can. Can I allow adverts to move me anyway? I absolutely can.

The season's first offering appeared in the shape of the John Lewis advert. And a fine example of the craft it is too: cinematically shot, poignantly performed, landing with on screen text that reads, 'If you can't find the words, find the gift.' Powerful stuff.

It's rich material for carol service sermons, especially because the last line sets up the Christmas story so well: when he couldn't just say it anymore, God gave the gift of his son. Or even better: at Christmas the Word of God *became* the gift.

But for those of us who'll find ourselves chatting at office Christmas parties, around tables at family gatherings, or sat next to a non-churchgoing friend at the carol service we plucked up the courage to invite them to, sermon one-liners could sound like clanging cymbals.

That's why I want to admit that Christmas adverts make me cry.

Because as every advertising agency that's made a Christmas ad knows, we humans are emotional creatures. God has made us this way. That means that in any given moment, my emotions are a valid part of my human experience, and can even reveal my deeper, unconscious longings – in this particular case, to have a relationship with a dad.

So this coming Advent, I'm leading with less polished analysis, more leakage of the facial region. And if a Christmas ad can help me with that, well then I'll let it do its work – because every tear I shed is a reminder of the promise that Immanuel will wipe those same tears away (Revelation 21:4).

While I wait for that day – with others in the John Lewis checkout queue, or with whoever I'm sitting next to this season – I'll keep admitting that I'm a middle-aged man who cries at Christmas adverts. I'm hoping that will open conversations up, rather than shut them down. And wherever things do go, I know where I start. Honest tears. Open heart. God with us.

Tim Yearsley (*Tim is Head of Communications at LICC*)



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

Christmas services around the Benefice

Christmas Carol Services

Friday 19th December: Little Sodbury **6.00 pm**

Sunday 21st December: Horton **11.15 am;**

Old Sodbury **3.00 pm**

Followed by a procession to join the celebrations on the village green

Chipping Sodbury **6.30 pm**

Afterwards wandering to the Baptist Church for seasonal refreshments



Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services

Wednesday 24th December:

Old Sodbury Crib Service **3.00pm**

Chipping Sodbury Christingle **3.00pm and 4.30pm**

Horton First Communion of Christmas **5.00pm**

Chipping Sodbury First Communion of Christmas
(midnight mass) **11.30pm**

Old Sodbury First Communion of Christmas
(midnight mass) **11.30pm**



Thursday 25th December:

Chipping Sodbury Family Communion **9.30 am**

Old Sodbury Family Communion **11.15 am**

From A Rocha's 2025 Easy Eco Tips Calendar.

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



DECEMBER

Celebrate a simpler and greener Christmas.

As Advent begins, let us turn our gaze to the true meaning of Christmas - God with us, Emmanuel. The humble birth of a child in a stable may seem distant from the way we celebrate today, but it offers a profound reminder of simplicity. This season, let's reflect on the story that we wish our actions and choices to tell.

Consider A Rocha UK's blog on journeying towards a zero-waste Christmas <https://arocha.org.uk/journeying-towards-a-zero-waste-christmas/>. May our hearts and our celebrations align with the simplicity and beauty of the Christmas story.

Christine Axford

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	4:00pm Until Mar 29 2026
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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