



SVB Outlook

April - May 2026



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

www.svbcofe.org.uk

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Rector's Rambles

I don't know about you, but I love this time of year; writing this at the beginning of March the world around us has begun to change. After the long months of winter, spring is quietly unfurling, colour returns, and what once looked lifeless begins to blossom again. Creation is reminding us that new life is always possible.

In a world where conflict and uncertainty often dominate the headlines, this message feels especially urgent. We know too well that the shadows of war, fear, and division can weigh all of us down as we watch the images on our screens with horror. Writing today it seems that peace is a long way away.

And yet, Easter proclaims that God's peace is not fragile or fleeting. In Jesus Christ—who faced hatred without hatred, violence without violence, and death with self-giving love—we see a peace born not of power but of sacrifice. His resurrection is God's declaration that love is stronger than death, and that hope can break through even the hardest ground.

Like the first shoots of spring, Christ's peace often begins in small and surprising ways: a gesture of kindness, a word of reconciliation, a community choosing compassion over indifference. These are the seeds of God's kingdom, signs that resurrection life is already at work among us.



This Easter, may we open our hearts to the risen Christ who steps into fearful rooms and says, "Peace be with you." And may that peace take root in us—growing, blossoming, and spreading—until it becomes a source of hope for our communities and for a world that longs to be renewed.

A blessed and peaceful Easter to you. **Rev Chris.**

"Writing today it seems that peace is a long way away. And yet, Easter proclaims that God's peace is not fragile or fleeting."

"This Easter, may we open our hearts to the risen Christ who steps into fearful rooms and says, "Peace be with you." "

Six million bins - and counting



Truly I say unto you, the kingdom of God is like a man who emptied six million bins.

Keith Sayers started his job in 1986, two months before I was born. Throughout my entire life, somewhere in Rushcliffe, a man has been emptying bins. During this time, Keith has travelled the equivalent of 10 laps of the world, collecting nearly a billion items.

He's still doing it now.

Last week, Keith was celebrated for his 40 years of service to Rushcliffe Borough Council. I don't think Keith has a LinkedIn profile to post it on. And I'm not sure LinkedIn would know what to make of him if he did. Our shared professional mythology tends to follow a familiar script: disrupt, scale, leverage, pivot, impact. By contrast, Keith told the BBC:

'I've just got up in the morning and I've done my job and life has just carried on. It's been a great job for me, it really has.'

It all sounds like the kind of thing Jesus would point out. Like a widow's offering of two small coins. Children that the disciples tried to shoo away. A cup of water given in his name. Because in the kingdom economy, value is weighted on different scales.

I think we all know this, deep down. You can see it in the way Keith's story has been reported. The various articles don't use Jesus' kingdom language, of course. But they speak of Keith and his work in a tone close to reverence.

We know that work like Keith's is work to be grateful for, even though we so rarely show it. Bin collection sits in that same category as the work of the person running

your church's AV desk: you barely notice it until it's gone wrong. Anyone who remembers last year's near-civilisational collapse from the bin collection strikes in Birmingham will agree, no doubt.

Of course, Keith's kind of quiet, faithful work is what most of us spend most of our time doing on most days. We don't get a certificate and a news report for sending emails, cooking family dinner, or just getting on with the job that pays our salary. But like my favourite parables, Keith's story is one of improbable-sounding numbers that raises a delightful possibility: unseen work is worth celebrating every day. Even if it takes 40 years to get a certificate.

Whose unseen work is worth celebrating where you are?

Tim Yearsley (Head of Innovation, LICC)

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

Your PCC Needs You Could You Serve on your PCC?

As we look ahead to our Annual Meetings we are praying for new people to consider serving on our Church's Parochial Church Council (PCC). The PCC is a vital part of our shared life together. It helps shape the vision of the church, supports our ministry, and ensures that our buildings, resources, and mission are stewarded wisely.



Picture by graphicmama - Pixabay

You don't need special qualifications—just a love for our church, a willingness to listen and work with others, and a desire to see our community flourish. PCC members bring their experiences, skills, and everyday faith to help guide decisions that matter: from supporting worship and discipleship, to caring for our finances and fabric, to encouraging outreach and community partnerships.

Serving on the PCC is a meaningful way to make a difference. It offers the chance to deepen your involvement, get to know others more closely, and play a part in shaping the future of our church family.

Would you take some time to pray about whether this might be the right step for you? If you'd like to know more, please speak to Rev Chris or any current PCC member—we would be delighted to chat.

Together, let's continue building churches that reflect God's love in all we do.

Rev Chris



Horton Teas

Horton Church will be serving afternoon teas at a date and time to be announced shortly. Contact Tina Hildick-Smith for more details.



Photo by Haley Parson - Unsplash

Chipping Sodbury Yarn Festival

We're really excited to be supporting The Wool Cellar in Chipping Sodbury as they undertake their third annual Yarnover on the 18th and 19th April. A weekend dedicated to wool and all things you can make with it in all sorts of ways. With lots of stalls and exhibits, wool will be taking over Chipping Sodbury for the weekend.



We're very pleased to be hosting some exhibitors in the Church Centre (main room) for the duration of the event, they are also taking over the Town Hall, Grammar School and a few other places! On the morning of Saturday 18th we will also be running our usual second hand book sale upstairs in the centre and throughout the weekend we will be offering tea, coffee and cake in the church.

If you're interested in attending the festival tickets are available here <https://thesodburyarnover.co.uk/> or from the Wool Cellar on the High Street. If you can help on the weekend with refreshments or at the book sale please let Anne Vickers or Michelle in the office know.

Our new Deanery Operations Lead

Sending a warm hello to all - I am thrilled to have been recently appointed as the new Wotton Deanery Operations Lead. I am employed by the Diocese to work in the Deanery, collaborating with the wider operations network that is being created, delivering on the deanery strategic plans. I work alongside Graham (Area Dean) and Carole (Lay Chair) and spend the majority of my time in parishes and benefices across the deanery. I have a background in service and quality improvement alongside experience in business development, mainly gained within the healthcare space. I am a registered nurse, and chose to work on ITU throughout the pandemic, hopefully evidencing that I like a challenge and I am not afraid to roll up my sleeves and get to work. One of the projects we have been tasked with is developing and delivering is the Tyndale Trail project, a pilgrimage walking trail through the deanery highlighting the key link points to William Tyndale to celebrate 500 years since the translation and publication of William Tyndale's English New Testament, the first to be translated directly from Greek and Hebrew. There are many links to Tyndale within the deanery, he lived in this area for a period of time and the large 34 meter monument in North Nibley is a physical representation of the huge influence he had on the local area. Rev Chris Butler and I will be leading this project, but are keen to collaborate and work with all who have an interest in the walking trail. Outside of work I am a mum and wife, and our family enjoys spending time in nature looking for bugs and soaking up the beautiful area we live in. Please do say hello if we meet out and about, and feel free to reach out on claire@wottondeanery.org.uk with any questions, feedback or if there are any meetings you would like me to attend. With best wishes, **Claire Coleman**.



Calling all grandparents.....

And the children they love and care for in their families. Churches and communities gathered at St John the Baptist Church in Cirencester, for an afternoon of fun, where they were able to explore Christian faith and spirituality together; through prayer spaces, stories, activities, dance, an interactive worship and more.



The main activity was the Treasure Hunt, a challenge to find symbols representing the precious story of who God is and which Christians use to share with each other.

Given a matchbox, grandparents and grandchildren were tasked with finding around the church, 10 symbols reminding everyone of who God is, to then place in the matchbox to keep and share.

God is Love - A coloured heart, **God is Peace** - A wooden dove, **God is Faithful** - A rainbow sticker, **God is Creating** - a tiny picture of coloured paper, **God is Spirit** - A seed, **God is Hope** - A coloured feather, **God is Life** - A curl of ribbon, **God is Just** - A Jesus figure, **God is Grace** - A cross, **God is light** - A birthday candle.

The most fun was taking part in the silent disco, with blow up guitars and mics, and the gingerbread decorating; don't know which was the best part the decorating, the eating of the gingerbread or the icing!!

The afternoon rounded up with Unevensong, when there was music and dance, a reflection and prayers. Great fun and very much worth being part of this event. I do recommend attending. I took my grandchildren and they thoroughly enjoyed their time there, joining in everything; so look out for details of the next event, or even consider organising one by following

<https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/faithful-generations>

Blessings

Paul Jones-Williams

'We love to read about what you've been getting up to and if you'd like to share with everyone, please send your article to Michelle (office@svbcofe.org.uk) together with any photos. Anything up to around 300 words. Alternatively, if you don't feel able to write, we can offer you a 'Ghost Writer' who will meet with you and write the article on your behalf.'

Copy Deadline: May 18

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

Front Cover:

Spring on the Ridge
By Michael

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Chipping Sodbury Music Society

Tuesday 19th May 2026 7:30 pm
Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

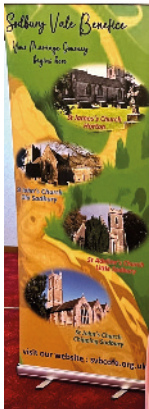
Dominic Aldiss Trio - Jazz Trio



This Trio explore the meeting of classical and jazz. Building on a legacy of Loussier, Brubeck, Evans and the Modern Jazz Quartet, they bring a fresh approach to famous classical themes, opera arias and traditional folk songs. Glorious melodies by Bach, Handel, Faufe, Satie, Bizet, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky and Chopin, blended with the swinging rhythms and improvisation of jazz.

Wedding Fair

Over the past few years, we have had a presence at the South Glos Wedding Fair. This year we again participated in the event held in Chipping Sodbury Town Hall on Sunday February 15th.



The event was well attended with interest being shown to all the various exhibitors. Our SVB display featured a new banner showing all four of our Benefice churches. At the table we had various wedding-related items, even a little packet of 'Love Hearts' to give away. Do you remember those? We gave away copies of our wedding information leaflet to several couples who expressed interest.

My grateful thanks to Rev Chris, Janet and Colin, Linda and Richard for their valuable assistance on the day.

The next Wedding Fair is to be held on Sunday 27th September 2026.

Kathryn Thompson

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The Future of Church Worship

What would our church worship look like if we are to attract younger generations?

This was the main theme of the recent Intergenerational workshop in the Church Centre led by Barrie Voyce of the Gloucester Diocese at the invitation of Rev. Chris.

It was a stimulating evening as Barrie guided us through a series of thought-provoking questions. He brought 20 years of youth-work leadership experience to our discussion, which will be on-going.

‘Think like a child,’ Barrie encourages us as we plan services and activities that will attract children and young families. We will need to work at it, going out to them rather than waiting for them to come to us. Our present style of worship – though comfortable for most of us - is a deterrent to many who are unfamiliar with church. We need to work at removing these obstacles if we expect our Sunday worship to become a magnet in our community, drawing people into a meaningful experience of Christian worship.

Research shows that young people are more open now than they have been for a long time. Many have parents who had no experience of church and continue to feel negative toward church activities. Yet beneath the surface they may continue to hold strong feelings about maintaining and encouraging Christian values in our society.

Barrie lives in Stroud and writes regularly for the Diocese’s *Connect Blog* offering guidance to churches, parents and youth workers. He is the Senior Youth Connector for the Diocese, and the key figure in the Children, Youth and Families team. **Frank Gray**



New Service

Details of our services this Easter are elsewhere in this magazine (page 14) and as always, please know everyone is welcome to any service. I just wanted to draw your attention to a new service the Wednesday of Holy Week (1st April at 7pm) in St John’s Chipping Sodbury; it is a meditation service with Taizé. It links to the Lent course we have been doing, but is also suitable as a standalone service for anyone who is looking for a peaceful service before Easter.

Rev Chris

The Church has forgotten Jesus' teaching on prayer.

It's time to discover the missing peace.

Christian meditation is nothing to be afraid of. In fact contemplative and silent prayer is the most consistently emphasised aspect of Jesus' own prayer life."



Chris is the founder of The School of Contemplative Life and was introduced to contemplative practice during several years of formation at the Benedictine monastery of Prinknash Abbey, Gloucestershire. Chris has introduced the practice of meditation from the Christian wisdom tradition to thousands of people and hosts the largest online Christian meditation practice group in the UK.

These were the words of Chris Whittington who led the **Sodbury Benefice Quiet morning** on Wednesday 11th March from 10.00 – 1.00pm which was attended by 23 people.

Over the course of the morning Chris reminded us that many people are searching for more peace or a deeper connection to God. Rooted in the timeless wisdom of the Desert Fathers and Mothers in the desert tradition, Christian meditation is accessible to us as a path to peace, community and oneness – a simple way of making space to encounter the divine.

As we persevere in this path, we learn to discover a new relationship with our thoughts and feelings, to rest from striving and become attentive to the presence of God within and around us, discovering a peace that once seemed out of reach.

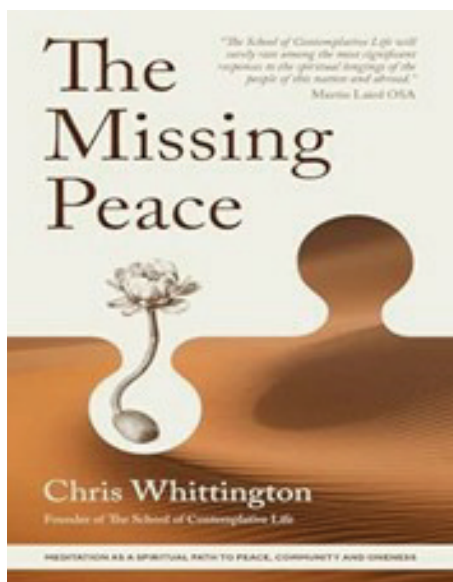
To give us a taste of meditation practice, Chris led us through three periods of silent prayer of 10 minutes each which began and closed with three gongs from the singing bowl.

During times of conversation about our experiences, some commented on the deep quality and beauty of the shared silence whilst others mentioned how distracting our thoughts become during these times. In reply, he said that thoughts will arise quite naturally - as naturally as clouds in the sky - and there is very little we can do about that. The challenges flow from how we **react** to our thoughts. We heard about the importance of learning to quietly acknowledge the clamouring of thoughts, worries, making lists and managing our reaction to them, by simply turning time and time again to our chosen prayer word or mantra. "Leave your front door and your back door open. Let thoughts come and go. Just don't serve them tea!"

Chris shared the insights of saints and sages across the centuries, from Jesus and the desert ascetics, to Julian of Norwich, Martin Laird, Rowan Williams, Maggie Ross and others. This was a banquet from which to feast and we all probably left needing to digest and ponder what we had heard – so thank you, Chris - and indeed all those helped and supported the morning.

Readers of Outlook magazine who may want to know more can go to:

<https://schoolofcontemplativelife.com/> for more information and join an online group - or order Chris' book available on Amazon:



Bishop Rachel Treweek writes "Many years ago, one of the greatest discoveries of my life was that of silent prayer and being still. In a world of constant noise, distraction and conflict, **The Missing Peace** is an invitation to discover the treasure of silent prayer and enter more deeply into the mystery of God's love as we go on becoming who we are in relationship with God, neighbour, creation and with ourselves. This inspiring and beautiful book is not only deeply nourishing but also extremely accessible and practical.

Easter Services around the Sodbury Vale Benefice

Sun 29th March, Palm Sunday

10.30am Benefice Service at Old Sodbury

Wed 1st April

7.00 pm Meditation Service at Chipping Sodbury

Thurs 2nd April Maundy Thursday

10.00am Holy Communion at Chipping Sodbury

7.00pm Communion and Vigil at Chipping Sodbury

Friday 3rd Good Friday

2.00pm Service at the foot of the Cross
at Chipping Sodbury

Saturday 4th

7.00pm Easter Vigil at Little Sodbury

Sunday 5th Easter Sunday

6.30am Sunrise service at Old Sodbury

9.30am Easter Communion at Chipping Sodbury

11.15am Easter Communion at Old Sodbury

11.15am Easter Communion at Horton

6.00pm Easter Communion at Little Sodbury



Quiz News

On the 6th February we gathered together at the Church Centre for a fun evening of quizzing. It was lovely to see the centre full of some familiar and not so familiar faces all enjoying the opportunity to exercise our brain cells. Ivor, our Quiz master, informed us at the start that the only right answer was the one he had – which caused a little debate at times and even though it wasn't what was on his list, he did agree that Luke Littler was in fact the Darts World Champion! But he kept us in order very well. Thank you so much for agreeing to be the face of the quiz. There is, of course a team who work hard to make these events happen and without Christine, who set the questions and was generally in charge of the event, Catherine the glamorous assistant collecting answer sheets, Madeleine for housekeeping behind the scenes and of course me looking after the logistics we couldn't achieve the event. Huge thanks to all involved and all the people who helped to clear up after the event.

We made just under £500 which will go toward the roof repair at the centre; so no more need to keep a bucket on the staircase when it rains!

Who won, I hear you cry? Modesty doesn't allow me to tell you who the winning team were; all I can say surely, "It's all about the taking part!" **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	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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*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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