



SVB Outlook

August - September 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

Our Team



Lay Reader

Tania Manners

07546 995751

mannerst@gmail.com



The Rector

Rev. Chris Butler

07985 708707

rectorchris@svbcofe.org.uk

(Rest Day - Friday)



Associate Priest

Rev.

Jane Jones-Williams

07498 878164

revjanejw@gmail.com

Churchwardens

St John's, Chipping Sodbury

Anne Vickers

01454 850942



Vacancy

St James', Horton

Tina Hildick-Smith

01454 320380



Vacancy

St Adeline's, Little Sodbury

Linda Hurst

01454 319183



Brenda Cordy

07767 076985



St John's, Old Sodbury

Joy Fussell

01454 314074



Vacancy

Administrators

Michelle Jenkins, and helpers

Outlook Advertising

Volunteer required

Safeguarding Nominated Person

Hannah Saunders 07515 915976

safeguarding@svbcofe.org.uk

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When the Heat Rises, Hope Holds

This summer's heatwave has pressed itself into every corner of daily life. We've felt it in our homes, our workplaces, our travel, even our sleep. Conversations in queues, on buses, and across garden fences all circle back to the same theme: *it's too hot, and it's wearing us down*. There's something about relentless heat that exposes our limits. It slows us, tests us, and reminds us how small we are against forces we cannot control.

Perhaps that is why the reading from Daniel, Chapter 3, feels strangely timely. We have been enjoying studying the Book of Daniel in our by-monthly "Together Group"

"However hot things get, Jesus never leaves us to face the flames by ourselves"

online. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are thrown into a furnace so hot that even the guards outside are overcome by the flames. It is heat at its most extreme — heat designed to destroy. Yet when King Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace, he sees not three figures but four. The fourth, we are told, is one like "a son of the gods" — the presence Christians recognise as Christ himself. The miracle is not only that the three men survive. The miracle is **that they are not alone in the fire**. There is a quiet, powerful truth here for us today: **however hot things get, Jesus never leaves us to face the flames by ourselves**.

Heatwaves come in many forms. Some arrive as rising temperatures. Others arrive as pressure, worry, exhaustion, grief, or the slow burn of responsibilities that never seem to cool. But the message of Daniel 3 is that God does not wait for the fire to die down before drawing near. He steps into the furnace with us. And that changes everything. It doesn't always remove the heat. But it removes the loneliness. It turns survival into testimony. It turns fear into courage. It turns a furnace into a place where faith is refined rather than destroyed.

"May his presence be our shade, our strength, and our peace in the days ahead"

Let's remember the burning furnace – three men and Christ himself, stood with them — not outside the fire, not calling from a distance, but *with them*, right in the heart of the heat. And that promise is for us, too. Whatever heat we face — the heat of the weather, the heat of worry, the heat of loneliness, the heat of the world's troubles, Christ stands *beside* us, steady and faithful, in every moment. Christ *within* us, too, causing us to be 'good medicine' for one another. So, may his presence be our shade, our strength, and our peace in the days ahead.

Tania Manners

SVB Strollers

Strollers have enjoyed a variety of walks since February, when led by Rosie we discovered a new walk from Frampton on Severn. Starting from outside the post office we followed a path into the Frampton Court estate and along by one of the lakes, getting a great view of the house. We then made our way to the Sharpness Canal and followed the towpath, with fine views over to the river Severn and beyond to the Forest of Dean, up to Saul Junction, for our coffee and cake stop! Then back to Frampton along the canal, completing 4.5 miles and celebrated by a pub lunch at the Bell.



The following month we took a 4 mile walk led by Bev around the farming village of Tormarton and some of its immediate environs. It was an easy going flat walk, starting with us going past a hidden village pond. The walk passes some interesting buildings in this Cotswold village and the attractive village pond. This was given to the village by the Grigg family as a memorial to Lady Altrincham who lived at Tormarton Court. The pond is now a

registered charity providing a haven for wildlife. The majority of our walk continued across farmland, on both sides of the M4 before returning to the village.



April saw Strollers heading across the Severn to the Forest of

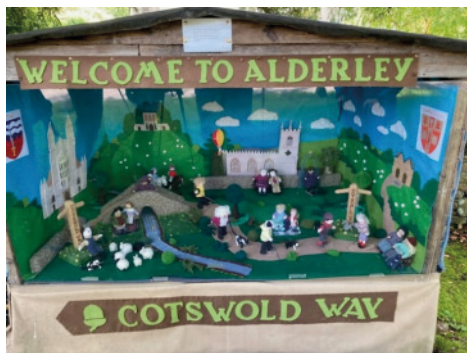


Dean led by Ivor, who obviously thought we needed a bit of a challenge! Starting at Redbrook and staying on the English side of the River Wye, we walked to Newland and All Saints Church. This is a beautiful, light filled church known as the

‘Cathedral of the Forest’ and dates back to the early 1200s. The scenery was varied

with our path going through woodland, green lanes a forest road and fields, covering a section of Offa's Dyke. Unfortunately the heavens opened before we reached our lunchtime hostelry and water wings or a canoe might have been more appropriate than boots!

May saw Strollers beginning our walk in the little known gem of a Cotswold village, Tresham, with its beautiful view down a valley housing the Monarch's Way. Leaving the road we descended quite steeply down into another lovely tranquil valley towards Alderley. There were some fine long distance views en route; much to admire! We stopped to have coffee in the churchyard at Alderley and admired the hand crafted display celebrating the Cotswold way.



We met another interesting walker, with a rather larger rucksack than any of us, who was walking from Land's End to John O' Groats.

The return to Tresham was along the Cotswold and Monarch's Ways. The final stretch being up the valley we had admired at the outset. Overall, a very uplifting walk through beautiful Cotswold countryside. We drove the short distance to The Fleece at Hillesley for a well earned lunch.

As always do come and join us, details on the website.

Anne Vickers

Sodbury Short Mat Bowls Club

Come rain or shine our members meet at

**Old Sodbury Village Hall
from 6.30pm until 9pm
on Monday evenings**

for a friendly game of Short Mat Bowls. Just occasionally if we have too few players, we have to miss our Monday game, which is a real pity for those who are available to play. We therefore really need some more players, and the more the merrier! Visitors are very welcome, so why not pop along to see if you think you would be interested in joining us?

If you would like further details, please contact:

Richard Gilpin on 07860 334191



My favourite hymn

I soon realised how difficult my challenge was: to choose my favourite hymn from the many that bring back very special memories to me: *How Great Thou Art*, *I Vow to Thee My Country*, *Be Still for the Presence of the Lord*, *The Lord's My Shepherd* and *Great is Thy Faithfulness*.

However, the hymn that I have chosen to write about is *The Lord of the Dance*, which was actually written in 1963. I remember singing it at primary school and loving the tune. I'm pretty sure that at that young age, it was the tune that attracted me more than the lyrics, but as I got older, I began to realise how significant those lyrics actually are.

The first verse speaks of God creating the heavens and the earth (*"I danced in the morning when the world was begun"*) and the birth of Christ (*"And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth: At Bethlehem I had my birth"*).

The second verse tells how Jesus was rejected by the Pharisee (*"I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee, but they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me"*), but it was fishermen and lowly people who chose to follow Him (*"I danced for the fishermen, for James and John; they came with me and the dance went on."*)

The third verse speaks of how Jesus was rebuked by the Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath, which led eventually to His Crucifixion (*"I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame: The holy people said it was a shame. They whipped and they stripped and they hung me on high, And they left me there on a cross to die"*).

The fourth verse continues to speak of the Crucifixion, followed in the fifth verse by the Resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone;
But I am the dance, and I still go on.*

*They cut me down and I leapt up high;
I am the life that'll never, never die.
I'll live in you if you'll live in me,
I am the Lord of the dance, said he.*

Lynne Watts



Celebrating 150 years of Mothers' Union at Chipping Sodbury

At our June meeting we had a celebration of this anniversary of Mothers' Union: both in this country and worldwide. We invited our Diocesan MU President, Doreen McLellan, former members of our branch and members from Yate MU, our clergy and supporters of our branch: we aimed to have a real treat for our members some of whom have been members for many years. As always we opened with prayers - the foundation of all we do.



We had decided to take advantage of the offer to have long serving members presented with certificates by Doreen. Long service was 20+ years and 16 certificates were handed to members ranging from 20-55 years of membership. Doreen then spoke about the future plans for MU and reflected on the fruits of projects started both here and abroad in past years that have increased the quality of life for mothers and children and strengthened family life. This continues along with more recent projects to tackle anything which hampers resilient family life and parenting, reflecting the needs of a changing society.



We continued to enjoy fellowship over tea and savoury treats prepared by our committee and then the celebration cake was cut and shared out with drinks. We had a display of items from our archives and details about the history of Mothers' Union on information boards. A very happy afternoon and worth all the hard work of people who joined together for this special time with our members and guests.

The personal prayer of Mary Sumner founder of Mothers' Union:

'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

Art Gallery Project

By Chipping Sodbury Chamber of Commerce

This year we will be supporting the Chamber of Commerce Art Gallery Project.

This is a children's trail throughout the whole 6 week school holiday called Sodbury Summer Search featuring artwork in 40 business windows designed by children from St John's Mead School. Also this year there will also be an exhibition of art housed in St John's, Chipping Sodbury.



The organisers have managed to arrange a local artist who will be holding a community art workshop and this will then be displayed in church.

The exhibition would run from 1st August until the 1st of September, more details will follow as we have them, or you can keep an eye on the Sodbury Summer Search Facebook page.

To Crib or not to Crib



This year the Crib Festival at St John's Chipping Sodbury will be taking a break.

On Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th December 2026

St John's will be holding a
Christmas Event



Come and join the team to be part of this exciting event.

There is a meeting on **Monday 24th August at 11am** in the
Church Centre to kickstart the planning

Everyone is welcome

Further details available from Paul J-W

M: 07980 240103 E: pjandjj81@outlook.com



Copy Deadline: Sept. 16

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

Front Cover:

Dyrham Park Gardens
By Frank Gray

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Romans - What is St Paul trying to teach us?



A Roman soldier
by Heinz
Schneider

For those of you who are church goers I don't know whether you've noticed, but the first readings at Communion since the beginning of June have all been from St Paul's letter to the Romans. You may not have noticed, because those of us who preach have concentrated on the gospel passages. There are good reasons for that. Romans is a difficult book. Unlike a gospel, which usually consists of relatively short stories and sayings, the argument of Romans unfolds over 16 densely-packed chapters. It's difficult to interrupt Paul in mid-flight. Also, Romans is regarded as the summit of Paul's thought, and trying to explain it is sometimes seen as the preacher's equivalent of scaling the north face of the Eiger.

Nonetheless, I thought I'd attempt a few words of introduction. First it's worth saying that Romans has probably had more influence in history than any other book in the Bible. St. Augustine was converted through reading it. Luther's thinking was so profoundly changed by it that he broke with the Church of Rome and

spearheaded the rise of Protestantism in the 16th Century. John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" and his life transformed when he heard a sermon on Romans. And countless others have been deeply affected by reading it.

So what was Paul trying to teach in this letter? He probably wrote it around 57 AD, so only 24 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It's vital to remember that the newly-formed church in Rome, and throughout the Roman Empire, included Jews and Gentiles. Jesus, Paul, the 12 and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem and Judaea were all Jews. Many Jewish Christians tended to resent Gentile converts as interlopers, thought they were worldly and that they ought to observe Jewish laws. Many Gentile Christians thought Jewish believers were legalistic, superior and weird.



St Paul by Dimitrisvetsikas1969

Paul was determined that Jewish and Gentile Christians should learn to love and respect one another in the local church. To do that, he goes to great lengths at the beginning of Romans to show that, before God, all human beings are equally sinful. We all - Jews and Gentiles - need God's love, grace and forgiveness. We also all need faith - faith like Abraham's - to approach God and to know his acceptance. Paul is very clear that it is through Jesus' death alone that we are made right with God. He also encourages Christians to walk in step with God's Spirit, and thus know what it is to live a sin-free life. He assures the Roman Christians that nothing can separate

them from God's love. He argues that Jewish and Gentile Christians need each other for the church to be complete and united. Finally, he applies his teaching to practical issues in the local church.

There is much more I could say, but to end, here are some memorable quotes from Romans:

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (3:23-24)

"The promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all." (4:16)

"Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (8:39)

A final suggestion: why not have a go at reading Romans for yourself, perhaps using a modern translation like The Message? **Steve Abbott**

Dragonflies



Photo by Nennieinszweidreil

The Benefice event really was wonderful, but one worry we had beforehand; how would we keep George from falling in

the pond? No need to worry, for as he approached the water for the first time, he saw the dragonflies flitting around and asked what they were. 'Dragonflies', we told him. 'Do they breathe fire?' he asked. No-one answered him as we mulled over a reply, but it did the trick as he certainly gave the pond a very wide berth from then on!

Rev Jane

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Pieces of the Puzzle

‘Doing mission is like being a part of a big and beautiful puzzle called the Kingdom of God. And each of us is a piece of this puzzle.’

Katia Rocks was preaching in St John’s Chipping Sodbury in June and brought a challenging message. She is from Brazil and had just arrived to speak in churches here in the UK. Ours was the first.

‘As a missionary in Brazil I am only one piece of the puzzle. Churches that pray are another piece. The people who give financially are another piece. Those who encourage missionaries are yet another piece. Those who serve faithfully in their local communities are another piece of the puzzle.

No single piece can complete the picture alone.’

One of the pieces in her puzzle was to work in the women’s prison in Florianopolis, one of the strictest in Brazil. In 2024 she taught a 12-week course to two groups of twelve women. Each 12-metre square cell holds twelve women, and they eat in their cells. They are only allowed out for one hour each day.



In Brazil there are powerful drug trafficking gangs and many of the women have connections to them. Violence often breaks out. Yet God is at work there. One cell leader, a hardened woman who was sentenced for 30 years, came up to Katia toward the end of the course. Her sentence had been reduced by two years. ‘Katia, I prayed for

this. After many years of not praying, I got down on my knees and asked God to help me.’

Do pray for Katia as she has now been joined by her family after speaking in many churches. She is much encouraged by the love she has felt here.

Become a piece in the puzzle!

Frank Gray

Benefice Picnic Lunch.



Amidst some very indifferent days, Saturday 13th June dawned with lovely sunshine and a gentle breeze, the perfect day for a Benefice Picnic Lunch! At the very kind invitation of Gail and Neil, folk from all around the Sodbury Vale Benefice made their way to Horton Hall for a family picnic lunch; around fifty in all. The Hall's beautiful gardens were the ideal setting for people to come together, relax in the tranquility, and enjoy an excellent lunch to which all had contributed by bringing a delicious variety of fare. It was a time for all the family, and it was so encouraging to see people from across the age ranges obviously enjoying spending time together getting to know one another better. There was a buzz of conversation throughout our time together and new friendships were made. The invitation to explore the fabulous gardens was well taken up, either through a gentle wander in the sunshine or by taking part in the slightly more energetic Treasure Trail which explored particular features of the gardens with a mystery



prize that eluded most! Croquet, Petanque and other games were available for the more energetic and some serious contests were witnessed. All in all, a wonderful time together affording a special opportunity for members of the Benefice to spend a relaxed time together getting to know one another better. An abiding memory is the sight of many groups seated around the lawns enjoying good food and fellowship together. A great success and we look forward to the next venture drawing the Benefice together. If you couldn't make this event, do come next time, you'll be

in for a treat. Finally, a huge thanks to all who made this happen.

Frank Gray

Franciscan Peace Pilgrimage

Franciscans in your area and throughout the world will be celebrating the **800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi** this summer and autumn. The Anglican Franciscan family will be making a **Pilgrimage of Peace** across the country travelling from Friary to Friary, beginning on Saturday 18th July. They will be receiving hospitality in churches, halls and homes during the pilgrimage.

The Pilgrims will finish at one of the London houses at the start of October. The celebration of the Saint's death will take place worldwide on the 3rd and 4th of October.



Brothers and sisters will be joined by supporters as they walk, and invite others who are sympathetic to join them. Those interested in doing so can join in for a day by contacting **pilgrimage800@franciscans.org.uk**

The route begins at Alnmouth in Northumberland and travels southward.

Further information can be found on the Facebook page **Franciscan Peace Pilgrimage**.

Locally the pilgrimage will be walking from Charfield to Chipping Sodbury on 2nd September and then from Chipping Sodbury to Keynsham on Thursday 3rd September with overnight hospitality provided by our church members.

Further local information about the Franciscans and / or the Pilgrimage can be obtained from

Rob or Chris Axford rha50@outlook.com or craxford@gmail.com

or

the Francis 800 website <https://www.spiritoffrancis.com/2026-franciscan-peace-pilgrimage/>

Rob Axford

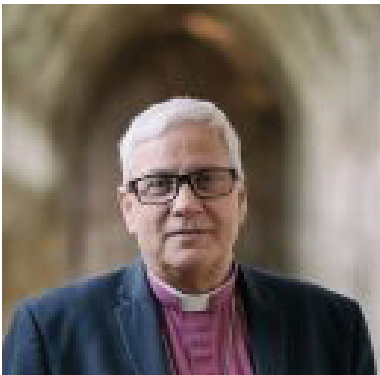
Odd Fact To dazzle your friends with!

No word in the English language rhymes
with month, orange, silver, or purple

A word from Bishop Robert

At the recent ordination services, Bishop Rachel reminded those gathered that “the Church is the Body of Christ, the people of God and the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit.”

That vision was not simply spoken of – it was made visible, as new deacons and priests were ordained and sent out to serve. In their calling, we glimpse something of the Church as God intends it to be: a people raised up and sent in the power of the Spirit. For the ministry of deacons and priests is rooted in, and exists to serve, the calling given to all God’s people in baptism. They are ordained not to act alone, but to enable the whole Church to live out its vocation – discerning, nurturing, and drawing forth the gifts of all, so that together with their congregations they may share in Christ’s mission to the world. Please continue to hold them in your prayers as they begin this next stage of their ministry, and pray also for those among whom they will live and work.



+Robert

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 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.



Rev. Steve Abbott

abbott.steve@btinternet.com



Rev. Chris Mason

revd.chris.mason@gmail.com



Rev. Canon Rob Axford

rha50@outlook.com



Rev. David Powe

[01454 777745](tel:01454777745)



Rev. Christine Axford

craxford@gmail.com



Rev. Colin Lunt

colin@lunt.co.uk



Rev. Canon Catherine Coster

catherinecoster3@gmail.com



Mike Swain (Reader)

swain189@btinternet.com

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