SVB Outlook

December 2026 & January 2027



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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Published by **The Sodbury Vale Benefice,** Church Office, St John's Church Centre, Wickwar Road, Chipping Sodbury, BS37 6BQ, 01454 325160, sodburyvalebenefice@gmail.com, Open in school term time, Mon. and Thu. mornings 9.00 - 12.00. Ed. - Michael Stephenson svboutlook@svbcofe.org.uk



Dear Friends

As we look back over 2026, there's no doubt it's been a challenging year, particularly how the extreme weather affected so much and so many. As we struggled, we couldn't help but think of the natural world as wildlife suffered so greatly. But I marvel how the grass, which was the colour of straw and liable to burst into flames, showed signs of life within days after the first rain and very quickly turned to vibrant green. It seemed bizarre to get the lawnmower back out! Then the glorious colours of autumn transformed into bright twinkling lights as chilly December envelopes us.

For many, the run up to Christmas brings a familiar mix of emotions. The joy of gathering with family and friends, hearing carols while out shopping or during special services, and hearts either lifting or sinking as 'I Wish it Could be Christmas Everyday' blasts out, realising we've been regaled with this for over 50 years! Yet, Christmas can feel heavy in the busyness of shopping, cooking and planning. For some, this season highlights an emptiness, loss, ever tighter budgets, or health struggles that make celebrating harder.

"May the wonder of the Christ-child fill your home with warmth, your spirit with comfort, and your days with hope this Christmas and through the New Year."

But as we reflect on the truth of the Christmas story, we realise God doesn't wait for us to have everything polished, calm and wrapped up neatly before he draws near. Jesus Christ came over 2,000 years ago into a quiet, messy, and uncertain world and he's here for us now in our messy and uncertain world.

In the gospels, Jesus is described as the light shining in the darkness, a light the darkness has not overcome. He steps right into our noise and stress and longs to offer us peace.

Whether you come into our churches this Christmas with a heart full of thanksgiving, or carrying quiet worries you haven't quite put into words, you belong here. Our doors and our hearts are wide open; we look forward to welcoming you.

May the wonder of the Christ-child fill your home with warmth, your spirit with comfort and your days with hope this Christmas and through the New Year.

With my prayers and every blessing. **Rev Jane**

A prayer for Advent from CAFOD

CAFOD are the **Catholic Agency for Overseas Development** who are working to relieve poverty around the world

Christ, come into our world of darkness
Light up our lives with your coming.
Fulfil all our longings with the joy of your birth
Strengthen our resolve to work for change in our world
And to share the hope of your birth that each Advent brings.
Amen

Time out in Advent and beyond.



We know that the run-up to Christmas can be busy for some and a tough time for others. If you need some time out at any point, our churches are open as places of peace and prayer. They belong to the whole community, not only to those who attend regularly, and everyone is welcome. In each church you will also find prayer cards and helpful information to take away.

Concert at St James', Horton



On the 25th October, for the first time, Horton changed a church service for a concert .

We knew the singers, Go Vocal, from their performance at Old Sodbury afternoon teas one afternoon in the summer, and when Tina and Rev Chris heard them sing , Tina said, "We would love them to come to Horton."

So many people came to hear them and support the day. The church was full, there was plenty to eat and drink and it was such a happy time. Thank you to all of you who came along. **Tina**

Harvest festival for Horton and Little Sodbury

This year harvest festival for St James', Horton and St Adeline's, Little Sodbury was a joint service held at St James', Horton.

Unfortunately Rev Chris was taken ill on the day and so it fell to Tina Hildick-Smith to conduct the service, which she did very smoothly and professionally delivering us a thoughtful and meaningful service.

The church was decorated beautifully by teams from both churches producing some fantastic decorations.





As we didn't have a sermon we heard Jill Dolman read her father's harvest poem which she did with deep feeling, evoking the experience and meaning of harvest for us all.

Our organist for the service was Graham Newman whom we see here hiding behind the flowers.



The service was well attended with the church being almost full. Following the service we enjoyed a marvellous harvest buffet with drinks, and good fellowship was enjoyed as we consumed the delicious food.

Many thanks to the Rev Chris and the people from both St Adeline's and St James' who helped to put together this delightful service, to provide the food and drink and to decorate the church so beautifully.

Michael Stephenson

Books and Cake!

We would like to thank all those who have supported our bimonthly book sales and coffee mornings at the church centre, by donating cakes, tombola prizes and books and, of course, as customers. These events are an important part of our income, raising just over £2000 last year. We would like, however, to make a heartfelt plea and ask you not to use us to clear out your old, dusty, mouldy book collections from the year dot!! We do not have the storage facilities or the manpower to deal with multiple bags of books, especially when they cannot be sold. If you want to donate books, we would appreciate newish books that you would be happy to buy yourself and only one bagful at a time. Thank you in anticipation for your cooperation.

The Book Team

Chipping Sodbury Harvest Supper



Everyone had a jolly time at the Harvest Supper on Friday 16 Oct 2026 which was held in the Church Centre.

Ably organised again by Anne and her band of field workers, Katherine, Michelle, Emma and Julie and seasoned crew of Hilary and Nigel.

After an opening prayer of thanksgiving and welcome by Reverend Chris, a communal supper was enjoyed at tables beautifully decorated by Katherine. Michelle made a harvest loaf fit to display in any bakery window, mouse and all! Hearty fare was followed by home made puddings provided by Gail, Helen, Michelle and Anne. This year was BYOB (bring your own bottle) to keep the ticket price the same as last year.



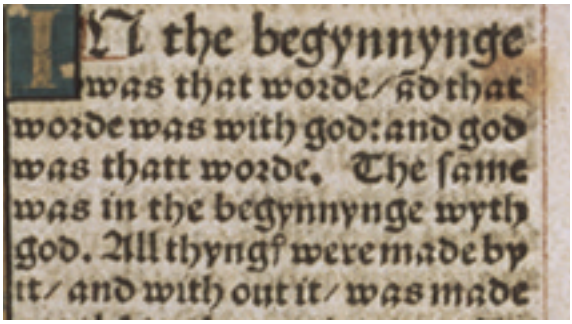
"We thank you, then, O Father, for all things bright and good, the seed-time and the harvest,our life, our health, our food"

Entertainment was provided by the Yate & Sodbury U3A Shanty Singers, who kindly gave up their time to regale us with musical tales of adventures at sea and on terra firma! We finished by all joining in to sing "We Plough the Fields and Scatter".

Thank you to everyone who helped make it possible and all who joined on the night.

Julie

500th Anniversary of Tyndale's Bible


In the begynnynge
was that worde/ & that
worde was with god: and god
was thatt worde. The ſame
was in the begynnynge wyth
god. All thyngſ were made by
it/ and with out it/ was made

John Ch1 in Tyndale's new Testament

As this year is the 500th anniversary of William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament from the original Greek and Hebrew being smuggled into England from the Continent, where it was printed, there has been a rise in the number of pilgrim visits to Tyndale's church, St Adeline's, Little Sodbury.

A little earlier this year, we had a visit from the U3A church group who were interested in the church and its structure and also our connection to William Tyndale. This was followed by a team of American film makers, who were making a film about the life and achievements of William Tyndale and who were thrilled to be able to film in the church and record some comments on Tyndale's life.



We have also had a group from the Bible Society, who were on a walking trip around the places of interest related to Tyndale. Then we were visited by a group of Americans organised by the Tyndale Society who were on a coach trip to take in the wider scope of Tyndale's influence in England and some were moving on into Europe to follow Tyndale's life after he left Little Sodbury and moved via London to Europe and on to his execution in Vilvoorde in Belgium.

For these two groups I gave a talk on Tyndale's life with a focus on his time living in Little Sodbury, and some of his adventures after leaving here.

We were also visited by a group organised by a Methodist minister from Gloucester who were following the Tyndale trail through the area. We look forward to more of these pilgrimages as we strengthen our ties with the Tyndale Society and pilgrimage groups.



The most recent group to visit was the Rt. Rev. Dr Vincent Kumar, Bishop of Karnataka Central Diocese in India, his wife and three of his senior clerics, hosted by Rev Steve Abbott with Rev Gary Grady. I talked to them about William Tyndale, his time here in Little Sodbury and on into Europe and his influence on today's Bible versions and on the English language.

Michael Stephenson

SVB Strollers

I have only one walk to tell you about this time as we had to cancel our October walk due to heavy rain and winds and we do walk for pleasure!



In September, however, we had good weather for our trip to Berkeley. We parked in Stock Lane and made our way down to Berkeley Pill, the local name for a stream, where we couldn't resist a photo with this cheerful floral display. The path follows the pill, past a playground and along fields, before crossing the road leading to the power station and joining the Severn Way Path. This was one of the earliest nuclear power stations built in the 1950's and was decommissioned in 1989 but the buildings are still a distinctive feature of the shoreline.



We stopped for our coffee break and enjoyed this view. Although there were plenty of geese to be heard we didn't see any and as we continued down to the Severn the exceptionally high water level probably explained it. We were greeted by the rather surreal sight of a ship, apparently gliding through the field! There were two ships making their way to and from Sharpness docks, which soon came into view as we climbed the embankment.



After a short stretch along the river towards the docks we turned inland on a bridle way, which came back into the town on Hook Street. We then visited the church with its unusual separate tower. This was built as far away from the castle wall as possible so that it could not be used to attack the castle by firing arrows over the defences. Having completed 4.5 miles we went for a well- deserved lunch in Berkeley café, with excellent cake!

We would welcome new walkers to join us on our strolls around the glorious countryside that surrounds us. Please check out the website the week before the third Wednesday of the month, which is when we walk.

Anne Vickers

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Chipping Sodbury Music Society
December 2026



Keziah Thomas

Harpist Keziah Thomas, acclaimed by the New York Concert Review as " *stupendous . . totally original and engaging"* presents her solo harp arrangement of Vivaldi's Four Seasons, alongside vivid musical tales from around the world. Keziah will also be running a harp workshop!

Tuesday December 1st 2026 at 7:30 pm
At Chipping Sodbury Town Hall, BS37 6AD
Tickets on the door on the night, or from www.ticketsource.co.uk/csmusicsociety
(a small booking fee will apply)
For further information phone 01454 315741 or visit website www.csmusicsociety.co.uk

Chipping Sodbury Music Society
February 2027



Ensemble Ébano

Ensemble Ébano will tell you a story inspired by 1934, a year of artistic and political landmarks. Flute, French Horn, Harp and Mezzo Soprano, in various combinations, playing pastoral English music; echoes of Glyndebourne's inauguration and reflective morsels.

Tuesday February 9th 2027 at 7:30 pm
At Chipping Sodbury Town Hall, BS37 6AD
Tickets on the door on the night, or from www.ticketsource.co.uk/csmusicsociety
(a small booking fee will apply)
For further information phone 01454 315741 or visit website www.csmusicsociety.co.uk

Distribution of Outlook Magazine



Photo by Rich McD

At a meeting of the Communications Team in March, Rev Chris suggested that it would be a good idea to ask shops and businesses in Chipping Sodbury High Street whether they would be willing to take issues of Outlook and make them available to their customers. I was happy to volunteer and was very encouraged by the response of all those I visited - Hamptons, the Wool Cellar, the Old Bank Hotel, Future Brides, Sodbury's Sweet Emporium, Innovations, Toll House Clinic, Animal House Vets, Tourist Information Office and My Little Town. I have now been delivering Outlook to these businesses every two months since April and have been delighted by the enthusiasm they all show, with some actually asking for extra copies. If you have any suggestions about other shops or businesses that might be interested in taking issues of Outlook for their customers, please do let me know.

Lynne Watts

My Dyrham World



Recently at the Dyrham volunteers' summer social I was awarded my certificate to mark 15 years of vounteering at the NT property. Some of you will know I am to be found as a room guide on a Thursday. When I first expressed an interest, it was when the NT had decided to open properties every day, so I had offered to work on a Wednesday. I was accepted and summoned for training. Unfortunately this consisted of only an hour and was mainly about the ethos of the NT, which I already knew as I was a member! No hints about how to engage the public or what to do in an emergency! We were given a copy of an old guide book and then at the end the leader said, "Can anyone do next week?" So the following week, I turned up to a baptism of fire! My first shift was on the front door, checking membership cards or tickets, clicking the numbers, and because it was raining, giving out blue overshoes and covers for umbrellas. Oh and delivering the two facts I knew! Over the years I have acquired a lot more knowledge from reading room guides, talking to conservators and attending the winter lectures that are laid on. Most volunteers do one day a week and having moved to a Thursday some time ago, we have a great team, who support each other, go out for meals regularly and have a great deal of fun. I am pleased to say if you volunteer for the house now, considerably more training is given and you shadow other team members before you are let loose on your own! On your shift you will be in four different rooms, so you don't get bored repeating yourself. A few years ago, I was lucky enough to guide up on the roof when it was being done. Watching the skilled lead workers and stonemasons was a real joy.



There are volunteers in all aspects of Dyrham: you can work in the park, the garden, the shop, the bookshop, the café, in admin., driving the minibus or as a welcomer, in addition to the house. We are always looking for new volunteers so if you fancy giving a few hours a week just up the road, get in touch or go to the Dyrham website.

I thoroughly enjoy my weekly visit to Dyrham, I meet a great variety of people and it is lovely to be able to enhance their visit by telling the story of William Blathwayt and answer their questions. We get many visitors in the summer from Europe, especially the Netherlands and the USA. Now we are busy helping to make decorations to dress the rooms for Christmas. There is always something new to do in my Dyrham world.

Anne Vickers

A Christian's take on Artificial Intelligence

(or "A Christian looks at AI")



Photo by Igor

Hardly a day goes by without an item of news about AI. Sometimes it's positive, for example, a report of a break-through drug which has been discovered through an enormous number of complex procedures that only AI could perform at such lightning speed. Often however it's negative: huge data-bases have been mysteriously hacked into by AI engines without anyone knowing the reason why. This astonishingly powerful new technology has been unleashed on the world in the last 20 years (though it has been in the making ever since the advent of the computer), and we are suddenly becoming aware of how radically and quickly it is changing our lives.

Important people are taking note of this. The Pope has recently written an encyclical, "Magnifica Humanitas" on the subject of AI. King Charles has assembled a group of experts for a conference about it. The bishops of the Church of England have also met to discuss its significance. At a personal level, I spent 2 days recently with a number of retired clergy on a "reading retreat", discussing Professor John Lennox's book "2084 and the AI Revolution", which looks at many aspects of AI from a Christian standpoint.

Let's consider some of the positives and negatives of AI. Positively, even at a very low-key level, AI can help us if we consult it about personal, domestic issues, e.g. ChatGPT seems to have solved a problem that I've been having with cramp in my feet! On a large scale, there are the amazing results, already mentioned, that can be achieved in medical treatment, and AI can be effective in many other fields of research and development. It has also revolutionised language translation and communication, and enabled notable progress in the development of autonomous vehicles and robotics.

But even where we see positives, there are also negatives. For example, in the field of education, while AI can provide huge amounts of data, and effectively précis material, it can also be used by students to manufacture essays. In the Arts, original material can be stolen and reworked, faked and copied. And negatively, AI can give rise to sinister social and political developments, like the surveillance and social credit systems used in China which assist and bolster an authoritarian regime, and are being copied by similar regimes.

When considering AI as a Christian, some things stand out to me as fundamental. First, it is not, and never will be, human. It's a machine. Some way-out theorists believe that it will give rise to a new, silicon-based life-form - presumably self-created. I don't believe that for a second. Human beings are unique, created, the

Scriptures tell us, by God in his image. We have invented AI through the extraordinary gifts that God has given us. How we use it, and whether we can control it, is another matter, and this is the great challenge that faces us.

Secondly, AI does not have a moral sense. The jury is out as to whether it can be programmed to have one, but even if it can, everything would depend on the moral sense of the programmer. Also, AI can start to do strange and unexpected things, as we have seen recently. To use the jargon word for this, it can "hallucinate". No wonder the tech bros of Silicon Valley are getting concerned - very concerned - about what might happen to civilisation when a super-AI engine goes rogue.

So as Christians, we need to be aware that AI is a tool. It is vitally important that it is used by upright people and moral governments for the good of mankind. If it is misused by evil people it will cause mayhem. It is certainly not the solution to humanity's deepest problems. We find that solution only in God, and in the radical change he can make to individuals and society, if only we would believe in him and allow him to guide us. When it comes to the ultimate destiny of humanity, we can take comfort from the fact that God is in control.

Steve Abbott (without any help from AI)

My Favourite Hymn


Photo by Max Larochelle

When I hear the worship song '**My hope is built on nothing less'** (Cornerstone), something inside me becomes still. I think it's fair to say we've all weathered storms we never expected — storms of loss, storms of change, storms that came quietly and stayed longer than we wished. And that's why this song feels so precious. It reminds me that my hope has never rested on my own strength, but on Christ Himself.

Christ is the one foundation that doesn't shift. People change, circumstances change, even my own confidence changes — but He remains steady. The lyric "I rest on His unchanging grace," suggests to me how often grace has carried me, quietly and faithfully.

I love the honesty of the song; it doesn't pretend that life is easy. It speaks of darkness, of storms, of moments when God feels hidden. Yet the song gently leads us back to the truth: "Through the storm, He is Lord, Lord of all." That line has become a kind of anchor for me, a truth to lean on when the night feels long.

The song begins softly, almost like a prayer, and grows into a strong declaration, and that feels like the journey of faith itself; we start in vulnerability, and find the confidence not within ourselves, but in Christ alone, and it reminds us that He has been our Cornerstone all along. **Tania Manners**





In the busyness, noise and distraction of everyday life, it can be a real blessing to find a quiet space to pause, reflect and simply be in God's presence.

Many readers of Outlook magazine will know that our Taizé services offer just such an opportunity. Inspired by the ecumenical community of Taizé in France, these services are centred around simple, beautiful chants, periods of silence, scripture readings and prayer. The Taizé Singers lead and enrich the music consisting of short phrases repeated several times, which allows us to move beyond words and enter into a deeper sense of stillness and contemplation.



On Saturday 26th September, we included healing ministry in the 5.00pm service. This is an ancient practice of the Church and continues to offer anyone with personal concerns about physical illness, emotional pain, anxiety, grief, difficult relationships - or simply a longing for peace and strength - the chance to receive prayer, laying-on of hands or anointing with oil.

There was no expectation or pressure to participate. It simply offered an opportunity to allow someone to pray alongside you, holding whatever concerns you in God's love and in complete confidence. Here is a comment from that evening:

"We both went with open minds but with the concealed burden, both personally and in relation to the family of the enormity of a cancer diagnosis. The service allowed time for quiet contemplation which was reinforced with the knowledge of the support of all who were there. The power of knowing that you were not alone and on your own at challenging times of personal despair was comforting.

The whole experience was immensely powerful, particularly the chance for one-to-one prayer with a choice of counsellors. The opportunity to release long term buried

emotions in a place of safety and with sensitive people was extremely difficult and emotional but cathartic.

We are immensely thankful to have been given the opportunity to participate."

After the Taizé review meeting in November, we hope to have a new programme of services for 2027 where we find, in the stillness, a reminder of God's presence and the promise of his healing love.

For further details of the next healing service, do please watch this space in Outlook magazine, Pew News or SVB web site and come as you are - with your hopes, your worries - or just be in the space simply for yourself. ***Chris Mason***

School Visits

Have you heard that Rev Chris and I go into each of our three church schools, Old Sodbury, St John's Mead and Horton once a fortnight to hold Collective Worship for the pupils? We look at many different themes with them, both current and historical, Biblical and non-Biblical, as well as moral issues. Last year we talked about faith in action as we learned about men and women whose faith helped them change their world. Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman were just a few.

This term we're discovering some of the animals we meet in the Bible and chose the snake, raven, dove, donkey, eagle, whale and lion; looking in depth at the parts they play, which has brought some great discussions.



In addition to Collective Worship, we have two Bible Storyteller teams who alternate with Chris an I. We know both the children and teams really enjoy their time together as they re-enact Bible stories, involving the children as much as possible. The aim is not only that the children should know and love stories from the Bible but also understand how these stories explore what God is like and how the people of the Bible have understood themselves to be in a relationship with God. They also learn about the life of Jesus and can reflect on his meaning and message for themselves.

If you would like to find out more about these wonderful sessions and perhaps join one of the teams (no previous acting experience needed!) please get in touch with me on revjanejw@gmail.com **Rev Jane**

Copy Deadline: Jan 18th Please send all copy for the **Feb-Mar** issue to the Editor or the church office by this date.

Front Cover:
Guess Where?
Photo by P Williams

A message from Bishop Robert



Bishop Rachel and I recently challenged our licensed clergy to identify and encourage one person who may be called to ordained ministry. We did so because we believe that God continues to call women and men to serve his Church, and because we want to be intentional in helping people recognise that call.

But this is not a challenge our clergy can meet in isolation. It belongs to the whole Church. Every congregation and community has a part to play in noticing gifts, encouraging people to explore where God may be leading them. God so often calls in unexpected places and through unexpected people.

Too often we assume that if God is calling someone, they will simply know it for themselves. Yet many people begin to recognise God's call because another Christian first sees something in them and has the courage to say so. A simple word of encouragement, an invitation to explore a possible vocation, or a conversation about gifts and calling can be life changing.

As Bishop Rachel and I reflected on the future, it became clear that this challenge cannot belong only to clergy. It belongs to all of us. We need to nurture a culture of invitation and response, where people are encouraged to listen for God's voice and where the possibility of vocation is recognised as a normal part of discipleship. A healthy church will always be a community that notices gifts, encourages potential, and helps people discern where God may be leading them.

The prophet Isaiah gives us one of the clearest pictures of vocation in Scripture. "Whom shall I send?" asks God. "Here am I; send me" comes the response. A healthy Church is one in which people continue to hear that question and are supported in offering that response.

The challenge Bishop Rachel and I have given to our licensed clergy is a simple one: Perhaps that same challenge is one that every reader might take up. Is there someone whose gifts you have noticed? Someone whose faith, wisdom, compassion or leadership leads you to wonder whether God may be calling them to a new form of service?

Yet there is another question too. As you read this, might you be the person God is calling? Many who now serve in ordained or lay ministry began with uncertainty, convinced that God could not possibly be calling them. Vocation rarely begins with

complete confidence. More often it begins with a willingness to listen, to pray, and to explore where God may be leading. If you have ever wondered whether God might be asking something more of you, perhaps now is the time to begin that conversation with your parish priest.

One of the greatest gifts we can offer another Christian is the confidence to believe that God may be able to use them in ways they have never imagined. Sometimes that gift is one we receive ourselves.

The future of the Church will not be secured simply by plans, strategies or structures. It will be shaped by women and men who hear God's call and respond with faith and generosity. That has always been God's way, and it remains God's way today. **+Robert**

Hannah Bowley

Wotton Deanery Operations Lead (Maternity Cover)



Hi everyone!

I have just joined to cover the Wotton Ops Lead role while the lovely Claire is on maternity leave. I have come from the MOD, where I have spent the past eight years in a variety of roles, mostly focused on people and operational management.

Before that, I worked for a biomedical company, shipping vials of genetically engineered cell lines that modelled human diseases. These were used to identify genetic drivers of disease and test drug responses. It was a fascinating role, and I enjoyed playing a small part in a process that could ultimately help improve people's lives.

Prior to that, I studied Forensic Investigation at university which was great fun!

In my spare time, I enjoy walking with (or being walked by) my dog, occasionally climbing big hills for fun, including Kilimanjaro and Mount Toubkal, going to the gym, and spending time with my partner and family. I have a three-year-old niece who I adore, and I am lucky enough to look after, and be bossed around by her on a fairly regular basis.

I will be based in Church House most Wednesdays and out in the Deanery and Home Office in between. My door is always open, wherever I am, and I look forward to meeting more of you soon. Kind regards, **Hannah**

A Christmas Reflection



Everyone's child has a right, and a duty to wonder…
So let the world fade as, one by one, the lights are dimmed
and I travel back to a dark night lit by a single star:
and wonder that if the light from Alpha Centauri,
our nearest star, has taken a good four years to reach us
when did the light from *that* star begin its journey
to light the birth of the Son of God,
he who would be the radiance of God's glory?



Maybe from the foundation of the world…
At three in the morning, the town is in darkness
except for the smudge of soft light
through the crack in the stable door;
I creep in and stand in the shadows and wonder
at the unexpected weight of sheer joy and awe
that I feel in the presence of those two ordinary folk
as the lamp lights their weariness
and draws my gaze, with theirs, to the child asleep on the straw.

I am grateful for the light of a single lamp: I know where to look.
And I will keep the thought of a single light,
a candle for the darkest times,
a flame to sweep the anguish and confusion of my life
into the shadows, still the conversation in my head,
focus my hope, my certain hope,
on that wonderful child, who later said,
'I am the light of the world.'



Everyone's child has a right, and a duty to wonder…
so, after the shopping mall and the superstore,
after the blinking lights on the Christmas tree,
after the pantomime characters lighting the street
and the glittering icicles framing the door,
after the flaming pudding and flashing toys,
dim the lights and let the world fade;
light the candle and wonder again how one small flame,
one warm soft flame, not so much lights but rather illuminates all it touches
with meaning.

Christ, touch my life: and illuminate it with meaning.

Taken from *Contemporary Reflections* by Sheila Walker. Used by permission of Kevin Mayhew Ltd.

Sense and Sensibility and the Bible have a common theme:

It's all about yearning



Watching Georgia Oakley's new film adaptation of "Sense and Sensibility" – in which *yearning* truly is the main character – made me conclude that one of the Dashwood sisters could have written the opening line of Psalm 42. 'Just like a deer that craves streams of water, my whole being craves you,' goes the Common English Bible translation. Yup, Marianne would lap that poetry up. Elinor would lose sleep over it.

According to Tinder, 2026 is 'the Year of Yearning.' The new Austen adaptation, with all its pining and unrequited loving, fits right into that dating trend. And (allow me to indulge myself) the Bible does too. Humans yearning for more connection with their Creator; the Creator yearning for his creation. Humans yearning for a fulfilled, perfect kingdom; God yearning to fulfil it. The Bible is yearning-lore 101.

David for instance, in true poet fashion, doesn't shy away from yearning in his writings. His psalms are a loud and bold reminder for the stiff-upper-lipped: it's ok to tap into such sensibilities (picture Marianne nodding in sincere approval.)

'Oh God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water,' David writes (Psalm 63). True, he was literally thirsty in the wilderness, but the other ache is the lack of connection he felt to God. He felt deserted, and he wanted more.

Yearning in the dating sphere often means unrequited love: relistening to melancholy songs in the shower and finding leftover ice cream in the freezer. But in our relationship with God, yearning is always a buildup towards a reality: the promise repeatedly made by God of a new kingdom.

'Everyone who drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again,' says Jesus in John 4. 'Come to me,' he says in Matthew 11, 'and I will refresh you.' This is yearning with a happy ending; an everlasting, fully requited yearning that Tinder *might* not have anticipated when they came up with their label.

What an immense privilege to ache for something that will truly satisfy: a love capable of providing daily joy, fulfilment, and transformation. When we know we're loved like that, we're better able to love others – sharing what we've received and helping others find what they yearn for in God.

In true Dashwood fashion, I'd say the year of yearning is worth a hearty embrace.

Naomi Pitts (British-Belgian writer living in the Netherlands)

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

Christingle with Crib Service

Christmas Eve 2026

Join us at St John's Chipping Sodbury

3pm and 4:30pm



We look forward to welcoming you again on Christmas Eve as we celebrate our Christingle and Crib Service together, at 3pm and 4:30pm.

What happens at this service?

We involve our guests (both young people and adults) in telling the story of the birth of Jesus, but don't worry, you can simply sit and enjoy the performances. As well as the story telling, there are songs and a time of reflection, as we think about what the Christingle represents.

In 2025, nearly 5,500 Christingle services were held across the country, and over £700,000 was raised to support vulnerable children through the Children's Society. Your kind donations at our services help towards this total and last year we were able to send over £700 to the Children's Society. Thank you!

Christmas Services

Please do have a look at our services below as we would love to welcome you to church over the Christmas period. All our services are open to everyone: the services at Old Sodbury and Chipping Sodbury on the afternoon of Christmas Eve are particularly suitable for families, including young children, but all ages are welcome at any service. We can guarantee carols and a warm welcome.

Christmas Carol Services

Friday 18th December:	Little Sodbury	**6.00 pm**
Sunday 20th December:	Horton	**11.15 am**;
	Old Sodbury	**3.00 pm**
	Chipping Sodbury	**6.30 pm**





Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services

Tuesday 24th December: Christmas Eve

	Crib Service	Old Sodbury	**3.00pm**
	Christingle	Chipping Sodbury	**3.00pm**
	Christingle	Chipping Sodbury	**4.30pm**
	First communion of Christmas	Horton	**5.00 pm**
	First Communion of Christmas	Chipping Sodbury	**11.30pm**
	First Communion of Christmas	Old Sodbury	**11.30pm**



Wednesday 25th December: Christmas Day

Christmas Communion	Chipping Sodbury	**9.30 am**
Christmas Communion	Old Sodbury	**11.15 am**

Sunday 27th December:

Benefice Communion	Little Sodbury	**11.15 am**



Journeys to Bethlehem

Displays Depicting the Birth of Jesus Christ



St John's Church, Wickwar Road, Chipping Sodbury

Saturday 5th December to Sunday 6th December

10am until 5pm **11am until 5pm**

This year's Christmas event at St John's Church, Chipping Sodbury will be a series of tableaux telling the story of God arriving on earth.

Visit Mary's kitchen where you can chat with Mary's mother. Travel to the Inn and sign the census form.

Move on to the hill where the Shepherds are visited by a great light.

And then listen to the grumpy king, Herod.

Complete your journey by visiting the stable with the Christ Child lying in the manger. Take a moment to sit and reflect.

Old Sodbury-Lychgate Appeal



As you come into the churchyard at Old Sodbury you walk underneath our wooden Lychgate War Memorial. It was erected in 1920 and was to commemorate sixteen men who lost their lives in the First World War, and included two peers. Their names are inscribed on the roof beams over the gate. After the Second World War, it was amended to include the six men who were killed in World War Two.

The Lychgate is a focal point of our Remembrance Day service and reminds all visitors who walk through the Lychgate of the villagers who gave their lives in both World Wars.

We are running an appeal to raise £20,000 for the repair and conservation of the Lychgate as it is in a very poor condition.

The appeal has raised over £12,000 from donations, fundraising and grants. If anyone would like to donate to the appeal please send a cheque made payable to 'St John the Baptist Old Sodbury PCC' and marked Lychgate appeal, to the Church Office. Or donate via our JustGiving page.

https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/davidhartley?utm_medium=CA&utm_source=CL

Many thanks, **Joy Fussell** (Church Warden)

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 21 2027**
1st Sunday	St John's Praise Child friendly informal service	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Evensong
2nd Sunday	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	Holy Communion	Service at Horton
3rd Sunday	All-Age Communion	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Evensong
4th Sunday	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	Service at Little Sodbury	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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