

St Thomas', Trowbridge and St John's, West Ashton Monthly News December 2025

**St Thomas
Trowbridge**

**St John's
West Ashton**

Kingfisher



**Holy Trinity
Trowbridge**



"The Lord is coming, always coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord." —Henri Nouwen,

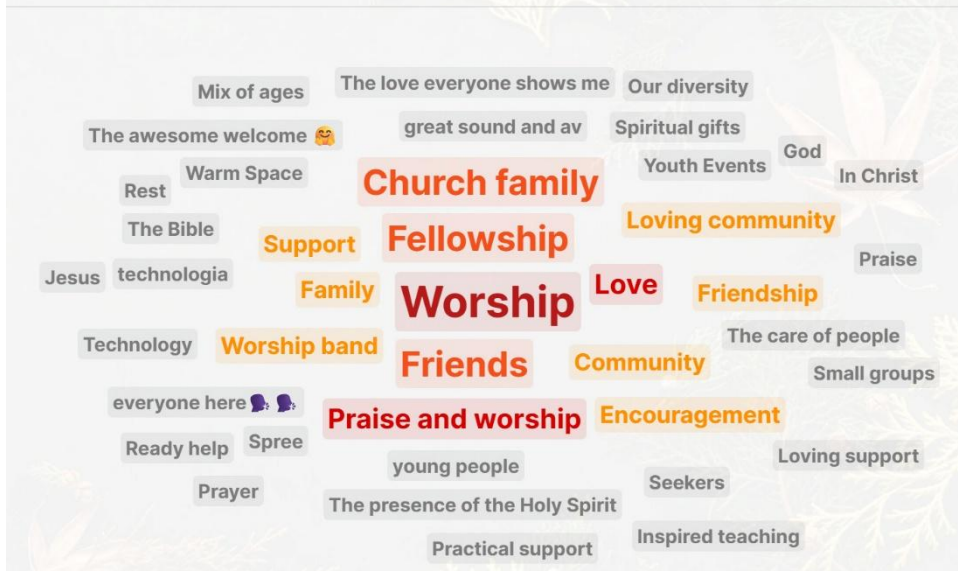
December

Goodness me the weather changed a few weeks ago and the winter chill has arrived!

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their input into the church weekend away, both those that worked so hard with the arrangements, and those who stayed behind and enabled worship here at St Thomas'. We have a fantastic church family that it is an honour to be part of, thank you!

While away we collated responses to the question “what are you thankful for at St Thomas’ Church”, and the (tweaked) word cloud is here. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian responses were automatically translated, but it was fantastic to see your responses, as a key and valued part of our community. I removed names but would like to thank you all for the affection shown for both me and Elle. Finally, I would also like to thank the youth for going big on elephants and broccoli in the original!! The life you bring to the church is crucial – please keep being yourselves.

What are you thankful for at St Thomas'?



As we enter advent and the Church New Year, we do so thankfully, recognising the blessing we have of the community around us. Advent is a time of preparation. While days are short, in the same way as nature draws back to store for the warmth and light to come, we prepare our hearts for the light coming in the darkness. The light found in Jesus. The contemporary themes we look at in the church during advent are those of hope, peace, joy, and love. These are gifts that God gives us, gifts that came in the form of Jesus, and now through the Holy Spirit empowering us. Let us all remember that the world needs this light shone into the communities and lives of those around us, especially during wintertime.

My prayer for you, and all people we meet and welcome over this season, come in the words of Romans 15 v13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

May we reach out a welcome of love to all this wintertime, as Jesus did first. Immanuel – God with us.

Every blessing,

Simon.

Deadline for submissions for January's
Magazine: Tuesday 6th January

St John's Update

Christmas time is nearly upon us, all the preparations; all the shopping; all the gift buying; the organising of family and friend gatherings; all the cooking - we love it deep down! At the end of the day, we are celebrating the birth of Jesus - what a special time of year for us all.

November proved an eventful month - the churchyard is looking better now than in the summer, green grass is looking lush even though we had the last cut in November. Vestry outer door repaired and repainted ready for the winter weather. A meaningful Remembrance Day Service was held on the 9th, with Holy Communion on the 16th.

Christmas decorations are appearing as

St John's Christingle Service will be held on the 30th November at **4pm**.

The Christmas Concert will be held on the 5th December. The Carol

Service will be on the 14th December and Christmas Eve Holy

Communion will be held at **10.30 am** on the 24th December. Pop along to one or all of the above, you would be very welcome.

A PCC meeting had taken place on the 27th November, several matters were raised concerning the next few months.

Christmas time gives us something to look forward to that is beautiful and light in a season which feels very dark both literally and metaphorically. It is a time which invites people to come together and at the centre of that togetherness lies the story of hope, love and joy - the story of the baby Jesus.

May St John's wish you a Peaceful and Happy Christmas and every Blessing for the New Year.

Jean R



St John's Remembers

The Fallen





Very poignant - A late poppy in flower in St John's churchyard on Remembrance Day.

Crosses and Poppies for Remembrance

In November, we continued a tradition established by Kingfisher before Covid: we erect wooden crosses outside The Mead and Castle Mead Primary Schools, wrapped around with crocheted poppies, as a symbol of remembrance and a reminder of God's presence even in conflict.

When we offered to put these crosses up for the schools again this year, we received instant responses of "yes please" from the two headteachers.



In December, we are taking our Living Nativity presentation into the schools again (year 1 and year 4): please pray that children and staff will engage with the message of Jesus coming to earth as a baby, destined to become our saviour and king.

Stephen B

Church Weekend 2025

As I write this, many of us have just got back from the 2025 edition of our St Thomas' Church Weekend, which this year took place at Hill House. This Christian conference centre is perched on a hill just to the west of Bridgewater, close to the estuary of the River Parrett and the wetlands of Steart Point.

A total of about 50 adults and 13 children and young people attended the weekend, plus two day visitors on the Saturday. We were also blessed to be joined by three students from Falmouth who led the children's and young people's work throughout the weekend, freeing up our own adults to take part in the sessions.

It was great to have Simon leading our sessions through the weekend, which focussed on four different themes. Each session started with worship, then had a video to get us thinking, and went on to explore the theme with the help of a bible passage. There was a progression to the themes: firstly we looked at Psalm 100 and giving thanks to God; then we looked at Ezekiel 37 and how God can release and transform (Simon shared some of his own story and how God's power has been at work); then we looked at Romans 12 and what God wants us to do with our transformed lives; and finally we looked at Acts 2 and the Spirit empowering us to witness (tying up with the final part of our recent study series on Spiritual Gifts).

That wasn't all though. We had an interesting Q&A session discussing questions about faith that people had raised; a short act of Morning Prayer was available at the start of each morning and Compline each evening; and we shared in a final act of worship together in the family communion after coffee on Sunday morning.

Of course, a weekend away like this is not just about the formal sessions. Eating was an important part of the weekend too, and I have to say we ate really well! One of the challenges of using Hill House was that we had to do everything for ourselves, including catering. But our amazing planning team nailed it as far as the food was concerned!

Various people planned, shopped and led each meal, and then the

guests signed up to be on kitchen/serving team for one or more meals. That spread the workload, and gave us all a chance to contribute without anyone having to miss sessions.

Another important part of weekends like this is the social element. The simple fact of spending time together, and chatting over meals or drinks, helped us to get to know one another better. I hope that those who were relatively new to the church came away with a stronger sense of being part of a family. There were opportunities on Saturday afternoon for people to do activities or go for walks together. It's also become something of a tradition at church weekends to have an entertainments evening, and Saturday night did not disappoint! Geoff and Laura did a great job of hosting the 'concert', and we had a wide range of entertaining, beautiful, or sometimes hilariously funny acts. I won't try to describe them - you had to be there!

So what were my own personal impressions of the weekend? I thought it was a great success. I appreciated the ground that Simon covered in the sessions, which was encouraging and challenging in a gentle sort of way. It was brave of Simon to take on being the 'speaker' at such a weekend only 6 months into his ministry with us, but it worked really well. It gave us the opportunity to find out more about Simon and Elle, and gave Simon the opportunity to encourage us with the things that he believes are important as we seek to worship and serve God together. It was good, too, that there was space in the sessions to discuss and to pray with and for each other. Prayer also spilled out beyond the meeting room, and even into the car park, which was encouraging to see. And of course, I enjoyed the food and the social side of the weekend too!

As a church we want to say a big 'thank you' to those whose hard work made the weekend possible: Simon, with Elle's support, for leading the weekend; John for chairing the team that did the organising; the members of that team, dealing with bookings, finance, catering, transport, facilities, youth and children's provision and so on; Tamar, Lilja and Laurie for leading the youth and children's work; those involved in worship and tech stuff; the people who led meal teams; and of course everyone who participated and helped out in any way.

Paul





Ugandaid

I have the privilege of being part of the team going to Uganda with the charity Ugandaid next year from February 16th until March 4th.

Ugandaid is one of the Overseas Missions supported by St Thomas' and Pauline B and I have been involved in their work since 2012. We have each taken part in 4 visits and been involved in various projects.

Ugandaid was set up just over 20 years ago to provide sponsorship for young people to attend Nile Vocational Institute (NVI) in Jinja. The young people are chosen from the poorest of the poor to undertake 2 or 3 year courses and gain well respected qualifications in a variety of practical subjects including Nursery Nursing, Hotel and Catering, Electrical Engineering and Motor Mechanics. So far at least 800 young people have graduated through Ugandaid sponsorship and this has provided them with an opportunity to find a good job and find a way out of extreme poverty. The ripples from these young people are often far reaching as when the young people have good jobs they are able to help support their families and often take on the sponsorship of others that need help, one even set up an orphanage!

During our trip in February we will mostly be based at NVI taking on a practical project and spending time with the students. I hope to meet Pius who is currently being sponsored by our lovely Church family. I also hope to meet up with our first student Mary F who is now married with a baby and lives locally.

The practical project we are hoping to do is refurbishment of the girls dormitory to make it a nicer place for the students to live. The team have worked their way around much of the NVI 17 acre site and would now like to start making a difference in the girls' dormitories. We hope that some of the students will help us so we can spend time with many of the Ugandaid students. We don't have any photos of the interior of the rooms but this is the building which currently houses around 420 girls. The intention is to renovate one, or possibly two of the smaller rooms, each with two quintuple bunk beds.

The accommodation is basic, but for many it is an improvement from home.

It would be great to brighten up the accommodation for at least some of the girls. Hopefully, this would mobilise the college to start a broader project.



As well as sponsoring students, currently 100 young people, Ugandaaid also endeavour to support them through their training with personal equipment. The team will meet up with all the students, including the new intake, likely to be around 20 and we give each of the new students a gift bag

of some of life's essentials and simple gifts, like toothpaste, toothbrush, note book, pen. This maybe the first gift they've ever received and it's a real joy to see their beautiful glowing smiles. We are very grateful to our Seeker leaders and young people who held a car wash and raised over £250. This money will be put towards the gift bags. We would love to raise some a bit more money which will be spent on mosquito nets, mattresses and other essentials.

So we plan to hold a second Games Evening and light supper on January 17th and invite our Messy Church families. Last time several families came and had a great time. We plan to have games for under 5s right up to adults. We would love it if lots of people of all ages could come along, play games and spend time with some families who may not have had much contact with Church. It was especially lovely that quite a few young people came along who were "adopted" by some of our Messy Church children, especially my grandchildren!

We realize games are not everyone's idea of fun so we will hold a cake sale after Church on Sunday 18th as lots of people have very kindly



asked how they can contribute. Thank you so much for all the ongoing support for this work, it means such a lot.

So please save these dates and look out for more details and how to book nearer the time.

Save the Date:

Ugandaid Games Evening and Light Supper January 17th time.

Cake Sale in aid of Ugandaid after Church January 18th.

Some 'really bad puns' submitted by Tony Ludlow

1. Two vultures board an airplane, each carrying two dead raccoons.

The stewardess looks at them and says: 'I'm sorry, gentlemen, only one carrion allowed per passenger.'

2. Two boll weevils grew up in South Carolina. One went to Hollywood and became a famous actor: The other stayed behind in the cotton fields and neve amounted to much. The second one, naturally, became known as the lesser of two weevils.

3. Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, but when they lit a fire in the craft, it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.

4. A three-legged dog walks into a saloon in the Old West. He slides up to the bar and announces: 'I'm looking for the man who shot my paw.'

5. Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocaine during the root canal? He wanted to transcend dental medication.

6. A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and were standing in the lobby discussing their recent tournament victories. After about an hour, the manager came out of his office and asked them to disperse.' But why?' they asked, as they moved off. 'Because', he said, 'I can't stand chess nuts boasting in an open foyer'

Overseas Mission at St Thomas'

The programme for

2026

focussing on the missions that we support through
prayer, financial giving and updates

Jan-Feb	Flame International
Mar-Apr	Bible Society
May-June	Church Mission Society (CMS)
July-Aug	-
Sept-mid Oct	Ugandaid
mid Oct-Nov	Mercy Ships

Jan-Feb 2027 Arab World

In addition we also support Tearfund and the Bradford Deanery Link
with the Diocese of Kadugli in Sudan

Further details on the missions we support are in the Mission Leaflet
available at the back of the church

Trip to Ushuaia, Robert J

As many at St Thomas' know I went on a mission trip to Bolivia in 2023. On that trip while chatting to a fellow team member, retired Bishop Maurice Sinclair, I heard about a mission he made to Ushuaia while serving in South America. Ushuaia is known as the "End of the World" because it is considered the southernmost city on Earth. It is in the far south of Argentina. Bishop Maurice told me about his journey to Spanish Harbour to visit a cave which was the resting place of Allen Gardiner, a missionary in the mid-19th century, my heart got very excited. Later, I read a little on Gardiner from the Church Mission Society (CMS) website which further intrigued me.

Then we had a visit from Azaria and David, the two CMS missionaries that we support in Guatemala, Central America, they had gone to a conference in Ushuaia where they got engaged. As each of them, separately, spoke about Ushuaia, my heart got really excited again.

After that I visited the CMS offices in Oxford England, spoke to Paul Tester, (who I had met first in Bolivia at a conference) he spoke at St Thomas' for CMS last year and is their manager for Latin America. He gave me a book about the missionary Allen Gardiner's life called "Unquenchable Fire" which I loved. I thought to myself this is a long way to go just for an excited heart, so I thought I will wait because CMS may have a trip there in the future.

Ushuaia was simmering in my heart, then David Goldstone's grandson visited the church and started saying that he wanted to go to Antarctica. Ushuaia is the place where the cruise ships leave for there, my heart jumped again. I had to take some action. The next week I was visiting Bath and enquired about a trip to Ushuaia at a travel agents, they gave me a good ticket price, so I bought the ticket there and then. I have 3 days in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, then take a domestic flight down to Ushuaia for 9 days. I leave on the 6th of January next year.

I have been in contact with Pastor Javier Campero from Gran Rey Iglesia in Ushuaia, who has been very welcoming. He has advised me with some accommodation and is happy to have me visit his church.

At the moment I feel God wants me to go to Ushuaia, do some praying and spend time with church members and soak up the atmosphere. I have also spoken to a minister in Buenos Aires who has helped me with accommodation. I am just completing a beginner's Spanish course at Trowbridge College. I would welcome your prayers.

Robert J

"We would like to thank all those who over the past couple of months have supported us with love, concern and prayers. These have made a huge difference, and we are immensely grateful.

The following verse from a mid 20th century hymn has been very much in our minds over the period:

I do not know the course ahead,
What joys and griefs are there,
But one is near who fully knows;
I'll trust his loving care.

Philip and Linda"

Christmas by Mike B

Here we are awaiting Christmas
Storing up our gifts and food
Spending lots of lovely money
Don't forget, we must include
Auntie Betty, Uncle Norman
Cards for all upon our list
Daren't forget a single person
Can't upset the one that's missed.

Whilst were stuffing all the turkey
Christmas pud helped down with wine
Slumping down in front of tele
Snoring through the pantomime
This is usual for the masses
Greed and gluttony abound
Whilst, outside, the homeless passes
Searching pavements for a pound.

Jesus Christ was born at Christmas
Sent to earth to save us all
Lived to serve all those around Him
Always perfect, standing tall
Helped the leper, healed the cripple
Underdog and down and out
Suffered greatly for His mercy
Hated by the men with clout.

So we must be all like Jesus
Following His every way
Showing love to all who need it
Living in His humble way
For He loves a cheerful giver
One who relegates himself
To the role of peoples servant
That is how we gain our wealth.

Here's a quiz for you from Tony L, answers next month

DITLOIDS - EASY			
1	3 = BM		
2	3 = S to H		
3	6 = W of H the E		
4	6 = Z in a M		
5	10 = Y in a D		
6	12 = S of the Z		
7	12 = I in a F		
8	12 = D of C		
9	12 = D in a G		
10	12 = K of the RT		
11	13 = BD		
12	12 = C in a S		
13	16 = O in a P		
14	24 = H in a D		
15	26 = L in the A		
16	26 = M in a M		
17	36 = I in a Y		
18	50 = S in the USA		
19	60 = M in an H		
20	80 = DA the W		
21	101 = D		
22	147 = MB in S		
23	366 = D in a LY		
24	1760 = Y in a M		
25	20000 = LU the S		

WORDSEARCH

Look up, down, forwards, backwards and diagonally on the grid to find these words associated with the Nativity

D	B	E	Y	L	V	P	K	Z	R	E	G	C	D	D	G	Z	N
E	L	J	S	F	I	H	F	I	Z	B	H	C	Q	K	H	N	Z
S	K	Q	A	N	G	E	L	S	C	L	Q	J	R	T	M	V	B
M	Z	F	Z	T	E	Q	H	C	S	Q	E	R	W	Z	H	I	J
Q	X	T	H	H	S	C	L	S	J	U	Z	K	M	M	Q	M	B
H	H	F	H	R	K	W	N	R	W	Z	Q	I	Q	A	Z	W	A
X	D	Q	P	V	T	Q	W	I	S	A	Q	N	Y	R	Q	F	B
S	Z	X	E	T	J	Y	C	Q	K	D	W	G	Q	Y	W	Z	Y
T	R	L	S	K	V	F	Z	W	L	N	R	H	Z	V	J	M	J
A	G	Q	O	Z	G	D	M	O	Q	Z	A	E	N	W	Q	E	E
R	E	I	J	P	Q	Z	G	Z	R	B	Z	R	H	Q	N	H	S
Q	R	T	Z	E	G	H	K	J	M	U	Q	O	F	P	M	E	U
P	M	O	L	Q	Z	U	X	E	Z	Q	O	D	O	Z	E	L	S
B	V	Q	R	T	G	J	N	H	P	V	Q	I	A	F	F	H	R
I	T	N	E	M	E	S	I	W	Q	Z	U	X	V	N	Z	T	S
R	M	L	W	D	G	C	O	V	L	G	R	Z	G	A	Q	E	Y
T	Z	R	H	R	R	Y	M	C	B	V	B	X	U	Z	S	B	R
H	Y	F	Y	V	K	G	Z	Z	C	L	H	V	Q	R	N	T	C

ANGELS

BABY JESUS

BETHLEHEM

BIRTH

FRANKINCENSE

GOLD

JOSEPH

KING HEROD

MARY

MYRRH

SAVIOUR

SHEPHERDS

STAR

WISE MEN

*St. John's Parish Church
West Ashton*



*Warmly Invite You To Rejoice In The
Following Services :*

*Experience The Magic Of The Candlelit
Christingle Service*

Sunday, 30th November 2025 4.00 pm

*Commemorate Our Saviour's Birth
And Join Us For*

St John's Carols And Readings

Sunday 14th December 2025 10.30am

Celebrate Christmas Eve Holy Communion
Wednesday, 24th December 2025 10.30am

*The Miracle Birth Of Jesus ~ Christmas Day
A Family Service At St Thomas Church
Trowbridge*

Thursday 25th December 2025 at 10.30 am





COME TO ST JOHN'S CHURCH
TO CELEBRATE A
FESTIVE CONCERT

With the



Musical Director : Denise Drew

On : FRIDAY, 5 DECEMBER, 2025 -7.30pm

Tickets : £6.00 To Include Mulled Wine & Mince Pie

Contact : Jo Watkins : (01225 753196)

Jean Robertson (01225 760368)

Please Join Us For An Evening Of Celebration & Joy



Trowbridge Philharmonic Choir

Dir Graham Dalby

Guest Organist Luke Bond (St. George's Windsor)
present

Christmas Music from

G.F. Handel's **Messiah**

Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Messe de Minuit pour Noël

(Midnight Mass for Christmas)

Saturday 13th December 2025

St. James' Church Trowbridge BA14 8DU

Doors open 7:00pm Concert 7:30 Refreshments available in the interval.

Tickets £15:00 on the door (cash) or on-line at:

www.ticketsource.co.uk/trowbridge-philharmonic-choir/t-plzoyyo

Registered Charity 293240



Join us for Advent 2025 at St Thomas' Church



- Sunday 30th November 10:30am
Morning Worship - Hope
- Saturday 6th December 10:45am
Messy Church - Joy to the whole world
- Sunday 7th December 10:30am
Holy Communion - Peace
- Sunday 7th December 7pm
Encounter - Space to encounter God
- Sunday 14th December 10:30am
Morning Worship - Joy
- Wednesday 17th December 2pm
Book of Common Prayer Communion
- Sunday 21st December 10:30am
All Age Service - Love

Join us for Christmas 2025 at St Thomas' Church



- Sunday 14th December 4pm
Community Carols @ Holy Trinity
- Saturday 20th December 11am
Living Nativity @ The Civic
- Sunday 21st December 6pm
Carols @ St Thomas'
- Wednesday 24th December 11:30pm
Midnight Mass @ St Thomas
- Christmas Day 10:30am
All Age Celebration @ St Thomas

