

St Thomas', Trowbridge and St John's, West Ashton Monthly News January 2026



"Start the new year off with a sure thing—God's promise to give you a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11)." *Billy Graham*

January 2026

Happy New Year to you all.

Firstly, may I say what a wonderful Christmas this has been! Many stopped to point out that it has been my 'first Christmas' – which usually caused me to pause for a few seconds, calculating that I am actually over my half-century of Christmases now! Our first Christmas here with you all has been a huge blessing. Thank you to everyone who decorated the church with flowers, lights, trees and baubles. Thank you to everyone who made our services and carols work so well. Thank you to everyone who invited and welcomed so many schools and new faces through our door. It was an honour and joy celebrating with you all.

January 7th 2025 was the first (official) time we visited to look around. It came in the middle of a crazy few days where I travelled between Durrington, Blandford Forum, Taunton, and Trowbridge. I didn't know whether I was coming or going! The welcome then was generously warm, and I am pleased to say it hasn't changed.

Motto verse 2026

Trust in the Lord with all
your heart; do not
depend on your own
understanding.

Seek his will in all you
do, and he will show you
which path to take.

Proverbs 3.5-6



We step now into 2026, and all it has to offer us. New Year can be an unnerving time, with days being cold and dark, the celebration of Christmas behind us, as well as a time for change. Into this we read our

motto verse for 2026, to...

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Proverbs 3.5-6

Wintertime is a period to especially trust in the Lord. The garden can look bleak, many plants have lost their leaves yet beyond our gaze, beneath the surface, life is retreating ready to burst forth again in Spring.

In times of change, in times of cold, in times of challenge, it is good to remember the simple truths of faith. That you are loved (1 John 4.16). That God is always with us (Matthew 28.20). Ours is a life built on solid rock (Matthew 7.24-27). I encourage you all to remember the story of Christmas again -Immanuel – God with us, the story of light shining in the darkness. It's as key in January as it is in December... and in all honesty some Christian traditions would be celebrating and remembering right through to Candlemas on 2nd February anyway. We would do well to do the same, reflecting on the light and shining it out for all to see. For ourselves, for our church, and for our community.

Every blessing,

Simon.

February Magazine deadline:
January 26th

St John's Update

Happy New Year To You All

"Joy to the world - the Lord is come" (Isaac Watts Hymn)

Christmas seems to be a distant memory - valentine's cards, Easter eggs and hot cross buns are appearing in the shops!

As in all churches, December was a busy month. St John's started the month off with a Christingle Service, perhaps numbers were slightly down but the music and sentiment of the service was nonetheless meaningful. It is always a magical moment when the lights are turned off and the children hold the candle lit Christingles. Thanks go to Jean Covington for providing the Christingles. This was followed on the 5 December by a Festive Concert, the Wiltshire Singers provided the entertainment and Bev and Pete Wills provided the magical external illuminations. The weather was not kind - rain, wind and being on top of an exposed hill, conditions were somewhat atrocious.

Unfortunately, this impacted on the attendance, but those who "braved the storm" enjoyed the festive music, mulled wine and mince pies. The singers provided a jolly programme with festive melodies, some traditional and some fun ones like "The Christmas Tree Feud". Even David Essex classics were included. There were bells, drums and a keyboard to accompany them. Four carols for audience participation and three singalongs, so quite a full programme - something for everyone. The Carol Service followed on 14 December and was well received. West Ashton Village School held their end of term Service on the 19th, giving their own appraisal of Christmas. The children had banners with the words "Amazing" or "Awful" - these were held up during the Christmas Story - a very admirable service which was written by the children. Christmas Eve Holy Communion Service was held at 10.30am on the 24th. Attendance was high and an uplifting service was provided by Revd. Simon. Thanks must go to the ladies that decorated the church so beautifully for the festive season.

We now head on into a new year - many new challenges and decisions will be afoot - they may challenge our faith but we must stay positive and strong - faith will win through. We are blessed and thankful for our new vicar, Revd. Simon and his wife Elle and family, that after his first six month he is still with us and still willing to visit the church on the hill. On a personal note, I thank all those who have helped with maintaining, decorating, cleaning, reading or anything to do with St John's during the past year - your help is invaluable and has kept our rural church alive and functioning.

St John's Services for January: Morning Worship 4th January and Holy Communion on 18th January - it would be great to have you visit us. Jesus brought light to the world. May we be a source of light in our own corner of the world and may God bless us throughout this New Year.

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" John 8:12

Jean R



Flame International

January and February Mission Focus

Flame International works in countries and communities affected by war, poverty and injustice. The mission's main work is to release God's healing, forgiveness and reconciliation to individuals and their land: healing, equipping, training, and supporting local leaders to make positive and sustainable impact upon their communities and nations.



For many years Flame has been involved in a number of African countries including South Sudan, Congo and Nigeria. In recent years God has led the mission into new places including the Silk Routes, Armenia and Ukraine.

The mission was founded in 2003. A prophetic word at that time indicated that the ministry would spread like flames, going out throughout the world, communicating the light of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. The mission works through teams of volunteers under the leadership of Flame staff. Missions are at the invitation of established churches of the country. It is felt important to work in partnership so that leaders are equipped in-country to carry on the teaching and ministry delivered on a Flame Mission. Drama, visual aids and activities are used to overcome language and cultural barriers and local people are employed to translate. A key scripture to the work of Flame is Luke 4 verses 18-19 where Jesus speaks of his ministry quoting from Isaiah.

The prayers and support from St Thomas' is much valued by Flame enabling more people and countries to be impacted with the gospel bringing transformation, healing and deliverance, we have developed a relationship with Jan Ransom, their director, over the years and more recently with Ian Fall who is the outreach and training officer. We are

welcoming Ian Fall back, with his wife Sandra, to speak at the morning service on 11 January.

There are many ways to engage with Flame: through their website, in prayer, through reading their latest book, 'The Beacons are Lit', through joining their discipleship training course, and going on mission. The Flame International website, www.flameinternational.org, is full of information including life changing testimonies from the missions. Flame also produces an inspiring magazine called Burning Issues, which can be subscribed to free. It is produced 3 times a year and is also available on the website. Some copies will be available in church on 11 January. For further information please speak to Andrew Sharland, St Thomas' rep for Flame International.

Andrew Sharland

MENUNITED-Trowbridge

BIG BREAKFAST

Saturday 24th January

MIKE HILL (*former Bishop of Bristol*)

Christianity played no part in his youth in the Manchester area

After a short career in the Printing, he attended Fitzwilliam College in Cambridge to train for the Ministry in 1974

St Leonard's in Amersham grew significantly under his leadership. He was the first President of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago. He was our first guest speaker in Trowbridge about 10 years ago when he was Bishop of Bristol.

Mike is an inspirational speaker.

See Geoff T or John R for more details

Morning Break Christmas Special 2025



At 11 o'clock on 12 December we began to gather in the Church Rooms for a welcome cup of coffee and delicious Christmas Biscuits. It was great to welcome most of our regulars plus some extras from the

community, some church members, and some who have been prevented from joining us regularly because of illness. An hour was spent in lively chatter and then it was time to progress to the Hall.

The festively decorated tables gave the whole room a warm and welcoming atmosphere and 51 of us sat down to a full Christmas dinner with all the trimmings expertly cooked by our own Master Chef, Kay C, and her kitchen helpers, and efficiently served by some of the ladies. A glass of wine was enjoyed by most and we all pulled crackers and put on our hats and groaned at the jokes. Frustratingly, we tried to work out which Christmas films were shown on the picture quiz sheets, answered 20 Christmas questions with a "star prize" for the winners (Simon and Ellie's table) before tucking into Christmas pudding, topping the whole lot off with coffee and mints!

Suitably replete we sat back and enjoyed the "John Lewis" sketch compared by Ruth (ask some of the guests about it!) followed by some community singing led by John C. Direct from the London Palladium (not really) and - at great expense - we then welcomed Monsignor Tony L who regaled us with some of his best jokes delivered in his own inimitable way. Simon drew the short straw and had to follow that! He manfully rose to the challenge reminded us that the whole essence of Christmas is "Love", something we all crave and which is available to us all through our Saviour Jesus.

What a wonderful climax the whole day was to a very successful and happy year we have had at the Morning Break. A year when we have grown in numbers and deepened our friendships.

As we sent our guests home with a chocolate Santa and a Christmas card, we look forward to welcoming our regulars back on 9 January together with any who enjoyed our Christmas Special and fancy giving our regular gatherings a try.

**On behalf of all our faithful and committed volunteer helpers
Geoff and Linda**





The Morning Break is one of several St Thomas's Community Facing outreach programmes. It grew out of Warm Welcome Space – a Trowbridge Town Council initiative to support the community through what seemed to be shaping up to be a very challenging winter.

Was there something we could and should do? By God's grace, there was a very encouraging response from our Church family that we should, and we began opening the church rooms each Friday morning at 11am commencing 2nd December 2022.

Over the years the work has grown. We have reached and made friends with a good number from the local community, and this continues

We say a big thank you to all our loyal helpers and all our regulars for another successful year and by the way – we could do with a couple more helpers - really!!

Mead Schools' Living Nativity 2025

On 2nd December, we enjoyed delivering three performances of a Living Nativity to local schools. In the morning, we gave performances to Year 4 and Year 1 at The Mead School; we followed this in the afternoon by a performance to Year 4 at Castle Mead School. The performances are designed to bring to life this familiar account.

The audience met four sets of characters from the Nativity narrative, starting with the Angel Gabriel (played by our vicar Simon), whose sword attracted the question: "why does an angel carry a sword?" Gabriel explained that he was a protector of God's people as well as a messenger with news that would bring great joy. We also met a tired and weary Joseph and Mary who were trying to get their newborn son to sleep and a group of shepherds (and sheep) who had just been surprised by Gabriel's latest announcement and were about to set off to the stable. At each performance one of the children was delighted to be able to take part by donning a sheep costume! Finally, we witnessed the meeting of the Wise People with a very grumpy Herod. Thankfully, he didn't scare the children (too much).

At each stage, the characters were encouraged to recount the Nativity Story by questions from the narrator, who also prompted the children to pose their own questions to each of the sets of characters, which gave us an opportunity to explore and explain the story further.

We first presented the Living Nativity to the schools in 2018 and have done so every year since ... even in 2020 (Covid year!), when the performance was done outside, with the help of a large wooden camel. This is a great opportunity to continue our relationships with both these schools – sharing the gospel with them in an engaging way, as well as helping them to deliver their R.E. curriculum. They have been consistently enthusiastic and grateful about the Living Nativity, commenting that it really helps their learning about Christmas to come alive.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who gave up their day to play their parts - without them we could not make this happen. It was lovely to have some new people involved this year!

We hope to continue other outreach activities around Easter, and we will be asking for volunteers nearer the time. Keep your eyes open for our calls for help in the Spring!

Stephen and Alice B



Monthly Prayer Points – January 2026

National and International Church

Persecuted church

Open Doors – World Watchlist online event 21st Jan 2026 7.30-8.30pm (details - opendoorsuk.org)

Pray for any place where Christians are persecuted, including -

North Korea

Following Jesus in North Korea requires total commitment, even in the face of imprisonment, torture or death. Pray that God will give His people spiritual and physical strength to remain faithful, and the courage to live boldly for Christ, despite the risks.

Somalia

Somalia is one of the most dangerous places to follow Jesus. Islamist extremist group al-Shabaab targets anyone they suspect to be Christian. Pray that the small number of believers will find refuge and strength in God.

Sudan

Pray for an end to conflict in Sudan. Ask the Lord to protect, comfort and provide for Christians who have no safe place to go, and pray for courage to carry Christ's peace and hope to their communities

Nigeria

According to Open Doors research, more Christians are killed for their faith in Nigeria than in any other country. Pray that Nigeria's government will do all they can to protect people from violence, and ask God to convict and change those who inflict violence on His people.

Syria

Many Christians live with constant uncertainty since the overthrow of the Assad regime by the Islamist group HST. Pray that Interim President al-Sharaa will respect and protect the rights of all Syrians, regardless of religious or ethnic background.

Unity among denominations

Pray that Christians throughout the world and country would love and honour one another, and work together for the glory of God, beyond denomination and faction.

Prayer for the new Archbishop

Pray for the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally, as she is legally confirmed into her role (28th Jan), and then formally installed (25th March).

Here are some common themes and elements to think about -
Thanksgiving & Calling: Thanking God for calling her to serve and for her willingness to accept the role.

Wisdom & Strength: Asking for the Holy Spirit to pour out wisdom, strength, courage, and patience for the immense responsibilities.

Service & Humility: Praying for a heart like Christ's—to serve, listen, and lead with grace, humility, and compassion.

Unity & Justice: Seeking her to be a bridge-builder, a champion for justice, and a voice for the voiceless.

Blessings for All: Asking for blessings on her family, colleagues, the diocese, the nation, and the worldwide Anglican Communion

Keeping the world order to account

Ask God to bless the launch of the Open Doors UK World Watch List in Parliament Weds 14th January. Pray that many MPs will attend and be moved to action, and pray for good media coverage that raises greater awareness of the scale and severity of the persecution of Christians.

Pray that Christians would work to shape and influence leaders of the world to bring peace, justice, and hope where it is needed the most

Particularly thinking of ;

Venezuela, USA, Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Palestine, China, Taiwan, and not least UK & Europe

Local Church

Salisbury Diocese

Pray for the leadership and work of Salisbury Diocese, including these areas;

Bishops (Stephen, Andrew, Karen) Leadership Finance
That God would be at the heart of every decision Mission
Training Ordinands, Curates and Lay roles Schools Vision
Engaging the young Supporting the elderly
Maintaining buildings Working together

Bradford Deanery

Pray for our area, Bradford deanery – Melksham, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, and villages

That we can all work well together, support one another, and seek mutual flourishing.

For the leadership under Lay Chair John Joy, and Rural Dean Jake Eggersen

Para-church organisations

Pray for those Christians who work beyond boundaries;
Storehouse, Wiltshire Youth for Christ, Ruksak, Trowbridge Debt Advice, Street Pastors, soup run, MenUnited, Men and Women's Sheds, Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team, Scouts etc.

Pray for the other churches in Trowbridge

Bethesda Baptist, Salvation Army, Southwick Baptist, St John the Baptist Roman Catholic, St John the Evangelist Studley, St James, Upper Studley Baptist, Wesley Road United Church, West Wilts Vineyard, Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, New Testament Church of God.

Pray for our Benefice - St Thomas' & St John's Church

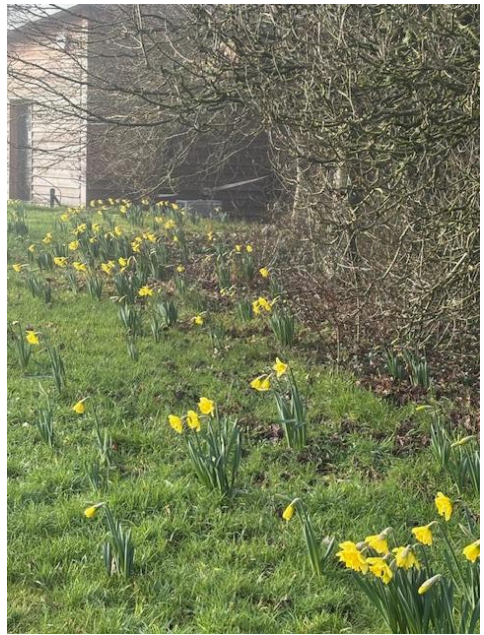
For a continued God-given vision and direction

PCC – decisions with God at the centre and people at the heart
Able to reach those in need

Help us to prioritise as God would

For the schools in our parish (Walwayne, Bellefield, The Mead, West Ashton, St John's, St Augustine's) and those who we are closely connected (Paxcroft, John of Gaunt, Clarendon, Wiltshire College)

For the care homes in our parish (The Wingfield, Romney House) and those we are closely connected (The Oaks, Goodson Lodge).



Spring has sprung at end of December at Stourhead.

Here are the answers to last month's quiz

DITLOIDS - EASY			
1	3 = BM	Three Blind Mice	
2	3 = S to H	Three Steps to Heaven	
3	6 = W of H the E	Six Wives of Henry the Eight	
4	6 = Z in a M	Six Zeros in a Million	
5	10 = Y in a D	Ten Years in a Decade	
6	12 = S of the Z	Twelve Signs of the Zodiac	
7	12 = I in a F	Twelve Inches in a Foot	
8	12 = D of C	Twelve Days of Christmas	
9	12 = D in a G	Twelve Dozens in a Gross	
10	12 = K of the RT	Twelve Knights of the Round Table	
11	13 = BD	Thirteen - Bakers Dozen	
12	13 = C in a S	Thirteen Cards in a Suit	
13	16 = O in a P	Sixteen Ounces in a Pound	
14	24 = H in a D	Twenty Four Hours in a Day	
15	26 = L in the A	Twenty Six Letters in the Alphabet	
16	26 = M in a M	Twenty Six Miles in a Marathon	
17	36 = I in a Y	Thirty Six Inches in a Yard	
18	50 = S in the USA	Fifty States in the USA	
19	60 = M in an H	Sixty Minutes in an Hour	
20	80 = DA the W	Eighty Days Around the World	
21	101 = D	One Hundred and One Dalmations	
22	147 = MB in S	147 Maximum Break in Snooker	
23	366 = D in a LY	366 Days in a Leap Year	
24	1760 = Y in a M	1760 Yeards in a Mile	
25	20000 = LU the S	20000 Leagues Under the Sea	

I apologise for the printing error at number 12 it should have been 13 = C in a S.

Eternal Life

I've got this insurance, it just cannot fail
It's certainly foolproof and pays on the nail
It covers the seasons of plenty and strife
It's backed by the promise of eternal life.

The eternal salesman will knock at your door
By letting Him enter, your prospects will soar
He'll leave a memento, a guide to your plan
By quoting you happy, he'll do all He can.

The catch is quite simple, you follow His rules
To keep you apart from a world full of fools
The payout is treasure, put by up above
Safe from destruction, invested in love.

Mike B



Ugandaid Games Evening

Saturday 17th January

5:30pm – 8pm

At St Thomas' Church

Games for preschoolers right up to adults of 99

With light supper

Donations towards refurbishment of the girl's dormitory at Nile Vocational Institute and practical equipment and tools for the Ugandaid students.

To aid catering please let Jane B
() or Val S.
know if you are coming.

Cake sale after church on Sunday 18th



Nile Vocational
Institute

