

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



“Whatever you do for  
lent this year, do it with  
the intention that on  
Easter Sunday you are  
more like Christ.”

*Father Simon Baker*

# February 2026

I've said to myself a few times this week... how on earth is it February already?! January seems to have flown passed at a great rate and it has been a really valuable time too.

Firstly, I'd like to thank everyone for praying as we held our PCC away day. We spent the day reflecting on the blessings we have in our church. Themes include new people joining us, the intergenerational and diverse nature of our congregation, and God moving in all sorts of ways – it is exciting being at St Thomas!

We read and reflected upon Acts 2:42-47 and sought God's calling on our future. The unity and palpable feeling that God was with us was



incredible. Thanks again for those prayers. We will collate and reflect further, but the plan is to communicate over the months ahead, and particularly at the annual APCM meeting in April.

January is also a time where we collect statistics for the central Church of England records. I'm pleased to say that attendance is up slightly across the board for the year, and our finances are in a healthy shape as we faithfully and gratefully step into the next season with God.



We also reflected on the PCC away day on this picture of a tree, giving us images of growth, not just up and out, but also the deep roots, reminding us of Colossians 2.7 – ‘Have your roots planted deep in Christ. Grow in Him.

Get your strength from Him. Let Him make you strong in the faith as you have been taught. Your life should be full of thanks to Him.’

This scripture speaks into us individually, but also as a community. We are thankful for the time that has gone, and God shining through the branches illuminating the path that He calls us on to ahead.

One of the PCC also shared a picture of God shining in and through us at St Thomas’ church. The goodness we have to offer is all directly from Him. May He continue to shine on us all.

If you ever have a picture or words to share, do drop me a line. Especially as we step into the precious time of Lent later this month. A chance to recalibrate and be more deliberate about prioritising time with God.

Every blessing,

Simon

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Deadline for March Magazine – 24<sup>th</sup> February

# St John's Update

Here we are in February - Christmas festivities have faded and we have Easter Eggs and hot cross buns in the shops! We escaped the snow, but the rain seems to be never ending - but it all helps the reservoirs and is said to be "liquid sunshine". St John's held two services in January - on the 4<sup>th</sup> we had morning worship with a theme being "Light Of The World". An interesting and different style of service took place, with four testimonies from members of the congregation, which proved interesting with personal accounts of life, sprinkled with joyous hymns. Culminating in a candle being given to each member of the congregation with the words: "May we be a source of light in our corner of the world - as we bring the light of the world to others, may God bless us throughout the new year". 18<sup>th</sup> January, Revd. Simon ministered a Holy Communion Service with an excellent sermon. It was a year ago that the Parish Reps gave out a notice in both churches that Revd. Simon had accepted the post to be our new vicar - what a true blessing for us all.

January saw a local tree surgeon pollarding the bushes and trees in St J's churchyard - the result opened up the area. This is a recommended action as per the five yearly quinquennial inspection. A tree which had lost two large boughs in the last eighteen months, had to be removed as leaning somewhat dangerously. There was no preservation order on it and a faculty had been secured. The decision was not taken lightly as trees are precious to us all but when a danger posed itself to property and the public, action had to be taken.

St John's February Services are:

Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> February - Service of the Word and Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February - Holy Communion - both at 10.30am. A warm welcome awaits you. As we approach Shrove Tuesday (17<sup>th</sup> February) and Ash Wednesday on the 18<sup>th</sup> February - we begin a time of reflection as we prepare for Lent. Lent is a 40 day period during which many Christians give up something they enjoy. This enables them to focus on their faith and



follow the example of Jesus. We can't change the world alone but we can help to improve our life style and help others. Amen.

Jean



Before and after tree surgeon pollarded the trees and bushes at St John's.

A selection of floral Christmas decorations at St John's



First primroses and daffodils at St John's





The Wiltshire Singers Choir provided the entertainment at St John's Festive Concert on 5 December

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### **A Feast for Lent**

Lord

May we feast on the riches of your delight this Lent  
As we seek to leave behind selfish concerns and indulgences.

Help us this Lent to fast from anger and feast on patience.  
To fast from resentment but feast on gratitude.  
To fast from bitterness and feast on forgiveness.

So that we can celebrate with joy your Passover from death to life.  
Amen

# Coming soon... ChurchSuite

Some of you may have already heard people talking in St Thomas' about ChurchSuite, while perhaps to others it's a name that is new to you. The purpose of this article is to give a brief introduction to what it is and how we plan to introduce it within St Thomas'.

So, **what is ChurchSuite?** It is a suite of software which is designed to assist in the administrative tasks of church life. It includes facilities for managing the database of members and contacts, bulk mailings, room bookings, calendars, small groups and rotas, as well as a variety of other elements of church life. It supports compliance with GDPR for the data we hold and use.

**Why do we want to use ChurchSuite at St Thomas'?** There are various ways in which this tool will help us to integrate and modernise the way in which the admin of the church operates. For example, at the moment we have separate spreadsheets, documents and lists for membership, church directory, and bulk e-mails, which have to be updated manually; ChurchSuite will give us one single set of membership data which will be easier to manage and also easier to manage GDPR compliance. Another example is with our room bookings and calendars, where we expect ChurchSuite to make the room booking process easier for the church office to manage, and enable us to present a clearer calendar of upcoming church-related events available to members and on our website. Other features we envisage being useful include the management of rotas, small groups and children's/youth work.

A number of people in our church already have experience with using ChurchSuite in other churches, including Frankie who therefore understands how it will help with her work in the office! Those who do already know about it have spoken highly of it and recommended it.

**What can we expect next?** We're already in the process of preparing to use ChurchSuite: we have demonstrated that we can import membership data from our existing spreadsheet, including contact



details, GDPR permissions and contact preferences; and we have started to set up the software to work in the way we want it to. We'll shortly be running a trial with a small group of church members, mainly the PCC but with a few extras. Once we're happy with how it's all working we will import the rest of the membership and contacts database. That's when we can properly 'launch' ChurchSuite and start to use its features.

We'll introduce features of ChurchSuite progressively. Initially the focus will be on the membership database and mailing lists, followed by room bookings and calendars. We can then explore other features like rotas, small groups, service planning and so on once we've got the core bits working well.

One of the first things that will happen for everyone once we 'go live' is that you will receive an invitation to set up a personal login for ChurchSuite. It's not compulsory to do this – we recognise that not everyone will want to interact in this way. But we will encourage people to sign up where you are comfortable doing so. ChurchSuite will be accessible via an app on smartphones and tablets, or via a web browser, and the login will initially allow you to check and update your personal data, as well as giving access to an online address book of other members (like with the paper address book, people will only appear in the online address book if they have given permission, and it will only be accessible to people who are members). As we add more features then these should become available via your login.

No doubt there will be more to say, and help to be provided, as we start to introduce ChurchSuite, but I hope that this article gives you some idea of what is coming. If you'd like to know more about ChurchSuite then their website contains a lot of useful information ([churchsuite.com](http://churchsuite.com)). If you click on 'Tour' you will find information on all the different features. If you have any questions or concerns about the introduction of ChurchSuite at St Thomas' then do please have a chat with me or drop me an e-mail.

Paul E

# Finance Team News

It's been suggested that we write a little piece for the monthly newsletter from time to time. So here goes with the first one!

Lyndsey attended a fabulous training session run by the Diocese called "Money Matters". It was a bit of a call to action with the strap line of the day being "It's time to be looking for the money buried down the back of the sofa". Many churches in our Diocese are stretched financially, but we at St Thomas' are incredibly blessed as we have spaces to rent out at both St Thomas' and Holy Trinity, which provide us with extra income. The training session talked about mission, vision, partnerships and resources. The message from the Diocese is that it wants churches to thrive, not just survive.

So, on the back of the training, St Thomas' has purchased a contactless payment machine which Lyndsey hopes to have up and running in the next few weeks. Please look out for it. Since it has taken Lyndsey a considerable amount of time and frustration setting it up, she would like suggestions for a name for it. The best name suggestion will win you a chocolate bar! It has been shown that churches making use of contactless payment machines see a significant increase in ad hoc giving.

During the autumn Esther brought all the Gift Aid Declaration forms up to date, to ensure the data regarding giving that is forwarded to HMRC is correct. If you are new to St Thomas' and are able to Gift Aid your donations, please pick up a form on the table by the front door or speak to one of us and we will get one to you.

On a practical note, can we please ask that when you transfer money into the church bank account you put a descriptive reference on it (e.g. 'regular giving', 'tithe', 'donation', 'room hire', 'Viney Hill') as it saves a lot of time making telephone calls to find out what the money is for. St Thomas' bank details can be found on the Gift Aid Declaration forms.

If you have any questions, please email us on  
[treasurer@stthomastrowbridge.org](mailto:treasurer@stthomastrowbridge.org)

Lyndsey and  
Esther



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## Dingbats

These pictures lead to a well-known phrases or sayings what are they?

1 **steps  
steps  
pets**

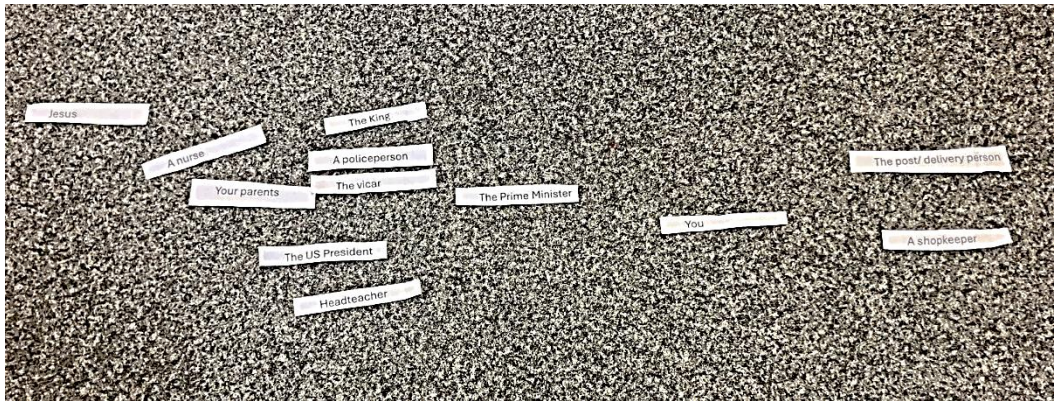
2 **standing  
miss**

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u  
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Answers next month.

# Who is More Important?



Just one question posed to a group of 7-year-olds in their children's session recently. The picture shows how they ordered various people including themselves. They thought that compared to most people, they weren't very important. The role in the children's leadership teams is to challenge this and show how important they are to Jesus. We recall he stated 'let the children come to me.... The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'

We are looking for another person to join the Sunday morning leadership team in the year 4-7 children's group, with willingness to lead a session once a month. We follow a program with activities preplanned by Urban Saints organisation. If you think you would like to take on this role please contact the office, or chat with Anita B or Chris W. We look forward to hearing from you.

Anita B



# Kadugli Newsletter and Prayer Diary

**“Please do not grow tired of praying for Sudan” (Archbishop Ezekiel)**

## **Headline News.**

The Church Times opened its edition of 16 January 2026 with the headline “Show leadership on Sudan, UK is told”. The article went on to report that a coalition of 13 charities had written to The Times saying

*“As the UN security council lead on Sudan, the UK has a rare platform to drive action , but its leadership has been inconsistent. It is time for the Government to increase its diplomatic efforts to push for an immediate nationwide ceasefire as the first step towards lasting peace.*

*Sustained rapid and safe humanitarian access across Sudan must be made a priority by the UK and the international community, alongside funding that reaches frontline responders so that aid reaches every community in need”.*

This is a call that we would all recognise. Before Christmas, the UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy told the House of Commons the Government was “engaging intensively with the Quad countries - the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the USA - which have now together called for an immediate humanitarian truce, and an end to external support and arms that are fuelling conflict.” So far, we are still waiting to see results. Readers might like to urge their MP to press our government for stronger diplomatic action.

Sadly, the 23 January edition of the Church Times carried no further news of Sudan.

## **Across Sudan.**

The scarcity of food has often been reported, followed closely by the difficulty in obtaining medical supplies. The lack of medical supplies is predictably resulting in the outbreak of serious diseases across the country:

- Measles is affecting mostly children in Central Darfur
- Malaria and Dengue Fever have broken out in Khartoum and Omdurman
- It is thought the outbreak of the rat death phenomenon in Kassala Province may lead to a plague epidemic.

Women's organisations report that sexual violence is being used deliberately to terrorise communities; it is being used as a weapon of war. Coping with the aftermath is yet more work for the Mothers' Union.

## Kadugli.

In the 16 January article mentioned earlier, the Church Times went on to report that *"the Kordofan region, in the centre of the country, is now the focus of concern as the target of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia."* (South Kordofan contains Kadugli Diocese). This confirmed what we had heard earlier, and suggests this campaign is continuing.

A drone attack has been reported on the town of Dilling, targeting civilian areas and causing a number of deaths. Meanwhile, the town of Kadugli continues to be under siege.

More positively, a confirmation has been held on 25 January in Andolo. The church continues to grow!

A recent confirmation.



We continue to support the people of Kadugli in their search for desperately needed food and other essentials, and in addition, we have been supporting Hassan's son Yassa with help for his fees for his course at a university in Uganda, and we have just sent a payment for this coming year's fees. Our latest news is that he is doing well. For administrative and other reasons any money given for Hassan's son Yassa would need to be kept distinct from other funds, so anyone wishing to donate for Yassa can use the same payment details as for other funds for Kadugli, but with the reference "Yassa" instead of "Kadugli." However, at present the need for food is more pressing.

Across Bradford Deanery there has been a continuous warm and generous response to this need; thank you all. The church in Kadugli is intensely grateful for our support, both financial and in prayer. Please continue to give via your church if you can, or directly. The account details are:

Bank: Lloyds Bank Trowbridge  
Name of Account: Bradford Deanery  
Sort Code: 30-98-75  
Account No. 00710285  
Reference Kadugli. Or, as mentioned above, Yassa. (N.B. This is important)  
Please also consider ways of raising funds for Kadugli.  
And as always, we ask you to pray.

## Prayer Diary

**“Please do not grow tired of praying for Sudan”** (Archbishop Ezekiel)

Bishop Hassan has asked us to pray, thanking God for his care and protection during these days and to thank him for the recent confirmation service in Andolo, a wonderful day, and God saved souls for his glory.

We are asked also to pray for the extremely dangerous security situation and for people in the various combat areas, especially in Kadugli and Dilling, and for the very many displaced people, whose needs are severe.

We pray for the church and its mission in the midst of difficulties and harsh circumstances, so that it may be light, salt, and a refuge for all those in need.

Bishop Hassan also asks for prayer for his own family, displaced to Kampala in Uganda, especially for the children at the start of a new school term.

**We should note from this that Bishop Hassan himself remains in the place of danger, among his flock in Kadugli, and we should pray for God’s protection and blessing on him.**

We pray too for food and medical supplies to reach the civilian population, and that outbreaks of disease will be prevented.

