

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

St Thomas
Trowbridge

St John's
West Ashton

Kingfisher



Holy Trinity
Trowbridge



“It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade.”

— Charles Dickens, Great Expectations

Churchwarden's Letter

Lent in the Orthodox Church is apparently known as the 'bright sadness', which I think is a good way to understand this time in the Church's calendar. Lent has often been a time to exercise spiritual discipline in order to grow closer to Jesus. It's quite possible that you find spiritual discipline easier than I. Something particular and manageable to help me focus, is what I need. The Church of England has the theme of Living Hope for Lent 2025. Sign up for Daily Lent reflections delivered by email:

[Living Hope - Lent reflections | The Church of England](#)

Alternatively download the Everyday Faith app:

[Everyday Faith | The Church of England](#)

Now that's something even I can manage! And the theme Living Hope is appealing too – especially if, like me, you spend a bit of each day reading news. We need glimpses of the hope Jesus gives, even as we follow him to the cross and pray for the suffering world.

Another great way to do things differently at Lent is by joining with the wider church as we explore more about prayer together in our Lent Course. It would be good to see as many people as possible spending an hour and a half on Thursday evenings – sharing, listening, worshipping and praying together. Again, that's a spiritual discipline I can engage with.

Our Youth Alpha course continues until March 23rd, with the Youth Day on March 1st. Please continue to pray for the young people as they explore the Christian faith on Sunday mornings. We are exploring with St James the possibility of a Trowbridge Confirmation Service, possibly in June, should there be any young people who are considering making this personal commitment. There is also a wider invitation obviously to any in the church who would like to confirm the promises made at their baptism. Please talk to the churchwardens to find out more.

As I write, I have just returned from St James, where many people who knew John Howard gathered to remember him and celebrate his life. He was a warm, friendly gentleman who naturally shared his friendship with Jesus with all he met, especially on the checkout. It was a wonderful time, one might say a 'bright sadness', encouraging and challenging in equal measure.

John C

Flip Hip Hooray

Pancake Day will be on Tuesday, 4th March - little is said about its roots in Christianity. The day is also known as "Mardi Gras" and "Shrove Tuesday", the occasion marks the last day before the Christian season of Lent. Mardi Gras is the French for "Fat Tuesday" and it is said that people used all their fatty food before a period of fasting. The name Shrove Tuesday comes from the middle age - a confession of wrongdoings, in preparation for Lent.

Lent is a 40-day period during which Christians give up something they enjoy. They do so to focus on their faith and follow the example of Jesus, who fasted before beginning his work, which ended in him giving up his life for us.

Christians are not obliged to observe rituals such as Lent, although they can be beneficial. All God requires of us is to run to him and receive the gift of his love and forgiveness which will turn our lives around.

"The Devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour" Matthew 4:8. What temptations do we struggle with - what worldly things are pulling strongly at our lives?

Jesus remained strong and resisted temptation in the wilderness for 40 days. Let us restrain from evil and strengthen our faith by the Lords Spirit. Amen.

Jean R

St John's Update

Two services were held at St John's in February, it is always interesting how visiting ministers present their sermons. They all have their own unique way.

Hopefully, by the next magazine issue, a start date for the new vicar - Revd. Simon Pope - may official be released and the planning of future services can be organised in earnest. Just before the weather changed to rain, part of the churchyard had been mowed. It was hard work for the mower as the grass was long, exposing moss and the ever visiting moles that leave their tell-tale mole hills. On the 19 February a Triennial Visitation/Inspection took place. The two inspectors (Assistant Archdeacons - The Revd. Canon Jane Curtis and The Revd. Canon Roger Powell) checked all paperwork; registers; posters and church silver ware. St John's had four items to be addressed, all new paperwork for St John's which had been put into place in the last three years. (ie. Health and Safety Policy, Updated Safeguarding, etc). The two inspectors came from the Marlborough/Wootton Bassett area and had not visited this region before. However, strange though it seemed, they both knew our new vicar and were very complimentary of Simon. They both commented how lucky our two churches were to secure a new vicar so quickly, as many parishes have been waiting for new ministers for years. A lot of vacancies but not enough clergy.

St John's had a PCC meeting on the 21 February.

We head into March, we have three services at St John's - Service of the Word on 2nd March; Holy Communion on the 16th with Mothering Sunday on the 30th. A warm welcome awaits you.

Of course, we have Pancake Day on the 4th March and the start of Lent on the 5th. Also on the 30th March, British Summer Time begins; clocks spring forward one hour - longer and hopefully sunny days.

Loving Jesus, you long that all people would feel welcomed when they come to worship You. Help us to be those who notice others and reach out in love. Amen.

Jean R

Bishop's March Letter

Clearing away the rubbish

Returning recently to my former parish in Crystal Palace, South London, I was reminded of the glorious glass edifice that once stood atop Sydenham Hill, overlooking the city. It was a quite extraordinary building, one of the wonders of the Victorian age and entirely destroyed by fire one night in 1936. All that remains of the Crystal Palace are some grand steps and stone sphynxes leading to a deserted platform: a bleak and thought-provoking spot to this day.



It is thought to have been a single cigarette end that ignited the blaze, although what truly caused it was the build-up of decades of combustible gubbins lying beneath the floor. The boards of the palace had been constructed with gaps between through which dust could be swept by cleaners, which meant that, over the years a metres-deep tinder box was being prepared.

The story has lessons for our soul, not only health and safety, I think – especially at the start of Lent. Sweeping things under the carpet rarely works and, whether in our relationships, work, or worship, ‘taking out the rubbish’ by honest self-examination, discipline and penitent prayer is both healthy and helpful for us - and can prevent all kinds of disasters.

‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me’ cries the sorrowful King David in Psalm 51. A good prayer for us all, together and alone, as the church makes its way through this holy season, following our Lord to the cross and the celestial city beyond.

Bishop Andrew

Deanery Synod Meeting, Feb 11th

Reverend Jake Eggertsen, from St James, began his second meeting as our Rural Dean, inviting us to discuss the growing demands for accountability and safeguarding reform in the Church of England, following the abuse scandals. This meeting was the same day as the General Synod's decision not to outsource its safeguarding now but, in the future, create an independent organisation to have oversight of church safeguarding.

Marjory Wade, Chris Whittock and I were in a group with the new vicar at Holy Trinity, Bradford on Avon, Jenny Nelson. Our new vicar, Simon Pope, trained with her at Trinity in Bristol, so she knows him well!

Our feedback mirrored other groups, feeling that on a local level the public were still grateful for the church's service and community involvement. Judy felt the system should be sped up so that necessary changes would be made quickly. Jake will send all the feedback to the Salisbury Bishop and led us in prayer for forgiveness and for the victims.

John Joy gave a Kadugli update. Keevil church members keep St Leonard's (part of Rev Jake's benefice) open daily, it's worth a wander in, if you like to visit a pretty village and a parish church. There's a clever kitchenette in several cupboards at the back of the church and breakfast served to the village on some Saturdays, where the last count was 35 happily eating **bacon butties!**

Judy Wright brought the good news of **Women's Shed**, Chris shared how well the **Youth Alpha** is going and we heard **St Michael's** in Melksham has started work on converting a building to flats, meeting rooms and use for the community. Ruth Mecredy (who led our Midnight Christmas Eve Communion) told us how St Katherine's in Holt has introduced putting a Bible verse around the tables in their **Toddler** sessions. They then listen to a testimony about the verse and have found the families are responding to God's love and the impact of His

word. Jenny Nelson explained how meeting people where they are, in a BoA music group that uses her church, has led to some people asking for **baptism**.

At the next Deanery Synod **Bob Hartman**, from Bethesda, also a famous Christian author of children's Bible books, will be storytelling. (You may have heard him leading the Living Nativity held in town in December. He kindly came to Impax recently and got everyone joining in with his stories and enjoying themselves.) Jake encouraged us to invite others to this next Deanery Synod meeting – I'm inviting you! It's on Wednesday 11th June 2025 at 19.30 at St Barnabas Church in Beanacre.

Ruth C



Chat & Games Evening

For all the family – toddlers to dinosaurs!

Saturday 10 May

5:00pm - 9:00pm

Ploughman's Supper at 6:00pm

Suggested donation £2 per head

Come and chat to Steve & Helen about the latest news from Uganda and browse the displays

Come and try a new card or board game

Book your place with Jane Bullock or Val Saxby

Update on Easter Opportunities on Paxcroft And Castle Meads

We now have confirmed dates for our Easter Experience presentations in The Mead School (morning of 1st April) and Castle Mead School (morning of 3rd April). Please do pray for God

to speak to all involved through the presentations and that the children will come away wanting to find out more about the events of the first Easter. We will put a few prayer pointers in the church notices nearer the time. It would be great to have **one or two**

more volunteers to help the children with the activities in the Easter Experience.



We will also be running our annual Easter Egg Trail around the Paxcroft Mead area on Easter Monday, will start and finish at The Red Admiral pub, who are keen to welcome us back again. (They got in touch with us to ask whether we would be running the trail this year.) We need some **volunteers to help run the Easter Egg Trail** (either based in the pub handing out leaflets and prizes, or along the trail helping people find their

way around). We also need **prizes for the trail** (Malteser Chocolate Bunnies or chocolate eggs (approximately crème egg size)), please leave them at the church office or give them to one of us.

If you can contribute or help, please speak to one of us.

Thank you – Stephen and Alice B

Onto Pastures New...

It seems like a long time since I updated my friends at St Thomas' on what I've been up to, and this feels like an important moment to do so.

Training with CMS

I'm now in my third year of four studying at the Church Mission Society in Oxford, doing their Pioneer Leadership Training BA in Theology Ministry and Mission. It has been very interesting and stimulating training. This year has been no exception, with modules in Biblical interpretation, Chaplaincy, Community Development and The Creative Arts and Christian Ministry and Mission. It is all very context-based with an emphasis (of course!) on Pioneer ministry.

Baptist Training (Bristol Baptist College)

Alongside this I am in the second year of three doing Ministerial Formation Training at Bristol Baptist College. Again, it has been excellent training, with an emphasis on the practical issues we will come across as ministers. We have regular theological reflection and spirituality groups, plus training in preaching; as well as one-off sessions or days on subjects like doing weddings, baptisms and funerals, being Dementia-friendly, Whole-life discipleship, Young People, Creation care, and Conflict Resolution.

So what's this about Wincanton?

As a Minister-in-Training, I need to be in a part-time "placement". This was previously Kingfisher Church. With things changing there I needed



to find a new placement and was encouraged to find a small church to lead rather than be an assistant in a bigger one.

A Regional Minister told me about a small Baptist Church in Wincanton whose last Minister left 4 years ago, which has 24 members and 10

other regular attenders. They have a church (built in 1835) and Hall (built in 1887) which are now “past their sell by date” and in need of significant investment. The church members have decided to sell them and are seeking God’s guidance as to what they do next.

Their profile said, “We have the reputation of being a loving caring church and we try to make all feel welcome, safe and at home with us. As an aging fellowship we are finding it harder to do as much as we would like.”

“We would like to serve the community, bring the good news of the Gospel to many in the area and pass on the baton of Baptist witness to a new generation. We are open minded about where we worship. It may be that... we are able to provide a building that is a community resource as well as a place where Baptists worship. Stepping out in faith must be our watchword.”

“We are seeking a Pioneer Missioner who naturally gets alongside and builds genuine relationships with those who aren’t Christians, a community networker/builder, someone who seeks to listen to the Spirit of God and the needs of the local community to help discern how best to demonstrate and proclaim the love of Jesus to them. We believe there is a need for a new initiative in Wincanton to reach out to those who have no church connection.”

“We are seeking someone who will take hold of this opportunity to explore and develop new ways to reach out to the people in the town, who has a deep desire to take God’s love to them and create a Christian community that could become the future Wincanton Baptist Church. We are open minded as to how this work will be developed and would welcome discussion as to how we, as a church, can be involved together in supporting it.”

When I read this, my immediate reaction was “*Is this for real?*”

It sounded too good to be true! A couple of my friends said “*Did you write this?!*”

It seemed very Ruth-shaped and I immediately registered my interest, was invited to chat with the Leadership Team, then “Preach with a squint” (when only the leadership know you’re looking for a placement), before going back to “Preach with a view” (when everyone knows) and have an informal ‘getting to know you’ session. They then

held a church meeting and voted unanimously to call me as their Minister-in-Training. I was delighted!

I will be officially starting on April 6th, and the practicalities seem to have fallen into place. As I'm still training, it's a part-time temporary role - about 3 days/20 hours until the end of July 2026. Their manse has tenants in, so we've agreed that I'll do a weekly commute, staying with a member of the congregation two nights a week, and using a study in another member's house.

As I expect you'll have seen we're having my Induction Service on 15th March. There was some pressure to have it earlier rather than later, as recently they were given the end of March as a date for handing over the buildings! So we thought we'd better crack on!

I'm hoping to come and say goodbye to my friends at St Thomas' in the service on March 9th (to be confirmed) as you have all become so important to me since I arrived in Trowbridge, and especially since becoming your Church Administrator in 2017. We've been through a lot together, haven't we? Remember the Lockdown Lowdowns?! And I will never forget your support when Paul was so ill, then after he passed away. Your love, prayers and concern helped me through a very tough time.

I have also been very grateful for your support and encouragement on my ministry journey to date. Some of you were responsible for me starting on it in the first place! You know who you are!

I would very much value your prayers as I take this next step. It's a bit daunting to officially be a Minister, however the church have been very loving and welcoming to me, and I feel I am in safe hands. I feel confident this is the right next step and am very excited to find out what God has planned for us all – as I really have no idea!

With much love, and grateful thanks,

Ruth

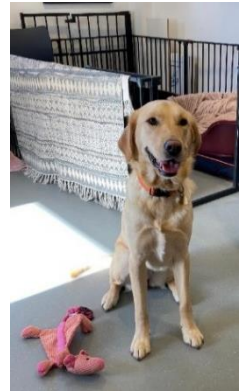
PS If you would like to keep in touch and receive my prayer updates, please email me on ruth.barber26@gmail.com They're not very frequent, so won't clog up your inbox!

Guide Dog Puppy Update

We had the privilege on Tuesday of going to the beautiful city of Exeter to see our Guide Dog Puppy Gucci at work, guiding her trainer. It was such a special time – we were so proud of her. We followed at a distance so as not to distract her and at times had problems in keeping up with them. She is very speedy but thoroughly enjoying working – her tail was wagging all the time. She manoeuvred her trainer through crowds, on lifts and stairs, through the streets and through large stores. Unfortunately, she was too fast for us to get any photos or videos of her guiding.



We then went back to the training centre and we were able to spend some time fussing her and saying a final goodbye to her, but to be honest she didn't need that - she has grown up, growing in to the potential she always showed, and moving on with new people.



And even as I write this today she is meeting a new person, somebody who could be her Guide Dog owner although this is just the very first stage of 'matching'. We are told he is a tall man with a long stride – something that is needed for the speed she works at - and he has a teenage family which she will love. So we do so hope this match works out. Matching is not an overnight process – if today works well, there will be another walk next week and then an overnight stay for her at the man's home. If all goes well with all that there is an intensive 2 week period before they are let loose together as a permanent team. Zoe, the lovely trainer, told us Gucci has done so well and she is a month ahead of the projected path – matching was not expected to happen until April.

Now as Geoff and I move on to Shrewsbury we look forward to receiving another little golden bundle of fun – and hard work. Probably the most frustrating parts of our recent move delays is that we have lost out on about 5 months of these wonderful doggies.

But I do commend this work to you – it is great fun but it is also hard work at times – folk always say it must be so hard to let them go, but when you enter in to it you know that is the outcome after a year or so – but how special it is when you see the fantastic work they do to change people’s lives. If you are interested just go to the Guide Dog website for more info on the process.



Pat K



**CHURCH
MISSION
SOCIETY**

**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**

Church Mission Society Update March 2025

Azaria and David, our Mission Partners in Guatemala are not able to visit us on CMS Mission Sunday this year on 9th March, but we have another blessing instead. Paul Tester, CMS Manager for Latin America will be coming and sharing a word from God. Paul spent many years as a missionary in Peru, where he and his wife brought up their three daughters. Now he is based at CMS headquarters in Oxford, which I visited recently. I would like to remind you that there will be a soup and roll Lunch after the service on 9th March to spend some more time with Paul, please contact Frankie in the office or myself if you would like to attend.

Meanwhile Azaria and David, who I'm sure many of you remember seeing and meeting last year at St Thomas', have continued their work in the vulnerable community of Bethania, Guatemala, connecting with children, with David teaching them singing, and also making friends with the parents. Azaria has been working hard training up mentors for the young people and writing a document for the government to explain what is needed and what is already being done. David has also been coordinating worship teams at the church he has now joined. Good news on the progress of Azaria's brother Zeph, who was able to leave hospital and continue his treatments at home. Azaria and David may be able to pop in and see us later in the year, but only on a midweek basis, due to a busy schedule.

I hope you will take a look at the mission board through March and April, which is situated by the teas and coffees station. If you have any questions about the CMS Mission Sunday, please have a word with me.

God bless you all, Robert J.

Lent Studies 2025

During lent we are running a series of studies for the whole church gathered together. This is similar to what we have done for the last few years, and is a valuable opportunity to share in fellowship round God's word, and to study and pray together. We are encouraging the small groups to take a pause from their own groups during lent, where this is practical, and to join together at the church on Thursday evenings.

The course will last 5 weeks, and we are using 'The Lectio Course', produced by the 24-7 Prayer movement. The course is subtitled 'How to Hear God by Praying the Bible', and aims to help us to explore the practice of 'Lectio Divina', looking at questions such as: "How can I grow in my prayer life?", "What on earth is God saying?", "How do I make sense of the Bible?". Many of you will already be familiar with resources produced by 24-7 Prayer, and this course comes highly recommended by those who have already done it.

The key dates that you need to be aware of in lent are as follows (all evenings):

- Wednesday 5th March: Ash Wednesday service
- Thursday 13th March – Thursday 10th April inclusive: Lent studies (5 weeks)
- Thursday 17th April – Tenebrae (Maundy Thursday)

Because of the course, there will be no separate monthly prayer meetings in March or April. However, we do plan to incorporate prayer in some of the study evenings. There will be normal prayer meetings on 1st/2nd May.

Paul, John

Your Church Your Voice

Your church. Your community. Your voice. Joining the electoral roll is a simple way to make a difference. Here are three reasons why you should join today!

Share Your Voice

Joining the electoral roll lets you vote on key church decisions and help shape its future.

Speak up for Your Community

If you care about your local church and what it offers, this is your chance to be heard.

It's Free for You & Your Church

Signing up costs nothing but makes a big difference.
Get involved today!

Find our more
salisbury.anglican.org



St John's Church, West Ashton



St John's Church, West Ashton
The Rectory, West Ashton

Warmly Invite You To Celebrate

MOTHERING SUNDAY

SUNDAY, 30 MARCH, 2025

10.30 am

Family Service



Acts 11 Project

Centre for Global Witness and Human Migration



Emily Shepherd
CEO, Welcome Churches



Dr Harvey Kwiyani
Host

Webinar

How Welcoming Are We?

An Overview of How Churches in the UK Are Supporting People Facing Forced Displacement Today

For the past 10 years, Emily has led Welcome Churches, an organisation that exists to see every refugee welcomed by the local church in the UK. She is based in Greater Manchester and has a wealth of experience in welcoming many people seeking asylum and refuge with the local churches she has been a part of. Emily is passionate about seeing the UK Church being at the forefront of welcoming refugees. She has an MA in Conflict, Development and Security where she specialised in European citizens' responsibilities to refugees.

£10 Registration Fee

REGISTER NOW

For Registration
acts11.org



WED
12 March 2025



IPM
1pm - 2:30pm



On Zoom

Hospitality | Empowerment | Resources | Research | Community

Please join us for this event and invite your Church leaders and congregations to do so as well.

Changemakers Conference 2025

Saturday 8th March 10.30 – 1.30.



The Conference takes place in London but will be streamed so we can join in from our own areas.

You can watch the Conference at home or join with others at a Regional Watch Party. (You can of course also attend the London venue).

From previous experience, joining with others enables the sharing of ideas.

We have set up venues as follows, but you could still make your own local arrangements to watch with friends or church family members. Please register and encourage others to do so , as well.

- Bishop's Cleeve Methodist Church , GL52 8NT.
- Trinity URC, Henleaze, Bristol, BS9 4BT.
- ChristChurch, Nailsworth , GL6 0DQ.
- Purton Methodist Church, Nr Swindon, SN5 4DR

Please register via caid.org.uk/conference

[regionalvenues.pdf](#)

As this is our 80th year , I would like to engage with as many local Churches as possible – please do let me know if it is possible to meet with a member of your Leadership team or Church congregation.

with thanks

Yvonne

Yvonne Penn

Church Engagement and Fundraising Officer

Gloucestershire, Bristol, Wiltshire and The Channel Islands

07950 717268 / 07778 109480

caid.org.uk | ypenn@christian-aid.org

Don't Forget to book for the Church Weekend Away

Hill House Christian Centre, near Bridgwater

21 to 23 November 2025



**Details and booking forms available
in church or from Val S or Jo D
or from the Church Office**

it really does help in the planning if you can book asap

Deadline for articles for April's magazine: Friday 28th
March