

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

**St Thomas
Trowbridge**

**St John's
West Ashton**

Kingfisher



**Holy Trinity
Trowbridge**



Expect to have hope
rekindled. Expect your
prayers to be answered in
wondrous ways. The dry
seasons in life do not last.
The spring rains will come
again. —Sarah Ban Breathnach

Churchwarden's Letter

'... rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.' *Philippians 2:7*

I'm no expert on Roman Catholicism or even Pope Francis but I think there has been genuine and widespread appreciation of Pope Francis' willingness to serve others from the privileged position that he was blessed with. "Pope Francis was a pope for the poor, the downtrodden and the forgotten," said Keir Starmer. He lived a life of service, especially on behalf of the powerless and voiceless. That, for those of us in the rich north and privileged west could be an uncomfortable reminder of global inequalities. In that, he mirrored the teaching and example of Jesus.

The Pope's life is a reminder to all Christians that we are all called to a life of service. I think many of us would recall that Queen Elizabeth demonstrated that same message and principle.

You or I may not have anywhere near the same influence, reach or profile as a Pope or monarch but we too are called to serve. God has placed us in a context in which we can serve those around us in our families, communities, work and in the church fellowship.

I write this on the day that Simon, Elle, Ben and Tom move into the vicarage. It was quite a chaotic environment with removal vans, Scottish Power generators and workers and plenty of church folk and other service users coming and going in the car park. I'm sure you'll join with me in praying that our vicar and family settle in well and feel at home soon. We all know how moving home can be unsettling and disorientating. Simon has taken on the responsibility of serving God here at St Thomas' and St John's and our support, encouragement and willingness to serve alongside him is essential.

One of the things that Paul and I have repeatedly felt during the interregnum is how so many of the church have lived out that model of service. We accept that none of us is perfect and that we are all flawed but there is a genuine desire to serve Christ and others in our churches. At the risk of missing some people out, I'd like to highlight a handful of those whose service may go unnoticed.

Firstly, those who unseen, decorate the churches with flowers. Having been without any during Lent, it was particularly lovely to have the displays on Easter Sunday. So, our thanks to all those who decorate the churches, week in week out. (If you want to join them – see Marjory W!)

Another person who I'd like to mention, is Steve M our cleaner at St Thomas' and Holy Trinity. He's not a member of our congregation on Sunday, so he's not observed by everyone. However, I am aware that Steve's commitment and service is so valuable, often going above and beyond in his care for the premises. Thanks Steve!

Thanks too to those who serve coffee and tea after the morning service. It can be a challenge getting everything ready and it means being late for Sunday Dinner, but it adds so much to our fellowship after the service. (I've not sold it particularly well – but we would welcome new folk to join the teams. See me if you're interested in serving in a new way!)

The Churchwarden, Jean R and the loyal team of helpers at West Ashton acknowledge a similar selfless dedication to serving Christ in the congregation there that enables our sister church, St John's, to function.

One of the things I've enjoyed over the past few months is inviting people from the congregation to share something of their Christian faith with us. I'd like to thank those who've been brave enough to do this. In April it was great to hear from Matt Y and Mandi A talking about obedience to God. Not everyone feels comfortable speaking in church like this, but when it's happened, I really feel we have all learnt and benefitted. That, I think has been a real service to us all. I guess it's an example of every-member ministry in practice where we learn from and encourage each other.

This could well be the last churchwarden's contribution to the Newsletter from me. (Phew, I hear you say – let's hear from the new main man!) And so, my closing encouragement, as Simon begins his ministry here, is for us all to serve Christ alongside and with him in confidence and humility.

John

St John's Update

Spring has sprung. Hallelujah. The swallows have returned and so has the cuckoo. Baby lambs are prancing about in the fields and cows have been let out in pastures after spending their winter indoors. April at St John's started with the Village School's Easter Service - the children had given a lot of thought into the Easter story and produced a meaningful service - the congregation appreciated their efforts. Fire extinguishers had been serviced and certificate issued. Chantrey Conservation Architects and a representative from Ellis Decorators visited the church regarding the damp wall situation. Various suggestions were mentioned. A report would be written and submitted to the PCC.

Good Friday took the usual format of an hour by the cross at 2pm. Judy W kindly covered this service and helped make this service very relevant to the occasion. Easter Saturday saw the "flower ladies" decorate the church providing colour and beautiful arrangements - a welcome sight after the bare and austere Lent period. The Easter Day Service was led by Revd. Joy Albone (Canalside Benefice), her first visit to St J's, she brought her own style of service and was welcomed by the congregation. The Annual Parochial Church Meeting for St John's will be held in the Church at 7pm on 1st May. Excitement and anticipation is mounting with the forthcoming placement of Rev. Simon Pope (and family). St John's wishes them well with a safe and trouble free transition to Trowbridge and setting up home in the vicarage.

We are in that time of year where marathons are run - where personal challenges and goals are pursued; conquering endurance targets and monies being raised for charities. Where people who are strangers, will reach out to help others finish the race. The saying "It's not the winning that counts but the taking part" - this also applies to our faith. Let us encourage one another by lending a helping hand; let us spur each other on; pull together - we run together in the race of faith. As Hebrews 10:24 says "Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds". Hallelujah. Amen.

You would be very welcome to join us for worship at St John's at
10.30am on : 4 May - Service of the Word

18 May - Holy Communion

Jean

Easter at St John's





Holy week at St John's



Report on our annual parochial church meeting which took place on Tuesday 29th April ably chaired by Paul E.

John C and Paul E thankfully agreed to stand again as church wardens and were duly elected.

Mandi A, Simon W, Helen S and Stephen B were elected as members of the PCC.

The PCC is now made up of the following members:

Ex Officio: Simon P, Angela G, Martyn W, Judy W

Deanery Synod Reps: Ruth C, Christine W, Marjorie W

PCC members: Peter H, Natasha B, Harriet H (to 2026); Esther B, Mandi A, Lyndsey W (to 2027); Stephen B, Helen S, Simon W (to 2028)

Lyndsey W gave a presentation on the accounts for 2024 with thanks to all involved. She explained that the significant increase in income is largely due to On Track hiring the church. We have recently spent more on refurbishment but this goes hand in hand with renting the rooms more. Please see the APCM booklet for more details. Also, a reminder was given to everyone to please only use the designated treasurer address treasurer@stthomastrowbridge.org

Thanks was given to John R who has completed the huge undertaking of the 6 yearly renewal of the electoral roll. He has asked for assistance going forward so if anyone is interested in this role please speak to him or the churchwardens.

Paul encouraged members to read all the reports from organisations received in the APCM booklet as they show how much the church is involved with. He thanked all those who contributed the reports and who take part in the various works in the church.

There was only one matter of Parochial or Church concern raised and this was the increasing difficulty in parking at St Thomas'. Paul confirmed that the PCC have already been discussing options and there is a reluctance to use the grass area due to complications with obtaining faculties and concerns about safety. The PCC will keep this under review as it is accepted that it is a big concern. Any suggestions from church members are welcome, please email me.

Mandi Archer thanked our 'Superheroes' Paul and John for all their hard work during the interregnum and they receive a standing ovation

together with gifts to show our appreciation.

John reflected on the last year from a church warden's perspective and then invited everyone to consider in small groups the following questions:

- *What are the things that you particularly want to thank God for?*
- *What have you learned during this period, either about our church or about yourself?*
- *Do you have any new insights about God's calling for the future of St Thomas'?*

The answers are being consolidated and Simon P is keen to consider them. If you were unable to make the APCM and want to contribute your thoughts then please email them to me.

Harriet Heard PCC Secretary

What is a Coccinellidae?

It's a Ladybird - the name Ladybird derives from the Latin word scarlet and has been associated with the Virgin Mary for her red cloak and seven spots depicting the "seven sorrows". Like most of nature's creatures, the Ladybird has an important job to do by consuming aphids voraciously. The first sight of a Ladybird is a call to make a wish.

To see a Ladybird is lucky and could make a wish come true. She looks so pretty in her bright red coat, as they always do. It may look like she's just resting but the real experts know - She is consuming harmful aphids, so all the plants can grow!



Thank You to Paul and John



This picture shows a group of Superheroes. I don't know how many you can spot and name? The message is that Jesus is the real Superhero. But he gifts us with power to be His Superheroes when we are ready and willing to do his will. With this in mind.....

I have been asked to say thank you, on behalf of you all, to our Churchwardens for seeing us through this interregnum.

Having spoken to a number of people, there is a danger that I could go on for far too long. There was no shortage of superlatives in the comments I noted down.

To give this vote of thanks a bit of shape, I am going to focus on three particular areas for which we are grateful to them and to God.

Firstly, **Paul and John themselves:**

They are both very gifted and have been willing to step up and use their gifts, even if they had to step out of their comfort zones. They have been courageous to be led by the Holy Spirit. They have had great stamina, working incredibly hard not only in the foreground but in the

background. Sorting out postcodes, heating, lighting, fabric repairs, and even the vicarage. And they have worked brilliantly together as a team. I would also like to mention Ruth, who has also worked very hard, undertaking many tasks, and quietly supporting both John and Paul.

Superheroes of Courage and Stamina

Secondly their dealings with us as a church family

They have been endlessly patient, good humoured and approachable. They have encouraged us, making the most of peoples' gifts and using a broad range of people in services and activities. And they have kept us well informed at all stages. We have felt confident week by week that the church was running smoothly and everything was well thought through and meticulously organised. They have set a tone of togetherness and helped maintain the unity of this church family as Allan often prayed for in his final year with us. "Love one another".

Superheroes of Love, Patience and Tolerance

Finally leading the church spiritually

We have been blessed by two churchwardens who can not only confidently lead services but can also preach and teach. We haven't just been treading water for ten months but moving forward, learning new things and trying new initiatives. It has been a time of growth, of excitement and finding out who we are as a church. We can look back and say it has been a successful year for us as a church. But there has also been sensitivity to the fact that we will soon have a new vicar who will take over the reins and make his own mark in leadership.

Superheroes of Faith and Spirituality

So, Paul and John, I will sum up by saying

We have huge admiration for you both and are deeply grateful for all you have done for us during the Interregnum.

Mandi A

Easter Outreach to Paxcroft and Castle Meads



We presented our Easter Experience to over 100 Year 5 (approx. ten-year-old) children at The Mead and Castle Mead schools at the beginning of April. We encouraged them to engage with four

key aspects of the Easter story: Palm Sunday, washing the disciples' feet, the crucifixion and the resurrection. They had obviously been learning about Easter in their RE lessons and were already familiar with some aspects the narrative. Most of them really engaged with the activities, and were excited when they saw a folded and torn piece of paper turn into a cross. The foot washing prompted one to say "now I feel like a disciple". In the final activity, each child planted a sunflower seed to take home and (hopefully) watch growing, as a reminder that new life (Jesus' resurrection) is central to Christian beliefs about Easter.



A wooden cross (made by Men's Shed) decorated with flowers serves as a focal point for the Easter Experience. Following each presentation, we erected a cross (we have two) in the grounds of that school, along with a notice inviting people to stop and pray. The crosses have stayed up throughout the holidays as a reminder of the message of Easter. Alice and Isaac also visited the Year 2 children at The Mead School to read the Easter story to them and to answer their questions about Easter, which included:

- How could Jesus roll the stone away when he was dead?
- How did Jesus know where the fish were when he was talking to his disciples?

It was great to hear them exploring the subject their own questions and great to be able to share our faith through our answers.



On Easter Monday, we ran our annual Easter Egg Trail, starting and ending at The Red Admiral on Paxcroft Mead. Despite the rather wet weather forecast, there was only a little rain (a great answer to prayer!), and record numbers of children took part, finding the wooden eggs and answering questions (sometimes loosely) related to spring-time and Easter. (The wooden eggs were made by the Men's Shed and decorated by

children at the schools.)

Between 80 and 100 children took part, and most people seemed to enjoy getting out into the fresh air (and earning themselves some chocolate). It was great to give families (and groups of friends) in our community an opportunity to do something together around the estate; and to see familiar faces returning to experience this year's event. It was also a good opportunity to remind them, through the questions, of key aspects of the Christian faith.



We would like to thank everyone who has supported us in these activities, including those who have prayed, volunteered and donated chocolate! We could not reach out to these people without your help.

Stephen and Alice B

Deadline for June's magazine: Friday 23rd May

The Morning Break Easter Special 2025



On Friday 11 April, about 43 of our regular Friday morning visitors, some church members and helpers gathered in the Church Rooms for coffee, Easter biscuits and a chat.

Around noon we decamped to the Church Hall where we sat down to an excellent lunch of homemade soup and a cold buffet and continued our conversations. The meal was rounded off with coffee, mints and petit fours. During this coffee time we were entertained with a light hearted Easter themed Quiz – we do like a quiz!! After the quiz, we then heard some appropriate Easter Scripture verses and listened to a gentle but moving testimony from one of our helpers, after which another member of our Team sang a thought-provoking song. The occasion was a fitting end to our winter programme and as we said goodbye to our guests, we gave each one an Easter Card and a small bag of Easter Eggs. Linda had made up some very attractive floral table decorations and we presented one to each of our visitors as they left.

We are looking forward to welcoming our regular guests back each Friday during the summer when we shall share coffee and cake together. Although we have grown over the winter there is still room for more people to join us so do pop in one Friday morning – you will be made most welcome.





Broads Adventure 2025

West Runton Holidays

In 2025 Broads adventure took place between the 12th & 19th of April. We had 6 Yachts and one smaller half-decker, with nearly 40 crew members and skippers living aboard. Our plan as always was to spend a week sailing, worshipping God and having lots of adventures and fun!

Saturday

Our week began on Saturday with everyone meeting at either Martham or Upton boatyards, depending on which yacht we'd be spending the week on. We met our crews, and then the Upton boats had a motor under the low, medieval bridge at Potter Heigham, and to Candle Dyke where we moored on the river bank to spend the first night.

After a great dinner prepared by the crews, we all met aboard 'Palace' for our first regular evening meeting. During these meetings, we worship, pray and a Skipper will give a talk. These times are always really powerful, and this year God really spoke to us during the meetings.

Sunday

We were up nice and early on Sunday morning to prepare the boats and go for a sail on Horsey Mere. This was our first real opportunity to sail the yachts, and for some of the crew it was their very first time sailing.



Sailing on Horsey Mere

After a great sail, we moored at the Horsey Mill, and embarked on our long walk to the beach. We had our Sunday church service amongst the sand dunes, played games on the beach and saw a lot of seals sleeping and playing in the sea! After returning to the boats we prepared the

favourite meal of the week, roast chicken with all of the trimmings. This is always a very impressive achievement considering the small galleys on the yachts.

Monday

Everyday after breakfast we have a 30 minute quiet time with our crews. It's a great chance to discuss the talk from the night before and to learn and pray together. The next job of the day is to get the boats ready for a daily inspection. This gives us the opportunity to see all of the boats and crew and check everything is ship-shape! The best prepared boat/crew will hold the converted 'Broads Adventure shield' for the day. On Monday, after inspection we headed back onto Horsey for a sail. This gave us a chance to practice manoeuvres including the 'Man overboard drill'. This is a very important skill to learn, so we always make sure the crews know the plan if someone does get a little wet! Once we had all had a good sail, we had a short river sail to our night mooring at Martham boat yard.

Tuesday

On Tuesday the fleet headed towards Potter Heigham to navigate under the very tight, stone bridge. Due to a heavy rain shower, we decided to motor to our next mooring on South Walsham broad, where we had a lovely afternoon rowing the dinghies around. Our mooring for the night was rafted up together and tied to the trees.



In the trees on South Walsham

Wednesday

Wednesday was a great sailing day with strong winds and sunny weather. We sailed on South Walsham broad, and then headed down the river towards Upton boatyard for our night mooring. Here we had a chance to have showers. This only happens once a week, so we did insist that everyone take the opportunity to smell nicer! In the evening

we had our traditional barbecue, and our evening meeting outside. We finished off a memorable day with songs around the campfire.

Thursday

The next morning, we left early to embark on our longest river sail of the week. We were heading to Salhouse broad which meant a long sail through the town of Horning. There were light winds and a strong current, so we did need to revert to a little bit of engine power to get us there! Salhouse is a wonderful broad, as it's nice and sheltered amongst trees. This gave the crews a chance to sail around in the dinghies, and also to compete in the 'Dingy Treasure hunt'. This is an amazing event and has just the right balance of fun and chaos as the crews row between the yachts looking for clues!

Friday

Our last full day was a very good one! We started off with some sailing in the yachts around Salhouse and then after rafting up for lunch, we held the annual dingy regatta. This consists of a wide variety of races,

and the highlight this year was definitely the 'Oven glove' race where crew members had to share the rowing, while also wearing a pair of oven gloves.



The dingy regatta

2025 was a fantastic year for all of us on Broads Adventure. We had pretty good weather, some brilliant times worshipping God, and some really nice sailing too! Thank you to everyone who has supported us and our crew!

Skipper Andy Cooke

For information about Broads Adventure 2026 and other holidays for young people, keep an eye on <https://westruntonholidays.org/>

Ugandaid

We are delighted that our lovely family at St Thomas' continue to support Ugandaid a small charity that Pauline has been involved in since 2012 and I joined in 2013. May and June this year will be the Mission Focus months for Ugandaid so we thought you may like some more information.

This is some background information from the Ugandaid website, we actually included it last year but it sums everything up so well we've included it again. If you remember from last year, please feel free to skip to the end.

"The Ugandaid story

Uganda has seen turbulent civil war, violent dictatorship and HIV/AIDS, which has left over a million children orphaned. Poverty is widespread, most people live at a subsistence level and children commonly die from malaria, measles and dehydration. Primary education is almost universally accessible, but schooling after 11 years old is beyond the means of many families.

There is little hope of employment for most poor and orphaned youngsters in Uganda, and they desperately need an opportunity to learn skills to provide for themselves as they approach adulthood.

Ugandaid has two primary objectives:

- To offer hope to vulnerable youngsters, the poorest of the poor in Uganda, by sponsoring vocational training (primarily at Nile Vocational Institute) leading to personal growth, confidence, employment and self-sufficiency. A life-changing opportunity for hundreds of students and their extended families.
- To support NVI in the development of existing and new courses (with appropriate building infrastructure and equipment) at its Njeru campus, and to work with similar training organisations, as appropriate, to improve the education and well-being of disadvantaged teenagers and young adults in Uganda.

"When a group of us visited Jinja in 2000 we were touched by the poverty and the struggles faced by Ugandan people. Many young people don't have the money for secondary education or vocational skills training and with it the opportunity for independence.

In 2001 we discovered NVI and from the outset were impressed by all aspects of their work and it's excellent success rate. It seemed obvious - rather than "reinvent the wheel" we should work with this well-established Institute which had all the experience and infrastructure in place, yet had spare capacity for more students.

In 2002 we set up a sponsorship scheme to place students at NVI, where we could be confident of the quality of education and care students would receive. UgandaAid has steadily grown, and now nearly 900 students have been trained at NVI through UgandaAid."

For Pauline and I, our involvement in Ugandaid has taken the form of two week trips to Uganda, we've both been four times. These trips were really amazing and we had the privilege of being part of so many different activities that it's difficult to list them all. Visits to NVI to see where the sponsored students study to gain their life changing vocational qualifications were and still are always central. There is usually a practical project, in the earlier years we decorated school classrooms and a Nursery kitchen. In the later years the practical projects have been in NVI itself. We've decorated various departments which were all greatly in need. One year we renovated the Hairdressing Department and fitted 2 shiney new sinks. Up until then hair washing had taken place in a washing up bowl with water from an outside tap! That year our student Mary Faith who had recently finished her qualification came along to help us and told us she and her friends had prayed for better facilities for future students and she was delighted to be able to help in her prayers being answered.

With the annual gift that Ugandaid receives from St Thomas' we've taken on another student who is called Pius and is in year two of his three year Motor Mechanic course. If you have a look at our Ugandaid display on the Missions board you can read a letter from Pius. We've also included more information about NVI and this year's Ugandaid trip to Jinja.

We're also looking forward to a visit from Steve Edwards who is joint leader of Ugandaid and his wife Helen. Steve will be speaking at the Sunday morning service on May 11th. We're also holding a Games and Chat Evening on the evening of May 10th, see details below.

Thank you for all your previous help in supporting and praying for these vulnerable young people of Uganda.

Pauline B and Jane B

Please join us for a Games and Chat Evening. Details below. We'll have games for all the family including some for younger children, giant Jenga etc. We'd love some people, (especially young people) to come and help explain games to us all. If you'd like to bring and share a game, do bring it along. If games aren't your thing just come and chat. The Social Team are preparing a Buffet supper so please sign up at the back of Church or with Jane, Pauline or Val. Donations welcomed, any money after costs are covered will go to Ugandaid. Hope to see you there.



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

Twinning

Last autumn, the mayor of Trowbridge came up with the idea of a twinning between Trowbridge and one of Ukrainian town. When we met, he asked me if I could help him and if I knew of a town that is similar in size to Trowbridge and whose leadership would be willing to develop a relationship with Trowbridge.

I suggested the town of Kostopil, Rivne region. This is the town home of my husband Mykhailo.

His parents and his older brother still live there. Unfortunately, it was there that the war caught us.

I was worried about whether I would be able to cope with organising this, because I had no experience of this. I prayed a lot. And I realised that it is a great opportunity to speak about Ukraine and to help Ukraine.

It is also a very symbolic event for me. Kostopil is my husband's home, we used to go there often, and we have a great relationship with his parents. For the children, it was always an incredible and welcome time to visit their grandmother. It is part of our home. And Trowbridge is a town that became not just a refuge for us, but a second home for us during the war! Here the Lord gave us a lovely second family! And no matter what happens, this place is now forever in our hearts! God has given us wonderful friends and family! God is good in any circumstances!

So, we started the process of agreements and negotiations. It was not easy, because the leadership of Kostopil is working in a war situation. On 18 February 2025, the Trowbridge - Kostopil Twinning Association was established. Now we have about 20 members of the association (everyone is welcome to join us 😊). By the way, we have a Facebook page if you want to follow the news of the association.

On 24 April, the official ceremony of signing the Trowbridge-Kostopil Twinning Charter took place.

The Deputy Mayor of Kostopil, Yuriy Kuzniuk, and his assistant, Iryna Prokhorenko, came from Ukraine to sign the Charter.

They had only 3 days in Trowbridge, so we tried to introduce them to the town as much as possible. They visited the Trowbridge Museum, the Parade House, the King's Arms (they had a traditional Fish and

Chips 😊). On Saturday, we had the opportunity to take Yuriy and Irina to Stonehenge.

It was a really lovely and busy time. But I saw how God was there, and that was the most important thing for me!

But this is just the beginning. There are many plans and ideas to further develop the cultural relations between our towns, but as I do this, I don't want to do it without God's intervention and leadership. I know that some of you have been supporting me in prayer since the beginning of the twinning (thank you very much to my small group!). So, if the Holy Spirit reminds you of this work, please pray. I really want God to be glorified through this! And if this is an opportunity to be a light to the world, I don't want to miss it! Without Him, nothing makes sense! I love you all, thank you for everything!

Anastasiia.



Goodbye St Thomas', Hello Wincanton

In my last piece in here I was telling you about the next move on my ministry journey, to Wincanton Baptist Church. It was really lovely to be able to say "Thank you and goodbye" to you all on 9th March.

Wasn't it perfect timing, with it being CMS Focus Sunday? It gave me the opportunity to say how much my training at CMS has helped me



step into my pioneer ministry gifting. Thank you all for your good wishes on this next step, and beautiful cards. It was so wonderful to be with you all and very affirming. I left on cloud 9!

The following week was my Induction Service at Wincanton. It was wonderful to have about 20 friends and family there, with a good proportion coming from St Thomas'. I was very touched by all of you who made the effort to come and support me. *This is me with Carl Smethurst, the Regional Minister who told me about Wincanton BC and took the service.*



The service and time of fellowship afterwards were truly joyful. Having had a rather bumpy time of it since starting my ministry journey it was lovely to be able to celebrate reaching this milestone. The church did me proud with the refreshments.

Sam came from London, and it was great to have him by my side. I'd asked him to take photos, but he was kept so busy with all the

people wanting to chat to him I didn't end up with as many as I'd expected!

I was overwhelmed by my friends Rachel and David coming all the way from Stafford, bringing their very well behaved dog Taffy with them. He even came to the service! I had no idea he was there, as he was so quiet. Rather more importantly for me (!), they



also brought my sister Christine from Stoke-on-Trent, who did the reading. Sadly my other sister Joy couldn't come as it clashed with a choir concert she was singing in. My Uncle would normally have brought Mum but was awaiting an operation (which I'm very pleased to say he's now had and recovering well from), so neither of them were able to get there. To those unable to make this service, I'm saying - hopefully I'll be ordained in September 2026 so there should be another chance!

The first part of the service has talks by the sending church, the receiving church, college, then me. It was very clear how God has been preparing all of us for each other so that the jigsaw pieces all fell into place. It was a bit like being at your own funeral, hearing all these nice things said about you that you wouldn't normally hear! Then there are affirmations and promises made by me and the church to each other – which was more like getting married. I chose songs on the theme of God's faithfulness as that is my testimony. God is good.

It was terrific to have Rev Ali Boulton preaching, as she is the person who first suggested I thought about Baptist Pioneer Ministry. Her message was very appropriate for me, focusing on: Call, Challenge, Resurrection and Response.

Since then I've been there for three long weekends (I work there 3 days a week), and have made a great start on getting to know the community there. It really feels like God is going before me and is "making a way". My first day there was "Wincanton History Day" and the town was out in force, with all the main buildings open etc. so I achieved a lot of 'ticks' in a day. I even met the Headteacher of one of the local primary schools and he invited me to go and do assemblies and support the RE curriculum! Yes please!

The sale of the building has now completed so we are officially homeless! We are meeting in the local Methodist church after they have held their service on Sunday mornings. I preached on Easter Sunday so everyone left with an egg...!

Please pray for us as we continue to seek God's will for us as a fellowship. I'll keep you posted on what happens!

Every blessing,
Ruth x

Letter to St Thomas' & St John's 26th April 2025

Dear church family and friends,

Sometimes God has a plan for your life that is not what you expected, and I am writing to say farewell after 23 years of friendship and ministry. I have been offered and am delighted to accept, a curacy at the United Benefice of Holt St Katherine's, Great Chalfeld All Saints and Brought Gifford St Marys. It's been quite a journey to get to this point, so I thought I you might be interested to hear some of the highlights from 23 years at St Thomas' and St John's.

We first came to St Thomas' in 2002, after meeting Jayne and Ian (Gibbons), and Alice and Stephen (Bull) at New Wine. We had just moved to Edington and were looking for a church where we could put down roots. They were on Blue 2 (I think!) and were warm and welcoming, full of enthusiasm for Jesus and His kingdom. They invited us to St Thomas' after New Wine finished, and here we have stayed ever since. We found a church, under Allan's leadership, full of metaphorical Gibbons's and Bull's; kind, thoughtful, caring, compassionate, and fun-loving, with a heart for worship, our local community and mission throughout the world. Kevin would say, he also found the best cake-makers in the South-West! We felt humbled and excited to be serving in a church that was living out Jesus' commandments to "love God and love your neighbour as yourself."

I had been a worship leader for some years before coming to St Thomas' and as you know, Kevin was (and is) an amazing drummer. In 2002 we joined what was at the time, a kind of hybrid choir, which was moving towards a model of worship teams and gradually introducing songs with a more contemporary feel. I became a worship team leader and supported Ian. When Ian left, I became overall coordinator, working alongside many who were much more gifted than I am, and encouraged others to use the worship-gifts God had given them. I was delighted to pass on the coordination of the team to Carrie when I began training for ordained ministry and she has brought a fresh anointing and vision to the team.

As well as that, I've served on the PCC a number of times, been part of the Prayer Ministry Team, was the Church Rep for Christian Solidarity, helped with Toddlers, and led Connect@Castlemead – a missional home group, when we moved into Trowbridge. Kevin and I were part of the church Morogoro Team in 2005 (was it that long ago?!) and we raised some of the money by organising a Morogoro Night, complete with a 2-course supper and a Jazz Band aka, Reuben, Andy Sherwood, Kevin and myself. We offered the band at the auction of promises and our first gig was at Marjorie and Brian's wedding anniversary party in Melksham! We were kept busy for the next two years with weddings, and other events, on the condition that there was always a donation to charity. In the end, my work pattern made it untenable to carry on, but it was great fun while it lasted.

Turn the clock forward to 2015, when Ruth Worsley (now Bishop of Liverpool) was our Archdeacon and she encouraged me to do something about the call to ordained ministry that I had not previously acknowledged as a possibility. So began a process of discernment for a year, but whilst recognising the calling, the diocese at the time had an age restriction for training, so I was offered an LLM pathway instead and another 6 months of discernment. I had already completed a Graduate Diploma in Kingdom Theology, but as you might be aware, all things academic lead to Durham, so I had to start from the beginning again and completed another three years at Sarum College before being licensed as a Lay Minister, to St Thomas' and St John's.

Being an LLM opened up new opportunities for ministry in both contemporary and traditional settings; preaching and teaching, pastoral visits, taking Services for schools, funeral ministry and mission, for example, the Women's Shed. One of my great joys has been to serve the lovely congregation at St John's month by month. I started the Tea@4 Service at Holy Trinity with a great team of helpers and it grew to about 15-20 families. Then Covid struck and we all know the impact that had. At St Thomas' we all learned new skills as we grappled with the technology to provide online Services with Worship on YouTube. And Tea@4 evolved into Holy Trinity Online which I led on Zoom. Gradually we all got back to some kind of 'normality'.

In June 2022, a new Bishop was inaugurated at Salisbury Cathedral, and in October at our first Archdeaconry Day, Bishop Stephen addressed those of us who were LLM's and asked if God was calling us to Ordained Ministry. I knew in my heart the Holy Spirit was speaking to me and I went back to the discernment process. In July 2024, after successful interviews with the Bishop's Advisors, I was back at Sarum College in August for a One-year Pathway for Ordination and it's been great to journey with Natasha, who is currently doing her LLM training through Sarum.

So now I have the excitement of getting to know people in a new rural parish (just down the road) as an ordained minister. Friendship isn't dependent on which church you belong to, or even which part of the world you live in. I don't know where to begin to name all of my many friends who love and support me. You know who you are and I thank God for you all, for your prayers, kindness and love, and continuing friendship.

As well as serving the church, my greatest longing for my Ordained Ministry is for it to open doors to take Jesus the life-changer to our communities, and to help women, men, young people and children grow in their faith. The words of Isaiah 61:1-2 really resonate with me and remind us all what we are called to.

"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captive and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour".

I am being ordained at Salisbury Cathedral on 29th June at 10:30 in the morning. It would be lovely if you could be there and there is a buffet lunch afterwards back at 7 Noctule Avenue. We will be able to arrange some lifts if you are unable to drive, so please let me know in good time. My email is judy-wright@outlook.com or leave me a message on 07584 562313.

With love and blessings, Judy

Guide Dog Puppy Update

After a short break we now have news of two Guide Dog puppies. The plan for Gucci was originally that she would be matched with a man in Plymouth, but for some reason that didn't work out, as it wasn't the right match for Gucci.

However she has now been matched to somebody in the Oxford area and she is now there in the last stages of training and matching.

The photo was taken on Monday showing her on a free run in Devon prior to the long trip to Oxford.



The second puppy is Aaliyah - pronounced Aah-lee-uh, and the Arabic meaning is exalted or sublime – quite a name to live up to. She arrived today – at just 8 weeks old she weighs just over 5kgs, and is honey coloured. She is very much a Golden Retriever with just a dash of Labrador. And she is very vocal – she has barked more in the 10 hours she has been here than Winter, Esselle and Gucci collectively barked in all the time we had them!! But she is



great fun – the photo here shows her cuddled up in her toy box. She loves the selection of new toys and is quite partial to a frame or two of snooker. It is really good having a dog again.

For a Kerbeys (older section) update. We are enjoying our new home, we are enjoying the stairs!! We have had a few problems with the property with a leak in the shower and heating controls not working in quite the way they should do – but most of that is sorted now and the few remaining things should be done by the weekend. We have had to start working on the garden to make it suitable for the Guide Dog Puppy.

It is interesting being back in the church we worshipped in and were fully involved in when we lived in Shrewsbury previously – obviously a good number of people are the same but there are a large number that we don't know.

There are a range of services each Sunday:

9.00am HC that has a congregation of about

70; an 11.0am service that has a more mixed

age range – the 10.30am service at St Ts is

somewhere between the two in terms of worship music. Then there is

an Evening Service at 6.30pm – this is held in the Bradbury Hall the

extension to the church that was built when we were here previously

and when I was church administrator. We have tended to go to

9.00am and 6.30pm. We did go to the 11.00am service on Easter

Sunday when Richard, Estelle and Issy were with us – it was very lively

(and very loud!) including beach balls being tossed around the

congregation. We do intend to try the 11.00am service again.

Attached are some photos of the church – the stained glass windows

are lovely with designs by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones –

and the many window sills and the arched

entrance porch allow so many areas for

Easter flowers.



Saying all that we do miss our

St Ts and St John's friends and other Trowbridge folk a lot – so if you fancy a trip to this beautiful part of the West Midlands we would love

to see you. We are just a few minutes walk from the River Severn

(great walks in this lovely weather) and just 5 minutes drive from

Attingham Park, a beautiful NT property with miles of walks.

God bless you all, and we are particularly thinking of you as you

welcome Simon as your new Vicar and to Elle and their sons.

Pat K



Dear Friends,

We are pleased to announce our summer 'Encountering the Father's Love' school. You are warmly invited to join us at St Katharine's Church in the beautiful village of Holt (near Bath).

**St Katharine's Church
Holt
BA14 6PZ**

The school will run from **Monday 28th July to Friday August 1st**

The cost will be £120 per person or £210 for a couple
(Help may be available for those in financial difficulties).

Tea and coffee will be provided each day, but please bring your own packed lunch.

For more information and to register please visit:

www.encounteringthefatherslove.org

Whether this would be a return visit or a new venture for you we would be delighted to welcome you.

Blessings

David, Faith & the EFL team

Kadugli Newsletter and Prayer Diary

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

The Church Universal

The event dominating the news after Easter is the death of Pope Francis. In this newsletter we have tended to focus on the Episcopal Church of Sudan, a part of the Anglican Communion, because we have contacts there, but looking back to 2019, when a team from Bradford Deanery went to Kadugli, we met representatives of other denominations.

At that time, the civil war (yes, another one) had ground to a halt and there were hopes a democratic government might be formed; sadly, those hopes were disappointed, but we took advantage of the pause in hostilities.

At the end of our short stay in Kadugli, the local church hosted a meal for us, and representatives of other denominations joined us. The local RC priest (may God’s blessing rest upon him) stood up and explained that during the last and long lasting hostilities, the ministers of many churches had left Kadugli. Those who remained drew closer together; this explained the

presence of christians from several denominations. And then he voiced a profound truth: “what is important is not our different denominations, but the fact that we are all one in Christ Jesus”.



Leaders at the conference in 2019. The Roman Catholic priest is in black.

So as we react to the death of Pope Francis, a good and humble servant of Jesus Christ, let us thank God for him and let us remember too our fellow Christians in other denominations in Sudan, and especially in Kadugli.

Recent News on Sudan.

Following SAF’s reclaiming of Khartoum, their next obvious target is the recovery of Omdurman, which is opposite it across the Nile. RSF, of course, will not give this up easily, and the most recent reports claim their forces have executed 31 civilians of various ages whom they accused of associating with SAF. If true, as seems likely, these killings are war crimes.

In the West of Sudan, the RSF have been attacking and besieging the town of El Fasher and a major refugee camp. Those who manage to escape are often attacked and robbed, and many have died.

Given the record and reputation of RSF, it is worrying that they are present in the Kadugli area. They have joined with the Sudan People's Liberation Army - North (SPLA-N) to oppose the SAF, who, it is thought, would bring in an Islamic government. All in all, it is hardly surprising the population of Kadugli lives in fear, not knowing what each day will bring.

And What of the Church in Sudan?

Amid the turmoil, comments from across Sudan reveal that suffering is drawing Christians closer to Christ. Abir Suleiman, Diocesan accountant for Wad Medani, is now a refugee in South Sudan. She writes "The worst feeling one can experience is weakness, from a broken spirit. It comes from going through negative situations such as homelessness, job loss, and one's family scattered due to this war. These challenges have changed the course of my life and make me think and feel in ways I don't want to. Where is God in all this? I read the people of Israel asked Moses 'Is God with us or not?' (Ex 17). Feeling faint, they were moaning, though God was with them every step of the way. He tests and trains us to trust and be firm in Him, to free us from all fear, anxiety, and dependency on the world. He says 'My grace is all you need. My power shows best when you are weak.' (2 Cor. 12). I have opportunity to be a living demonstration of Christ's power."

A Mothers' Union leader, now a refugee in Cairo, says " "Pray for us to be able to help our neighbours. We have the hope of Jesus and his love. Our neighbours have no one to encourage them. God has given us Jesus." Members of the Mothers' Union (plus a few others) Kadugli 2019.

What about Kadugli?

Most of the Sudanese bishops have been forced to flee the country. One of the three who remain is Assistant Bishop Hassan of Kadugli, living and working chiefly in the Nuba Mountains. As mentioned earlier, the population lives in fear, and when we pray for them we should especially pray for Hassan's protection. Bishop Andudu of Kadugli is not in Sudan at present, but is reported to have persisted with remarkable building works.

Over Easter a youth concert was held. Rev. Ibrahim Musa Mitshi reports "Under the theme: Psa 149:1 "Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints". Kush choir (1000 members) which was founded last year 2024 by the Rt. Rev. Andudu Adam the bishop of Kadugli diocese. More than 20 choirs attended and presented their songs, indeed it was a great and blessed day, glory to God almighty."



Unfortunately it is not possible to show the video clip of the occasion, but the singing and dancing were impressive. Meanwhile, we also need to support the desperate need for food and other essentials. Can

we help? For administrative and other reasons any money given for Hassan's son Yassa for his education 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."

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)

1. Please give thanks for the steadfastness of Christians of all denominations in Sudan, and pray for their protection.
2. Pray for the rapid ending of the civil war and its attendant atrocities.
3. Pray for the establishment of a stable and fair government that will protect different faiths and allow for conversions.
4. Pray for the strengthening and encouragement of the leadership of the different churches, and that they may be given God's wisdom in their work.

Thanks to all who were able to join the vicarage garden working party on Thursday.



If anyone would like either or both of these office desks from the vicarage that are going free, please let the church office know.



**Deadline for June's magazine:
Friday 23rd May**