

December 2025

60p



Life



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MAGAZINE EDITOR LIFE

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Articles for the January edition are due by Sunday 14th December.

There is an interesting article inside, (well actually all the articles are interesting and informative). But Sue Ripley's one on the Parish Churchyard reports on the recent tidy up at the Parish Churchyard and throws some light on the Eco side of things there. We need to keep on top of things there to keep the area tidy and Eco friendly, as the Council only cuts the grass. The back cover has pictures taken at the time, and the ivy, leaf, and the ladybird ones were taken by Sue, but the holly one and the Parish Church are mine. Sharp eyes will spot the dead tree covered with ivy, standing aloft on the left of the church, therefore not a recent one. It was a nuisance when the wind blew it over, but it must have been God's plan to turn that area into an Eco area for the wildlife.

Thank you to those few who volunteered to help tidy up the churchyard in November, we will probably have a spring tidy up in March.

The lower picture shows a good number making Christmas cards at November's connections in the Mission Church.

The Christmas front cover is a past Parish Church picture and includes the 2025 logo for the month.

If you pay for the 'Life Magazine yearly at the reduced rate and great value at £6, the advanced payment will be due in January.

**Wishing all 'LIFE' readers a Happy
Christmas and Blessed New Year.**

Roger.

Curate's Letter.

'Therefore, the LORD himself will give you a sign, The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.'
Isaiah 7 verse 14.

DING DONG MERRILY ON HIGH IN HEAVEN THE BELLS ARE RINGING!!!

Has Noddy Holder declared that 'Its' Christmas!!' on your radio yet? Is Maria Carey singing through your devices? Even though I am writing this in mid-November the shops are full of Christmas decorations, Kevin the Carrot is back on our screens and the Grinch is shopping at Asda. But hang on, pause, and breathe. Have you opened your Advent Calendar? What did you get? Maybe some chocolate, or now, Advent calendars have all sorts behind the doors. In mine, (I peeked!) is a simple picture of Mary and Joseph. No baby Jesus, no animals. Just a young couple awaiting the birth of a very special baby. The people of God have been waiting many years for the birth of the Messiah, it was foretold in the Old Testament through prophets like Isaiah, many hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

I do not like waiting, I reflected on waiting at the Remembrance service in Walton this year, waiting is frustrating. But during Advent, we are called to wait... Advent can be glossed over in the secular world; it is filled with the preparation for the Christmas dinner rather than the preparation of the coming of the Christ Child. Years ago, Advent was highly revered amongst Christian nations, it was a holy time of waiting, self-reflection and prayer. With its own advent carols, and beautiful words and prayers, Advent was a time for dwelling in the waiting on the Lord. This year lets slow down; Mary and Joseph had to wait for the birth of Jesus, so let us wait with them. Patiently and prayerfully watching and waiting. I wish you a peaceful and patient Advent. And a beautiful Christmas, when it comes...
Sr Rachel.

Did you know God answers our prayers....

the Eternal Wall of answered prayer

One of my highlights at the brilliant First Sunday @ the Mission Church service last month led by Sarah Woodward, was to see the joyful and earnest expressions on people's faces - adults as well as the children as they hurled their paper aeroplanes, containing their prayers towards the altar at the front of the church.

Later that week I read that the UK's largest Christian monument is being built. Construction of this monument to the hope that prayer gives us began in November 25 and is scheduled to be completed by 2028.

The Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer will be built between the M6 and M42 near Coleshill, Warwickshire, and will be about 51m (167ft) tall, and is in the form of a Mobius strip. It will contain about one million bricks with each brick representing a story of Jesus answering someone's prayer.

Former Leicester City FC chaplain Richard Gamble, who has led the project, said: "I am delighted we are creating a monument that will share a million stories of hope and that people will be able to discover Jesus, who listens to and answers prayer."

He said he was grateful to everyone who had backed the monument, which included more than 20,000 supporters.

"This is the moment to build a landmark of hope," he added. "A lasting testimony to the power of prayer, preserving the Christian heritage in our nation."

Jane Tompsett, Mission Church

Holly, Ivy and Churchyards

...let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall the trees of the forest sing for Joy... Psalm 96:12

Already the shops are filling with Christmas fare and Christmas music, so how pleasant to escape outside for a while and enjoy the gift of nature. 'The Holly and the Ivy' is a familiar Christmas Carol which relates plants, holly, ivy and mistletoe, to events in Christ's life. These are amongst the evergreens which are often used to decorate our homes and churches for Christmas some of which are abundant in our churchyards.

Looking after our Churchyard

On a Saturday in early November a small group of willing volunteers gathered in Holy Trinity Churchyard in Street to tackle a number of tidying tasks which involved holly, ivy and other vegetation.

Following early morning rain, the sun came out from behind the clouds and shone brightly for the rest of the morning, highlighting autumn colours particularly on the beech trees at the entrance to the church. Sweeping up the golden carpet of leaves from the path was one of the first tasks. A spindly holly beneath a more mature tree was trimmed back. As we tackled tidying up 'wild' areas ready for new growth in the spring we were careful to leave refuge areas for wildlife. Trimming back the ivy it was easy to see the importance of it as shelter for beneficial insects such as ladybirds as some were disturbed by the cutting back but found their way into vegetation that remained. Flowers and berries were left where possible as sources of nectar for bees and food for birds. Thank you to the enthusiastic few who turned up to help and for the refreshments provided.

Renaturing

In the past we may have referred to what we are doing in many of our churchyards as rewilding however I learnt recently that rewilding is only possible in large areas of countryside as it refers not just to vegetation but also to animals such as beavers, lynx and wolves. What we are doing in our churchyards, and some of us in our gardens, in providing pockets of space to share with fellow creatures and foliage, is more accurately described as renaturing.

Street Parish Churchyard has an abundance of trees. If you saw the photograph of the Church in November Life you may have noticed that there appeared to be fewer trees when that picture was taken. A number of the trees in the churchyard today were not there when that picture was taken, there are some unusual specimens maybe all planted at around the same time.

How you can help

If you're interested in helping with occasional tasks in the churchyard or joining us next time, we have a specific tidying day please do get in touch with Roger or myself. Even if you can only spare an hour now and then there are tasks that would help us to keep the churchyard tidy and manage it for wildlife.

Susan Ripley (Street Parish)

SWCD Eco Church Group

Celebrate@6 2026 'God at work'

It has been a joy to worship alongside Christians from across the benefice and beyond during our Celebrate@6 evening services, held on the 3rd Sunday of each month in the Mission Church.

During 2025 we have travelled together through the book of Romans, at times wrestling with challenging teaching and at times celebrating with the encouragements to the people of faith that Paul offers.

In 2026 Celebrate@6 will continue and during next year we are planning a series looking at 'God at work'. We are in the midst of inviting a number of external speakers who have stories to share, both of God at work in their 'day jobs' and who will also talk about what it means to be Christians in their contexts, serving God at work.

Further details of the programme will follow in due course but please be putting these dates in your diaries and inviting others who you know to come along too. We would love to make this service also a resource for others in local churches, who perhaps spend most of their time in church serving and need time simply to come and receive as worshippers. Ana Lawrence

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Christmas Home Communion

I am aware that for some, getting to church has become difficult, perhaps because of increasing age or limited mobility.

We have a team across the benefice who offer home communion to those who would value this, and I appreciate that some may particularly want this around the Christmas season. If you or someone you know would value receiving Home Communion, please contact the church office as soon as possible to let us know and we'll do our best to make sure that we come to you in the coming weeks. Ana Lawrence

‘Come with me to our carol service’

You will see details elsewhere in this magazine of the carol services and other Christmas events held across SWCD churches.

My encouragement is that you take the opportunity, during this Christmas and Advent season, to invite others to join you at one or more of these. It might be a spouse, a family member a neighbour or a friend but there is no better time than Christmas to invite people to come, sing carols and hear the Good News but we have to proclaim. There may also be mince pies!

If you don't do it, it might be that nobody does.

Be bold! Ana Lawrence

Alpha 2026

Following on from our successful ‘Alpha’ course in 2025 we are looking to run a daytime ‘Alpha’ sometime in early 2026.

We shared some of the feedback from the last course in November ‘Life’ and would encourage anybody who would like the opportunity to find out more about the Christian faith, ask questions and have discussions in a judgement free, friendly environment to consider coming along.

To get an idea of numbers we'd love to hear from you or anyone you know who would be interested in coming on an ‘Alpha’ course and please contact the church office to express your interest.

Ana Lawrence

Bags of Joy.

This year on December 6th We will be handing out 200 Bags of Joy at the Street Festive Market. We will be lovingly and prayerfully filling those bags on Wednesday 3rd December after the midweek service of Holy Communion. You are welcome to join in and help! The idea of this outreach has come out of our Thrive group, looking at growing our churches and the kingdom.

We will be using the opportunity to wish people a Merry Christmas as well as an act of kindness. In the bags will be, a scripture reading card, a sweet treat, the dates of our Street Christmas services and a small gift. Giving face to face offers the chance of conversation and the opportunity to tell the good news of Christmas. Please do pray for this if you are unable to help. Sr Rachel.

Messy Church.

This year's Christmas Messy Church will be at Walton on the 9th of December. The focus will be on Presents or Presence. We will be looking at the Christmas story and asking what is important? We will be looking at seeing where God is in our own lives and how to spot him! With worship, crafts and food suitable for primary aged children why not come along? Sr. Rachel.

My Faith Journey

I am West Country born and bred. I grew up in a family of five where church played a prominent part in our lives. My father was a Station Master who was in charge of the Cheddar Valley line, now known as the Strawberry line.

We lived in the Station Master's house allocated to us. Later, my father moved to a position in the control office at Bristol Temple Meads and as a family we moved to a suburb of Bristol.

I felt lucky to be living in the 70s and discovered ballroom dancing, rock and roll and 'boys' and I moved away from the church!

Having had my wild days I settled down, married and we raised a family and I also rediscovered the importance of church to me and my family. They have all fled the nest. I'm now widowed and by various routes find myself living in Street for the past 2 years and I am so blessed to be welcomed into the community of the Street Churches who have made me feel very welcome.

Frances Groucott (Street Parish and Mission Churches)

St Andrew's Nativity Festival

During the afternoons of Saturday and Sunday December 13th and 14th we are holding our first ever Nativity Festival in church. We hope to have a variety of Nativity sets of all shapes, sizes and materials to display and enjoy. There will be refreshments of course! Pat.



Sunday Kids Groups at Mission Church.

On the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month we have groups for children during the service.

Adventurers are from the age of 3-7 and meet upstairs in room 4.

Explorers are from the age of 8-13 and meet in the kitchen.

We hope to be able to provide a creche for the 0-2 age group soon – watch this space!

Hannah Hindle

Mission Church

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Glitter and Glow

Friday the 31st October provided an evening of fun and games at the mission church. The younger children enjoyed the traditional challenges of apple bobbing and eating a doughnut off a string alongside some crafts. We joined together to sing 'Jesus-The light of the world' by Hopestream and feasted on hot dogs.

The older youth created some wonderful cakes on a theme of light – many ended up slightly tenuous depicting sports pitches, with floodlights!

Thank you to all the kind helpers 😊

Hannah Hindle

Mission Church

This is Christmas

Let's peep into the manger
bed!

And see the baby small.
Those little hands reach
out to us.
He is the Lord of all.

Those little hands have
made the world.
And also me and you
As Mary gazed in
wonder
Let's gaze in wonder too.

Those little hands grew
bigger.
The baby became a man.
The hands were full of
power
And amazing works began.

He healed the sick and
taught the folk
And touched the unclean
man
He stilled the storm and
raised the dead.
The children to him ran.

**A poem from the book,
Wonderful Love, A
collection of poems by
Jenny Hall.**

He showed us all the way of
love
And we must love him too.
But other hands were harsh
and rough
And hated him through and
through.

They nailed those hands to
a cruel cross
And killed him on a tree
He died that we might be
forgiven
That our heart and hands
might be free.

Oh blessed hands so pure
and good
Raised up in prayer for me.
My name is written on his
hands.
For all the world to see.

This is Christmas.
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.
Came to earth to save the
world.
This baby small.

Bishop's Letter

Christmas joy for all people

We fear that we live in a world of increasing polarisation. Conflicts between and within nations play their part. The amplification of division and hostility by social media algorithms doesn't help. Culture wars exacerbate matters further. Sometimes it feels like common ground is disappearing from underneath our feet like a sandbar being overwhelmed by the tide.

In such a climate, it's good to return to the message that heralded the arrival of Jesus. 'I bring you tidings of great joy which shall be for all people' says that angel who announces the saviour's birth (Luke 2:10). Jesus' story quickly includes all types and sorts of humanity. From local shepherds to exotic visitors from afar. I wonder what the conversation was like as they all crammed into the stable to see the newborn child?

Jesus's story quickly shows that not only is he for all people but that he needs all people. His family must have needed assistance when they fled as refugees to Egypt. Jesus must have needed help when his parents left him behind on a family outing to Jerusalem aged twelve. Jesus was constantly calling on and engaging with others as he went about his teaching and ministry.

What might counter the polarisation of our day? Amongst our greatest resource is to seek out the emotion that accompanied the news of the saviour's birth – joy. When we encounter joy – from that cup winning goal to the marriage of much-loved friends – such moments are never the time for division and enmity. We're all far too busy shouting and hugging each other! The invitation of Christmas is to experience such joy afresh. Often, we see joy most obviously in children's experience of the season.

Might we seek it for ourselves too? For joy breaks down divisions, overcomes barriers, reminds us that we are one.

'I bring you tidings of great joy which shall be for all people' says the angel. A very merry and joyful Christmas to you all.

Michael Beasley
Bishop of Bath and Wells

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Mission Church Christmas bring and share Christmas lunch

We would like to invite the church family of the Mission Church to our home on Sunday 14th December from 1pm onwards.

We can share lunch and fellowship together, along with a few 'sitting still' paper games for folk who want to participate; and even enjoy a short time of singing Christmas carols.

We will cook jacket potatoes and anything to accompany them would be appreciated (we have a list of ideas if you are stuck!) Light puddings would be special too!

But please come as you are if you are unable to bring anything. Your company is more important.

We live at: - Little Orchard, Church Street,

Barton St David. TA116BU

Do share lifts if possible.

Jackie and Richard Houlden (Mission Church)

Christmas Joy

As introduced in last month's 'Life' magazine, the Church of England's campaign for this Christmas is simply entitled 'Joy'.

As well as on our church publications you should see national advertising encouraging people to seek 'joy' this Christmas as they find their local church.

If you are on social media, please retweet, like or share posts about this to spread the news. If social media isn't your thing, then please be talking to friends and neighbours about this campaign and maybe even invite them up to come along to find some joy this Christmas (see article on inviting people to services).

Have a joyful Christmas season!

Ana Lawrence

Loving our communities, with carols and cake!

Over the coming weeks each of our parishes will host a carol service to which members of our local community will be warmly invited. Alongside the carols, readings and sharing of Good News of Great Joy we also share refreshments as part of our vision to 'love our communities'.

One really practical way in which you can get involved in this is by offering to bring a cake, mince pies or something similar to the carol service. Let's be known as a generous church family, who feed both body and soul. To find out more and offer edible blessings, please, speak to your church warden and let them know what you are able to bring.

Ana Lawrence

Women of God conference Sherborne 21 Feb 2026

Many of us have valued this local conference in previous years and details of the 2026 conference, to be held in Sherborne Girl's School, have now been released.

The event is described by the organisers as follows:

Join us for our 2026 conference - In Relentless Pursuit of Jesus - at The Merritt Centre, Sherborne Girls School, DT9 3QN, on Saturday, 21 Feb 2026 from 10:00 - 16:30.

Our keynote speaker will be Damilola Makinde. In addition, we will welcome Sue Crossman, Polly Axford-Checkley and will hear from Nicky & Pippa Gumbel in a prerecorded interview.

Early bird discounted tickets are available during December and I would warmly encourage you to book up, particularly as the event is regularly oversubscribed. Unfortunately, I will not be able to go to this event due to other commitments but if those who are going could let the office know then I'm sure you can arrange lift sharing etc.

To book, follow this link

<https://brushfire.com/womenofgodconference/relentless2026/599197>

Ana Lawrence

Samaritans Purse.

What a joy it was to deliver 64 shoe boxes to the depot ready to make their way to customs. Thank you so much to all of you that made it possible whether it was buying and packing your own box or giving a donation towards gifts or postage. Each gift is so valuable and blessed by God and, in time, they reach a child's hands to bless them and show that they are loved. The boxes were prayed for at Walton and we will know in the new year their destinations. Thank you all so much for your love and care.

Nativity Weekend.

29th/30th November. 10.00- 4.00.

We are looking forward to this weekend and to be welcoming people in to see the displays lent by so many of you. We also look forward to welcoming classes from Walton Primary School to come and visit. Plenty of delicious cakes to be had so please pop in to see us.

Annie's news.

We have for many years at Walton supported One Church in Harare helped by Annie Makoni. We hear all the news regularly whether good or bad, but we were delighted to share in news the Annie had become a grandma as her daughter Promise gave birth to a son called Kamali Elikai. Kamali means perfection/ completion and Elikai means God is my salvation. What a joy to pray with and for the family at another of Gods blessings.

Sandra Gristock Walton.

Christmas meal.

The Coffee, Chat and Snacks team would be delighted if you would join us for a festive meal on Saturday 20th December. The session runs from 11pm-1. We will also be singing carols around the piano.

We have received a grant for festive food from Street Parish Council to allow us to facilitate this and we offer our sincere thanks.

At the beginning of December there will be a sign-up sheet to book your free place in each of our churches.

We are always looking for more volunteers on a rota basis. Who could you ask? Who likes a good natter?

Please note Coffee and chat will be closed on Saturday 27th December and Saturday the 3rd January. For more information, please contact me. Sr Rachel.

Rachel's Placement.

As some of you may remember my September placement to Bristol Loaves and Fishes project was postponed. I am now going throughout January. I would ask for your prayers during this time. Sr Rachel.

Pets Blessing. Save the date!

On Saturday February 7th at 3pm I will be delighted to offer a Pet Blessing service at Compton Dundon. So, bring along all creatures great and small! Sr Rachel.

Charitable giving 2026

Across our churches we seek to look outwards by offering support to local, national and international charities as part of our giving.

Who we support is decided by each Parochial Church Council early each year and we encourage nominations from church members who have particular causes they are passionate about.

Our support tends to be offered to Christian registered charities and is usually for one year.

If there is a particular charity that you would like to nominate for consideration please contact me by the middle of January with your name and the church you attend, details of the charity (including registered charity number if possible) and a brief explanation as to why you think they are worthy of support from your church,

These nominations will go to our first PCC of 2026 for consideration. We also try to maintain ongoing support for the charities through prayer at Sunday intercessions and through regular updates through 'Life' etc. To do this we ask that each charity has a charity champion as a point of contact, and if that's something you would be willing to do for your nominated charity, please also let me know.

Kevin Lawrence

Reserving grave spaces at Compton Dundon & Walton

Whilst the churchyard at the Parish Church in Street is closed for new burials (burial of cremated remains continues), the churchyards in Walton and Compton Dundon remain open, with plenty of burial 'space' remaining.

Parishioners have the legal right to be buried in open churchyards after an act of Christian committal, but some people ask if they can reserve a particular burial space, perhaps because it is near to a loved one or because it has particular memories for them or their family.

As we've received a number of requests to do this I thought it was worth letting church members know that this process is open to them also. There is a cost, a process to be followed and some form filling to be done, but if that is something that you would want to pursue either for yourself or for a loved one. please contact either your church warden or the church office in the first instance. Ana Lawrence

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WOMEN'S BREAKFAST

Do come and join us for a Benefice Women's Breakfast in the Mission Church at 9 am on Saturday, January 24th.

A time of fellowship, faith and food. Gluten free, vegan/vegetarian options. Details to follow in the January 'LIFE' and in your Lifelines.

Comments from the last Women's Breakfast. It was great to share fellowship and food. Thank you. What a lovely start to the day. Wonderful to see everyone.

Ed Sounds good ladies, put it in your diary now.



Christmas



Connections@theMission

Thursday 18th December

2-30pm

Mission Church Street

Everyone Welcome!

There will be a Christmas Message

From the Clergy



Trinity Handbell Ringers



will be entertaining us



**There will be
Refreshments**



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Friends meeting.

We have decided to have our next events meeting after our service on Sunday 7th December. As we all stay for coffee, we thought this might enable those who can't join us midweek to be involved. Please come along with ideas as we would like to fill the events diary for a year.

Sandra Gristock. Walton.

Christmas Events and Services at Walton

We are so looking forward to our Christmas events and services thanks as always to Ana, David and Rachel. Our pebbles of joy will be hidden around the village for the children to find. This year they have angels painted on. Their finders will be encouraged to bring them along to the crib service 4.30 on Christmas eve. The school will be having a Christingle service on the 2nd December and our Carol service will be on the 18th December. Look out for times and details in our benefice Christmas lists of events.

Our Messy Church Christmas is on the 9th December after school. We look forward to welcoming the children to this as we aim to remind them of the true meaning of the season.

A happy and blessed Christmas to all of you from Holy Trinity.
Walton.

Amazing!

'THEY SPREAD THE WORD ... ABOUT THIS CHILD.'

Luke 2:17 NIV

It's Christmas! Time for parties, pageantry, and presents; and that's okay, but the real story transcends these things. To get the most out of it, take another look at:

- The Shepherds; Sheep-herders had so little status in first-century Palestine, they weren't even deemed reliable enough to testify in court, yet God chose them to announce His Son's arrival, and they in turn went out and told it to the world! Luke records: 'When they had seen Him, they spread the word' (Luke 2:17 NIV). Here's your answer to, 'Could God use someone like me?' You don't need to be a Theology graduate or be polished and eloquent. Just tell people what you've seen, heard, and the change Christ has made in your life. Share the Word, God will do the rest!
- Those who heard their story; 'All who heard it were amazed' (Luke 2:18 NIV). God's grace still amazes people; 'God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation' (2 Corinthians 5:19 NIV). Note the word 'reconciliation.' Your sin-debt is cancelled, your books balanced; now you can have a relationship with God by simply trusting in Christ. Amazing!
- Mary: Luke writes 'Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart' (Luke 2:19). She wanted to understand what was taking place and how it related to her. And you need to do that too. Get off the Christmas merry-go-round and take the time to treasure what's important here, and what it means for you. God became a man; that we, who are the sons of men, might become the sons of God. Amazing!

From the daily readings in 'The Word for Today'. This booklet of devotional readings is published every three months and is available free of charge through the generosity of supporters, from: UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF. Tel: 0845 60 40 401. Email: ucb@ucb.co.uk UCB is short for United Christian Broadcasters, who also produce Christian radio and TV programmes available on DAB digital radio, TV and online. Details at ucbmedia.co.uk

