

Wigan South Parish Magazine

- Holy Trinity
- St Andrew's
- St Peter's
- St Aidan's
- St Luke's
- St Thomas'

St Aidan's edition



Dec 2024 / Jan 2025

70p

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Parish Information

Baptisms

Baptisms (also called Christenings) are held around the Parish throughout the month. Please come along to the morning service at the church of your choice, and you can talk about booking a date that works well for you and church. Godparents must have been baptised themselves and be prepared to attend a baptism preparation session with the parents.

Funerals

Every parishioner has the right to a service in church, followed by a committal.

Marriage

You can marry in a CofE Church of your choice if certain criteria are shown to be met.

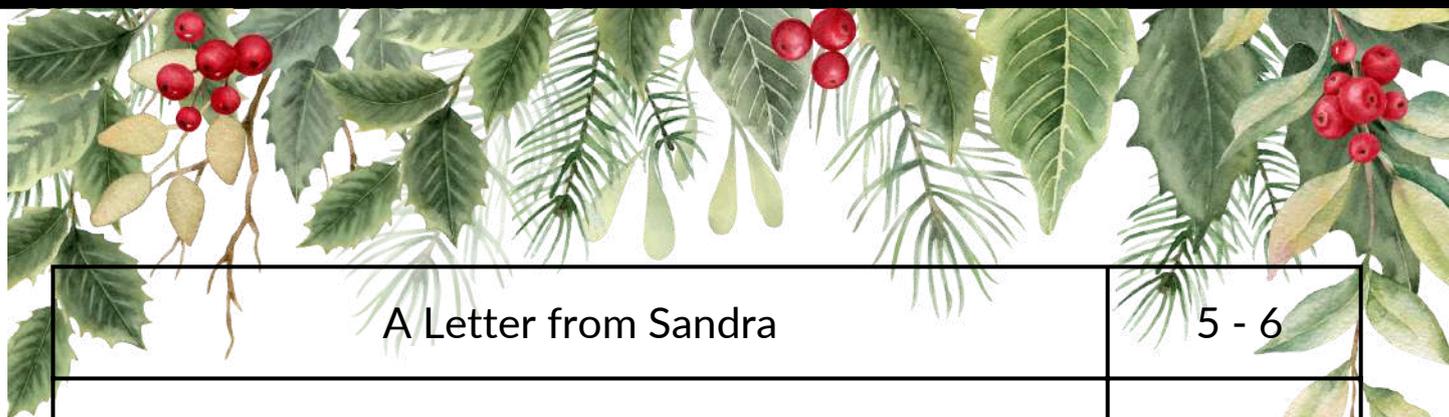
If you would like further information or to book a wedding or a baptism, please attend at one of our churches or see the contact details at the rear of the magazine. Funeral Directors will book any funerals.

Magazine Deadlines

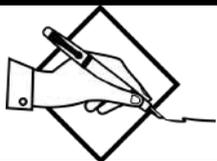
Please send any material for the magazine to your local assistant editor (see contact details at the back) or magazine@stthomasstluke.org.uk.

	January	February	March
Deadline for material	Christmas break	16th January	13th February
Publication date	Christmas break	26th January	23th February

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A Letter from Sandra

As the crisp chill of winter settles in, the Advent season beckons us into a time of preparation, hope, and gratitude.

Many of you will know that the word Advent means "coming,"

Advent is a four-week journey that invites us to prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth and anticipate His long-awaited return.



Advent reminds us to pause amid the holiday hustle and realign our hearts with the real meaning of Christmas. Just as Mary and Joseph prepared for the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, we, too, are called to prepare ourselves spiritually. This might involve setting aside moments for prayer, lighting the Advent candles, or meditating on Scripture that highlights God's promises. These practices help us move beyond mere external preparations to develop a deep inner readiness for the coming of Christ.

Advent is steeped in hope—a reminder that even in our darkest moments, God's light shines through. Isaiah 9:2 declares, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." This hope is not a fleeting wish but a steadfast confidence in God's faithfulness. As we reflect on the prophecies of old fulfilled in Jesus' birth, we are assured of His promises for our future.

Advent also calls us to give thanks. Amid the busyness of gift-giving and festive gatherings, we can pause to remember the greatest gift of all: God's Son. Gratitude flows naturally when we reflect on His love and the countless blessings in our lives. Maybe you might want to consider starting a gratitude journal this Advent, jotting down daily blessings as a tangible way to foster a thankful heart.

As we journey through Advent, may our hearts overflow with anticipation for the celebration of Christ's birth and the hope of His return. Let this be a season where faith grows, hope shines brightly, and thanksgiving abounds. May the joy of Emmanuel—God with us—transform our lives and our communities this Christmas season and beyond.

Let us embrace this holy time with hearts wide open, for He is coming soon!

May the babe of Bethlehem be yours to tend.

May the boy of Nazareth be your friend.

May the man of Galilee his healing hand send.

May the Christ of Calvary his courage lend.

May the Risen Lord his promise send

And his holy angels defend you to the end.

Blessings to you and your loved ones this Advent and Christmas time.

Sandra x

Finding calm at Christmas

Are you calm? We live in tense, anxious times worried about global conflict, climate change, the cost of living the increased tensions and divisions in society. When we retreat into our church communities we become anxious about numbers, finance, and buildings. As a church we stress about the theological and doctrinal divisions that we strive to avoid tearing us apart.



It is hard to find calm. In church life finding calm at Christmas is nearly impossible. It is the season where the work seems to increase. Christmas fairs, carol concerts, extra services all great in themselves yet all increasing the busyness and stress. Then there is the getting ready for the festivities, shopping, cooking, decorating – all things to aid our enjoyment but all adding to the pressure, the stress, the noise.

We need calm. We cannot live our lives at full pace hurling ourselves from one thing to the other. That's why we have the sabbath, made for humanity by an omnipresent God, A God who does not need to rest but recognised at the moment of creation that the world would need peace. At least for a moment. Silent Night, Gruber's famous carol first performed on Christmas Eve, has formed the inspiration for the church of England's advent and Christmas campaign 2024. It offers a note of calm often in the midst of a rousing carol service or concert. It is in itself a simple quiet carol that contrasts with most of the others we sing and provides a moment to quietly reflect on the beautiful moment of God's incarnation. Through the inevitable trauma of labour and childbirth comes the time when all is still and we can sleep in heavenly peace. While the shepherds are quaking and the choirs of angels are singing at the centre is the calming presence of Jesus. Jesus, who later would calm the storm, would model times for prayer and solitude in the midst of his busy ministry, and would stand calmly defiant in the face of the persecution that led to his victory on the cross.

We all have storms in our lives and we all need to recognise for the people and communities we serve Christmas is not always a time of joy and celebration but can be an occasion when the storms in their lives reach a crescendo and they need calm.

This advent, this Christmas, I pray that your church can be for you and for your community a place of calm. That you can bring yourselves and others to stand before the prince of peace to find the peace, the calm that you need this Christmas.

Bishop John

Parish News

Weekly Events

please check locally for dates around the Christmas period

Mondays

- 9.30am - 10.30am: Mini Street Pop Up Play (St Andrew's)
- 6.30pm: Girls Brigade (St Peter's)



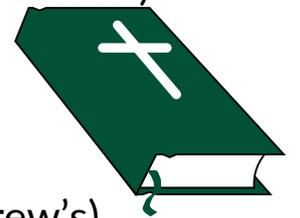
Tuesdays

- 10am - 12pm: Coffee Morning (St Thomas' church hall)
- 6pm: Boys Brigade (St Peter's)



Wednesdays

- 1pm - 2.30pm: Wednesday Weenies (St Thomas' church hall)
- 1pm - 3pm: Knit and Chat group (St Peter's)
- 3pm - 4pm: Hot Spot for Y7 - 11 (St Thomas' church hall)
- 4pm - 5pm: Discipleship Group for Y7 - 11 (St Thomas' church hall)
- 7.30pm: Women's Fellowship (St Peter's)



Thursdays

- 9.30am - 11.30am: Warm Space *starting 9th Jan* (St Andrew's)
- 3pm - 4pm: English Classes (St Thomas' church hall)
- 2pm - 3pm: Gentle dance class (St Luke's)

Fridays

- 2pm: Bible Study (St Thomas' church hall)
- 11.30am - 12.30pm: Mini Street Pop Up Play (St Andrew's)



Sundays

- 1pm - 2.30pm: Asylum seeker support (St Thomas' church hall)

December & January Events

Tuesdays 29th October, 5th, 12th, 19th , 26th November & 10th December

7pm - 8.15pm: Start course (St Luke's)

Saturday 30th November

11am - 2pm: Christmas Mini Market (St Andrew's)

Sunday 1st December

1pm onwards: Ashton Christmas Lights Switch On

Monday 2nd December

11am: Communion Service at Garswood House (arranged by St Peter's)

7pm: Wreath Making **ticket only** (St Thomas')



Tuesday 3rd December

10am - 11.30am: Bereavement Support Group (St Luke's)

1.30pm - 3pm: Bereavement Support Group (St Andrew's)

7pm: Wreath Making **ticket only** (St Thomas')

Thursday 12th December

2pm: Friendship Group singing Christmas Carols **note different week** (St Aidan's)

2.30pm: Rectory School Nativity (Holy Trinity)

Thursday 19th December

2.30pm: Rectory Christmas Celebration Service (Holy Trinity)

Saturday 21st December

10.30am - 12.30pm: Christmas Carolling at the Gerard Centre with Ashton Churches Together (ACT), Salvation Army Band and Spectrum Choir

Sunday 22nd December

3pm: Christmas Celebration inc films, readings & music (Holy Trinity)

7pm: Christmas Praise with Ashton Churches Together (St Thomas')

Monday 6th January

11am: Communion Service at Garswood House (arranged by St Peter's)

Tuesday 7th January

10am - 11.30am: Bereavement Support Group (St Luke's)

1.30pm - 3pm: Bereavement Support Group (St Andrew's)



**St Andrew's
Christmas Mini Market
Saturday 30th November
11am - 2pm**

**Got questions about life
and the Christian faith?**

If you're looking for answers then maybe it's time to make a Start.

The Start course will help you discover more about God, Jesus and the journey of life

- What's life all about and where are we going?
 - Does God exist and what is He like?
 - Why is the world in such a mess?
 - Who was Jesus, and is He relevant?
- What does Jesus' death on the cross mean for me today?
 - How far can I go forward with God in my life?

When & Where

**Tuesdays : 7 - 8.15pm
29th Oct,**

**5th, 12th, 19th, 26th Nov
& 10th Dec '24**

@ St Luke's Church, Stubshaw Cross

**Any questions contact:
Revd Sandra Jones 07598 847391
or Revd Sue Fulford**



Wigan South Hub Churches

Holy Trinity | St Aidan's | St Andrew's | St Luke's | St Peter's | St Thomas'

**Bereavement
Support Group**

**Don't Walk Your
Journey Through
Grief Alone**

*A Pathway
To Hope*

**We invite you to
come to a Safe Space**

**Share your experiences with a
group of loving people**

**1st Tuesday of
every month**

**Starting
December 2023**

**St Luke's Church
Bolton Road
Stubshaw Cross
WN4 8UN**

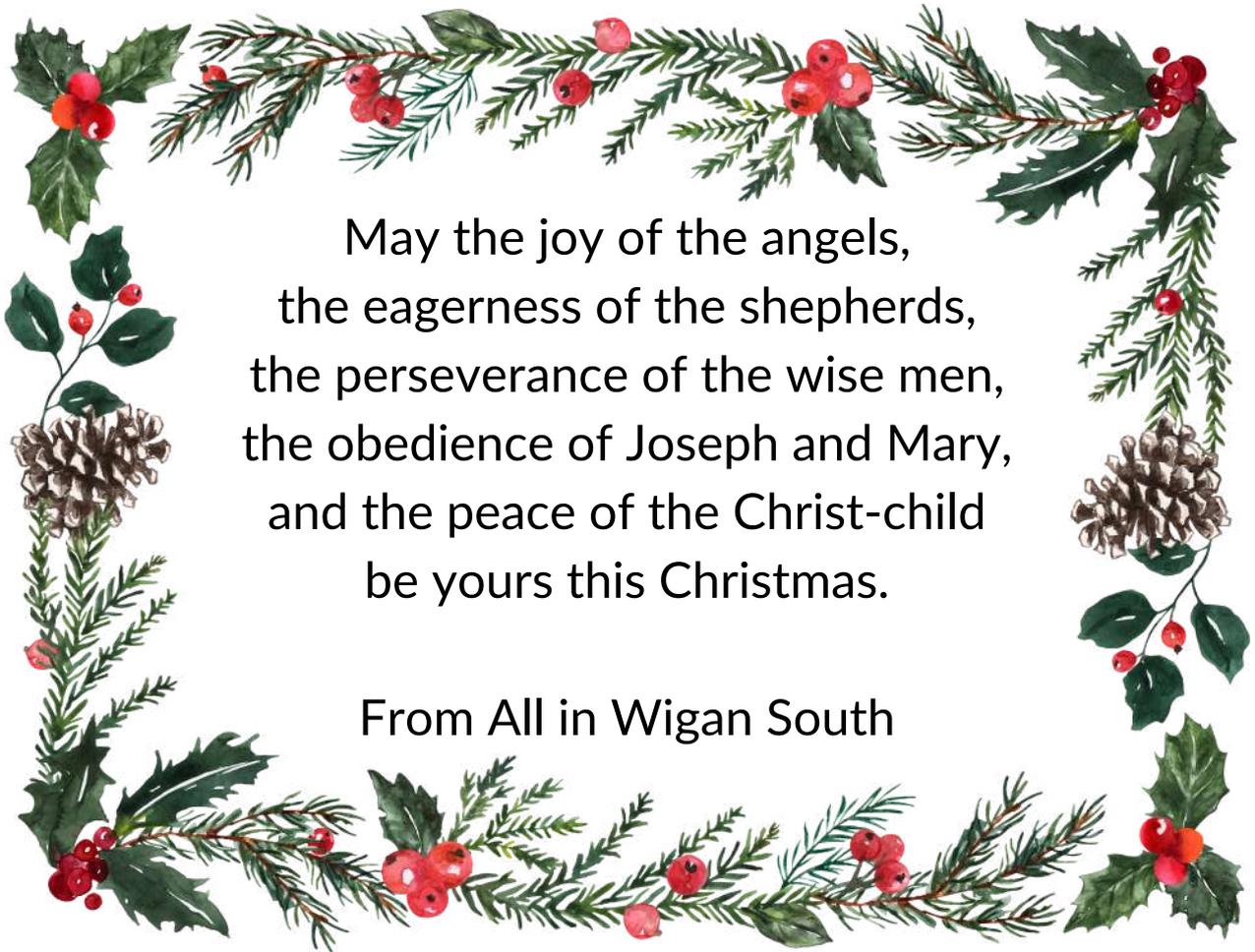
10.00am - 11.30am

**St Andrew's Church
274 Garswood Road
Garswood
WN4 0TU**

1.30pm - 3.00pm



Each week, starting on
Thursday 9th January 2025,
between 9.30am and 11.30am
St Andrew's Mission Hall will be open
as a 'Warm Space'. Anyone is
welcome to pop in for a cup of tea,
coffee, toast and a warm welcome.



May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ-child
be yours this Christmas.

From All in Wigan South



Overleaf is information regarding our local Food Pantries.

Please note that there are the following changes to opening times over the Christmas period:

Ashton Pantry

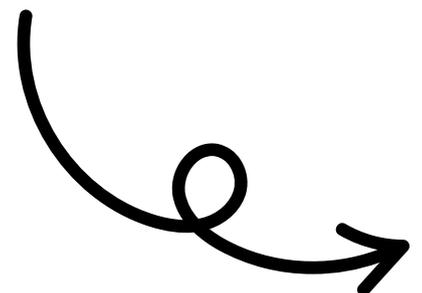
Additional opening of 6pm - 7pm on Tuesday 24th December
Closed Thursday 26th December.

Aidan's Pantry

Closed Friday 27th December.

Holy Trinity Pop Up Pantry

Closed Friday 27th December.



Together with local businesses, we are working to reduce the amount of food going to land fill.

The pantries are regularly stocked with food that is near its sell by date but can still be used to feed bellies not bins.



**St Thomas' Church Hall,
Ashton in Makerfield**

Tuesday 11am - 12pm

Thursday 2pm - 3pm

Sunday 3pm - 4pm

Max 2 visits per week

Additional donations welcome to be used to build a pantry and kitchen behind the church hall.



**St Aidan's Church,
Billinge**

Friday 11am - 1.30pm



**Holy Trinity Church
Downall Green**

Friday 9am - 10am

**Each Pantry has a £5 annual membership
and minimum £3 donation per visit**



Services in December & January



Sunday 1st	<p>9am: Morning Worship 9.30am: Holy Communion 10am: Holy Communion 10.30am: Christingle Service 10.30am: Morning Prayer 10.45am: Toy Service 11am: Toy Service</p>	<p>St Thomas' St Andrew's St Aidan's Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas' St Luke's</p>
Wednesday 4th	<p>10am: Holy Communion</p>	<p>St Aidan's</p>
Thursday 5th	<p>9.45am: BCP Holy Communion</p>	<p>St Thomas'</p>
Sunday 8th	<p>9am: Holy Communion 9.30am: Morning Worship 10.30am: Sta's4all & Beacon in church 10.30am: Holy Communion 10.30am: Morning Service & Brigades 10.45am: Worship Together 11am: Holy Communion 4pm: Evening Prayer 4pm: Blue Christmas</p>	<p>St Thomas' St Andrew's St Aidan's Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas' St Luke's St Aidan's St Thomas'</p>
Wednesday 11th	<p>10am: Holy Communion</p>	<p>Holy Trinity</p>
Thursday 12th	<p>9.45am: BCP Holy Communion</p>	<p>St Thomas'</p>
Sunday 15th	<p>9am: Holy Communion 9.30am: Carol Service 10am: Morning Worship 10.30am: Morning Worship 10.30am: Holy Communion 10.45am: Holy Communion 11am: Family Worship 4pm: Carols by Candlelight 6.30pm: Nine Lessons & Carols</p>	<p>St Thomas' St Andrew's St Aidan's Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas' St Luke's St Aidan's St Thomas'</p>

Wednesday 18th	10am: Holy Communion	St Aidan's
Thursday 19th	9.45am: BCP Holy Communion	St Thomas'
Sunday 22nd	9am: Holy Communion 9.30am: Café Church 10am: Christmas Special 10.30am: Morning Worship 10.30am: Carol Service 10.45am: Nativity & Crib Service 11am: Morning Worship 3pm: Christmas Celebration 4pm: Holy Communion 7pm: Christmas Celebration	St Thomas' St Andrew's St Aidan's Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas' St Luke's Holy Trinity St Aidan's St Thomas'
Tuesday 24th	3pm: Holy Communion 3.45pm: Christingle Service 4pm: Crib Service 8pm: Holy Communion 8.30pm: Holy Communion 11pm: Midnight Communion	Holy Trinity St Thomas' St Aidan's St Luke's St Aidan's St Thomas'
Wednesday 25th	9.30am: Christmas Communion 10.30am: Christmas Communion 10.30am: Christmas Communion	Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas'
Sunday 29th	10am: Wigan South Holy Communion	St Andrew's
Thursday 2nd	9.45am: BCP Holy Communion	St Thomas'
Sunday 5th	9am: Morning Worship 9.30am: Holy Communion 10am: Holy Communion 10.30am: Morning Worship 10.30am: Morning Prayer 10.45am: Worship Together 11am: Morning Worship	St Thomas' St Andrew's St Aidan's Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas' St Luke's
Wednesday 8th	10am: Holy Communion	St Aidan's

Thursday 9th	9.45am: BCP Holy Communion	St Thomas'
Sunday 12th	9am: Holy Communion 9.30am: Morning Worship 10.30am: Sta's4all in school 10.30am: Holy Communion 10.30am: Morning Service & Brigade 10.45am: Worship Together 11am: Holy Communion 4pm: Evening Prayer	St Thomas' St Andrew's St Aidan's Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas' St Luke's St Aidan's
Wednesday 15th	10am: Holy Communion	Holy Trinity
Thursday 16th	9.45am: BCP Holy Communion	St Thomas'
Sunday 19th	9am: Morning Worship 9.30am: Café Church 10am: Morning Worship 10.30am: Morning Worship 10.30am: Holy Communion 10.45am: Holy Communion 11am: Family Worship 6.30pm: Evensong	St Thomas' St Andrew's St Aidan's Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas' St Luke's St Thomas'
Wednesday 22nd	10am: Holy Communion	St Aidan's
Thursday 23rd	9.45am: BCP Holy Communion	St Thomas'
Sunday 26th	9am: Holy Communion 9.30am: Morning Worship 10am: St Aidan's Beacon 10.30am: Holy Communion 10.30am: Café Church & Christingle 10.45am: Worship Together 11am: Family Worship 4pm: Holy Communion	St Thomas' St Andrew's St Aidan's Holy Trinity St Peter's St Thomas' St Luke's St Aidan's
Wednesday 29th	10am: Holy Communion	Holy Trinity
Thursday 30th	9.45am: BCP Holy Communion	St Thomas'

Christmas Geese

The story is told of a farmer who didn't believe in Jesus. One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife was taking their children to a service at their local church. He refused to come saying: 'Why would God lower Himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!' So, they left him at home.

During the evening the winds grew stronger, and the snow turned to a blizzard. He heard a series of loud thumps on the window. In the field near his house he saw a flock of wild geese. They had been migrating south when they got caught in the snowstorm. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter.

The man wanted to help the geese and so he opened the doors of the barn, hoping they would go inside for shelter. But the geese didn't do anything, despite the man's efforts to move them. He made a breadcrumb trail leading to the barn and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered.

Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn: 'Why don't they follow me?!' Then he realised: 'If only I were a goose and become one of them, then I could save them.' Finally, he understood the heart of the Christmas message. God has become one of us in Jesus. The eternal creator God has entered time and space as a baby, to show us who God is and how we can know Him.

This Christmas, let's celebrate again this amazing truth that we have a God who knows and can meet our needs in Jesus. *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means 'God with us''.*

Matthew 1:23.



The “cheek and chic, pose and poise” of Noel Coward



Just 125 years ago, on 16th December 1899, Noël Coward, British playwright, composer, director, actor and singer, was born. His plays include *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives* and *Blithe Spirit*.

Coward was a supremely talented individual, starting as a child dancer who made his professional debut at the age of 11 and progressing to become a success in many areas of show business. He published more than 50 plays and hundreds of songs, most of them set in the kind of high society that he himself soon inhabited, despite his unpretentious upbringing in Teddington. His acting and directing career lasted six decades.

He received some education at the Chapel Royal Choir School, but he later described his spiritual attitude as “unregenerate” and became agnostic. He said: “I have a selfless absorption in the well-being and achievements of Noël Coward... I am jolly kind to everybody and still attentive and devoted to my dear old mother.”

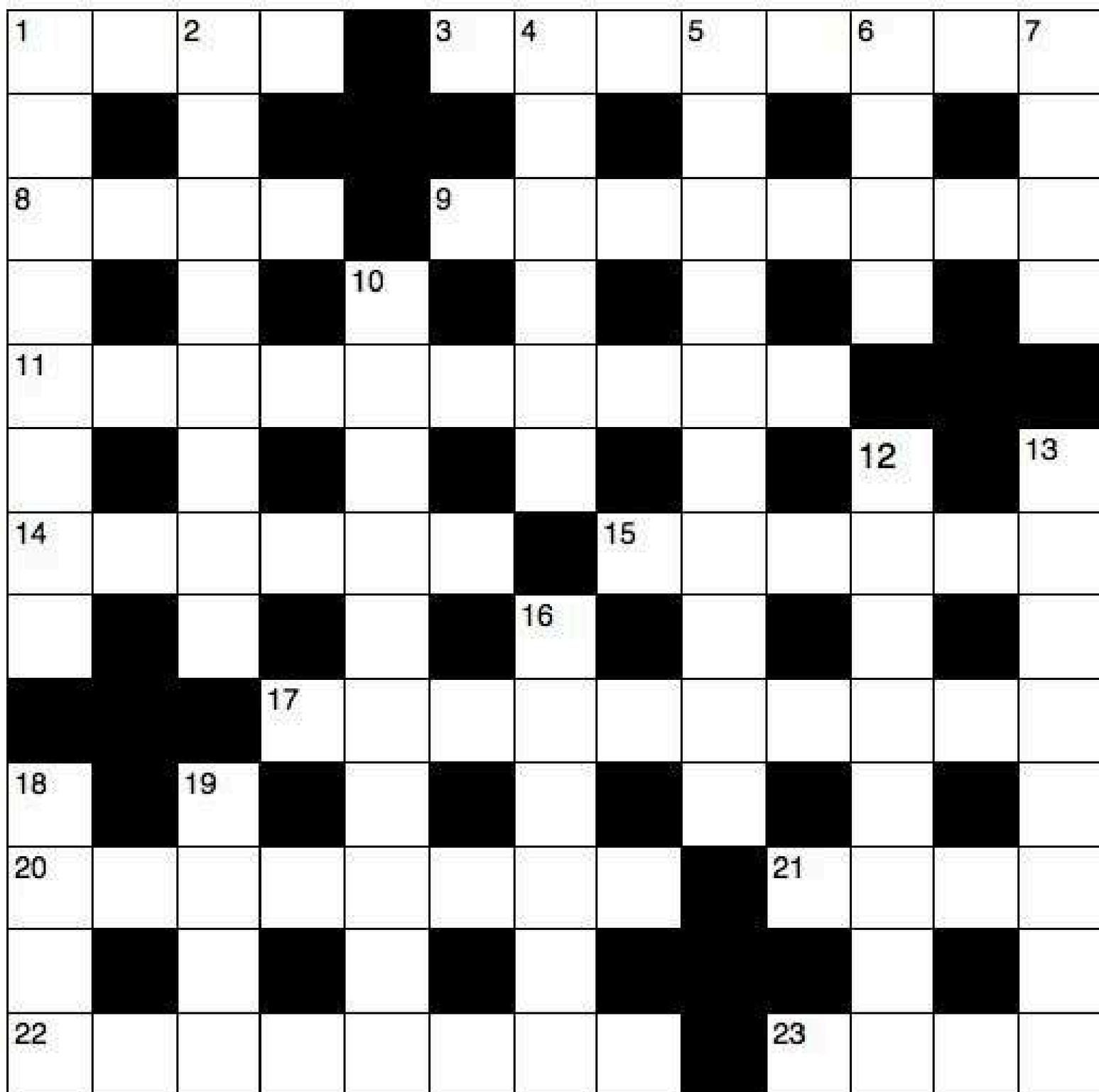
He found it easy to make friends and possessed what *Time* magazine called “a sense of personal style, a combination of cheek and chic, pose and poise”.

His many successes, including those in cabaret from the 1950s, led to a knighthood in 1970. Much earlier, by 1930, he had become one of the world’s highest-earning writers, with an annual income of £50,000 – equivalent to more than £4 million today.

During the Second World War he worked for British Intelligence and ran the British propaganda office in Paris. It is reported that Churchill preferred his role in entertaining the troops.

Towards the end of the 1960s Coward developed arteriosclerosis and suffered from bouts of memory loss. He received many other awards, including an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Sussex University.

Crossword



Answers on page 22

Across

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
- 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
- 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
- 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
- 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
- 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)
- 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
- 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
- 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
- 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "I don't need you"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)

Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
- 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
- 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
- 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
- 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
- 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
- 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
- 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
- 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
- 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
- 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
- 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)

No Room? On the Contrary



All over the world, doors are being slammed shut this Christmas. As the wars in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan rage on, millions are losing their homes and safety. Elsewhere, hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and immigrants are on the road, seeking refuge anywhere they can find it.

In recent years vast numbers of Christians have been forced to flee from their ancient homelands in Syria and Iraq. They mirror the Holy Family's escape into Egypt. Every time yet another infant dies violently, it is a reminder of the first century massacre of babies in the Bethlehem region.

So perhaps this year, one carol will be sung with particular poignancy. It retells the message of angels, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests" and continues:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife,
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled,
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring:
O hush the noise, you men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.*

The angels' goodwill message will persist despite our clamour, for it proclaims God's all-embracing and eternal welcome. Whatever is happening on earth, Heaven's doors are ever open: it is home for everyone. The final biblical vision is of an all-encompassing city: "On no day will its gates ever be shut... the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it."

Jesus, for whom there had been no room at the inn, taught that God's kingdom is home for everyone: "I say to you that many will come from the East and the West, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." He reassured those anxious about the future: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms"

No room in heaven? Don't you believe it!

Teaching the Lord's Prayer across the North of England

The Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell plans to teach the Lord's Prayer across the North of England throughout 2025, a priority of his vision for Faith in the North.

Archbishop Stephen is to visit dioceses in the Northern Province of the C of E where he will be sharing the relevance of the Lord's Prayer to our world today, encouraging people to pray and live by this, as part of their missionary discipleship.



Archbishop Stephen is encouraging prayer, storytelling and church planting inspired by the Northern Saints such as Hild, Cuthbert, Bede and Paulinus. The aim is to foster deeper connections with the Christian faith across the north and renew the Church's missionary purpose to share God's love with all.

Archbishop Stephen said "In less than 70 words, Jesus gives us a prayer to learn by heart and a prayer that gets inside our hearts, shaping the way we live. The Lord's Prayer surely is the best place to start. It is said in just about every church service, from the coronation of the King to the christening of a child. It's a challenging prayer and when we say this prayer together, we become part of God's movement of change, of bringing God's heaven to earth. It teaches us how to pray. But it also teaches us how to live".

Current Dates of the Lord's Prayer Tour 2025:

- Friday 7th March - York Minster
- Monday 10th March - Chester Cathedral
- Monday 17th March - Liverpool Cathedral
- Friday 21st March - Wakefield Cathedral
- Friday 28th March - Hull Minster
- Tuesday 1st April - Manchester Cathedral
- Tuesday 17th June - Carlisle Cathedral
- Wednesday 25th June - Sheffield Cathedral
- Sunday 6th July - Isle of Man/ Peel Cathedral

- Thursday 18th September - Newcastle Cathedral
- Friday 3rd October - Durham Cathedral
- Friday 10th October - Blackburn Cathedral

To learn more about Faith in the North visit www.faithinthenorth.org

Faith in the North is a movement of prayer and strategic resourcing which aims to help recapture the missional energy and commitment to prayer of the Anglo Saxon saints leading towards 2027, with the celebration of the 1400th anniversary of the establishment of the Church of Saint Peter in York and baptism of King Edwin by Paulinus in 627.



500 years ago, on 24th Dec 1524 that Vasco da Gama, Portuguese explorer, died of malaria. He was the first European to reach India by sea.

125 years ago, on 5th Dec 1899 that Henry Tate, British sugar merchant and philanthropist, died. He established the Tate Gallery in London.

50 years ago, on 24th Dec 1974 that British politician John Stonehouse was arrested in Australia (on suspicion of being Lord Lucan.) He had faked his death on 20th November by leaving a pile of clothing on a beach in Miami Florida.

40 years ago, on 31st Dec 1984 that the Bank of England stopped producing one pound notes. They remained legal tender until 1988.

Crossword Answers

ACROSS: 1, Lame. 3, Obtained. 8, Omit. 9, Merchant. 11, Burdensome. 14, Crafty. 15, Please. 17, Blacksmith. 20, Splendid. 21, Tier. 22, Singeing. 23, Hand.

DOWN: 1, Look back. 2, Main road. 4, Breast. 5, Accomplish. 6, Near. 7, Date. 10, Pestilence. 12, Basilica. 13, Tethered. 16, Action. 18, Asa's. 19, Clan.

3rd December - Birinus, an apostle to the English

Thousands of our churches are currently involved in various mission initiatives across the UK. If it is tough going at times, we should spare a thought for poor Birinus, a priest from Lombard, who was sent here on his own 14 centuries ago. Pope Honorius 1st gave him the daunting task of being the apostle to Wessex.

It was about 635 that Birinus first sailed across the Channel. He planned to convert all of Wessex, and then press on into the Midlands, where no Christian preacher had ever yet been. But once he began ministry in Wessex, Birinus found the West Saxons so pagan that he decided he better just stay and concentrate on them.

So Birinus began his ministry, endlessly travelling around Wessex, and preaching to whomever he encountered. Gradually he became known, and his message began to seep through.

Then a great breakthrough occurred: the King of Wessex, Cynegils, asked Birinus for instruction in the Christian faith. His daughter was going to marry Oswald, the Christian king of Northumbria, and for political reasons Cynegils now wanted to convert. So Birinus taught and baptised Cynegils and his family, and in return they gave him the Romano-British town of Dorchester as his see, and Birinus became the first bishop of Dorchester.

It was an excellent strategic move: Dorchester was on a main road and river in the centre of an area of dense Anglo-Saxon settlement. From his new 'headquarters', Birinus spent his last 15 years going on to build many churches around Wessex, and to baptise many people. Towards the end of his life Birinus dedicated a church at Winchester, which later became the ecclesiastical centre of the kingdom. (There is no record of Wessex bishops at Dorchester after 660.)

Any lesson in all this? Bloom where God plants you, and be faithful to your calling, however tough things may look at first, and however obscure the place. Birinus' obedience and faith planted Christianity in a key part of Britain, and so helped shape British history for centuries to come.

25th December - And there were shepherds...

Luke's story of the birth of Jesus is brilliantly told – the angel's visit to Mary to tell her she would be mother of the long-promised Messiah, the old priest in the Temple told by another angel that his wife would have a son to be called 'John', who would prepare the people of Israel for that event, and then Mary and Joseph making the 60 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, as required by the Roman census. When they got there, no room at the inn, and they settled instead for a convenient stable, where Mary gave birth to a boy child.

Suddenly, Luke changes the tone. 'And there were shepherds ...' – that's what he actually wrote, just like that. 'And there were shepherds', doing exactly what shepherds do, looking after their flocks by night. But this night was different: yet another angelic message – a call to abandon their sheep and go into Bethlehem to see the baby Messiah. They were given directions and a 'sign' to identify Him. He would be lying in a feeding trough. Well, at least they would recognise that.

And why the shepherds, in this glorious story of our salvation? Because the event needed witnesses, and the chosen witnesses would be this bunch of scruffy, smelly shepherds straight from the sheep-pen. Nothing could speak more eloquently of God's purpose than that. This was not a Saviour for the strong, rich and powerful, but for everybody. The carpenter and his wife guarded the Saviour of the world, and the very first witnesses were not kings or priests but a handful of shabby shepherds.





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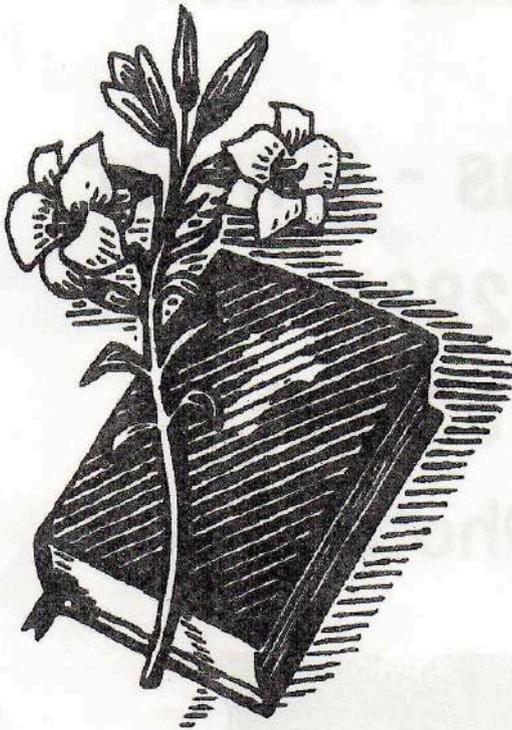
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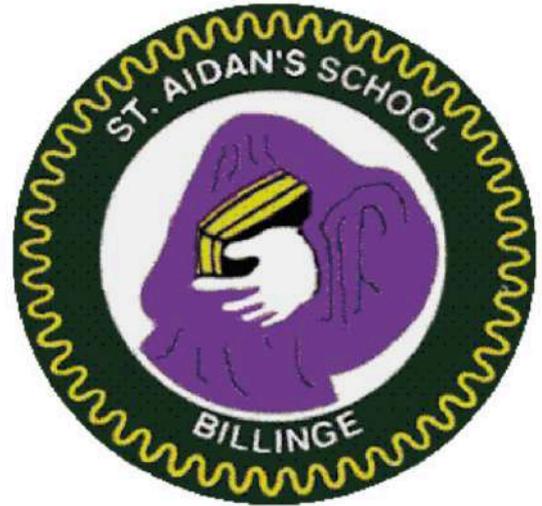
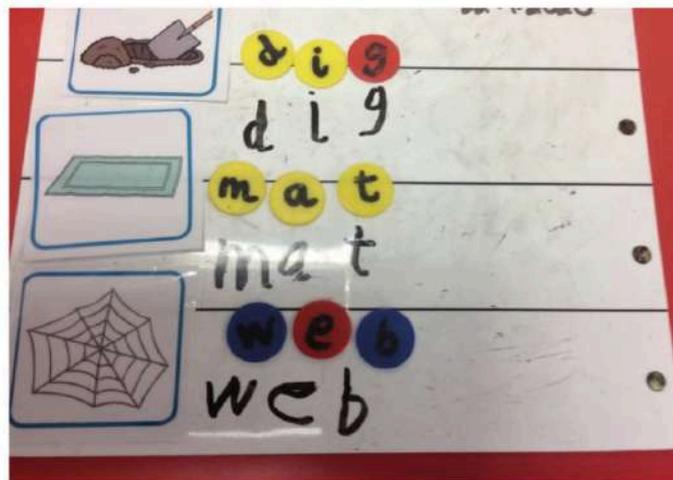
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Jesus wants Ewe in a Pew

News from our churches



Services in December



Sunday 1st December	10am	Holy Communion
Wednesday 4th December	10am	Holy Communion
Sunday 8th December	10.30am 4pm	Sta's4all & Beacon in church Evening Prayer
Sunday 15th December	10am 4pm	Morning Worship Carols by Candlelight
Wednesday 18th December	10am	Holy Communion
Sunday 22nd December	10am 4pm	Christmas Special Holy Communion
Tuesday 24th December	4pm 8.30pm	Crib Service Holy Communion
Sunday 29th December	10am	Wigan South Holy Communion at St Andrew's Mission Hall

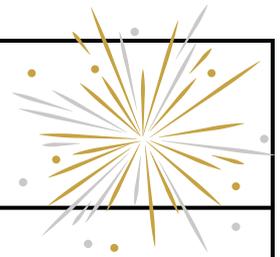
Please note at the front of the magazine the services on Christmas Day in other Hub Churches.

We are invited to and will be made welcome at each of these.

On Sunday 29th December there is a Hub Holy Communion at St Andrews, Garswood starting at 10am



Services in January



Sunday 5th January	10am	Holy Communion
Wednesday 8th January	10am	Holy Communion
Sunday 12th January	10.30am 4pm	Sta's4all in school Evening Prayer
Sunday 19th January	10am	Morning Worship
Wednesday 22nd January	10am	Holy Communion
Sunday 26th January	10am 4pm	St Aidan's Beacon Holy Communion

Crib Service

Our Crib Service returns to its traditional place on Christmas Eve at 4pm. You are invited to attend dressed as one of the characters from the Christmas Story - Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Kings, angels, sheep ... and there will be opportunities to take part in the service.

So take a break from your Christmas preparations to share in the joy of this service.



Sta's4all

In December we are making our annual trip to church! There will still be refreshments, singing, stories and activities on the theme. The puppets are joining us, and we will be thinking about the gifts of love! Starts at 10.30am.

In January we will be back in school, thinking about being good friends.



Beacon

Our 4th Sunday is after the school have broken up, so we have decided to have a joint Beacon/Sta's4all event in church on 8th December. Please note that it will only start at 10.30am.

On 22nd December we will have a special service though we are not anticipating a large choir of Beacon singers. We will be looking at some of the aspects of Advent and Christmas that don't often get into the Christmas services and singing some songs about Advent and Christmas songs that don't often get into the Carol Services! It will be something special!

The Beacon Service in January is our annual Christingle Service. Christingles will be available and donations are invited to support the work of the Children's Society who provide specialist support that empowers young people to make positive changes and rediscover their hope.

Find out more on line at www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Friendship Group

You are invited to join the friendship group to sing carols at their meeting on Thursday 12th December at 2pm.



There will be the usual refreshments and time to chat. Note that this is the 2nd week of December (usually the 4th Thursday). We will then be taking a short break during the cold wintry months. Look out for details of our March meeting in the February magazine.

Church Committee

The last meeting was on 5th November. On the agenda was Health and Safety with inspections of roofing, guttering and the lightening conductor coming up. Good progress is being made in raising the funds required to update the sound system, though more still needs to be done.

The next meeting will be on 7th January. If you have any general issue that you would like raising please see Peter Hughes or Barbara Goulden in church or by email (see back page).

Christmas Blessings

The Church Committee and the team of Worship Leaders wish you every blessing in this Holy Season. May you be able to rise above the commercialism that abounds and



know the Peace of Christ which passes all understanding. May you have hope for the days to come.

You are welcome to join us for any of our services as we think of God's great love for us as individuals; - so great a love that He sent his only Son, Jesus, to take on human form and to be born among us.

We know that it can be a difficult time for some people, especially those who are struggling to make ends meet and those missing a loved one at the time in which the 'world' seems to think that everyone should be 'Happy'. You may like to join one of the special 'Blue Christmas services' being held in Wigan Deanery for those who are struggling. There is one at St. Thomas Church, Ashton on 8th December at 4pm.

Christmas Cards

The Christmas Card Baskets will be in church from Saturday 30th November . Thanks to Jean Breeze for arranging this.

Please note that these cards are not delivered to people's homes. We leave cards to be picked up by others when attending church. Please do not leave cards for people who are not attending.

We will also have the large charity Christmas card up in church from early December for you to sign a greeting to other church members. This saves on cards as well as postage! This year our nominated charity is the YMCA.

Examples of the work they hope to achieve include: for £55 - free meals for 10 hungry people and £222 could give a young person 12 weeks of on-to-one Listening Service support.

Together we can make a difference. You are asked to give a donation to our nominated charity when using this card.

Recycling – good for the environment and for our future!

We continue to collect items which can be recycled at church which are not collected by our council. They can be placed in the drawers at the back of church when you come for a service or event.



Stamps – please cut the stamps leaving a border of 5mm (a little less than ½ inch)

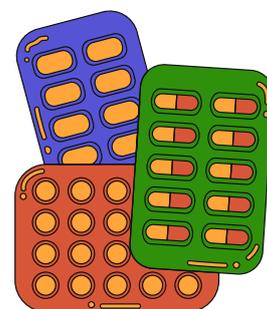
Spectacles – please don't leave the glasses cases as they are labelled with the correct lens strength and sent to developing countries where people cannot afford to be tested or buy glasses.

Empty tablet blister packs

We were collecting these and giving them to Linda and Mansell High from St Thomas'. They took them into Liverpool to be recycled. The plastic is turned into long life items such as outside benches. Good for the environment!

However because of the number that were being collected they have been told that they must pay for a box, its transport and delivery to send to the centre. A box can hold a lot of packets, but it's a lot of money and they have about 3 boxes full in their house at present.

If you wish to continue to do this then you are asked to make a small contribution in an envelope each time you put packs into the box. We will be reviewing whether we can continue to collect these items.



Magazines in 2025

I am pleased to say that 2024 prices will continue for both buying and advertising in the magazine. A big thank you goes to Jess Buckley who edits our magazine, and to Joan Andrew and her team who do a fantastic job printing and delivering our magazines over a wide area.

We will continue to give on line access to the magazine on our website <http://staidanbillinge.org.uk/>

Donations and Remembrance

Sound System

Marion Boardman
3 Anonymous Donations

Food Pantry

Marion Boardman
Roy Lawrence
Michael Grundy
Alex Fairclough
Bill Timson
Friendship Group

In Memory of Joan and Norman Heaton, very much missed
From daughter, Joan Roberts

General Fund

Clifford Dawson's family

In Loving Memory of Peter Painter
From wife Doris and all the family

Christmas memories for Margaret and George Moyers
From daughter Rita and family

Christmas thoughts for Brian, our Son in Law, husband to Linda
and daddy to Lizzy
Love Rita And Alan



Toy Appeal

Many thanks to all those who brought toys to our November Beacon service, and the evening service on that day, for the council's Toy Appeal. These will be distributed to children of families in our area who are struggling at this time. Your generosity makes a difference!

Aidan's Pantry

Opening on Friday 1st December last year, we celebrate our first birthday. A huge thanks and congratulations to the volunteers who work here each week.



This is a Pantry, not a Food Bank. It is open to the whole community and is helping to reduce food waste by offering goods in good condition which are nearing their sell by date from supermarkets and factories such as Heinz, Lidl and the Co-op.

If you have not been before Aidan's pantry is open on Fridays from 11am - 1pm. The church is open as a warm and welcoming place, where you can come, have a drink and a chat. Our aim is for the people of Billinge to have access to good low priced, quality food and also to be a place to make friends. You can join for an annual fee of £5, and each week you can shop for a wide range of items at a cost of £3 for up to 15 items.

Please note that we will not be open on Friday 27th December and Friday 3rd January.

The Registers



Holy Baptism 'We welcome them into the Lord's family'

3rd November	Margot Harper Forkin
3rd November	Phoebe Mae Cunliffe

Funerals or Burials of Ashes 'May they rest in peace'

12th November	Dominic William Coope
2nd December	Betty Lee

Note from Treasurer

If you wish to make a donation by Bank Transfer the details are:

Sort code: 60 24 02 Account No: 04035135

Please insert the name of the person you wish us to remember as the reference and email joan.roberts530@outlook.com with any wording for the donation to go in the magazine.

Cheque made payable to St Aidan's Parish Church or (in exceptional circumstances) cash donations in an envelope can be given to the treasurer in church. Alternatively, please pass to a Church Warden or leader only, marked for the attention of the treasurer.

This shall ensure all monies are recorded, gift aid claimed and donations placed in the magazine in a timely manner.

Garden of Remembrance Memorial stone

New rules now apply to having an inscription engraved on the stone.

Any entry must be paid for at the rate when the stone-mason does the work. We will advise you of this charge beforehand. You may also arrange for a line to be reserved below this inscription for a loved one by paying a £50 deposit. When the time comes to fill in the reserved line the charge at that time will apply less the £50 deposit. The fee must be paid before any inscription is added.

Unfortunately, we have had to make this change because rising costs have left the Church having to pay a shortfall of the fee charged at the time a second line was requested.

Anyone wishing to make any addition to the memorial stone should contact Barbara Goulden (894694). Please give details in writing and include a telephone number on which you can be contacted

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Magazine Editor

Vacant

Funerals are always booked through the undertaker.
Other enquiries about funerals contact
staidansbillingeveryer@yahoo.com



St Aidan's Billinge

www.staidanbillinge.org.uk