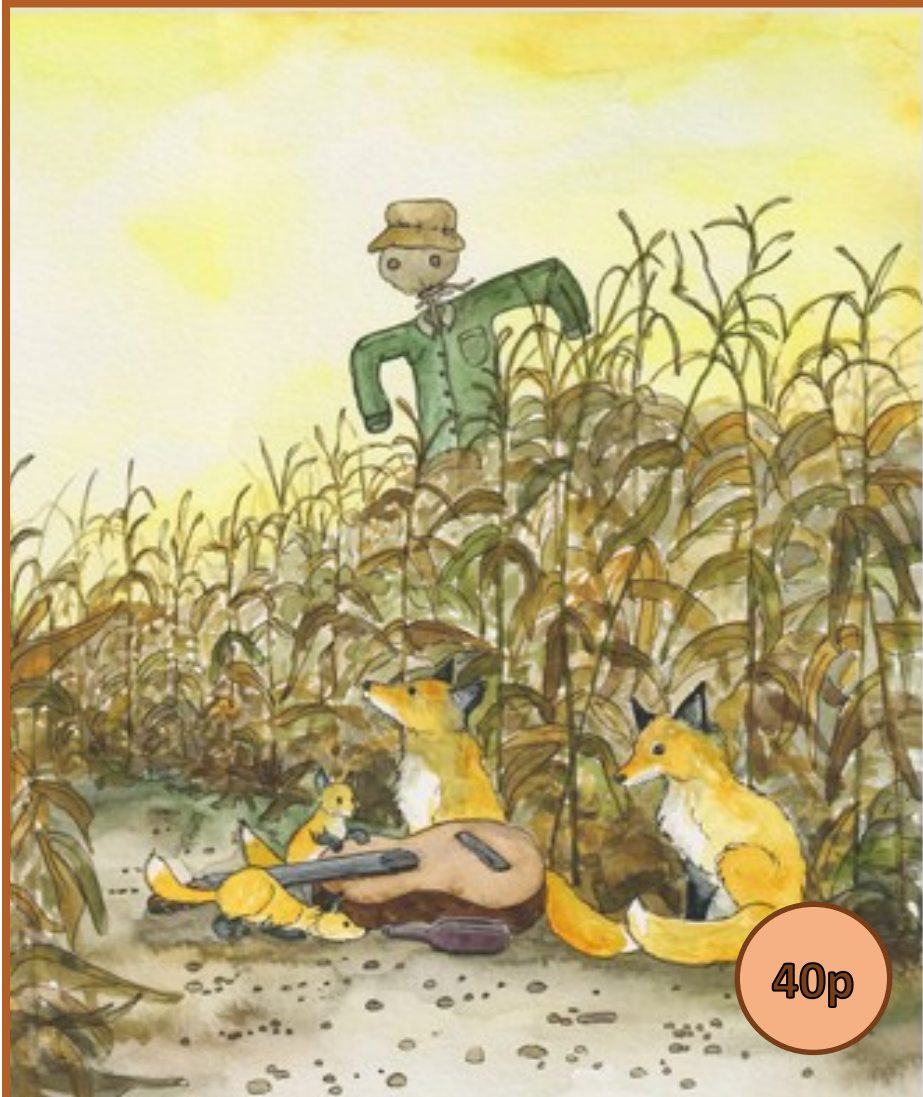


Christ Church Magazine

September 2025



40p

PARISH DIRECTORY

SUNDAY SERVICES

Details of our services are given on page 5/6.

THE PARISH TEAM

Vicar	Paul Kingman	812669
	The Vicarage, Bromfield Court	
Children & Families Worker	Peter Cuthbert	07733 042205
	peter.j.cuthbert@btinternet.com	
Electoral Roll Officer	Parish Office	811990
Parish Office	Christ Church Centre, Christ Church Way, Stone, Staffs ST15 8ZB	
	Email office@christchurchstone.org	811990

CHRIST CHURCH CENTRE

Booking Secretary	Parish Office	811990
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CHURCH SCHOOLS

Christ Church C.E.(Controlled) First School, Northesk Street.

Headteacher Mrs A. Graham BA(Hons) NPQH	01785 336545
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Christ Church Academy, Old Road

Principal: Mrs Tara Thorn	01785 334900
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Please send your articles for the September magazine to us by the 15th October

Cover Picture:
Harvest Time—from original work by Vicky Bowes—'Spring Tide Creations,' with kind permission

Magazine 40p each month or £4 each year. Money may be given to your magazine deliverer or handed in to the Church office

Christ Church on the Internet

Parish website	www.christchurchstone.org
Parish office email	office@christchurchstone.org
Magazine contributions	magazine@christchurchstone.org

From the Editor

Hi There,

I apologise to you all - the presentation of the August magazine was a bit strange!!! For some unknown reason all the page headings disappeared somewhere between Saxifrage Drive and the Office!! The magazine really did not look right—and must have been very confusing! Lets hope we don't have any printing glitches this time!!

This month we have lots of interesting articles—do check them out and keep more coming in! Please save the dates for the Quiz Night and the new study course—'Jesus the Evidence' - see details within. There is also an important article from Bishop Michael worthy of a read. Harvest is coming so collect those goods for 'food.gives' (see page 13) and enjoy the season and the lovely weather.

Helen. August 2025

From the Vicarage.....

Do you need to be fortified?

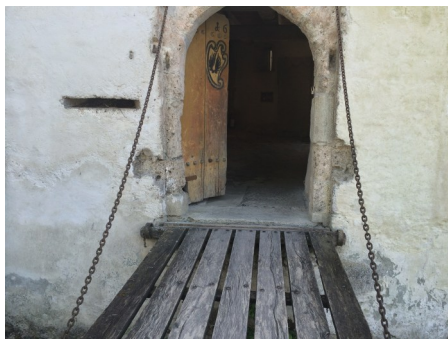
The word fortified is used in a variety of ways. Not last of which is the idea of needing strength to face the future when circumstances are unknown or unclear.

We may have a cereal packet that boasts “fortified with vitamins”. The vitamin supplementation boosts the nutritional value for health. It's a practise that extends across milk and milk products, flour, bread, rice, salt, cereal bars and fruit juices. It is of value where the diet is poor, or during child development, for mums to be during pregnancy, or among the elderly. It serves to strengthen us against sickness.

We may speak of “a fort” – when there is a strategic location such as a hill with a city built and that this needs fortification against attack

From the Vicarage.....

from enemies. We have many such historic structures across our country with only a draw-bridge entry.



We also think of “needing to be fortified” when we need to be strengthened to face a challenge. This is the case for many as the new academic year begins which often combines several new factors: a new institution, a new location, new people, new home. Where do we turn to be fortified? The Bible has loads of verses to strengthen us, but one Psalm often is turned to for it’s great encouragement: *‘He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust”’* (Psalm 91v1-2). The words would have been especially precious to the homeless people of the Old Testament as they wandered in the wilderness. Their refuge was in the LORD, the great ‘I AM’ who spoke to Moses from the bush that flamed with fire but was not burnt up, the one who is all-sufficient in resources. ‘Great is the LORD’, as the writer says, that he is my God in whom I trust. The personal relationship that is possible through Jesus Christ is one that carries the believer through the changing circumstances and challenges faced. Whatever we face, whether it is a new adventure or seems like a stiff challenge, we can have this great assurance as we trust in Him. We look forward to new people joining us at the start of this new academic year to explore these things further in our regular worship together.

Paul Kingman
September 2025



September 2025

	Date	Time	Events (Zoom codes in weekly email)
Mon	1st		
Tue	2nd	10.30 am	Communion; Mark 8: 27-38 "Who do you say I am?"
Wed	3rd		
Thu	4th		
Fri	5th		
Sat	6th	8.30 am 10.00 am	Prayer meeting followed by breakfast Everybody Welcome coffee morning
Sun	7th	9.15 am 5.00 pm	Communion; Genesis 25: 19-34 "The trickster" Bible Study: Salvation belongs to the Lord (1/6)
Mon	8th	9.30 am	Toddler group
Tue	9th	10.30 am 12.30 pm 2.00 pm	Communion; Mark 10: 17-31 "What must I do to be saved?" Pursuit Club Christ Church Academy Autumn House - Church at Home service
Wed	10th	9.00 am 3.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Trekks
Thu	11th	1.10 pm	Christ Church Academy assembly
Fri	12th		
Sat	13th		
Sun	14th	9.15 am 5.00 pm	Morning Prayer; Genesis 27: 1-40 "Losing the blessing" Bible Study: Salvation belongs to the Lord (2/6)
Mon	15th	9.30 am	Toddler group

September 2025

	Date	Time	Events
Tue	16th	10.30 am 12.30 pm	Communion; Mark 14: 53-65, 15: 1-41 "My God, my God, why?" Pursuit Club Christ Church Academy
Wed	17th	9.00 am 2.00 pm 3.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Oulton Abbey - Church at Home service Trekksers
Thu	18th	11.00 am 1.10 pm	St. Mary's - Church at Home service Christ Church Academy assembly
Fri	19th	2.00 pm	Christ Church Academy Year 5 welcome service
Sat	20th		
Sun	21st	9.15 am 5.00 pm	Communion; Genesis 28: 10-22 "A stairway to heaven" Bible Study: Salvation belongs to the Lord (3/6)
Mon	22nd	9.30 am	Toddler group
Tue	23rd	10.30 am	Communion; Luke 7: 43-49 "Actions speak louder than..."
Wed	24th	9.00 am 3.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Trekksers
Thu	25th	1.10 pm	Christ Church Academy assembly
Fri	26th		
Sat	27th		
Sun	28th	9.15 am	HARVEST: All Age; Matthew 6: 25-34 "Seek first the Kingdom"
Mon	29th	9.30 am	Toddler group
Tue	30th	10.30 am	Communion; Luke 8: 1-15 "One seed, four soils"

MISSION PRAYER DIARY

WEEK ONE BARNABUS AID FOCUS: PAKISTAN

Barnabas Aid is an international aid agency that aims to support Christian communities, churches and individuals around the world who face persecution and discrimination because of their faith.

PRAYER POINTS

The 2025 monsoon season has brought devastating floods to Pakistan. More than 250 people have died, with many others injured. Hundreds of houses have been damaged or destroyed, leaving many people homeless. Pray for the success of the humanitarian response to this latest natural disaster, to meet the needs of those left homeless and destitute.

Among those in desperate need are 30 Christian families from a village near the Punjabi city of Faisalabad. Their homes of brick and mud were washed away by the raging flood waters. They have sought shelter in a church building that withstood the elements – but this cannot serve as a long-term solution. Pray for both the aid they require and the spiritual comfort that will guide them through these difficult days.

Christians are a small and despised minority in Pakistan, making up 2-3% of the population. Believers often experience severe poverty because of discrimination in employment. Pray that the Lord protects Christians in Pakistan from violence and false accusations. Ask for strength for those imprisoned. Pray that the persecution against Christians in Pakistan will come to an end.

"Their wages were never enough, the work never ending and the debt never decreasing," pray for those who are trapped in bonded labour in the country's brick kilns. Give thanks that through Barnabas Aid, 625 Christian families have been freed from the burden of debt since September 2024. Pray that, with God's grace, together we can free hundreds more.

In Pakistan young Christian women and girls are frequently kidnapped, forcibly converted to Islam and forced to marry a Muslim or face extreme violence for refusing. Pray for Christian women and young girls ask that the Lord will be their protector and strength

MISSION PRAYER DIARY

WEEK TWO: LANGHAM PARTNERSHIP

The Langham Partnership comes alongside leaders in Christian communities across the World with resources, pastoral training and theological education to disciple their communities

PRAYER POINT

Praise God for the faithful staff members who work 'behind-the-scenes' of the frontline Langham ministries. Pray for the Operational Management Team, Personal Assistants and administrators, that they will know the Lord's peace and encouragement.

Please continue to pray earnestly for countries at war around the world, and in particular for our Langham family members who are holding out the Word of Truth at this time. Please pray for the impact of the Ukrainian translation of 'Tackling Trauma', a Langham resource which is a collection of essays. Christians there have appreciated this timely book. Pray for Markiyan Klepach and his ongoing ministry in Ukraine, serving thousands of displaced people and sharing God's love and hope.

Pray for the ongoing work of Langham Preaching across Central Asia, a region in which life is difficult for Christians. Pray for 'P', Langham preaching's coordinator for Central Asia, that he would know God's grace.

Please continue to pray for our new Bible study course 'Understanding Mission', written by Chris Wright. Pray that it will spur church leaders across the UK and Ireland in particular to truly understand God's mission and our part in it.

Praise God that the Langham Live podcast was launched last month! Please pray that many people will find out about Langham through the podcast and that the episodes will spur people on to pray for Langham's global ministries.

MISSION PRAYER DIARY

WEEK THREE: TLM THE LEPROSY MISSION

FOCUS: MOZAMBIQUE AND HARVEST

We rarely see Mozambique in the news in the UK, but from conflict to cyclones, people here face huge challenges. It isn't an easy place to serve people affected by leprosy, but because of you, there are so many reasons to give thanks to God. As we move from summer to autumn, churches and communities across the world will be celebrating Harvest, sadly, many families affected by leprosy across the world can't afford good food. Poor nutrition not only increases vulnerability to the disease but also slows recovery.

PRAYER POINT

In 2021, you helped to build Hubs of Hope in communities in Northern Mozambique. These are places for people to come together, learn about leprosy, and tackle local issues. Give thanks that so many lives have been changed through your love! Pray that these hubs will continue to be places of transformation for years to come.

Through your kindness, community leaders have learned how to spot the signs of leprosy. They're also challenging the attitudes that stop people seeking treatment. Praise God for these Leprosy Champions. Pray that they will be a source of comfort and encouragement as they help people find healing.

Most people affected by leprosy in Mozambique rely on farming for a living. Crop failures after floods or cyclones can be devastating. Pray the Lord will protect communities from the impacts of climate change. Ask that through your support, people will build resilient livelihoods and break the chains of poverty.

The TLM Mozambique team have faced many challenges recently, but their dedication to people affected by leprosy never wavers. Pray that they feel inspired and energised by the Lord when the work is difficult. May they draw closer to Him each day and know His blessing as they bless others.

Harvest, Sustainable livelihoods, Stigma, disability, and climate change mean that many people affected by leprosy struggle to make a good living. Please boldly pray for an end to poverty in the communities you support. Pray that whether through climate-resilient agriculture or small businesses, families will be able to thrive.

MISSION PRAYER DIARY

WEEK FOUR: OPEN DOORS

FOCUS: ARISE AFRICA

Millions of Christians across sub-Saharan Africa have been displaced by violence and conflict. The African church is rising up boldly in prayer against this violence – and they are calling on their global church family to stand with them. Please join with your church family in sub-Saharan Africa, asking God to stop the violence and start the healing.

PRAYER POINT

Open Doors estimates that, of the 34.5 million people in sub-Saharan Africa who are displaced by violence and conflict, at least 16.2 million are Christians, with many driven from their homes because of their faith in Jesus. This growing crisis has led to food insecurity, trauma and desperation. Pray for provision, healing and comfort for our displaced family.

Nigeria. *Last year, an estimated 100,000 Christians were internally displaced from their homes because of their faith, with many fleeing to official displacement camps that are unhealthy and unsafe. They are overcrowded, hygiene is poor and food is scarce, and they can be targeted by extremists. Pray that camps will be far better equipped to be havens of safety, provision and care.*

More than 2.6 million people in **DRC (Congo)** mostly Christians, have been displaced by violence. The conditions of camps are often horrific, with insufficient shelter, hygiene and food. Pray for better care and aid, and ask God to help churches and local partners as they seek sustainable solutions for people.

Sudan. More than a year since civil war broke out, nine million people are on the run, with Christians in IDP camps vulnerable to discrimination and neglect. “The situation is deteriorating every day, and there is no response from the world,” says Illia Djadi, a senior analyst for the Open Doors region. “There is a strong feeling of abandonment.” Pray that the international community will pay attention to the crisis.

Niger. There has been a surge in militant attacks, particularly in rural areas of the west and south west. Many Christians have been displaced, bringing multiple challenges, including widespread despondency. Pray for church leaders and local partners as they shepherd believers through the trauma of displacement.

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people 1Timothy 2v1

Missions Matters

We were delighted to host Chris Stratta from the Leprosy Mission (TLM) at our morning service for the last Sunday in July. Chris had travelled up from Oxford early that morning to bring us an update on the work of the leprosy Mission with some very encouraging and challenging video presentations, he brought news of encouraging work with drug therapy that is bringing the hope of cure to those who are reached early after diagnosis, as well as the amazing work of providing prosthetic limbs to those who have had to have amputation due to infections. TLM continue to fight poverty, homelessness and the discrimination that affect so many who live with this disease, there are so many other streams to the work that TLM undertake in supporting people with Leprosy around the world. Can I encourage you to find out more by visiting their website leprosymission.org.uk and also have a look at the missions board opposite the church office door. The Leprosy mission is one of our supported mission partners, they will also be appearing in our missions prayer diary this month which can be found in the church magazine.

A Prayer for Refugees

Almighty and merciful God,
whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own;
look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger,
homeless and hungry.
Bless those who work to bring them relief;
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;
and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will
rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Taken from Church of England Website.

As Harvest approaches and we celebrate all the wonderful varieties of food we have access to on a daily basis, the **Food.Gives** collection enables us to share our abundance with our Christian brothers and sisters in dire need. Items for the boxes, which are sent to a distribution centre in Swindon to be repackaged ready for shipment overseas are :- (all dried and suitable for room temperature storage) Chick peas, Lentils, Rice, Salt, Sugar, Pulses (dried beans, dried peas, dried broad beans). All in packets please rather than tubs or tins and as long a 'Use by' date as possible. We'll miss Sheila Hawley's input this year but I'm hoping to do her proud by sending even more boxes this time!! There will be a table set up in the Foyer in due course to receive your items. If you have items and can't get to church or wish to donate to the collection let me know via the office. Thank you.

Phil Tunstall.

For more information and to see videos of the work or to donate:-



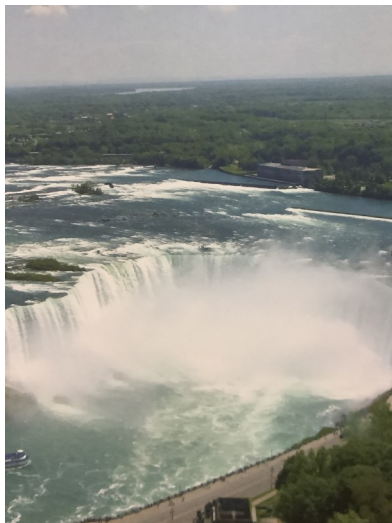
www.food.gives

Meanderings of a Simple Mind

We have a photograph of Niagara Falls in our hall which I took on one of our holidays in Canada

Recently I have heard the question posed of how we explain the Trinity to people who have no church experience. On one of these occasions my photograph of Niagara Falls popped into my head and it occurred to me that the river is an excellent example of how we can explain how God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost fit together as one.

Niagara Falls is not just one falls, it is Niagara Falls on the Canadian side and the American falls on the other side. The river Niagara is very powerful and the falls are magnificent. However, at a certain point the American Falls leave the main river and thunder down in a different place.



After a while they rejoin the main river. This gives a picture of God represented by the river. Of Jesus represented by the American Falls, leaving the main river and then returning. And over all this the power of the river (the Holy Spirit) never decreases illustrating our heavenly father with His power the same yesterday, today and for ever.

Shirley Hallam

Some quotes for you:- “Life consists not in holding good cards but in playing those you hold well.” —Josh Billings

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” —Nelson Mandela

Who is the most popular saint in Staffordshire? Some would say St. Michael {M and S}, others would say St. Modwen as one cannot escape that name as one drives around the county past various building development sites, particularly in Stoke-on-Trent. But who was St. Modwen and why is she so popular in this area ? Modwen was a nun who founded Burton Abbey in the 7th C on Andressey Island in the middle of the River Trent in Burton-on-Trent. She was an Irish noblewoman, who is reported to have performed many miracles, particularly associated with blindness. To this day, the well on the site of the abbey is said to possess healing properties. After a time, she left Burton and travelled to Scotland, reportedly dying aged 130, her body being then returned to Burton for burial. When she died, her companions are said to have seen her soul taken to heaven by silver swans. A shrine was built at Burton to commemorate her life, but it was destroyed by the Danes in 874. Today, two churches in Burton are dedicated to her name.

Her name also lives on in the form of St. Modwen Properties Ltd, an investment and development business specialising in the regeneration and reclamation of brownfield sites and urban environments. Still using a swan within the brand logo, amongst many other projects, the firm developed the Stoke on Trent Garden Festival site, purchased the Trentham Gardens Estate and was involved with the British Leyland site at Longbridge and the New Covent Garden in London. In 2021, it was purchased by the US giant Blackstone in a £1.24 billion deal. In 2024, St. Modwen Homes was bought by Miller Homes, although the St. Modwen brand name will continue to be used in the housing sector. The Blackstone owned part of St. Modwen still owns the Trentham Estate although Blue Diamond operate the Gardens.



John Bowes

In recent months I have tried, most days, to take a short local walk. Well, you know what they say... "If you don't use it, you lose it!".

As I leave home my mind is full of chores and other problems. But the regular rhythm of my footsteps seems to help clear my mind. So, then what? Counting the steps may be fine the first time out, but as I usually take the same walk each day, it's pointless to keep repeating the count.

So, what am I worrying about?! I quickly go over my problems.... almost as if to another person, and very often realise how trivial they are! But then, other friends who really do have great difficulties in their lives come to mind. I find myself naming them and thinking about them. I sense that an unseen presence, who I feel is with me, understands and is as concerned as I am.

I wonder "is this prayer"? Well, it is not prayer in the way we often think of prayer. But then going for a walk down the road with your "hands together and eyes closed" is not a good idea at all! However, the two disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus were equally uncertain who the "stranger" was who walked with them.

Jesus said to his disciples "and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age". Is this road in Stone after tea on a Tuesday afternoon excluded? So, as we live by faith our walk can indeed be a stroll with our Lord Jesus Christ.

If, on our return someone asks, "did you see anyone?" we can honestly answer "no". But if I was asked "Did you talk to someone"? I guess I would then have to say, "well, it was a sort of prayer walk".

Of course, we still need to keep regular "quiet times" for more formal Bible reading and prayer, but there will be other moments in the day, like my walk, when we can still be with, and converse with Our Lord



Jesus.

Jesus will always be with us. However, unless we keep up our regular prayers and hold on to His promise of always being present with us, our faith will get weaker. You know what they say... “If you don’t use it, you lose it”.

Roger

The Big Quiz Night is coming!

Save the date.....

Friday

10th October 2025

7.00pm Christ Church Centre



Its harvest time and that means the big quiz. The last two years we have very much enjoyed the Tearfund quiz nights. Here we join in with churches all around the country to enjoy a social quiz evening and raise money for Tearfund. Tearfund set the majority of the questions, although John and Helen always provide an interesting bonus round!!!

Come and join us—there are prizes!!

Thousands of people needlessly suffer and die every day because of poverty. But that’s not God’s plan for the world. We believe that we can all play a part in ending extreme poverty and injustice by reaching out to people in need.

For more than 50 years, Tearfund has partnered with local churches and organisations around the world, equipping people to lift themselves out of poverty and fulfil their God-given potential.

Transforming Communities one quiz at a time:



July/August 2025

Hello,

For me it's been a very strange month. As many of you will have heard by now our daughter Hannah became very, very poorly, went into a hospice and passed away on 11th August. This meant that my towpath walks have been somewhat curtailed although I have still helped some individual boaters where I could—as I told them—a useful distraction!

I have missed my towpath walks and rides in this beautiful weather but hope that I will be able to get going soon.



Anyway—what news? Aston Lock (number 26) underwent some major repairs and now the water levels in Stone are back to where they should be fortunately. Mind you water levels have not been helped by idiots purposefully emptying out sections of the Canal. Here is a report from the BBC following an incident on the 8th August on a stretch of the Trent and Mersey just north of here.

Vandals "motivated by social media likes" have been blamed for draining a stretch of canal.

The Canal and River Trust (CRT) said it was dealing with the after-effects of people purposefully draining water from the Trent and Mersey Canal on the Staffordshire/Cheshire border, near Kidsgrove, on Saturday.

The incident involved a two-mile stretch of the waterway between locks 44 and 54, the trust said, with every lock being opened.

Cheshire Police confirmed it was made aware of the incident, which was believed to have happened between 21:00 and 22:00 BST, and inquiries were ongoing.

Tales from the Towpath (cont)

The stretch of canal has since refilled but the CRT said the issue could have caused "massive problems" for boats moored in the area and wildlife living in the water.

"We believe that this vandalism is motivated by people looking for social media likes," a trust spokesperson added.

Despite the refill, the locks along the stretch had been closed to navigation due to very little water being left in the supplying reservoirs, the trust said.

In response to the vandalism, officials chained and padlocked the locks to "save what water we have left".

"Another incident like this could be devastating," the trust spokesperson said. "Please respect any advice signs, which are in place to keep people safe and protect the canal."

A Cheshire Police spokesperson said anyone who had any information on the incident should get in touch via 101 or the force website.

Not a good situation for our boaters!

One fun day though this month was when John, our daughter Vicky (over from Canada), the two dogs and I went over to the Shropshire Union Canal at Adderley and Tyrley to help a disabled boater through 10 locks. It was Vicky's first experience of 'locking'. After that she decided she was well experienced!

Please pray for all the boaters and everyone along the towpath in our lovely town of Stone and the village of Barlaston. 'Do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God' – Micah 6:8

God bless, Helen 10/7/25



New every morning

Living back in Lichfield for the first time since leaving for university some time in the last century is a slightly bizarre experience. I am currently living fifty yards down the road from where I went to primary school and cross paths, while cycling to work, with pupils on the way to my old secondary. Sometimes I feel tempted to put the old red crimplene blazer back on and follow them in through the gates...

Although we think of September as the time when we 'go back' to school or to work after the holidays, the reality of course is that we can never go back. Life only moves in one direction. Even if we find ourselves in a place which feels like somewhere we've been before, we have changed – we've grown older, hopefully wiser, hopefully not too much less able to engage physically with the challenges of living. The people around us are different, some new friends and family, some are missing. The web of love and relationship from within which we engage with the world is different. The world changes but sometimes it's we who change more.

The same is also true with how we interact with our faith: how we read the Bible, how we engage with worship, how we pray, how we think about God. Many would say that becoming a parent, for example, changes their understanding of the Father's love radically. Everything changes because we change. And that is nothing to be anxious about. God is always revealing new things to us about who he is and how much and in what ways he loves us.

'you travel as you grow nearer to
God today?

The steadfast love of
the Lord never ceases; his mercies
never come to an end; they are
new every morning; great is your
faithfulness '. (Cont.....)



From the Diocese (Cont.)

These words in the book of Lamentations in the Bible encourage us to see God as a faithful and never-ending source of love and mercy but that love and that mercy is new every morning. Because we are new every morning: a new me – older, wiser, creakier – with a new opportunity today to see my life afresh, through God's eyes. 'New every morning is the love' – why not go and look this hymn up on that new-fangled Google thing and be encouraged and uplifted by it? And then, what new road will you travel as you grow nearer to God today?

Sam Rushton returned to Lichfield in April (after spending most of her adult life in Bristol and York) to take up the role of Chief Executive, also known as Diocesan Secretary, for the Diocese of Lichfield, working closely with the bishops and archdeacons to provide all the practical support and training to parishes, schools and chaplaincies that the diocese can offer.

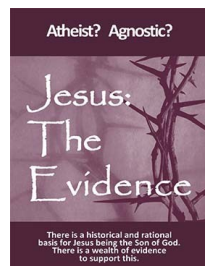
Coming soon

'Jesus - The Evidence'

4.00-5.45 p.m.

Sunday 26th October 2025

(with interval for refreshments) at Christ Church Centre, Stone.



A two-part presentation drawing on the historical, textual and archaeological research to provide us with evidence about Jesus, why his followers believed him to be the Son of God and what led to this movement spreading rapidly across the ancient world despite hostility and persecution by the Roman Empire and other people groups. The evidence also shows that people from all backgrounds and countries become followers of Jesus.

This article is a slightly abridged version of Bishop Michael's Presidential Address to July 2025's Diocesan Synod. As Parliament resumed on 1 September after summer recess,, it is timely to revisit this issue now before the the Bills continue their Parliamentary journey and with the Second Reading of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill imminent on 12 September.

Two Bills await scrutiny in the House of Lords: The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, providing for 'assisted dying' in some circumstances, and the Crime and Policing Bill, removing criminal liability from women who end their own pregnancies.

Both Bills affect vulnerable groups, who have had a bad few weeks what with these two Bills plus the debate over meaningful yet cost-effective support for people with disabilities. Vulnerable people are Christians' first call for compassion and advocacy, but here I am specifically addressing beginning and ending of life issues.

Increasingly, there are concerns being expressed about the end of life Bill. The Third Reading majority of 23 in a (free) vote in the Commons was significantly lower than the Second Reading majority of 55.

Some of those concerns are shared widely. Following the abortion decriminalisation vote, the Bishop of London helpfully pointed out that, '*Women suffering from coercion, or those who are victims of sexual or domestic abuse, would be the most vulnerable to the proposed change.*' Paradoxically, making those women free from legal sanction could make them more at risk.

In the case of assisted suicide, vulnerable people could, in their last months, feel themselves to be a waste of bed-space or a financial burden on their families, and then avail themselves of this way out. Over the past few weeks, several people who have been in situations of medical, psychological or social vulnerability have written to me to describe thoughts exactly like this.

Sadly, in some cases there could be temptations for overburdened hospital administrators, or for fatigued families, to reinforce those

inward feelings by their outward attitudes or words, so that people really do end up feeling coerced. The statutory inquiry into the COVID pandemic has recently heard evidence of the effective abandonment of residents of care homes to the ravages of a deadly disease because they were seen as more expendable than others. It is also hard to believe that there will not, over the years, be a relaxation of restrictions on who may avail themselves of assisted dying procedures. That has been the consistent experience of other jurisdictions.

As a Christian, I believe in the God-given sanctity of every human life, resting on the biblical truth that we are made in the image and likeness of our Creator. To take away God's gift of life is to choose to go against God's good purposes, whatever might be the circumstances in which that happens. That immediately raises a host of complex questions, particularly at the beginning of life. What if the life of a woman is endangered by a pregnancy, might not the imperative to save life point to abortion as the lesser of two evils? At what point does an incipient life become truly a human being and who has responsibility for the unborn life until that point? These complexities are addressed in this Church of England statement on abortion:

The Church of England combines principled opposition to abortion with a recognition that there can be strictly limited conditions under which it may be morally preferable to any available alternative. This is based on our view that the foetus is a human life with the potential to develop relationships, think, pray, choose and love. Women facing unwanted pregnancies realise the gravity of the decision they face: all abortions are tragedies, since they entail judging one individual's welfare against that of another (even if one is, as yet, unborn). Every possible support, especially by church members, needs .

(cont.....)

to be given to those who are pregnant in difficult circumstances and care, support and compassion must be shown to all, whether or not they continue with their pregnancy

At the other end of life, it is sometimes argued that no clear distinction can be made in borderline cases between assisting somebody to die, on the one hand, and on the other hand administering palliative drugs for pain control that will hasten the end of their life, or stopping intrusive medical interventions that artificially sustain a vegetative state. Many of us will have experienced issues like these in the dying days or hours of those we love. They can be bitterly difficult to decide. Nevertheless, there is a world of difference between acting to alleviate suffering in someone's dying hours and purposefully seeking to bring about death. Intentionality matters.

At the beginning and the ending of life, and at every point in between, as a Christian I affirm in wonder and gratitude that all human lives belong to God, and that every human life is to be treated with reverence and awe as an image of his glory and a temple of his spirit. Many people of other faiths or beliefs would share in that view, even if expressed in different language. In public as in private we must be free to bear witness to our strongest convictions; it is chilling to hear calls to exclude people from bringing their religiously grounded values to the debate because they are not 'neutral.' Faith or belief is not like a coat to be taken off and left at the door as we enter into the house of public debate.

Finally, at the most practical and immediate level, the Assisted Dying Bill currently before Parliament is good neither in content nor timing. The safeguards it stipulates are viewed by many as woefully inadequate and it seems to me quite extraordinary to be proposing a fully-funded suicide service when palliative care is dramatically under-resourced often left reliant on charitable resources, and when the NHS in general is under such strain.

Beginning and ending of life (cont)

So, the Lords will now engage with the Bill. Please pray for all members of the House of Lords, and particularly for the bishops who sit there, as we deliberate. Please also pray for debate about disabled people's provision. Every day the chamber begins its business with prayers led by one of the bishops. On the last day of each week these include Psalm 121. I put my hope in the final words of that psalm: 'The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and for evermore.'

+Michael



Events and training

NEW - Summer training brochure

The Summer Training brochure is available on lichfield.anglican.org [here](#).

Booking for courses in the brochure is via the [events pages](#) from each course's entry.

Downloadable and online courses for clergy, Readers, church workers and parish officers can also be found [here](#).



Safeguarding

The United Benefice is committed to Safeguarding and has adopted the National and Diocesan Safeguarding Policies for the welfare of everyone in our congregations. Anyone requiring any further information or raising concerns should contact the Safeguarding Coordinators: **Christ Church, Stone:** Andrew Stone on

Safeguarding2@christchurchstone.org

Oulton with Moddershall; Mary Gale on

Office@christchurchstone.org

Or contact the church office [01785 811990] to leave your details, and Andrew or Mary will ring you back.

The vicar, Rev Paul Kingman can also be contacted on 01785 812669.

If the matter is more urgent, or you feel uncomfortable contacting someone in our Benefice, you may contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team at Lichfield <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/safeguarding/>

Getting Scammed!!!

John and I consider ourselves of reasonable intelligence (both have degrees) , pretty technologically aware and conscious of fending off lots of potential scammers as one daily negotiates the plethora of emails and texts that have come from some untrustworthy source, people pretending to be different organisations and trying to get you to click on something or hand over your bank details.

However we did get caught just this week! It just goes to show that when one is particularly vulnerable one can get caught out! Through *phishing* emails, it only needs for a few of the items to ring true to lure you in. Thought I would share with you this particular scam and hope you do not get caught. (cont.)

The scam we got caught on is evidently well documented. Here is a report from 'Which' magazine about it:-

The gift card scam script

Here is the script used by one scammer who convinced a Which? member to send them a gift card.

They received an email in May 2023 with the subject line 'favour to ask?', seemingly sent from the genuine email address of a neighbour.

'Hi, Sorry to bother you, do you order from Amazon? '

Eager to help, they replied quickly and received this response:

'I've been trying to purchase an Amazon gift card by email, but I can't do this now because all my effort purchasing it online proved abortive. I intend to buy it for a friend's daughter who's having her birthday today, unfortunately she is down with cancer of the liver. Can you get it from your Amazon account? I'll reimburse you back as soon as possible. Please let me know if you can handle this so I can tell you the amount and how to get to her.'

The scammer asked them to send £300 worth of Amazon gift cards (three £100 cards) via email.

Fortunately, they only sent one card and asked for confirmation it had been received before becoming suspicious that some of the messages didn't sound quite right. They called their neighbour on the phone and discovered that she had received many other queries about this scam that morning.

They immediately contacted their bank, which blocked their card and promised a refund.

This was exactly what we got caught on—a friends contact list had been hacked and we thought the scam email was from this person — one feels both angry and an idiot for it happening. Please be on the lookout and check things out first! It can happen to anyone!

Helen 16/8/25

Groups and Rotas

Deanery Synod Reps	Helen Bowes, Sue Kingman
P.C.C. Members	Lynne Collier, Maxine Garrington-Miller, Marylyn Hillman, George Holden, Pete Kelly, Liz Mason, Shelagh Sanders, Andy Stone, Gary Williams, Shirley Hallam,
Secretary	Shelagh Sanders
Treasurer	Pete Kelly
Envelopes, Gift Aid	Lynda Marengi

FLOWER ROTA

7th September:	
14th September:	Doris Pickles
21st September:	
28th September:	Angela Brandon

WELCOMER

Mandy Dudd
Pam Roberts
Jeanette Rowlands
Jacqueline Abrahams

REGISTERS

BAPTISM

WEDDINGS

FUNERALS:

14th August Sheila Hawley Aged 82

Roads for Prayer

1st September

Candler Drive
Cauldon Way
Chandler's Way
Chestnut Grove

8th September

Cressy Close
Cross Street
Darwin Close
Dixon Close

15th Sept.

Dominic Court
Edward Street
Elmhurst Way
Field House Court

22nd Sept

Field Terrace
Goodall Close
Granville Terrace
Harding Grove

29th Sept.

Harecastle Bank
Hartley Drive
Joules Drive
Kent Grove

