Christ Church Magazine

January 2025

40p

PARISH DIRECTORY

SUNDAY SERVICES

Details of our services are given on page 4.

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Christ Church Magazine

Please send your articles for the February magazine to us by 15th January

Cover Picture:
View inside church at a flower festival

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Christ Church on the Internet

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

January 2024

	Date	Time	Events (Zoom codes in weekly email)
Wed	1st		
Thu	2nd		
Fri	3rd		
Sat	4th	8.30 am	Prayer meeting followed by breakfast
Sun	5th	11.00 am	Joint Benefice Service of Communion; John 1: 19-28 "John is not the Christ"
Mon	6th		***Start of Schools Spring Term***
Tue	7th	10.30 am	Communion; Ephesians 1: 3-14 "Truly blessed in Christ!"
Wed	8th	9.00 am 7.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Standing Committee
Thu	9th	1.10 pm	Christ Church Academy assembly
Fri	10th		
Sat	11th		
Sun	12th	9.15 am 5.00 pm	Morning Prayer; John 1: 29-42 "Jesus is the Lamb" Hope Explored (session 1) at the Vicarage
Mon	13th	9.30 am	Toddler group
Tue	14th	10.30 am 12.30 pm 2.00 pm	Communion; Isaiah 42: 1-9 "A light for the nations" Pursuit Club Christ Church Academy Autumn House service
Wed	15th	9.00 am 2.00 pm 3.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Oulton Abbey Care Home service Trekkers
Thu	16th	11.00 am 1.10 pm	St Mary's Home service Christ Church Academy assembly

January 2024

	Date	Time	Events
Fri	17th		
Sat	18th		
Sun	19th	9.15 am 5.00 pm	Communion; Hebrews 1: 1-4 "God spoke through his Son" Hope Explored (session 2) at the Vicarage
Mon	20th	9.30 am	Toddler group
Tue	21st	10.30 am 12.30 pm	Communion; Mark 1: 1-15 "Jesus the baptiser" Pursuit Club Christ Church Academy
Wed	22nd	9.00 am 3.30 pm 7.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Trekkers PCC Meeting
Thu	23rd	1.10 pm	Christ Church Academy assembly
Fri	24th		
Sat	25th		
Sun	26th	9.15 am 5.00 pm	All Age; Hebrews 1: 5-14 "God rules the universe through his Son" 'A marvellous evening' with Neil Baldwin
Mon	27th		
Tue	28th	10.30 am 12.30 pm	Communion; Mark 1: 14-20 "His call" Pursuit Club Christ Church Academy
Wed	29th	9.00 am 3.30 pm	Christ Church First School assembly Trekkers
Thu	30th		
Fri	31st		

Blue Monday and Counteracting the blues

January for some is a delight. Perhaps the shorter daylight hours and more time at home in dark evenings provides the more introverted with fewer social interactions and more time for projects at home. But others find January a difficult one to endure.

'Blue Monday' was an idea dreamed up by Sky Travel, a UK travel company, for a press release in 2005. They said that the third Monday of January was the most depressing day of the year. What better antidote than to book some holiday in the sun! It tapped into what we know about seasonal affective disorder ('SAD'), for which more sunshine is a good remedy to counteract a low mood; a loss of pleasure or interest in normal everyday activities; irritability; feelings of despair, guilt and worthlessness; feeling lethargic; sleeping for longer and struggling to get up in the morning; eating more; and a difficulty concentrating.

The writers of the books of the Bible have lots to help counteract this whatever time of the year. In his warm and positive letter to the church in Philippi the Apostle Paul concludes with three things which help us.

1. Count your blessings: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice!" (v4). There are always things that we can give thanks to God for – even the privilege of being able to know God and to pray. But many other daily blessings of home, family, food, warmth, achievements and the opportunity to be part of the church community for companionship along the way of Christ.
2. Pray to the Lord: "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (v6-7).

Blue Monday… (cont)

3. Focus on good things: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” (v8).

We may experience a low mood during the dark winter months, but we can also experience the goodness of God who has walked the way before us and offers help.

As we gather on Sundays, we remember the goodness of God who came down to earth in his Son Jesus Christ. Join us to learn more

Paul Kingman

A lovely November evening with ‘Nello’!

It was a last minute and informal arrangement to meet Neil Baldwin (aka ‘Nello’). He was holding a social evening celebrating ten years since the television film called ‘Marvellous’ was aired.’ Marvellous’ is a 90-minute British drama television film that was first broadcast on BBC Two on 25 September 2014. Directed by Julian Farino and written by Peter Bowke and starred Gemma Jones as Neil’s mother while Toby Jones played ‘Nello’. Neil became something of a celebrity due to his informal role as a welcomer of students at Keele University, but also due to his role within Stoke City Football Cub’s as their kit man and mascot in the 1990’s. Having been appointed by Lou Macari he later reflected that Neil was his best signing!

The guest list was wide ranging. Helen Bowes was present due a surprise invitation because of her role with the Waterways Chaplaincy work on the canals. A colleague of hers dropped out so I was the substitute. The line-up was impressive including members of the original production team for the film and the real Malcolm Clarke a lifelong friend through Keele. . Due to Neil’s own Christian faith, he has formed many friendships with Bishops – we had a local representation by Bishops of Stafford and Stockport, but

A lovely November eve with Nello… (cont)

also the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. It was testimony to Neil's interests and sociability, but also to his canny knack of simply asking to be included in events over the years! There were also some actors who had starred in the stage show 'Marvellous' that was first at the New Vic in Newcastle under Lyme before transferring to Soho Place theatre in the West End of London in 2022.

We had a tasty meal (thanks to the Crown Wharf kitchen), plenty of chat and some songs led by Neil.

If you are interested in meeting Neil, then you will be pleased to hear that we have him booked on Sunday 26th January at 5pm at Christ Church Centre in Stone which we've called *'A marvellous event'*. We hope to rustle up some food to make it a good do!

Paul Kingman.

The Lord Mayor's Chaplain

Alderman Alastair King, the 696th Lord Mayor of the city (of London) in the state coach with Ray Pentland, his Chaplain at this year's Lord Mayor's show. See pages 18 and 19 for the article.

MISSION PRAYER DIARY

WEEK ONE: LANGHAM PARTNERSHIP

FOCUS: THE CHURCH IN EYGPT

The Langham Partnership exists to equip the church worldwide through providing scolarships, theological literature and preaching programmes. The Langham Partnership is providing theological training to over 700 people in Cairo, the biggest city in the Middle East.

DAY	PRAYER POINT
01 Jan	Thank God for the Cairo Bible college and for the many tutors who have been funded by Langham for their academic training.
02 Jan	Pray for Ranya, the first female Langham PhD graduate who is now an Old Testament tutor at the Bible college, that God would guide her as she develops courses and programmes for future students.
03 Jan	Thank God for the ground breaking Bible commentaries that He has enabled The Langham Partnership to make that have helped so many Christians in Eygpt understand the Bible better.
04 Jan	Pray that God would equip more people to translate the Langham commentaries into many other languages such as Tamil.
05 Jan	In 2023, 9,300 preachers received theological training - praise God! Pray that this would bless the congregations that they serve and that many more people would discover Jesus through their teaching.
06 Jan	Praise God for the recent "Magnify" project, which has raised additional funds to resource the increasing demand for theological books and training in Eygpt and other countries across the world.
07 Jan	Give thanks for the publication of "Bottom of the Well Theology" - lessons learnt by Ukrainian believers in the face of war. Pray that it would impact the lives of those who read it and bring them to Jesus.

MISSION PRAYER DIARY

WEEK TWO: SIMEON'S TRUSTEES

FOCUS: 2024 REVIEW

Simeon's Trustees work hard to discern who God wants to place in different roles in their partner churches and help churches to organise themselves. They aim to carry the vision Charles Simeon had all those years ago to place Christ-centered, gospel people in parishes all across the country.

DAY	PRAYER POINT
08 Jan	Thank God for the appointment of Ann Brown, who has served Simeon's Trustees for many years as an executive officer, as a trustee and pray that she may continue to serve God faithfully in her new role.
09 Jan	Pray for Sarah Siddique-Gill, Leicester Cathedral's new Canon Missioner, that she would continue to be guided by God and His Word as she figures out how best to encourage discipleship in the church.
10 Jan	Thank God for the rest of the trustees who continue to serve God faithfully and pray that He may give them new encouragement as they start a new year of service
11 Jan	Thank God for the continued financial and prayerful support from all of the partner churches that allow Simeon's Trustees to continue their important work
12 Jan	Thank God for the good relationships that Simeon's Trustees have built with PCCs in their partner churches and pray that these may continue.
13 Jan	Pray for Canon Mark Payne, Simeon's Trustee's new Executive Officer, that he may be able to settle into his new role quickly.
14 Jan	Pray for those who are in charge of filling vacancies in the patronage, that God may give them wisdom and guidance.

MISSION PRAYER DIARY

WEEK THREE: AFRICA INLAND MISSION (AIM)

FOCUS: PAUL AND ELIZABETH MAKAU IN KENYA

In Kenya, the Christian church is growing. But whilst Christianity is Kenya's main religion, Kenya's ethnic diversity and vast countryside means there are still many unreached by the gospel. Paul and Elizabeth have been equipping local pastors and church leaders to take the gospel to these unreached people groups.

DAY	PRAYER POINT
15 Jan	Thank God that He has provided adequate funding to keep Africa International University's doors open to provide Christ-centered leadership training to church leaders.
16 Jan	Thank God for all the Kenyan men and women who have decided to serve God and dedicate their lives to learning how to teach His Word.
17 Jan	Pray for Paul and Elizabeth as they travel to Marsabit, a town in Kenya, to share the gospel in multiple locations, that they might have safe journeys and that their support will be well received.
18 Jan	Pray that God's work in the hearts and lives of church leaders and their congregations would be a visible and powerful witness.
19 Jan	Pray for Elizabeth, who hopes to continue one-to-one witnessing, evangelism and discipleship programmes, that she may be able to find adequate time to do so and that God will give her His strength.
20 Jan	Pray for Paul and Elizabeth's children, Daniel and Grace, as they continue their studies in Rift Valley Academy, AIM's missionary school, that they may continue to grow in their faith and love of God.
21 Jan	Thank God for His protection over their family and pray that He might continue to protect them as they continue this life changing work.

MISSION PRAYER DIARY

WEEK FOUR: OPEN DOORS

FOCUS: SYRIA

In Syria, President for the last 20 years Basar al-Assad has fled the country amidst escalating violence and political turmoil. The fall of the Assad regime has intensified fears of a complete power vacuum and a political surge in factional violence. Civilians are being displaced at an alarming rate and minority groups, including Christians, are bracing for an uncertain future.

DAY	PRAYER POINT
22 Jan	Pray for unity among leaders, that they keep the Syrian people's interest as a first priority and honour God with their decisions.
23 Jan	Pray for the leaders of all factions to be moved towards reconciliation and for the protection of innocent civilians.
24/25 Jan	Pray for peace in Syria, that the cycle of violence would cease, that there would be no spirit of vengeance against anyone, and that God's justice and mercy would prevail in Syria.
26/27 Jan	Thank God for His goodness to us and pray that the church would remain a beacon of hope and love, even as it faces immense challenges.
28 Jan	Pray for strength and courage for Christians who are living in fear and a personal reminder that God is in control, no matter what happens.
29 Jan	Thank God for faithful church leaders in Syria and pray that God may grant them wisdom as they guide their communities.
30/31 Jan	Pray for safety and resilience for families forced to make difficult choices about whether to stay or to leave.

"He [God] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me." Colossians 1: 28-29

12 Weeks of Christmas

Nowadays Christmas seems to start sometime in September and end on 25 December! So around 12 weeks of Christmas seems to have replaced the traditional 12 DAYS of Christmas - which starts on Christmas Day and continues until the first week of January. And Epiphany seems to have got lost completely somewhere along the line. Epiphany remembers the arrival of the Magi (also known as Three Kings or Three Wise Men) to bring gifts to the baby Jesus. Many countries across the world have major celebrations and carnivals to keep this tradition alive.

There was once a church that had a special Epiphany service with the theme of gifts and people were asked to bring gifts to be offered to Jesus and then to go to charities of one sort or another. One young boy, from a very poor family, couldn't think of anything that his family could afford so he thought that he shouldn't go on that day. However, the day of the service arrived and he arrived at church with a rather battered old tin tray. When the time arrived to go forward with the gifts, he picked up his tray, walked to the front, put the tray on the floor and stood on it. When asked what he was doing he said. "I have nothing to give but myself". That young man offered his life to Jesus at that point.

If you have made New Year Resolutions that won't last all year why don't you consider bringing your metaphorical tray to church on Sunday 5th January (Epiphany is 6th January) and giving your whole self to Jesus?

Shirley Hallam

The better choice

Most of you will be familiar with the account of Martha offering hospitality to Jesus. We deduce that she was the elder sister, as St Luke records that it was "she who opened her home to him." (See Luke 10 :38-42).

When Jesus came, her younger sister Mary was present and left all the preparation for the meal to Martha while she "sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he said." Many readers may have some sympathy with Martha, who sounds harassed when she asks Jesus to tell Mary to give her a

hand getting things ready! However, Jesus knowing that Martha is worried about many things, refuses to comply with her request saying, “Mary has chosen what is better”.

I suspect that the “Mary/Martha” choice often comes to us. For example, what happens when you take time out to sit quietly for a time of prayer or meditation? Just as you have become still and focused on the Lord, the “Martha” part of you springs into action. You suddenly find yourself thinking about tasks that you need to do, like recording that TV programme, or wondering about your shopping list.

Some people jot down the matter on a piece of paper, as a reminder to be dealt later after the prayer time is over. Or we may be able to turn the thought into a quick prayer “Lord, guide me today as I go shopping”. We each need to find ways to deal with the thoughts and get straight back to “the one thing that is needed” (Those are his words…not mine!). Only then will we be able to be still “know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)

Roger

Ringing Out the Good News

The theme of this year’s Advent Windows Trail was Ring Out the Good News, with bells being a focus for the logo and creative activity. It seemed appropriate, therefore, to invite the bell ringers of St Michael’s Church to get involved, especially as Paul and I count ourselves among their number, ringing the bells with them on practice nights and other occasions. Accordingly, the bell ringers agreed to create an Advent Window display, and this was constructed in the right-hand window of the Co-op Funeral Directors. It featured a nativity scene made of rope, set in a bell-shaped stable, with a backdrop of angels clinging to miniature bell ropes complete with sallies skilfully made by Becky out of pipe cleaners. In addition, at the ‘opening’ of the window the singing of our allocated carol “Away in a Manger” was accompanied by some of our members on handbells.

As part of the celebrations we had hoped to ring something special on the tower bells at St Michael's at 11 o'clock on the first Saturday of Advent, when the window was 'opened' at the Library and the Farmers' Market should have been in full swing. In the event not enough ringers were available to ring on that morning, and the Farmers' Market was cancelled because of the arrival of Storm Darragh. However, the next day 5 ringers including me assembled to ring for the Civic Carol service, and Peter, our Tower Captain, decided that we should attempt to ring a Quarter Peal of Plain Bob Doubles. This is a set piece of ringing consisting of approximately 1260 changes and takes about 40 minutes. For it to be accepted and recorded in a bell ringing publication it needs to be completed with minimal faults, and a successful attempt is cause for celebration particularly for those who are in the earlier learning stages of change ringing.

With only 40 minutes to spare before the start of the service we began the attempt at a rapid pace, requiring quite a lot of physical effort, and by the time we reached halfway a couple of members of the band were wishing they had taken off their jumpers. However, the ringing settled into a good rhythm, and we managed to complete the Quarter Peal, coming back into rounds on the dot of 3 o'clock. The publication of the achievement on the Ringing World Bell Board records that the Quarter Peal was rung for the Civic Carol service and for the Stone Community Advent Windows event. To view the details, go to

https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=179432

Thanks to all who took part in Ringing Out the Good News this December.

Sue Kingman

Tales from the Towpath (16)

November 2024

Hello there! As I write this we are well into Advent Windows for this year and I am pleased that we have a Waterways Chaplaincy Advent Window this year – I do hope that many people see the narrow boat and the nativity scene together!

Although the canals are quieter now in the winter it has still been busy for Chaplaincy work. Diane and I attended the Waterways Chaplaincy National celebration Day at Rugby on the 16th November. This was a day of great encouragement and it is good to meet other Chaplains from across the country. Diane and I both acquired a new beany hat with the WWC logo on so we can keep our heads warm and be seen coming!

During November… Both of us enjoyed helping a boater in need through the locks at Stone, Meaford, Trentham and Stoke – it is a great honour and privilege to meet friendly boaters all of whom are willing share their lives with us.

As well as walking the towpath in Stone and chatting with all I meet, I met with various boaters at Brewood, in Stone, Meaford and also at Scholar Green who requested practical help and/or a listening ear and I walked the towpath through Stone with Probationary Chaplain, Andrew, who is usually based at Fradley Junction. Diane has also been busy up at Barlaston – 57 'hellos' she recorded one day in November as she walked her weekly towpath mile!!

The most interesting event for me was being invited to spend an evening with 'Nello' (Paul has written in detail about this event) at the Crown Wharf to celebrate 10 years since the TV film 'Marvellous' was broadcast. This occurred because of a chance encounter on the towpath at Wedgwood last summer – you never quite know who you will meet!!

Please keep all the boaters and towpath users in your prayers through the winter weather.

God bless, Helen

"Always More to Learn"

On 28th November Jean Whitham and I attended a **Training Event** for *Chaplaincy Volunteers.* As always the content was **engaging, informative** and **helpful** for our work in the hospital.

It was a half-day designed for us to *reflect* on our work, *grow* in our *competence*, *encourage* one another and be *supported* by our leadership.

Initially we watched a national NHS video produced specifically for *Chaplaincy Volunteers*. Things that stood out for me were that Chaplains

- often act as a 'bridge' between patients and hospital staff.
- give patients the opportunity to be real and to lower barriers they might have put up.
- enable patients to say anything and therefore not to have to appear to be brave or coping well.
- help patients to deal with isolation that they might be feeling.
- encourage patients to speak about their beliefs and what is most important to them.

Next was a brief presentation on the latest (2024) **"Code of Conduct for Healthcare Chaplains"** which focused on *advocating person-centred care* and *acting safely, ethically and professionally*.

We then watched another video outlining **Delirium** – what it is and how we can support patients displaying it. I was surprised to learn that around 25% of inpatients experience delirium to some degree for short or longer periods of time. We finished with an exercise to **reflect** on the effectiveness of our visits to/for patients using examples of experiences from members of the group. We did this using the **'Gibbs Reflective Cycle'** which has 6 stages covering the *facts* and *feelings* which were present, *evaluating* and *analysing* how things went and *concluding* with what it might be beneficial to change and making an *action plan* to put any changes into practice in the future.

Hospital Notes (56)… (cont)

P.S. On December 2nd I attended the switch on of the Christmas lights at both County and Royal Stoke hospitals When being asked to shout out favourite carols one bright spark shouted out 'Vorderman'! Then on the 4th I was admitted as a patient for 11 days!!

Dave Rowlands

The Lord Mayor's Chaplain

At about 3pm on 8 November 2024 in the Guildhall in the city of London, Alderman Alastair King became the 696th Lord Mayor of the city. The outgoing Lord Mayor removes his hat, and the incoming Lord Mayor puts his hat on, and so begins a year like no other and it all takes place in what is known as Silent Ceremony. The silence is only broken when The Lord Mayor leaves the Guildhall to the sound of the State Trumpeters - a sound we will all become used to in the days ahead, as it marks Grace and speeches at Banquets.

I am present having been Invited by Alastair to be his Chaplain. On one level the role is ceremonial and on such occasions The Lord Mayor is accompanied by the City Marshal, the Chaplain, the Sword Bearer and Common Crier. On another level, the role of the chaplain is an ancient one and for me it is the type of ministry I have been involved in for many years, perhaps best summed by my personal mission statement 'serving through prayer, presence and proclamation'

Each Lord Mayor invites someone to be their chaplain and of course they all have different et expectations! For some it may be enough to have the chaplain present at the ceremonial events and to say grace at banquets. For others such as 'My Lord Mayor' (the official form of address) they expect hope for pastoral care, counsel, and as Alastair would say a great deal more! I have been chaplain to Alastair since he was a sheriff of the

city (another story in itself) and in pastoral terms been part of family funerals, a wedding, and supported him through the journey to the Mansion House - the official residence of the Lord Mayor. Although many other things happen over the next few hours the first public event for the new Lord Mayor is to attend Church for a Service of blessing. Here then is the role of Prayer, encompassing worship in its many forms, as well as particular prayer.

Presence is obvious I think, and the simple premise is that one has to be present to express the Christian faith and be ready to answer the question 'Who is God?' Where is God to be found today and what is required of us here and now?' Some speak of simply keeping the rumour of God alive. Over the last few weeks this involved questions such as ' How do I become a Christian?' Would you pray for me?'. The day after the silent ceremony is the world famous Lord Mayors show, which has been held since 1189, and I was privileged to join the Lord Mayor in the state coach, showing himself to the people, which was the original purpose of the Day, along with swearing an Oath of Allegiance to the sovereign at the Royal Courts of Justice.

A return to Mansion House and more engagements to follow. The next day is remembrance Sunday and we attend worship at St Paul's and the memorial at the Exchange by the Bank of England. On 11 Nov I lead an act of remembrance for the Manion house staff followed by getting to know the staff which is very much part of the ministry of presence. With a few days the Lord Mayor hosted the Chancellor, the speech's make the news.

Within the City's boundaries, only the Sovereign takes precedence. During the year in office the Lord Mayor hosts diverse visiting heads of state, heads of government and other foreign dignitaries on behalf of His Majesty and HM Government. It is my privilege to be Chaplain, supporting and caring for the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress as they serve city and nation. Please pray for Alastair and Florence, and all who are involved in the leadership of our nation. *Ray Pentland*

Groups and Rotas

Deanery Synod Reps	Helen Bowes, Dave Rowlands
P.C.C. Members	Jacqueline Abrahams, Lynne Bakker-Collier, Maxine Garrington-Miller, Shirley Hallam, Marylyn Hillman, George Holden, Pete Kelly, Liz Mason, Shelagh Sanders, Andy Stone, Gary Williams, Estella Woodhead
Secretary	Shelagh Sanders
Treasurer	Pete Kelly
Envelopes, Gift Aid	Lynda Marenghi

REGISTERS

BAPTISM

WEDDINGS

FUNERALS

FLOWER ROTA

5th January:	Flower Guild
12th January:	Flower Guild
19th January:	Flower Guild
26th January:	Flower Guild

SIDESPERSONS

Jeanette Rowlands
Pete Kelly
Dave Rowlands
Marilyn Overall

ROADS FOR PRAYER

5th January	**12th January**
Mount Crescent	Newcastle Road
Mount Road	Newcastle Street
Mount Street	Nicholls Lane
Navigation Loop	Northesk Street

19th January	**26th January**
Old Road	Oulton Mews
Old Road Close	Oulton Road
Oulton Cross	Prince's Street
Oulton Grove	Queen's Square