

INSPIRE

OCTOBER 2026



The monthly magazine
for the Parish of
St John The Baptist, Frome

**The parish of Frome Selwood
in the Frome Local Ministry Group**

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October 2026

Fair Frome Shopping List

Harvest Festival – Sunday 4 October

Packets & Cartons

Savory crackers, Pasta snacks, Sugar
Biscuits, Teabags, Sugar

Tins

Cold meat and hot meat, Tinned fruit,
Tinned potatoes
Hot snacks; ravioli, macaroni & cheese

Jars

Jam, Pasta sauce and rice sauce
Small jars of Coffee



The Vicar's view

Good people, once again I am speaking to you from beyond the veil! Yes, by the time that many of you are reading this, I will be away, for two weeks, in Spain. This increasingly seems the way I start a lot of these messages: 'become a priest and see the world'. Leaving St John's is never easy – you never know what will happen in your absence. I remember that the last time I left – the second some people thought my back was turned – they took the opportunity to edit the grammar of all the posters I put up! But on this occasion, it turns out I am leaving you with more than several misprinted posters. The last few weeks have seen the baptism of several new adult members of our community. All of whom are growing and contributing to our identity and mission.

What our new members have entered into is not just a personal commitment, neither is it just an intellectual assent. It is an inheritance, it is a choice to be joined into our family, its history and its future. For those who have been following recent events in Christian, let alone Church of England, events, this is no easy commitment to make: our present, let alone our past, is hardly a fairy tale. It takes intense courage, let alone faith, to look upon an institution as inept, floundering and often countercultural, and still trust it to sustain and minister our most fundamental needs in our most vulnerable and intimate moments. To say nothing of seeing in it the face of Christ.

Recently, a friend told me that one of the chief reasons they had faith in the Church was because of 'how terrible the priests are'! I choose to believe that they were not simply another critical grammarian analysing my hyphens. Their point was that politicians and political parties rise and fall; as do kings, empires and even organisations such as Oxfam. Almost everything around us depends upon the strength, history and morals of its leaders, and people may abandon these institutions at the slightest hint of scandal. Yet Christianity endures despite our worst faults and vilest leaders. New people still come through our doors and dedicate their lives to Christ, even when the failures of Christians would have been enough to fell some of the

mightiest parliaments and movements.

An understanding of our history, of our Christian inheritance, is vital for a life well lived as a Christian – the bad as much as the good, because in it we see redemption alive and at work, because in it we see the miracle of God’s love constantly saving us from errors and faults that would have toppled many. In our history we see the truth of our faith, because it endures and remains constantly admirable, even as societies and morals change; indeed, it continues to spread like no other force has ever managed. There is no doubt that the Church will disappoint – it is staffed and filled with humans who are, by nature, compromised. Yet Jesus remains the one figure uncontaminated by the friends and ministers he has. People still look to him, even when the Church has sunk to some of its darkest moments.

To be a part of Christ’s family is not so much the promise that the Church will be a perfect and safe place; nor is it the promise that you will be instantly perfect and that sorrow will never touch you and those around you will never betray you – even the disciples did this and more. Instead the promise of Christianity is that whatever your faults, no matter how great the depth of disappointment you might feel personally or give to others, it has no power to separate you, or any of us, from the love of God. It is the hope that Christ, the rejected cornerstone, can take even the greatest faults of ourselves and the Church and redeem them into the building blocks of his kingdom.

I dwell on this, because we are starting a new feature in this magazine of publishing historic articles from older parish magazines. This is not just an exercise in nostalgia; it is a chance to see the history of St John’s, warts and all, exposed. Some of it will read – and be – virtuous; some of it may feel surprising or shocking; but this is the rich history that we as members of St John’s Frome get to claim as our own. As Christians, we do not need to look on our past with the hand-wringing anxiety of so many, because our past is not a dead millstone but precisely that dark door at which Christ stands and knocks, offering our past as the guarantee that there is a place, and a redemption for each and every one of us. If our forbears could be the source of so much good and evil, and still leave us an inheritance as magnificent as

St John's, then there is hope for each of us, no matter how pious, or dissolute, or bad our grammar may be, to find to find in the faults and failings of ourselves and the Church, still the open arms of Christ. All of us, our good and bad, can be used to God's glory.

This is the hope and life into which our baptismal candidates have been brought. Whatever their pasts and whatever their futures, there is a place for them at St John's. Whether they bring wounds or wonders, we can accompany one another through joys and sorrows; and when we fail, as we surely shall, our hope is that those who have joined us will still feel able to persevere alongside us. For in the end, we are held and sustained by something no other force or movement can give: the love and life of God, who meets us wherever we are in mind, body and life, calls us his friends, grafts us into his body, saves us from our worst and transforms us into our full and true selves.

Rev Seamus Hargrave

Eds: Here are some photos of one of the baptisms Seamus refers to: Bryony's very unusual baptism in the River Mells near Great Elm!



Harvest Festival

Harvest is suddenly upon us! I have already received the text message from the nursery in Palmer Street booking a time for those little ones to bring their harvest goods into church. Our Harvest Festival Service is on Sunday 4 October. I'm sure that the church will be decorated on the day before (while Rosemary and I are in Wells attending the annual Reader Day morning conference and service in the cathedral in the afternoon).



As usual we will be gathering goods for the Food Bank so please be generous with your offerings, as well as the more traditional goods from gardens (has the Vicarage fig tree stopped producing? Mine has!). We will provide a list of the most needed items (see p.1). St John's school is planning to come to church for their Harvest Festival during the week following and I'm sure they will all arrive clutching more items for the Food Bank.

As we go to print, it has been decided that we will not be able to have a Harvest bring-and-share lunch this year. The Harvest Festival coincides with the mini-market, so perhaps you will be able to celebrate with some of the delicious food always available in church on Independent Market Day! Of course we shall celebrate Harvest, but I suspect that there will be a sombre tone to our Harvest Festivals as we confront the very real challenges faced by all food producers in this year of unprecedented heat and drought.

Janet Caudwell

St John's Gardening Group

Autumn bulb planting: If anyone would like to donate spring bulbs for planting this October in St John's churchyard, the Gardening Group would be very grateful.

Volunteers Welcome: We'd love to have more members on the Gardening Group team to help with a variety of tasks at St John's. Please have a chat with Tony, Lydia, Morag or Kathryn G. Thank you!

The Revd Pat Lawless

As we were preparing to print this magazine, we received the news that our dear friend Pat Lawless had died. Below is a flavour of the responses which arrived after we sent out the email.

What a very dear and lovely lady she was! We are all very privileged to have known her... and thank God for her.

So sorry to hear about Pat. I remember very clearly that along with Ross, they were the first people to welcome me into St John's.

Pat was a good and faithful servant.

Her ministry was greatly appreciated at St Mary's ... Pat delivered one of the best Good Friday services I experienced .

Pat was a very special person. She was greatly loved, and missed when she retired.

Our great and treasured friend, and gorgeous lady to boot. Our loss Heaven's gain ...

Pat was certainly a trailblazer and much loved.

Pat was very much a pioneer and like all pioneers had to bear some undeserved reactions/criticism/etc. Pat bore it all with courage and fortitude, and finally found a welcome and welcoming home at St John's. I echo your prayer for her: May she rest in peace and rise in glory. And may she also hear those blessed words : 'Well done, my good and faithful servant.'

We will all be able to pay our respects to Pat at her funeral, which will be held in St John's sometime next month. I have to conclude with the John Henry Newman prayer:

Support us , Oh Lord, all the day long of this troublous life,
until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes,
the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done.

Then, Lord, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, a holy rest,
and peace at the last. Amen

Janet Caudwell

As a further tribute to Pat, Janet has very kindly given us the text of the sermon she preached at Pat's last service with us before she moved to Lincolnshire in September 2023.

If there is anyone who doesn't know who Pat is, let me sketch in some details: Pat has been a priest in the Frome deanery since 1994. Church historians among you will realise that Pat, then, was amongst the very first women to be ordained in the Church of England.

The early years of Pat's ministry were not easy – I'm not going to go into details as this is a service of celebration, but it must be noted that Pat, along with other women priests, faced an opposition, in some quarters, which was ferocious and implacable. Pat's quiet, determined, gracious ministry changed so many people's perception of the priesthood.

For many years, Pat was the only woman priest in this deanery – now there are four. I believe that today's women priests are standing on giant's shoulders: their ministry is welcomed and valued because of all that Pat did as hospital chaplain, as celebrant at so many baptisms, weddings and funerals; in her preaching, in her presiding at Communion, in her words of wisdom, her pastoral care.

Women have been such an integral part of the Church for so long– it took the Church of England nearly two thousand years to recognise that and acknowledge that, but it finally did! And scarcely able to believe what had happened, it set about celebrating the event at some important milestones. And I was privileged to go with Pat to some of these celebrations!



In the twentieth year of their priesthood there was a magnificent service in St Paul's Cathedral for that 1994 tranche of women priests – there were 700 of them. After a jolly photo with the Archbishop of Canterbury on the steps of the cathedral, they all processed in for the beginning of the service.

The rubric in the order of service commanded, 'At 4.35pm, remain seated as the Great West Doors open and women ordained priest in 1994 process through the Nave to their seats under the Dome.' No chance! We in the congregation leapt to our feet and cheered and clapped as these amazing women, some in wheelchairs, some with walking sticks, others, like Pat, striding along, waving joyfully, made their way towards the altar. I have never stood and clapped for so long! Ten minutes? Fifteen minutes? It was worth it.

A few years later, on what felt like the hottest day of the summer, Pat and I made our way to Lambeth Palace to celebrate twenty five years! This was a much more relaxed, personal affair. And instead of being a tiny dot among the hundreds gathered in the photo with Justin, Pat got to talk to him and be photographed with him.

As we clapped and clapped and cheered and clapped at that service in St Paul's, what was uppermost in our minds was thanksgiving– thanksgiving for the struggle, the sacrifice and most importantly, the service of those brave, determined women.

Janet Caudwell



The Bennett Centre
community space for Frome

The Bennett Centre
Vicarage Street,
Frome BA11 1PU

Bookings:
bennettbooking11@gmail.com
www.bennettcentre.com

Spaces available for hire

The Marathon

We have become used to finding it difficult to get to church on the morning of the Frome Marathons. Some have managed to walk. Others have given up completely. Our Sunday morning Parish Eucharist has been sadly depleted.

But this year things were different. People who really couldn't get to church on Sunday morning (there are some who live right in the middle of the various routes) were able to join the congregation at the 5pm Vigil Eucharist the day before. There were others who were able to take advantage of the special passes which Rev Seamus had negotiated for us. I told him that I had driven past every other Anglican church in Frome in order to get to St John's! But after some very understandable suspicion from the chap in charge of the Badcox roundabout, I was able to drive in solitary splendour along Christchurch Street, brandishing my pass and receiving enthusiastic thumbs up from the marshals along the way.

And there were other cars in the Forecourt! We made contact with the very helpful young marshals on Bath Street who promised to let us know when it was safe to drive home, once all the runners had passed –and we in turn offered St John's as a place of refuge from the heat and a source of water and a loo.

It was all very amicable.

And far from being a depleted congregation, our numbers were good (although we did have a few refugees from other churches and a whole visitation from a Christian group who usually gather in a local school).

Altogether, counting the Vigil Eucharist, the Zoom service, the Parish Communion and the Bring and Sing service, there were many opportunities for worship on that Marathon Sunday, and we made some new friends. We also had some rather splendid refreshments as we finished off the cakes from Tom and Rachel's wedding!

Janet Caudwell

St John's when ...

The vicar wanted a rood screen

Eds: Thank you to Seamus for starting a new series looking at the history of St John's through articles from past parish magazines.

Froome Selwood Vicarage, April 1891

My dear parishioners

You are aware that the sum of £500 was left last year by Miss Philips for the Parish Church. The Testatrix saw fit to make me the sole administrator of her legacy. After much thought I came to the conclusion that the most suitable way of using the money agreeably with the conditions of the Will would be to erect a Chancel Screen. I do not pretend that this decision is unattended with anxiety. To add anything which is bound to form a new and permanent feature to a Church which in its present condition has over so many years grown into the hearts of worshippers must necessarily be an anxious undertaking, But the completeness of the building and the terms of the legacy left me little choice, whilst on the other hand a Chancel Screen is obviously the one remaining thing required if the Church is in all particulars to be a truthful representation of the old edifice.

Whatever therefore we individually may think about Chancel screens, this must be borne in mind – my reverend Predecessor made it his great work to restore the Parish Church of S. John Baptist, Froome. That upon which we are now engaged is a part of this restoration carried on down to the present time. We are now in fact, through the benefaction of Miss Philips, in a position to complete the idea which the late Vicar evidently had in his mind when he put up the stone wall and gates, thereby indicating where the screen once was, and where it should be again. Because therefore we are engaged in a Restoration two things follow: (a) 'The material of the screen is settled for without dispute. It must necessarily be of wood, not of iron, for iron Chancel Screens were unknown in Old English Churches, (b) It must be of just such height as agrees with the old door and piscina in the south wall, which as relics of the old screen, determine accurately the main lines of our present work.—.

My object, of course, has been to entrust this important matter to the skilled hands of one on whose artistic power, and even still more, whose undoubted fidelity to history I could safely rely. The name of Mr. C. E. Kempe, of Nottingham Place, London, is to those who know him, a sufficient guarantee on both these points. I have spent some hours with Mr. Kempe, entering fully into details, and have finally accepted his drawings, upon which, being approved by the Chancellor, we have now obtained a faculty, allowing the immediate erection of the screen.

But there is one remaining difficulty, and this connected with finance. We were taxed £50 for legacy duty, which reduced the sum received from Miss Philips' Executors to £450. It is difficult in a work of this kind to get much more than an approximate estimate, but I have gathered the following from Mr. Kempe.

The Screen itself, including erection and painting: £468

Mr. Kempe's Fee and expenses: £40

Other expenses such as lighting etc. £20

This leaves a deficit of £83!

We require therefore, roughly speaking, £100 more to pay the Legacy Duty and to cover all known and possible extra expenses. I am persuaded that I only represent your mind – when I say that whatever the cost of the Screen may be, nothing should be spared to make it worthy of the Church of which we are so proud – If I am justified in this persuasion you will allow me now to invite your assistance in obtaining this £100. Subscriptions may be paid to myself or to the Church Wardens, or to Mr. Wiltshire at the Wilts & Dorset Bank, who will act as Treasurer to the fund. The money received will be acknowledged in the Magazine, and we venture to hope that the sum will be provided before the work is completed. I may add that it is a satisfaction to have heard accidentally from a friend of Miss Philips, that nothing would have pleased her more than the way in which we have resolved to appropriate her gift.

Believe me, yours faithfully,

A. Hanbury-Tracy.

Chaplains

During the summer months there has been a team of people offering Chaplaincy to the many visitors who come through our church doors. Seamus's idea was that we would be there to offer prayer and support to anyone who was in need, and while there have been a few meaningful encounters of that kind, we have mainly found ourselves "meeting and greeting". Even though we are now into September there are still a great many visitors to our church, many of them from overseas. Within the past week I have had interesting conversations with visitors from California, the Netherlands and Denmark, as well as a number of long-term Frome residents who felt moved to come through our open doors.

Originally we had intended to suspend the Chaplaincy ministry once the school holidays were over, but at our recent review meeting we agreed to continue until the end of November. We are very much hoping that the long-awaited glass doors will soon be in place so that the interior might be nearly as warm as our welcoming, but fortunately the black chaplaincy gowns do allow for several thick layers to be worn underneath.

So, for at least the next two months the chaplains will be there every Thursday 12.00 – 1.30pm, easily identified by our black gowns and welcoming smiles. If you are passing by please come in and say hello, and if you are aware of anyone who might be in need of some more prayerful support, we will be there for them.

Rosemary McCormick

Clutter Busting

Those of you who come through our church doors regularly may have noticed a few changes recently. There has been a lot of hard work going on to tidy up the building and grounds. The gardening team have been planting birch trees in the churchyard (thank you, Connews) and inside the church there has been a re-organisation of pews and chairs. Redundant notice boards have been removed, and the tables of notices have been moved into a more prominent position inside the main doors.

On one of my recent visits I found Tony up a ladder preparing for the installation of the long-awaited new glass doors. One result of all this effort was that September's team of enthusiastic Clutter Busters had the satisfaction of seeing a lot of the stuff that had been accumulating carried away to the tip. Even though the main summer holiday period is now behind us we are still seeing a lot of tourists visiting our church. When I was in church earlier today there was a party of six Americans who were searching for (and found!) a family memorial – to Frederick Bush. I had no idea where to look for it, but they had done their research and discovered it above the door to the South Porch.



There is always more to be done to keep our lovely building looking its best, so please make a note of our **next Clutter Busting session which will be on Saturday 10th October**. See you there!

Rosemary McCormick

Shoebox Appeal 2026

We're delighted that St John's will be once again taking part in the annual Shoebox Appeal run by *House of Opportunity* in Salisbury. The filled shoeboxes will be delivered to people in need across South-Eastern Europe.



The plan is to collect donations of suitable items for inclusion in boxes – suggestion lists will be in church soon. – and then the shoebox team will sort and fill boxes ready for collection. This community approach keeps it affordable – though, of course, individuals and families are very welcome to complete their own boxes too. We need more empty shoeboxes, so please donate some if you can – and if you would like to join the decorating/filling team please let me know.

Alison Henderson

Saint Francis of Assisi

The Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) is celebrated on 4th October. He is the patron saint of Italy, of animals and of ecology. His 'Canticle of the Creatures', also known as the 'Canticle of Brother



Sun', is a hymn of praise to God for the creation of all things. Brought up to a life of wealth, he went through a spiritual crisis and embraced a life of extreme poverty – known as 'evangelical' poverty because Jesus said the Son of Man (i.e. himself) had nowhere to lay his head. Francis was a very popular preacher and inspirer: so popular that he was canonised (declared a Saint) within two years of his death. He formed three 'orders', that is, groups of people who followed his example: the Friars Minor (men living according to a religious rule), the Poor Clares (women doing likewise), and the Third Order (for men and women living 'in the world' but trying to live a Franciscan life within the constraints of ordinary everyday living).

'Saint Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy', painted around 1595, is a key example of Counter-Reformation art. The Roman Catholic Church went on the offensive after the Protestant dislike of religious art and the veneration of Saints had led to massive destruction of sculpture, painting and stained glass across northern Europe. It was commissioned by a Rome-based cardinal called Del Monte, whose name saint was Francis. It is an oil on canvas, 83.5 x 128 cm, and today can be found in a museum in Connecticut, USA.

It is the work of Caravaggio, who was born in 1571 and orphaned by the plague in 1577. His artistic talent was obvious and by the mid-1590s he was a member of Del Monte's household, producing paintings for him and his circle. He was famous for heightening the emotional intensity of his subject matter by using dramatic contrasts

of light and dark (known as 'chiaroscuro') and having key figures standing out amid gathering gloom ('tenebrism'). He was more than a bit of a naughty boy. He killed a man in Rome and spent much of his life on the run from the authorities or simply people he had annoyed ... but what an artist.

Francis was canonised so quickly because he was considered Christ-like, in particular because of a moment of deep empathy in which he so identified with Christ on the cross that he received the stigmata (the wounds of Christ) in his own hands, feet and side. Caravaggio's painting shows this moment on Mount La Verna in 1224. He has taken the traditional account written by Brother Leo, the friar who had accompanied Francis to La Verna, and manipulated it to produce this exquisite image of the Saint, still lost in his vision of the Crucified Christ, swooning in the arms of an angel.

Traditionally, Francis is shown kneeling before a six-winged Seraph, a mighty angelic being from whom rays of light dart to create Francis's wounds. Caravaggio changes him into the two-winged, gently mothering angel who holds him with infinite tenderness. Francis is wearing the brown habit of the Capuchins (a reformist order of Franciscans who appeared in the early 16th century), rather than the traditional grey of the Middle Ages which gave the friars the name of 'Greyfriars'. The only visible wound is the one in Francis's right side. The enveloping darkness concentrates one's looking on Francis and the angel; but in the dark background sits Leo and some shepherds who are aware of the light in the sky – suggestive of where the angel has come from and of divine light shining amid the darkness of this world.

Mark Golder

THE CATHOLIC CARTOON BY JOSHUA MASTERSON



"So THAT'S why priests wear those hats!"

“Death by Post-it note”

– the future of children’s ministry at St John’s

Back in January we launched our “4th @ 4.00” services: lay-led services on the fourth Sunday of each month designed for an intergenerational congregation. With a pattern of worship songs, bible readings, activities and prayers, rounded off with the good old Church of England Tea & Cake ceremony, these services were enjoyed by those people who attended, but we did not really succeed in our initial intention of drawing in more families with young children. So, on the 4th Sunday in August, we gathered to consider prayerfully how we might move forward. After a short act of worship when we heard again the passage from Mark 10: 14 “Let the children come to me” we took time to pray individually, and we wrote down some of our thoughts on post-it notes. Later, as we sat with our tea & cake, we shared our ideas with each other.

We began by thinking about how to use the 4th Sunday service times. We decided that we should change the time from 4.00 to 5.00pm to be in line with the other Sundays of the month, and we agreed that they should continue to be lay-led services. Regarding the content of these services some of the ideas included:

Christingle in January, Different styles of worship: Taizé, Celtic prayer, Contemplative prayer, similar to the Julian group meetings. Greek Orthodox vespers, “Lectio Divina” or similar Bible study opportunity

We all agreed that we valued what had already been done, that it was time for a change, and that we should encourage and enable more people to get involved in leading the worship. Being ever-mindful of the need for clear safe-guarding principles to be observed, we then thought about children of different age-groups, as well as what resources we already have to engage with them. We decided that in the first instance we should concentrate on building stronger links with the school – See “Launchpad goes to School” p.20.

We will continue the prayerful discussion at the next 4th Sunday evening service, on Sunday 27th September at 5.00pm. We would love more people to join the conversation.

Rosemary McCormick

News from other churches

St Katharine's, East Woodlands

The wedding of Emma Uffindell and Mark Kaye on 5th September was a glorious occasion. It was a privilege to share this day with them. Songs of Praise on 30th August was an enjoyable occasion: the church was full, as many people strolled over from the cream tea event in the village hall. Lovely to see so many from St John's in the congregation.

Woodlands Village Hall

Pop-up Pub 7.00 pm onwards on 2nd October and 6th November.

The **Woodlanders Variety Show** Mon 5th -Fri 9th October @ 7.45 pm, Saturday, 10th October at 2.00 pm. Tickets £12.50 from 07510 919573.

Horse and Groom (The Jockey pub) Following its closure upon the death of the landlord just before Covid, there has now been some activity by the Longleat Estate to dispose of it. If you'd like to become involved in some way or merely updated - and aren't already! - contact amie-joangel@hotmail.co.uk or 07894 211336.

Pam Chapman

Christmas Lunch

Wednesday December 16th

Bennett Centre

12 noon for 12.30pm

2 course meal *

Tea & Coffee

*Vegetarian option



Bring
Your
Own
Bottle



Tickets £15 (£10 for a child under 10)

available from Peter Connew 01373 474158,
bennettbooking11@gmail.com or from Christine or Peter in church

SERVICES at ST JOHN's – OCTOBER 2026

Regular weekly services

Sundays

- 8.45am Online service via Zoom – contact admin for link & code
- 10.00am Choral Eucharist
- 5.00pm Evening worship in the Lady Chapel:
Week 1: Evening Prayer
Week 2: Benediction and Evening Prayer
Week 3: Come and Sing Evensong
Week 4: Let Us Pray
Week 5: Flexible Fifth

Mondays

- 8.45am Morning Prayer in the Ken Chapel

Fridays

- 12.30pm Eucharist in the Lady Chapel

Saturdays

- 5.00pm Evening Eucharist in the Lady Chapel

Additional services in October

- Thursday 1 7pm Baptismal Eucharist (St Therese of Lisieux)
- Wed 28 7pm Confirmation Eucharist with Bishop Fiona
(Sts Simon and St Jude)

VISIT US ONLINE

St John's website: stjohnsfrome.com

Facebook page: Frome St John the Baptist parish church

DIARY DATES – OCTOBER 2026

September

Fri	25	1pm	1pm Wedding
		7pm	Cavatina Concert - Max Todes
Sat	26	1pm	Wedding
			Frome Carnival evening
Tues	29	11am	Julian Meeting

October

Thurs	1	2pm-4pm	Craft and Conversation
Sat	3	9am	United Prayer
Sun	4	11.15am -2pm	Café & Mini Market
Wed	7	11am	Selwood Academy Welcome Service
		6.30pm	Book Club
Mon	12	7.30pm	St John's Women's Group
Thurs	15	2pm-4pm	Craft and Conversation
		7.15pm	Deanery Synod - Leigh on Mendip
Sun	25		BST Ends - Clocks back
Tues	27	11am	Julian Meeting
Wed	28	7pm	Confirmation Service
Fri	30	2pm	Hospital Service

November

Sun	1	11.15am -2pm	Café & Mini Market
Mon	2	7pm	Bishop Michael - Frome Deanery Visit HT

Café & Mini-Market – the first Sunday of the month

4th October, 1st November and 6th December

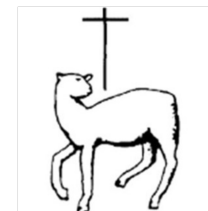
11.15am to 2pm

Refreshments and light lunches. Cakes, bakes and preserves. Books and bric-a-brac. Produce & plants in season.



A New Term – a New(ish) ministry:

Launchpad goes to school.



There has been considerable discussion recently, both at the ministry team meetings in the vicarage, but also more widely amongst the people who have been in some way involved on the Launchpad scheme, about our ministry to younger people. We have reluctantly decided to suspend our “4th @4.00” intergenerational services – see the “Death by Post-it note” article, in favour of putting our resources and energies into our work with SJ school.

A change of leadership at the beginning of this term seemed to be a good opportunity to review our links with the school, and see how we can further develop what we are already doing. The question we have been asking ourselves is “What could we do to build or maintain communication and trust between school, church and families”, with a particular emphasis on Families. Janet has sat on the governing body for many years, and the three of us (Janet, Seamus & Me) take it in turns to lead Collective Worship every Wednesday afternoon. This term we are trying to be more consistent in our approach.

Last year we started teaching the whole school the Lord’s Prayer – yes, we were shocked that they didn’t know it – so now we try to include it every week. The three of us also go in to school one lunchtime every half-term to offer a chaplaincy service to staff and pupils alike. One of sits in an office to be ready for any confidential chats, another of us joins the staff as they eat their lunch in the staff room, and the third member of the team goes out into the playground with the children and lunchtime supervisors. In addition I started a choir last academic year, and this term I am looking at ways to extend the singing experience of all the children in the school.

We are certainly a presence within the school, and I often find myself being greeted in the street by a small person in a St John’s uniform, but it is harder to connect with the parents. One small way we are going to try and do this is by making regular contributions to the

school's newsletter, and we are in discussion with the school's leadership team to see what more we can do.

We may not see many of our school children in church on a Sunday, but we do welcome them into school on special occasions. On Tuesday October 6th at 9.00am they will be coming for their Harvest Festival, a service which many parents also attend – please join us if you are able to.

Rosemary McCormick



Hymn Writers:

Mrs Cecil Francis Alexander

I was pleased that, recently, Tom and Rachel started their wedding at St John's with the hymn *All things bright and beautiful*. It may surprise some people that the words were written 180 years ago, as they are eternal and still relevant and popular today. It may also surprise people to know they were written by a woman, Cecil Frances Alexander, an

Anglo-Irish poet. They have probably lasted well because they were originally written for children, are simple and direct with no complex meanings.

Mrs Alexander lived from 1818 to 1895. She was born in Dublin, but as an adult lived mainly in the North, in Ulster. Her family was well-off, part of the Anglican church in what was overwhelmingly a Catholic Ireland, and her father was the land agent for various members of the English aristocracy. She was a poet from an early age, and her writings were heavily influenced by the Oxford movement in England: especially by John Keble, who edited her anthology *Hymns for Little Children*. She also translated much French poetry and published narrative poems under various pseudonyms. Her anthology *Hymns for Little Children* was one of the most

successful of all time, reaching its 69th edition by the end of the 19th century. At the height of the British Empire these hymns became known the world over, appealing to those with a limited knowledge of English and thus much favoured by Anglican missionaries.

In her 30s she married a local clergyman, William Alexander, who later became Bishop of Derry and Archbishop of Armagh. He was also a published poet and, unlike many husbands of the time, he encouraged his wife in her writing and publication, editing a collected version of her poetry after her death in 1896. Their daughter, Eleanor Jane, also became a poet. Later, the two women spent much of their time in charitable work. Mrs Alexander's published hymns brought in a steady income which helped these charitable words. She built the Derry Diocesan Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in 1846. The profits from *Hymns for Little Children* were also donated to the school. She was also involved with the Derry Home for Fallen Women and worked to develop a district nurses service.

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At first her poems were not set to music, but gradually others realised that her words could serve a greater purpose if they were set to music and used within services. This often involved several different people and sometimes modifications of the text. For example, she wrote the poem *Once in Royal David's City*, which was set to music by various people but did not achieve fame until the setting by Henry Gauntlett was rearranged by Arthur Mann for solo boy treble and choir for the processional start to the Kings College Cambridge Nine Lessons and Carols in 1919, which is how we now sing it.

The poem of hers regarded as the most important, but not a hymn, was a narrative poem about the death of Moses, based upon the passage in Deuteronomy chapter 34. There is no widely accepted place where Moses is thought to have been buried, as he died before the Israelites reached the Promised Land, and, as the Bible says, *Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. God buried him in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is.*' Mrs Alexander discusses the reasons behind this mystery and what message God intends us to gain from it.

Her poem most recognised world-wide as being one of the greatest is the one that started my interest in her hymns: *There is a green hill far away*. This is a touching description of Christ dying for the sins of men and gets across a difficult, if not impossible, message in a way that a hundred sermons do not. This is probably because Mrs Alexander was thinking of children when she was writing it, and it is the very essence of hymn-writing. In England we sing it to our favourite tune, Horsley, after its composer William Horsley's 1844 setting, but other countries have their own favourite tune, and the French composer Gounod composed a setting on the words calling it *the most perfect hymn in the English language*.

Living all her life in Ireland, she took a great interest in Irish literature, in particular adapting the old Irish prayer, St Patrick's breastplate, into the hymn we still use today:

*I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity,
by invocation of the same, the Three in One, and One in Three.
of whom all nature hath creation, Eternal Father, Spirit, Word.
Praise to the Lord of my salvation: salvation is of Christ the Lord.*

Modern composers continue to set her words. There is an excellent modern setting of *All things bright and beautiful* by John Rutter, which can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?XFCZQDqIQ8&list=RDcXFCZQDqIQ>. This maintains the simplicity of the original and is accompanied by a video showing modern examples of all God's creation.

Chris Lewis

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***By ways remote
and distant waters sped***

I am writing today about a favourite poem: Catullus's 'Hail and Farewell' Ave *Atque Vale*. Catullus lived about the same time as Julius Caesar and was from a professional Roman family, whose young men were expected to serve the state. He wrote down his experiences and opinions in a series of poems. Some are too 'earthy' for modern taste, but others express common-day things: a visit to a holiday resort, the death of a pet, the history of the vehicle taking you to work.



Catullus had a brother, and the two were very close. When the brother was sent abroad as an ambassador Catullus missed him very much, and he was heartbroken when the news came back that the brother had caught a fever, died and been buried in some distant province. This poem is about a long-delayed visit to his brother's grave.

I had always wanted a brother. I had a younger sister but that was not the same: When I was seven Peter arrived. I was so delighted, and I looked forward to him growing up. But he never did, and before his first birthday he died, of an illness that today would be easily cured. Like Catullus I was heartbroken. Luckily I didn't have far to go to visit him as he was buried in a local churchyard, about 20 minutes' walk away. I did get over this loss: David arrived a couple of years later, and although he was a completely different character, he followed a similar life course to me. But I never got over that sense of loss, and when a few years later I found the Catullus poem, I recognised in it the same feelings that I had and to some extent still do feel.

Catullus starts by showing how long he has taken to get to the grave. *By ways remote* is a Victorian translation of the original Latin by Aubrey Beardsley, better known as an artist; in those days Latin translations often used the same metre as the original, in this case

Iambic Penta\meters, similar to much of Shakespeare.

He begins by railing against Fate which has taken his brother away. Then he explains that he has come *'to make these last sad offerings to the dead'* and *'vainly parley [speak] with thine ashes dumb'*. He leaves a series of gifts from home and speaks of them as *'drenched with a brother's tears'* before saying farewell for ever, since he will not be able to come back.

*By ways remote and distant waters sped
Brother to thy sad graveside am I come
To make these last sad offerings to the dead
And vainly parley with thine ashes dumb.*

I always think that poetry can be enhanced by being set to music. Ned Rorem, the American composer of hundreds of songs, was the first setting I came across. Sung in a high tenor voice with simple piano accompaniment, this is an elegy to a lost friend, strong but plain and lacking emotion.

Much is lost in translation, especially phonetic density of the poem, but as the individual phonetic and verbal patterns of the poem interweave ritual and narrative with the clichés of epitaphs and other literary echoes, Catullus succeeds in creating a complex experience. It is one in which words ultimately fail (in vain), and the lament is cut short ('in the meantime'); it is one that requires the supplement of other poems. That the tomb is in Troy gives greater ironic depth to the Homeric echo. As the reader experiences this poem that does not, cannot, say all that needs to be said, the little that the reader carries with himself or herself from the other poems becomes an emblem of the great and personal experience that Catullus carries with him.

The poem, however, does not give form and permanence to this personal experience. Rather, the poem marks the intersection of the personal and the public, the private and the ritualistic. As Catullus moves from spatial extent to temporal extension, the recent and personal past carries with it the tradition of parents and is extended into an endless future of ritual and literary traditions. People share with others – both backwards within the culture and family and

forwards into the future – inexpressible loss, echoing sighs, experience unspoken and temporary steps against the permanent losses of the world. Perhaps nothing looks more in the direction of Virgil than this Catullan mood.

Catullus and his generation opened many doors for the poets that followed. Predictably, those poets did not choose to pass through all those doors. Never again would a poet – certainly not a Roman poet – speak with such frank brutality or in such magnificently obscene exaggerations. In general, after Catullus the small poem was not particularly prized. Horace, after his *Epodes*, turned to the more monumental achievement of the *Odes*. In Martial the Catullan range was reduced to endless epigrams and a courtier's wit. Nevertheless, Catullus's experiments in lyric created new opportunities not only for expression but also for feeling. He and his generation taught Roman poets the use of learning and tradition, the power and limits of poetry, and the uncanny depths of self and society.

Chris Lewis

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Hope Housing Frome

Eds: Thank you to Chris Hare for sharing exciting progress to helping homeless people in Frome

There are 700 people waiting for social housing in the Frome area and Somerset has the 6th highest number of rough sleepers in the country. We may not see any obvious homeless people on the streets, but there is a big problem of people sofa surfing or even sleeping in their cars with no safe space of their own and nowhere to call home.

Christians in Frome are now much closer to being able to house three or four homeless men in Frome. Hope Housing Frome CIC has been formed, and we are working with the established charity Green Pastures, who have purchased property in many UK locations that are then leased to local groups.

Green Pastures are willing to buy a house in Frome and lease it to Hope Housing Frome CIC, and we hope that within the next few months we will have a house. We have also been in touch with Somerset Council who are willing to refer clients and pay supported housing benefit that will enable the house to run on a good financially secure basis.

How can you can help? We are searching for:

- a Treasurer to look after the finances
- a paid House Manager to work approx. 12 hours flexibly each week to oversee the running of the house offering compassionate Christian support to help residents move towards independent living and to keep accurate records of interactions with residents
- a volunteer administrator who could give two or three hours a week
- volunteers to support the residents by getting alongside them, making them feel valued, making sure they get to appointments etc
- volunteers to carry out maintenance work.

Please pray for this project, and if you are interested to learn more about any of these tasks, please contact

Chris Hare cshare@hotmail.co.uk or 07368 881336

Surprising encounters in Cornwall

Towards the end of July, Neil and I managed to escape for a few days to the Roseland Peninsula in Cornwall. Situated on the south coast, it is a relatively unspoiled part of the county, accessed by just a single road which gets gradually narrower and more twisty, until it comes to a complete stop at Place House. overlooking the River Fal.

In the summer months foot passengers can take the small fishing boat that serves as the ferry, to make the 15-minute crossing to St Mawes. If the ferry isn't operating, one has the choice of taking the King Harry Ferry, which carries up to 34 cars, or making a 26-mile road journey via Truro.

The coastline is typical of south Cornwall – with rugged cliffs and small, mostly sandy, coves, many of which are only accessible by boat, and with the South-West Coastal Path winding along the cliff-tops it is a popular holiday destination for walkers – if they can find accommodation! This year Neil and I were lucky to find an Airbnb in Gerrans, half-way down the peninsula.

Our cottage was immediately adjacent to the church, which serves both the villages of Gerrans and Portscatho, a fishing community at the bottom of the hill. The spire of Gerrans church is a major landmark for many miles, and Neil and I were keen to explore.

Our first surprising encounter was with an A4 sheet of paper pinned to the church door, which, when we got close enough to read it, offered us the same welcome as visitors to St John's receive – the prayer of Thomas Ken. Inevitably the 13th century building has undergone restoration: Victorians replaced the roof, while more recent alterations have seen the space under the tower being turned into a kitchen/office, while the vestry had been re-modelled as a "prayer space" although when I looked inside it rather resembled our north porch – a repository for flower arranging and similar items which couldn't be housed elsewhere!

We returned for the morning service on Sunday to find a hive of activity: the choir were practising for the service – with cello and viola

accompaniment which was very effective. The urn was coming to the boil and we were warmly welcomed by the churchwarden.

On that particular Sunday the congregation were celebrating having successfully raised the money needed for the urgent repairs to the spire, and the (retired) priest who was leading the worship cleverly used the parable of feeding the 5000 as a metaphor for their fundraising success – which had exceeded its target, enabling them to carry out further repairs to the fabric of the building.



Our second surprising encounter came after the service, when we discovered that the person we were talking to as we drank our coffee came from the Frome Deanery, more specifically from Hardington Vale. He introduced himself to us as Peter Simper. He spends his summers in Portscatho and the winter months in Hemington where he has responsibility for the church, now under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. Peter is a descendent of the organist and prolific Victorian composer Caleb Simper, whose anthem, O how amiable, has appeared on the St John's music list.

He was keen for us to pass on his good wishes to those in our congregation who know him, and also to let us know that there is a prayer group that meets in Hemington church every Wednesday morning at 8.30am.

Rosemary McCormick

Links in a Golden Chain 24

St Winifred

Winifred, who lived in N. Wales in the 7th century, is familiar to those who have read the Brother Cadfael novels of Ellis Peters, or their television adaptations. She is also a saint to whom Fr. Seamus is devoted, so her name is heard in St John's on a regular basis. I take this opportunity to ask the question – Do you have a particular saintly individual who has a significant place in your Christian life? In penning these contributions I

include individuals who have been significant to me, or those who I knew little before writing these pieces. I try to pick figures from the distant past as well as those from more recent times. People from more recent times now have their lives described in some detail, with documentary evidence. Others from many centuries ago may seem to be the stuff of legends, containing things that seem hard to believe literally. Our creed affirms our faith in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. What does this signify? It is a proclamation of the reality of the continuity of human life beyond the limitations of time and space in this physical world. Why has the story of a young Welsh woman who lived 14 centuries ago endured to the present day? The major characters in our salvation history are to be found in the text of the Bible, but from those days to the present, women, men, and even some children, have lifted the hearts of Christians. They live on in a special way. For many they seem to be companions on our personal journeys of faith.

Winifred, whose very existence was doubted in more modern times, was venerated up to the time of the Reformation, when the saints seem to suffer banishment from the life of the nations who embraced reform. But her story was not extinguished and lived in in the survival, and restoration, of the spring that was associated with her



story, in the community that bears its name, Holywell in N. Wales. Her story in brief is as follows. In refusing the advances of an unwanted suitor, her head was severed by him from her body. Her uncle, Beuno, later sainted himself, was the channel for her restoration to wholeness and life. Her attacker, Caradoc, was struck dead. Winifred entered the life of a religious community, later becoming an abbess in her own right. Devotion to her grew up around the spring or well that in situated the site of her death and restoration. Many occasions of healing have been associated with the shrine. It is now referred to as the Lourdes of Wales. The continuity of attendance at the shrine and well at Holywell is a demonstration of the spiritual reality that undergirds the physical manifestations of water and stone. Winifred has also been remembered in terms of 'protection from unwanted advances' – a theme that is emerging in our own times as the degree of the abuse of women and girls is rightly being highlighted as an issue of great concern.

In reading up the saint's life I discovered that her name in Welsh is *Gwenffrewi*, familiar to us in another of its anglicised forms as Guinevere in the Arthurian legends. I have known a number of Winifreds in my life, but never a living Guinevere. Too late now to have suggested it as a name for one of my three granddaughters!

Kevin Tingay

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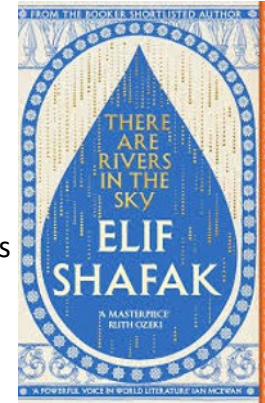
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Inspired to Read
There are Rivers in the Sky
by Elif Shafak

One of the books I was most looking forward to reading with the book group this year was Elif Shafak's novel: *There are Rivers in the Sky*. With its eye-catching cover illustration and seemingly endless weeks at the top of the bestseller lists, I had been aware of it ever since its publication in 2024, although the author was unknown to me. When I finally did settle down to read it in preparation for our September book group meeting, I am happy to say that it did not disappoint.



About the Author

Elif Shafak grew up in Turkey, and her earliest books were written in Turkish, but having completed a PhD in Political Science at a Turkish university she emigrated to America where she has held several university posts. In 2017-18 she was a visiting professor in comparative literature at St Anne's College Oxford, and in 2024 she was elected as visiting professor at Hertford College Oxford. In her writing Shafak is not afraid to tackle some of the major political issues of our time: Her exposé of the Armenian genocide in her 2007 novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* resulted in her being prosecuted on charges of 'insulting Turkishness'; had she been convicted Shafak would have faced a three-year prison sentence. She was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2019 for her novel *10 minutes and 38 seconds*, which was about the life of an Istanbul sex worker. She has also contributed to the *Future Library Project* – a collection of 100 literary works that will not be published until 2114. In 2025 Shafak replaced Bernadine Evaristo as president of the Royal Society of Literature.

From the back cover...

In Victorian London an extraordinary child is born by at the edge of the dirt-black Thames ... In 2014 in Turkey, Narin, a Yazidi girl living by the River Tigris, waits to be baptized ... In 2018 in London, broken-

hearted Zaleekhah, a hydrologist, moves to a houseboat on the River Thames to escape the wreckage of her marriage ... this is the story of one lost poem, two great rivers and three remarkable lives – all connected by a single drop of water.

A short extract

Water ... the strangest chemical, the great mystery. With two hydrogen atoms at the tips, each bonded to a single oxygen at the centre, it is a bent molecule, not linear. If it were linear, there would be no life on earth ... no stories to tell.

Three atoms join to form water: H-O-H.

Three characters connect across borders of time and place, and together they make this story.

In an interview Shafak recounts the moment when she was walking by the River Thames and a single raindrop fell into her hand. As she looked at it, she started to think about the story of that raindrop. The book might be seen as the story of that raindrop, but it is also a meticulously researched novel that interweaves the individual stories of three distinct characters. The central figure is Arthur, born into poverty by the banks of the river – a single snowflake lands on his forehead. His story is based on that of George Smith, who, despite having received very little formal education, became one of the leading experts on Assyrian culture, translating the ancient Cuneiform script on the stone tablets that told the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. His story is told alongside that of Zaleekhah, a hydrologist who studies hidden rivers: the buried rivers that flow under our towns and cities, but also the unseen rivers in the sky, those long bands of concentrated moisture that carry water around our globe. At our book group meeting several of us felt that her story was perhaps the least convincing, but she was an essential link between Arthur and the final character Narin, a young Yazidi girl caught up in the 2014 ISIS attacks on the Yazidi people. Shafak has said that she found that story particularly difficult to write, and I found it almost impossible to read. Had the book group meeting not been imminent, I might well have abandoned the book at that point. However, I stuck to it, and am very

glad that I did. It was one of those rare books that, as I finished reading the last page, I found myself just sitting and reflecting on the whole experience. I had been totally caught up in the stories of the three characters, united by a single drop of water.

There are Rivers in the Sky is not an easy book to read. Before we get into the three distinct story lines, which rather keep you wondering how, or even if, they are going to be woven together, there is an opening section about the ancient city of Nineveh and the great palace of King Ashurbanipal. His interest in ancient Mesopotamian texts caused him to create a great library for the ancient stone tablets – the tablets that, several thousand years later George Smith (or Arthur in the book) decoded to discover the Epic of Gilgamesh. Shafak also deliberately adopts different writing styles for each of her characters: for Arthur she adopts more Dickensian language, while for Narin she adopts the oral storytelling traditions of the Yazidi people.

I suspect this book might feature in our November *Inspired to Read Book awards* (Wednesday 4 November) but before that we are going to be sharing our thoughts on a Classic of 20th century American Literature: *To Kill a Mocking bird* by Harper Lee. For more information about the book group, contact Rosemary:

rosemarymccormick@hotmail.com

Rosemary McCormick

YOUR MAGAZINE TEAM

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SERVICES ROTA FOR OCTOBER 2026

Date/Week	Readings	Duties for the 10am Sunday service			
		Readers	Prayers	Sidespersons	Chalice
Sunday 4 October Harvest Festival Readings Trinity 18	Isaiah 5.1-7 Psalm 80 Philippians 3.4b-14 Matthew 21.33-end	B Essex R McCormick	Rev Seamus	M Smitherman B Essex	J Davies
Sunday 11 October Trinity 19	Isaiah 25.1-9 Psalm 23 Philippians 4.1-9 Matthew 22.1-14	H Chapman C Holland	R McCormick	A Barr-Sim M Veakins	C Holland
Sunday 18 October Trinity 20	Isaiah 45.1-7 Psalm 96 1 Thessalonians 1.1-10 Matthew 22.15-22	C Harrison A Barr-Sim	L Bushell	K Gurr C Holland	J Davies
Sunday 25 October Last after Trinity	Leviticus 19.1-2, 15-18 Psalm 1 1 Thessalonians 2.1-8 Matthew 22.34-end	S Caden S Smith	J Caudwell	J Davies D Bardgett	C Holland
Sunday 1 November All Saints' Day	Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14 Psalm 34 1 John 3:1-3 Matthew 5:1-12a	N McCormick E Gilbert	Rev Seamus	B Essex A Barr-Sim	J Davies
Vicar: Revd Seamus Hargrave Reader: Janet Caudwell Reader: Rosemary McCormick	Sundays at 5pm Evening Worship (Third Sunday - Choral Evensong) Mondays at 8.45am Morning Prayer, Fridays at 12.30pm Lunchtime Eucharist Saturday at 5pm Vigil Eucharist Tuesday 27th at 11am Julian meeting				

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