

INSPIRE

DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 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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December 2025 – January 2026

Christmas at St John's

Sunday 21st December

6.30pm Carol Service

Wednesday 24th December

3pm Family Service

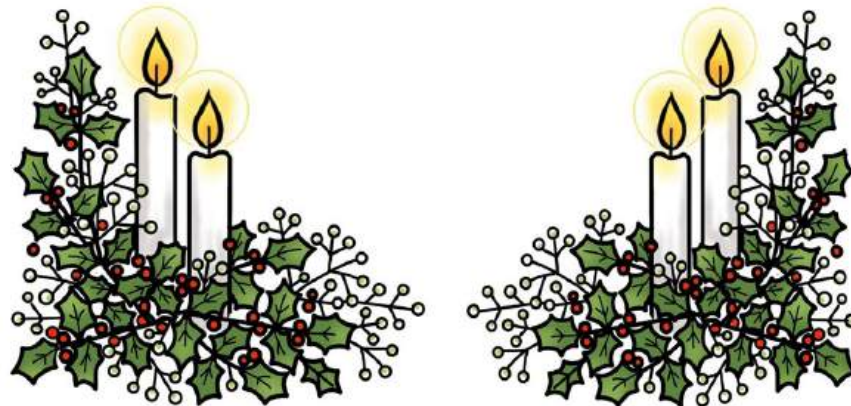
Carols and Readings at the Crib

11pm Midnight Mass

Thursday 25th December

10am Christmas Communion

All are welcome!



The Vicar's view

As many of you will know, Jay and I spent a week in Holland, a place of many magnificent medieval churches, most of which were stripped utterly bare – barer even than our own – during the Dutch reformation. But what I found fascinating is that – for all the zealous destruction (or, if you buy the propaganda, ‘cleansing’) that these churches went through, you could still see little traces of their past historic riches peeking through. Be it the eyes of a long lost saint emerging through the layers of whitewash supposed to obscure them. Be it the one surviving stained glass window in a church, left – according to legend – because it was so beautiful that even the reformers were moved to revere it. Be it the ornately painted ceiling left untouched – apparently because the roof was too high to reach with ordinary ladders, and the strong Protestant work ethic would not countenance the extravagant expense of paying for scaffolding to erase it – with the result that a very irate looking Virgin Mary glowers down at the pulpit once used to denounce her.

Now, before I get too high on my horse, it is true there is a beauty to the stark nature of these ‘reformed’ churches – you do feel in another realm. Indeed, I can see how, for those who remembered the opulence of the churches before, the new, bare interiors of their churches might have really focused the mind on the Word being preached to them, now understandable in the common tongue.

Yet, in the present, these bleak interiors seem to have become something of a metaphor for the state of Christianity in Holland, which is in freefall: 82% of Dutch people say they have never visited a church. It’s almost as if they kicked out the saints first, and soon after the congregations followed. The last surviving windows and frescos of Our Lady and the angels seem like hostages forced to watch as churches slowly erased their rich history and slowly dwindled. Now, most are museums of the state, with their congregations – if they still have one – paying a nominal rent for worshipping there on Sundays. Perhaps a poignant warning to us that when we begin to say a person’s or place’s past is not welcome, our expulsion can rob us of

their present and future too.

I was surprised that there seems to be a recognition of this, on the part of the Dutch Reformed, at Utrecht Dom Kerk, an epicentre of Iconoclasm. A clearly Dutch Reformed Church steward, on seeing me praying before a now decapitated image of All Saints, came over and said, 'Yeah, we did so much damage, we lost so much beauty.' An issue they seem to be trying to rectify as, slowly, new icons and art are creeping into their whitewashed churches. But, whilst Calvinists slowly rediscover elements of catholicity, society seems to be providing its own response. There was, in fact, still a lot of religious art in Holland – I was surprised by how much. Often found in trendy boutique shops and cafes, religious art now tends to be for comedic effect: a statue of the Sacred Heart in a cafe standing by a sign reading "In God we trust, but everyone else pays cash." Or a statue of Mary in someone's window, now mutilated to hold a Starbucks coffee cup and an iPod. There is a longing for divine art, but only as a spiritual cheerleader for the norms of secular culture.

I have been reflecting on this a lot as I rush through my own Advent and Christmas diary, trying to keep pace with the events and also trying to balance my understanding of Christmas as a profoundly religious observance that shapes my Christian faith with the ideals of my wider family and friends for whom it is primarily a secular break to eat comfort food and provide an excuse to spoil yourself with the new coffee maker you've had your eye on. So how do we, caught in the middle of this conflict of religious and secular, of Christianity and Consumerism, respond? How do we help people to recover the true substance of our Holy Day so that they can have hope to look beyond the Black Friday deals?

The whole narrative of Christmas – indeed the very name of Jesus – is 'God is with us'. What God achieved in coming to us in the flesh was the lasting and universal shift that at all times, in all places, in all forms for ever, God is irremovably present. Our relationship with God is no longer a St Pancras Station style relationship of ins and out, as God comes close in the temple, only to be driven out by sin, only to come

back after exile. Jesus is our everlasting covenant of God's everlasting and pervasive presence with us. Just as 15th century iconoclasm couldn't fully erase the church that had gone before, so our society will never be able to fully erase the presence of Jesus in our Christmas or the ability of our Christmas traditions to point meaningfully to Christ.

The question that confronts all of us – but especially parents and grandparents – is whether we will, like the iconoclasts, trust that the new bare interiors and unobtrusive and private devotion will somehow feed and sustain the full breadth of a person's soul, even as we watch in cognitive dissonance as people dash for the exit and clumsily try to make quasi spirituality out of Costa cups and podcasts. Or is there something we can do to start peeling back the whitewash? Is there some small thing you can do to show the true meaning of Christmas to the next generation? Asking your grandchildren to help you set up your nativity scene, telling them the origin of Santa as St Nicholas, inviting a neighbour or friend to Midnight Mass? Speaking to your community about the profound meaning you find in familiar Christmas carols? These are small things, but they are little cracks in the dusty shell with which society has tried to obscure the true potency of Christ and his coming at Christmas so we can focus on consumerism and self. They are ways that age-old saints, beauty and culture are yearning to burst forth from their prisons and fully participate in our lives and nourish the starving parts of our souls.

Like the Dutch churches, there is beauty, and much good, even in the most secular parts of Christmas, and I don't want to present these as in conflict with Christianity. But you cannot look at a Christmas without religion and not think there is something fundamental missing. Like the Oude Kerk, there is a fantastic building, but what is it there to house?

At Christmas Christ came into our world and transformed the messy stable into a royal palace. Just think how inviting him in through the small cracks still left to us by society could transform our families' Christmases this year, and open up a new, small window of wonder, and curiosity, in the people around you for the year to come.

Rev Seamus Hargrave

Shoebbox appeal 2025

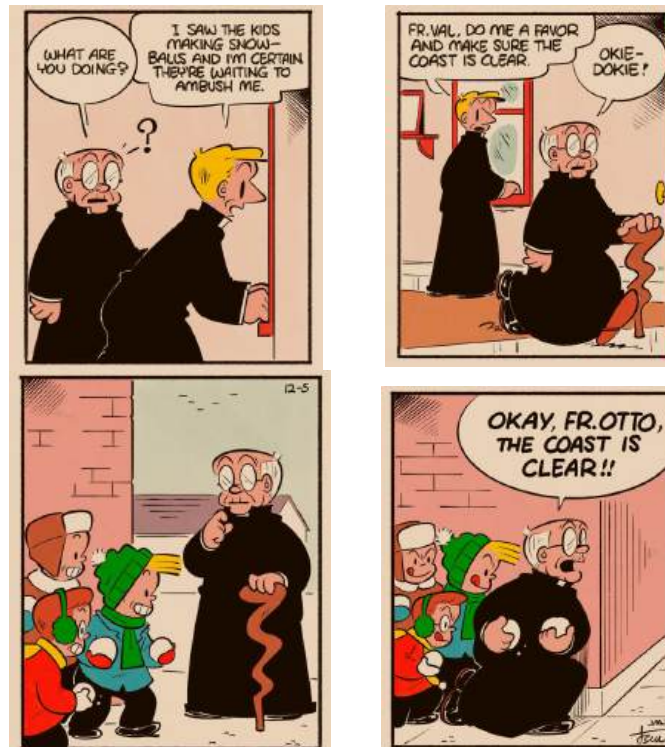
We are delighted to report that we collected a total of 75 filled boxes to send off to some of the poorer areas of SE Europe. Forty of these were made in church by



Rev Seamus blesses the shoeboxes

the shoebox team, using the many lovely items so kindly donated by members of the congregation and others. Most of the remaining boxes came from St John's School with a few individuals providing completed boxes of their own. We also received some generous donations towards the transport costs. Many thanks to everyone.

Alison Henderson



November: The Season of Remembrance

November: Over recent years the annual commemorations of All Souls Day and Remembrance Day have developed into a month-long 'Season of Remembrance' – a time for us to honour those who have gone before us and made us the people we are today. This year in St John's many candles have been lit, and names have been written on the leaves that have adorned last year's Christmas Tree during its last outing before it is finally retired and made into kindling!



The All Souls Requiem Eucharist on 2nd November was a moving service. The high altar was dressed with the rarely-seen black frontal, and members of the congregation gathered around the tree to add 'leaves' as we stood in prayer around the tree to honour those we had named. Then in the evening, the usual first Sunday 5.00pm Evening Prayer service was replaced by a quiet service of Compline, during which the names that had been recorded on the tree were read out, and more candles were lit.

The following weekend the church was adorned with poppies for Remembrance Day, as our focus turned to those who gave their lives



during the two world wars of the 20th century. Eighty years on from the end of WWII there are now very few people still alive who can tell the stories of these gallant service personnel or who remember the thousands of people who suffered but whose names do not appear on any memorials. Thank you to Father Kevin who, in Seamus's absence, led us through a slightly condensed morning Eucharist which ended

in time for some members of the congregation to go up to the Memorial Theatre for the civic Remembrance Service, while the rest of us observed the two-minute silence around the war memorial beside the Baptistry.



2025 has seen several Remembrance events, mostly masterminded by the indefatigable Jane Norris. In May and August there were special services in St John's to remember the 80th anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day (8 May and 15 August respectively) but the most ambitious event was the Festival of Remembrance at the Memorial Theatre on Friday 7 November. The evening included detailed accounts Frome during the wars – personal memories, but also historical accounts of the defence forces, their recruitment and deployment, in addition to how everyday life in our town changed during the war years. An important part of Jane's vision for the evening was the involvement of our younger generation – for these stories to be told so that they can be passed on to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the people who actually lived through those years. A group of children from St John's School dressed in period costume, appeared as evacuees, carrying their gas-masks, and they led the final part of the event in a song: *We will remember*. When they had finished singing they were joined on stage by members of Frome Musical Theatre Company, before the Cadets came on, bearing their banners to create a 'Drum Altar' for the final Muster which was led by Liz Dudley. The youngest child from the school accompanied by the oldest member of FMTC brought on a lantern, the guides and scouts presented their banners, and as the two minutes silence was observed, poppies fell onto the assembled company. Jane's vision of a multi-generational act of remembrance was fulfilled, and it was an evening that I am sure will long be remembered by those who took part.

Rosemary McCormick



The Confirmation

Bishop Michael was still fizzing with excitement about the Confirmation in St John's, when we met him five days later in Wells, in the Cathedral for a pre-Advent Retreat; and so were many of us!

We had travelled with St John's candidates, Claire, El, Lydia and Seth through the Confirmation classes where we were able to explore things we had either forgotten from our own Confirmation classes long, long ago; or possibly had never had the opportunity to address.

Seamus, Rosemary, Margaret and I had had the privilege of joining them on the day retreat in Great Elm. And now we had reached the great day itself.

Actually, before that we had The Rehearsal, which managed to be great fun, while allaying quite a few anxieties about what to do and where to go. It also gave us the opportunity to meet Ruby, the candidate from Christ Church, and to welcome her and her family.

There was the usual behind-the-scenes preparation: in addition to setting up the High Altar, getting the refreshments ready (many



supplied by Ruby's Mum), ensuring that there were enough microphones, preparing the music, making sure that every last detail in the Order of Service was correct and gathering the commemorative gifts, there was also the nave altar and the Bishop's chairs (there were two) to be moved, the font filled, the asperging vessels retrieved from the safe, the Rood Screen candles lit. Thank you to everyone who played their part in that. A visitor to the service observed in an email the next day. 'What a great team there is at St John's.'

The actual service was moving and deeply personal for the candidates and, I suspect, for many of us sharing in the service with them. Bishop Michael was his usual engaging self, relaxed and humorous at some points but at the actual moment of Baptism and Confirmation profoundly solemn.

It really was a privilege to be present at such an important service in the life of each our candidates and our church.

Janet Caudwell

The cosy corner

Over the past year/18 months a small group has been developing the old children's corner into a really special area that is justifiably now called the cosy corner. As well as families using it during services, children and adults of all ages pop in during the week to enjoy it. A huge thank you to the team who have persevered with making it such a lovely area to be in.





Hélène Chapman and Peter Davies

We held two funerals in St John's in October, when we gathered to give thanks for members of our congregation.

At Hélène's service it was important that parts of the service were in both French and English, and we were grateful to Rob Martin for providing the French language pieces.

A heartfelt tribute to Hélène was read in French by her older sister, and she has now provided us with an English translation:

"Hélène, my little sister, you have left us and we are overcome with immense sadness.

Our childhood in Tunisia, where we were born, left us with happy sunlit memories. Then we moved with Maman and Papa to Cherbourg: such a big change! We shared the same room and fell asleep to the sound of the foghorn from the harbour. It was there that you learnt to ride a bicycle in the schoolyard where Maman was teaching. We lived in the school's staff accommodation, where we shared many joyful moments. We found the sunshine and warmth again when we moved to Toulon, and soon a little sister was born. We were like two little mothers to her.

Of the three sisters, you were the most hardworking and diligent! You pursued excellent studies and passed the competitive exam to become a teacher. You chose English as your subject and went on placement to a secondary school in England. And there you stayed because you met Harry and married him. It was sad for us to know you were so far away, but it was your choice, your life.

Together you built a beautiful family and had three wonderful daughters. You were a devoted wife and a loving, attentive mother, and later an exceptional grandmother, very close to your grandchildren.

You fought with all your strength against your terrible illness. You lived a healthy, active life, and you found joy in singing with your choir. You loved the beautiful things in life: nature, travelling,

preparing delicious meals, your lovely home. Quite simply, you loved living. We miss you terribly. You will remain forever in our hearts, always with us.”

Hélène and Harry had not been part of our congregation for very long, but they had quickly become well loved, and Hélène will be particularly remembered for all those delicate knitted angels she created last year. Her death shocked us all.

The church was similarly full for a thanksgiving service for Peter who had been a member of St John’s for as long as most of us can remember. These were my opening words for his service:

“For the many years that I have been associated with St John’s, Peter has always been here – supporting Judith, often wielding a sweeping brush or something to tackle the weeds around the church. In more recent years he has been a loyal member of the Zoom congregation, not missing a single service.

He was always a generous supporter of St John’s, most recently during the restoration of the organ. The last time Peter came to a service here he was eager to see and hear the difference that had been made to that aged instrument, and I’m so pleased that Paul, who talked to him and played for him on that evening, is playing for this service.”

It was a measure of the love and respect so many felt for Peter that among those who gathered for a joyful celebration of his life were former colleagues, friends from the local community, former members of St John’s congregation who had travelled to pay their respects, as well as those of us who had been pleased to chat to Peter more recently during Independent Market Sunday gatherings in St John’s.

Our love and sympathy to Harry and Judith and their families at the loss of these two much-missed members of St John’s family.

Janet Caudwell





Notes from the PCC

November 2025

The PCC (Parochial Church Council) met on 19 November. These were the main topics discussed:

Fresh water for Frome: Parishioner Simon Keyes explained that as there was nowhere in Frome to refill a bottle with drinking water, he is developing a proposal to the town council to install a source in the centre of town, possibly near the St Aldhelm fountain, using treated water from the well. Simon is setting up a small fundraising/project group to take this forward, and there will not be any financial cost to St John's. The PCC agreed to support the project, with Pete Connew as the PCC representative on the project group.

Safeguarding: Steve Smith, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, reported that St John's were up to date with all the Church of England requirements under their 'dashboard' system. There were discussions about the two mandatory courses that PCC members had to complete and about clarifying whether any current church activities were arranged for children or vulnerable adults, and the position over giving lifts to fellow parishioners.

Finance: The Treasurer reported that the Parish Giving Scheme software had been updated and was currently experiencing problems.

Projects and priorities: A list of projects was presented. The next steps would be to assess priorities, identify a lead for each project and check that any funding applications did not jeopardise funding for any other projects.

The churchyard group put forward a report asking for approval to apply to the Woodland Trust for hedging for the churchyard. In their role as owner of the churchyards, the PCC were supportive of the application but emphasised that Somerset Council were responsible for the management of them and would need to be consulted.

Working party ideas: Current suggestions were:
glass cleaning; moving choir pews on north side to repair the floor;
and cleaning the rood screen. Helpers were needed to assist Pete

Connew and Tony Hodges.

Filming in church: A draft script for a scene to be filmed in church was discussed. It was emphasised that the church should not be identified as the location of the scene and that the fabric of the building must be protected. An appropriate fee would be expected. The PCC agreed that the project could be recommended to the Chancellor of the Diocese.

Frome Festival: A report with options proposed for 2026 was discussed. The plans were approved, with the option for 'Creation' preferred.

Health and safety: A report from H&S officer Brian Essex was noted. There was a discussion about mitigating possible flood risk.

Deanery Synod: A report was noted. The issue of the huge increase in Parish Share was being taken to Diocesan Synod. The Vicar would be meeting with the Area Dean in January.

Next meeting: The next PCC would be on 21 January 2026, with a Standing Committee on 9 December 2025.

PCC meeting agendas are posted on the noticeboard in advance by the north-west door. Minutes are posted up after they have been approved at the following PCC.

Angela Pater, PCC Secretary



FACT Carols at the Station Tuesday 16th December, 7am

We are once again having our joint carol singing at the station for the commuters. It's been going since 2008 and is a fun and much appreciated time when again we can share the true meaning of Christmas. Last year we had the biggest group we've had and it would be great to equal or exceed it. To catch the

maximum number of commuters, we will start at 7am and finish at 8.10am. Feel free to come and join in for a part or all of the session.

News from other churches

A poster for the Christmas Tree Festival at Christ Church Frome. The background is a blue sky with white clouds and a green Christmas tree on the right side. The text is white and blue.

Christmas Tree Festival
Christ Church Frome
December 8th -14th 2025
Open Daily 10am-4pm
Admission Free

Saturday 13th 3pm
Christmas Jazz with Frome Jazz Club

Sunday 14th 5pm
Carols amongst the Christmas Trees
with mince pies and mulled wine

A poster for the Nativity Scene Festival at St Catharine's Catholic Church. The background is a green and white patterned border. The text is red and black.

St Catharine's Catholic Church,
Park Road, Frome

**Nativity
Scene
Festival**

13th and 14th December
11am to 4pm
FREE EVENT-ALL WELCOME
Come and see a wide range of Nativity Scenes
from around the world displayed in the
Church.
Festive refreshments in the
Church Hall

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

Sat 13 & Sun 14 December

11am – 4pm



Free entry



**St Giles Church,
Leigh on Mendip, BA3 5QJ**

Light lunches, mince pies,
mulled wine

*Come and see this beautiful
14th century church lit up
with sparkling Christmas trees.*

Friends of Leigh Church, Registered Charity
No. 1174913

St. Katharine's East Woodlands

Our service of Remembrance in November was very moving. Tony and Hugo read the lessons, there was a 2 minute silence, and Hugo read the Exhortation. It was a privilege to be a part of this. The Chancel Screen listing the names of World War 1 veterans has now been placed behind the lectern.

Our carol service will be on Sunday 21 December at 11.15am followed by mulled wine and mince pies and our Communion service on Christmas Day will be at 11.15am.

A big thank you to Kevin Brixey for rebuilding the churchyard wall and to Mary Stockford-Sackville for purchasing bulbs to replenish the stock along the lane to the church.

Village Hall, East Woodlands

Christmas Craft Fair, Tuesday 9th December, 10am to 12.30pm

Pop up Pub Friday 5 December, 7pm on 5th December.

Pam Chapman

Amnesty Write for Rights

Every year at this time, when many of us are thinking about sending Christmas cards to friends and relatives, Amnesty asks people to send a card expressing solidarity with someone whose human rights are being abused.

The Kindness Café at Wesley Methodist Church on Saturday 6th December, 10.00-12.00, is in aid of Amnesty, and there will be the opportunity to write a card or sign a letter to the authorities. The pop-up café at St John's on Sunday 7th December, 11.15-14.00, will also have cards and letters to sign.

It only takes a minute to write a card, but the impact on the person receiving it, and sometimes on the authorities behind the abuse, can be very significant. Please come and support people around the world whose human rights are being denied. You can also get a hot drink and cake!

Thank you.

Rev Margaret Crawshaw

News from the Hudsons

Eds: We were sad to lose the Hudson family from our congregation back in July, so Janet got in touch to see how they are all getting on, and we were delighted when Stuart replied with their news. He writes:



Lovely to hear from you and I hope you and all of our St John's family are well.

We are slowly settling in to our life in York. The house is still a bit of a project to say the least, but things are moving on with the planning etc., and we will hopefully be a lot more comfortable in a year or so. We live in a quiet spot very close to the city centre and the river, so it has been a joy to wander in and explore York over the past couple of months – there is a lot to see and do in this city.

Cecily has moved up to Edinburgh to study medicine. We have been to visit her, and it seems a life of hard study and an expanded social life suits her well! Leofric and Edith are also both enjoying their new schools. Thanks to Seamus they gained places at local Catholic schools where our faith is a huge part of their everyday school education, so we are happy with how they have settled in. Leo is attending a Mass service at York Minster today.

Our local church is St Olave's, round the corner from where we live, founded in 1055 by Earl Siward in dedication to St Olaf. We have been attending the early morning spoken service each week with a small but faithful congregation, and have recently started doing some of the readings - I still get the OT names wrong by the way! It is a nice church and the congregation are very welcoming, but we do miss St John's. You are a very special group of people, and if we could pick you up and drop you all round the corner that would make us very happy. I hope everyone is doing well, next time we are in the area I will come along to a service to say hello to everyone.

God bless you all, Stuart.

Christian Art

An Orthodox icon of the Nativity

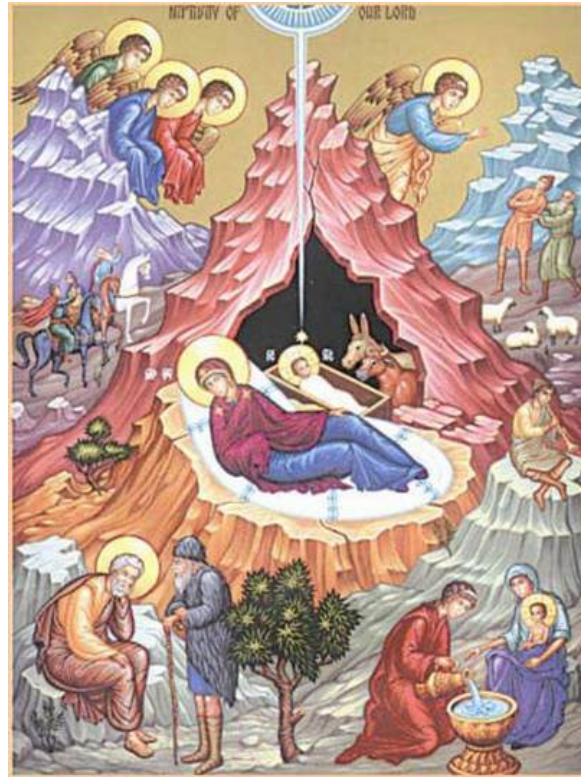
Eds: Our thanks to Dr Mark Golder who begins a new series on Christianity and the visual arts with this opening article.

Icons (religious images) are, after the Divine Liturgy (eucharist), the most significant sign of Eastern Orthodox spirituality. From the 3rd century AD, three-dimensional statues were considered to be idols, and thus pagan and taboo; but two-dimensional images were accepted as bridges between earth and heaven, bringing the Christian believer closer to the divine. Even so, in the 8th and 9th centuries some Byzantine emperors were 'iconoclasts' (icon-destroyers), seeing them as contrary to the commandment not to worship 'graven images'; but the majority view won and on the first Sunday in Lent 'The Feast of Orthodoxy' celebrates the victory of the icon-lovers.

A 'proper' icon – as opposed to a mass-produced replica – is a work of love and worship created by artists (originally monks) who prepared themselves by fasting and prayer. Once a key image (figures, gestures, layout, symbolism) had been accepted as 'canonical', it was strictly followed by later artists as a revelatory image with a heavenly message. Thus a 21st century icon of the Nativity made in the UK or USA will follow very closely the details of a 10th century icon made in Russia or Greece.

An icon is created on a wooden panel which is covered with a layer of gesso (a mixture of chalk and glue) to create a smooth ground on which to paint. The paint is tempera (a luminous mixture of egg yolk and water). Gold leaf is applied to the background – to suggest the heavenly realm – and to halos around the heads of key figures – to suggest their especial sanctity. The figures are 'realistic' – that is, recognisable – but 'stylised' (e.g. they may be elongated) and 'hieratic' (posed in a stiff way suggesting majesty).

Some icons – like that of 'The Nativity' overleaf – have a number of different scenes which relate to a core one placed at the centre. The scenes visualise texts taken primarily from the Gospels of Matthew



and Luke, but there are also references drawn from the Old Testament and an 'apocryphal' gospel – one that never got into the accepted New Testament canon of texts. The icon works as a focus for meditation. The viewer is encouraged to think about the significance of every detail in the five connected scenes. The key scene of Mary and the infant Jesus is surrounded by four scenes: the two bottom left and right involve the overcoming of doubt.

The two top left and right involve believing travellers who come to worship the Christ Child because of signs from God.

In the centre, Mary, the Mother of God, reclines beside the manger in which the Son of God lies in swaddling bands (Luke 2.6-7). The child is guarded by an ox and an ass because In Isaiah 1.3 their knowledge of their master is contrasted with people's lack of understanding of God's purpose. This tableau is set against the darkness of a cave entrance, a foretaste of the tomb of Good Friday. The cave itself is set within a barren, rocky mountain, which symbolises the harshness of a world fallen into sin after the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. But a ray of light – marking the new beginning, the coming of salvation – descends from Heaven, from the star which is guiding the three kings (Matthew 2.2), and it hovers over the head of the Christ Child.

The top left quadrant shows the three wise men – the astrologically-minded Magi – who have seen the star in the East and set out in search of the king whose birth it foretells (Matthew 2.1-12). They are now shown as kings because they are seen as fulfilling a prophecy in Psalm 72.10: 'All kings shall fall down before him.' And the top right quadrant shows the shepherds who have been visited by the heavenly host of angels with their message of peace on earth (Luke 2.8-14).

Together the two groups – rich and poor – suggest the universality of the Christian message.

The bottom left quadrant takes us back in time to when Jesus was conceived. Joseph was filled with doubt about marrying Mary because she was pregnant ... and not by him. He is not shown with the angel who told him not to worry (Matthew 1.18-25) but with the prophet Isaiah who foretold that God would send a sign of salvation: the birth of Immanuel ('God with us'), conceived by a virgin (Isaiah 7.14). The Orthodox Church followed the Greek translation of the Old Testament which translated the Hebrew word 'almah' (young woman) by the Greek one 'parthenos' (virgin). This magnified the miraculous nature of the Christ Child.

The bottom right quadrant shows the midwives who are washing the child. They are not part of the canonical narratives, but come from the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James. One midwife believed that a virgin had given birth, but the other, named Salome, scoffed. As a result her hand was crippled, only to be restored to health when she touched the Christ Child, at which point she cried out, 'A great king is born to Israel'.

Mark Golder

**Prayer, carols and soup
for everyone affected by memory loss**

St Mary's Church, Innox Hill – Friday 12 December 12 noon

We plan to celebrate our continuing capabilities. I may forget your name and fail to find the right words to express my vision for you but I can still pray for you. All welcome.

Dorothy-Anne Bryant

SERVICES at ST JOHN's – DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 2026

Regular weekly services in December & January

Sundays

- 8.45am Online service via Zoom – contact admin for link & code
- 10.00am Choral Eucharist*
 *Sun 28 Dec: Holy Innocents
 * Sun 4 Jan: Epiphany
- 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: Holy Hour
 Week 5: Flexible Fifth

Mondays

- 8.45am Morning Prayer in the Ken Chapel

Fridays

- 12.30pm Lunchtime Eucharist in the Lady Chapel**
 **Fri 26: St Stephen

Saturdays

- 5.00pm Evening Eucharist in the Lady Chapel

Additional services – December

Wed 10: 5pm Advent Worship

Sat 13: 9am MP – St Lucy

Wed 17: 5pm Advent Worship

Sun 21: 6.30pm Carol Service

Wed 24: 3pm Family Crib Service

Wed 24: 11pm Midnight Mass

Thu 25: 10am Christmas Eucharist

Sat 27: 12.30pm Eucharist: St John

Additional services – January

Thu 1: 12.30pm Eucharist: Circumcision

Wed 21: 12.30pm Eucharist—St Agnes

Sun 25: 4pm Christingle

DIARY DATES – DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 2026

December

Sat	6	9am	United Prayer at St John's
		10am-12 noon	Kindness Cafe for Amnesty (Wesley)
Sun	7	11.15 to 2pm	Cafe and Mini-market
Mon	8	10am-4pm	Christmas Tree Festival (Christ Church)
			Daily until Sun 14th Dec
Tue	9	10am	Christmas Craft Fair (East Woodlands)
Thu	11	2pm-4pm	Craft & Conversation
		7pm	Advent group: 'Icon', Vicarage
Fri	12	11.45am	Dementia Service at St Mary's Church
Sat	13	11am to 4pm	Nativity Scene Festival, St Catharine's RC
		11am to 4pm	Christmas Tree Festival, Leigh on Mendip
		12 for 12.30pm	Christmas Lunch in the Bennett Centre
		3pm	Christmas Jazz at Christ Church
Sun	14	10am-4pm	Christmas Tree Festival, Christ Church
			Final day
		11am to 4pm	Nativity Scene Festival, St Catharine's RC
Mon	15	11am to 4pm	Christmas Tree Festival, Leigh on Mendip
		9am	St John's School Christmas Service
		7pm	Standing Committee Meeting (BC)
Tue	16	7.30pm	St John's Women's Group party
		7am	FACT Carols at the Station
Wed	17	7pm	Frome College Concert
		7pm	Selwood Academy Concert
Thu	18	7pm	Advent group: 'Icon', Vicarage

January

Thu	8	2pm	Craft and Conversation
Sun	11		St John's Women's Group: Pub lunch
Sat	17	10am	Fundraising Meeting
Wed	21	7pm	PCC Meeting (BC tbc)
Thu	22	2pm	Craft and Conversation

THE Old Church North.

Eds: The very first edition of St John's parish magazine was published in 1854. Our thanks to Barry Edwards for this introduction and extract.

When Rev William Bennett arrived at St John's in late 1850, he was already a controversial figure. He had served in a number of prominent London parishes, including Portman Square, Langham Place and latterly St Barnabas, Pimlico, but he was never able to settle because he was eyed at first with suspicion and then with hostility by the Church authorities and in particular by the Bishop of London. There were doctrinal and practical matters which divided Bennett from the Church of England, and it seems that he was hounded out of London and even sent for six months' recuperation and rehabilitation to the Alps.

On his return, many doors were closed to him, but Lady Bath of Longleat had within her patronage the parish of Selwood Froome, and Bennett was duly installed. His first endeavour was to strip out the enclosed box pews, and then he launched an appeal for the rebuilding of the church almost in its entirety. Significantly, the Via Crucis was constructed, linking the church with the Holy Well and the town. This is said to be the last ever external way of the cross built at a C of E church.

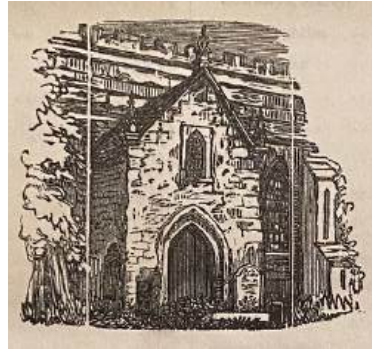
By 1854, Vicar Bennett had overcome most of the opposition that had marked his arrival in Frome. An early petition demanding his removal from his post attracted only 57 signatures: it was clear that his desire faithfully to observe a daily round of services and to work tirelessly for the good of his flock of parishioners was winning over locals, though Bennett's name was still causing ripples in the Bishopric of London and even the House of Commons.

The Old Church Porch is normally regarded as the first regularly produced church magazine in Britain. This is the initial article in the first edition of 1854. One can imagine the good Vicar standing in the South Porch looking down at building works he had commissioned, and at the small Somerset town where he had little expected to be continuing his ministry, and wondering, in the gathering gloom and cold, whether he had done the right thing for himself and for his parish. He could not have known that he would still be in the post some 30 years later!

The vicar's letter, written by Vicar Bennett in January 1854

Towards the close of a dark and dreary day in November – the wind blowing and blustering above, and the rain pattering down upon the pavement – I was making my way as best I could through the churchyard of the old parish of Froome Selwood. I had been walking some hours through the streets of the town, visiting here and there some of the aged and the sick.

But things had gone wrong with me that day. Men's hearts below and the dark clouds above seemed to accord and join together to depress and overcast the spirit, and I knew not whither to turn. One good and honest man, in whom I took great interest, and who even then lay hard at death's door, would not receive the Blessed Sacrament: he had never been taught concerning It, nor did he value It as any means of Grace. Another, whom God had just blessed by the birth of a little child, would not allow his wife to be 'Churched', asserting with an oath that all such things were only the Vicar's way of getting a sixpence out of a poor man's pocket. A great boy of 15 years of age could neither read nor write, and, on pressing him, I found that he could not even say The Lord's Prayer. As to the Creed, he betrayed an ignorance even of its existence. Two young persons, very respectable in terms of their outward appearance, and who professed to be members of the Church, had just been to one of the Meeting houses, and there had been joined together according to the Act of Parliament and the Registrar's certificate; and, when I expressed my wonder, 'Oh', they said, 'It is all the same and a great deal cheaper than your Church marriages.'



In short, all things, as they will sometimes, had gone cross with me that morning, and I was in a very moody, disconsolate way. Grief sat heavy on my heart. A pile of dead leaves lay clustering on the churchyard ground – the last relics of a bygone summer – and I mused on them as they told the tale of years coming to a close, and the one great end

of all. Suddenly a gust of wind whistled along the path, and I halted to resist it, stumbling across an old grave. ‘Ah well,’ I thought, ‘they that lie buried here may well be called Blessed for they are at least free from all such troubles as these. Those were better times when Acts of Parliament and Registrars’ courts did not interfere with the Pastor’s office, and the poor were not bribed away from the church of their fathers by thoughts of filthy lucre ... But we must charge ourselves and not others. The poor have been ground down and treated harshly and without love by the Church, and now we find them, as I have found them all this day, flocking to the Registrar for spiritual teaching.’

And I turned away in a kind of spleen at the thought of all so lost and perverted; our poor old Church so utterly gone from the hearts of the poor; every kind of spurious worship and religious error embraced with eagerness, and every man doing that which was right in his own eyes; and, after all, no-one to blame but herself – her own secular, worldly spirit; her compromising, time-serving subjections to the State; her loving the praise of men more than the praise of God.

And so I went on musing. ‘No,’ I said, ‘it is of no use. Nothing can be done in this wretched town. It is true I am Vicar of the parish and enjoy certain temporal rights invested in me by the law, but what spiritual relationship is there between the people and myself? Where are the hearts and the affections of this multitude? Parish Priest! A very good name in appearance. But in reality what does it amount to? The people are gone and fled, scared by doubts and fears, deceived by lying tongues and slandees, stimulated into hatred by preachers of strange doctrines who know not what they say. The Church! Alas, it is

a mere ruinous heap; the remnant of something that once was, but now a crumbling mass, ready to fall down about our ears. Christ's Body! Unity! Love! What are they but mere names, when here in every street I pass, there is a rending and hewing of everything holy into a thousand pieces, and no two men agree together.'

By this time the rain was pouring down faster and faster: splash, splash upon the crumbling old roof of the church; drip, drip along the eaves and gargoyles. The glimmer of a distant lamp arose as a wretched lamp-lighter bore up his torch for a moment, and clattering away in the distance, not a sound more was heard.

I stood alone. I looked down upon the houses on the one side, then up to the tottering spire on the other; then to the graves of the thousand dead around, and musing on, drew near the porch. It was the old porch that looks upon the town on the north side; far above some crazy dwellings, which gently decline with the hill down to the river side. It is a fine old porch with a Norman doorway, and a niche in the corner where, in ancient days, the holy water used to be. And over the porch is a parvis, a little room with a window looking upon the houses. There was a stone seat along the wall but very filthy, with scraps and refuse of every kind, the cleanings unresolved for many a long day....

That old porch! How many thousands of souls had entered by that into God's House with what hopes and fears? They came as little babes for baptism; they came as children for their Catechism; they came as men and women for their worship; they came aged and weary with this life and they would seek God in a better ...

Rev W Bennett

St John's Women's Group

Christmas Party Monday, 15th December from 7.30pm.

At 56, Weymouth Road.

Local pub for Sunday Lunch, 11th January 2026.

If you would like to attend either or both of these events, please let me know before 13th December. Thank you. **Alison Henderson**

Links in a Golden Chain 16

Angela of Foligno



St Angela lived from 1248 to 1309, but it was only in 2013 that she was declared a saint. She was an Italian Franciscan tertiary who became known as a mystic from her extensive writings about her mystical revelations. Due to the respect those writings engendered in the Catholic Church she became known as 'Teacher of Theologians'. She was noted not only for her spiritual writings but also for founding a religious community that refused to become an enclosed order so that it could continue her vision of caring for those in need.

Foligno is a city in the Province of Perugia in Umbria, which was within the Papal States until the unification of the Kingdom of Italy in 1860. Angela was born in a prosperous family, married at an early age and had several children. In her own account of her life she wrote that she loved the world and all its pleasures but that at the age of 40 she had a vision of St. Francis of Assisi and recognised in his rejection of material prosperity a call to follow his example. She started to lead a life of religious devotion, penitence and service to the poor.

A few years later she suffered the loss of her mother, her husband and her children. Undeterred by these bereavements she continued to divest herself of material possessions, and lived under the Rule of the Franciscan Order. She served the poor as a nurse and carer, and gathered other women around her in a life of service. In her life of prayer she experienced visionary insights which she dictated to a scribe, and they have survived to the present day. She described the many stages of her spiritual life, how the divine light revealed in Jesus Christ can be experienced within the soul and be applied in a life of service to any and all who may be in need.

She experienced a deep love for the suffering Jesus, and the depths of this relationship led her to insights into the mystery of the Holy Trinity. She wrote many letters and exhortations to her community, which extended far beyond those who lived with her. Her writings

have been a source of inspiration and inner sustenance for many through the centuries. She became a spiritual mother to a wide network of followers.

She died in her sleep in January 1309, surrounded by her community of disciples. She was buried in the Church of St. Francis in Foligno, and miracles have been attributed to her intercession.

Kevin Tingay



Christmastide Services

St Stephen's Day: 26th Dec
Holy Eucharist at 12:30pm

St John's Day: 27th Dec
Holy Eucharist at 12:30 pm

Sunday 28th December:
Holy Eucharist:
Saturday vigil 5pm,
Sunday Choral Eucharist 10Aam

Thursday 1st January:
Circumcision
Holy Eucharist at 12:30pm

Cookery Corner

Eds: Marmalade using apples and an eggless Christmas cake cooked in a slow cooker? Thank you to Dinah Bardgett and Lois Bushell for sending in these unusual recipes.



Autumnal Marmalade—makes 4kg (9lb)

Dinah says: Apples have been in abundance this year! An idea for using such abundance could be this marmalade, which I've made successfully twice now. The recipe is by Margie Buxton of Castle Cary, an award winning marmalade maker, and it appears in The Cooking Pot – a collection of recipes and stories published by the community of Castle Cary.

2 grapefruit and 4 lemons 2.85 litres water
900g windfall apples 2270g granulated or preserving sugar

Citrus fruit: wash and pare off rind, then cut peel into fine shreds; take pith from flesh and chop roughly.

Apples – peel and roughly chop.

Put apples, citrus peel and flesh into pan with the water

Put citrus pith, apple cores and peel into muslin and add to pan.

Simmer gently until peel is tender and mixture halved. Take out muslin, squeezing out the juice as you do so.

Add the sugar; stir until dissolved; bring to the boil and cook until setting is reached. Rest for 15mins and then put into sterilised jars.

Four-ingredient Christmas cake

Lois tells us she was given this eggless recipe by Adrian from Bristol, who comes to the mini-market each month. Although she hasn't tried it herself yet, she assures us that Adrian makes it successfully every year.

1kg mixed fruit (*Adrian says: I add a pack of glace cherries*)

2 cups chocolate milk—16 fl oz

½ to ¾ cup Bailey's (1 cup = 8 fl oz)

2 cups self-raising flour—250g

Soak fruit in milk and Bailey's for 24 hours.

Fold in flour. Line a slow cooker with 2-3 layers of baking paper around it and underneath. (*Adrian says: I also double a long strip and put it in first so it's easier to pull out when cooked.*)

Pour in batter and even out. Cook on low for 7-8 hours with a tea towel under the lid.

Women who should be remembered

Edith Sitwell, poet

A benefit of modern technology is that, with little research, it is possible to bring up on a smart device recordings of lectures and interviews that took place sixty or more years ago and be reminded of people who made an impression on you when you were younger.

One recording I listened to recently is of Edith Sitwell, an eccentric English poet, talking about her life and her poetry.

I recall, in about 1956, being part of a class of 14-old schoolboys being read probably her most well-known poem 'Still falls the rain'. Our aged schoolmaster had been a soldier in WWI, and had spent WWII in London, where he recalled vividly the bombing of residential homes in the Blitz. Sitwell, who also spent WWII in London, had written this allegorical poem at that time, comparing the bloodshed of London to Christ's suffering on the Cross. Sitwell and our schoolmaster would never forget the Blitz and what they suffered. Those of us born later were grateful we didn't have the same experiences. In the same way today's inhabitants of Gaza or Ukraine will never forget the bloodshed they have gone through, which shows the poem is still as relevant today as it ever was. The poem starts:

Still falls the Rain –

Dark as the world of man, black as our loss –

Blind as the Nineteen hundred and forty nails upon the cross.

[The Cross now has two thousand and twenty-five nails upon it!]

Still falls the Rain

With the sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed to the hammer-beat

In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet

On the Tomb

Still falls the rain.

In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed and the human brain

Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of Cain



Still falls the Rain.

At the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross

Christ that each day, each night, nails there, have mercy on us –

On Dives and on Lazarus:

Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

It is a very religious poem, written by a very religious poet. At that time, readers could be expected to be very familiar with all the images from the Old and New Testaments used in the poem. But more than that, when asked in her 1950s recording what was the purpose of poetry, Sitwell compared poetry to religion, saying:

“Poetry is the deification of reality; an art form that elevates everyday experiences into something sacred and divine.”

Essentially, Sitwell suggested that through poetry, reality is not just descriptive, but it is also imbued with an elevated sense of significance and reverence. ‘Still falls the Rain’ chronicles how man has failed throughout the ages, but the love of God remains – valid, all-important and all-supportive.

In verse six she quotes from Marlowe’s Dr Faustus, who makes a pact with the devil for earthly gain, pointing a finger at the European leaders of her time. She re-uses Faust’s final words of despair, as he realises that he cannot be saved because of his sins rejecting God: ‘*O I’ll leape up to my God. Who pulls me doune*’. She also contrasts the crown worn by Caesar and all earthly rulers with the crown of thorns worn by Christ, which she sees as a symbol of victory over the sins of the people.

She ends the poem:

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man

Was once a child who among beasts has lain—

‘Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood, for thee.’

This final verse contrasts the human failings of earlier verses with the love of Christ who is still willing to forgive. Christ has a heart as innocent as a child’s. ‘*A child who among beasts has lain*’ is an indication of how Christ was born in the place where the animals were

kept. After all the things that happened, God is still loving and forgiving. She ends by hoping that people can stop warring against each other and gain forgiveness.

Sitwell came from an aristocratic Yorkshire family, full of eccentrics. Both her brothers were also poets and authors. She read widely, in English and French, and wrote poetry, but she did not publish anything until her thirties. She never married but frequently fell in love with unsuitable and unavailable, mainly gay, men. She dressed flamboyantly. She encouraged younger poets, and it was mainly due to her support that the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas first got published. She was the first ever woman writer to be made a Companion of Literature, England's highest honour for writers, as well as a DBE. In her later years she became a Roman Catholic.

Sitwell published her first poem, 'The Drowned Suns', in 1913, and between 1916 and 1921 she edited *Wheels*, an annual poetic anthology. In 1929, she published 'Gold Coast Customs', a poem about the artificiality of human behaviour and the barbarism that lies beneath the surface. The poem was written in the rhythms of the tom-tom and of jazz and shows considerable technical skill. Her early work reflects the strong influence of the French symbolists, in particular Baudelaire and Verlaine, whom Sitwell talks about in the recording. She collaborated in the creation and first performance of *Façade* with the young composer William Walton.

'Still falls the Rain' was set to music by the composer Benjamin Britten, himself bitterly anti-war. There is a recording of Britten on piano and Barry Tuckwell on horn accompanying Peter Pears – all artistic icons of the 1950s. Pears sings a high recitative against a series of variations on horn and piano, one for each stanza of Sitwell's poem. The piano part, in particular, leaps about like the Blitz bombs themselves. It is very evocative of its time, and foreshadows the War Requiem, Britten's later masterpiece.

Chris Lewis



Edington Church and Festival

If you drive through Westbury to the east, you come to the small village of Edington, population 700, about 12 miles from Frome. On the main road the only reason to stop is a slightly expensive farm shop, next door to an interesting brewery/pub called the Three Daggers. However, if you



persevere down a side road you come across, with amazement, an enormous church, size completely out of line with the small village that exists today.

Edington's fame lies in two pieces of history. In 878, Alfred the Great, who had been conducting guerilla resistance for some years against the invading Danes from his stronghold in the Somerset Marshes, managed, against all odds, to vanquish the main Danish force at the Battle of Ethandun, which took place in the hills around Edington. From there Alfred was able to set up his first government of most of the South of England in Winchester, leading eventually to the governance we still have today. The White Horse monument in the escarpment above commemorates this. The Witan, the Anglo-Saxon advisory council, rather like our Cabinet today, met in Edington in 957.

The second piece of history is that in 1351, William of Edington, a younger son of a leading family of the village became Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor of England as well as later founding a college of chantry priests in Edington. This was converted into a monastic house of the Augustinian order of *Bonshommes*: the Church of St Mary, St Katharine and All Saints was built and consecrated in 1361. Being on the pilgrim route midway between Bath and Salisbury, it was the natural place for the *Bonshommes* order of monks to build a large priory, which thrived up until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539. Only the walls of the monastery and the splendid Priory Church now remain. The church stands today, Grade 1 listed, a good example of the transition between the decorated and perpendicular style of church-building. Nicholas Pevsner, the great commentator on

English Churches, wrote: *“A wonderful and a highly important church. It is so varied in its skyline and so freely embattled that it looks like a fortified mansion.”*

The main fabric of the church has remained largely unaltered and is now the only perfect example of a monastic church in Wiltshire. Until the 16th century dissolution, the chancel formed the collegiate church and the nave was used as the parish church. The poet priest George Herbert was married in the church in 1629. One of his poems, ‘The Church Floore’, is likely to have been inspired by the pattern of stones in the nave and chancel. The church contains the burial monuments of several local notables, including tombs removed from St Giles, Imber, during the early 1950s, following the evacuation of that village in 1943, when the area was taken over by the military.

The benefices and parishes of Edington and Imber were united in 1951, and today the parish is part of the benefice of Bratton, Edington and Imber, Coulston and Erlestoke. In 1965 there were six bells, one dated 1647 and three from the 18th century; four more were hung in 1968 to make a peal of ten. In 2014 a new organ by Harrison & Harrison was installed, to serve both the Festival and the Parish.

When you enter the church you are struck by two features. One is the size of the church – it is like visiting one of our smaller cathedrals, such as Brecon. The second feature is that it is a very light interior. Although there is some mediaeval stained glass, much of the windows are plain and let in more light than many churches of this period. If you dare to sing a hymn you will soon realise that the acoustic of the church is almost perfect for the sung voice, particularly in the chancel.

This grand acoustic is just one of the reasons why, for nearly 70 years, Edington has held a Music Festival each year, where both singers and congregation respond so well to the way the building enhances the praise and worship set forth in the liturgy. The origins of the Festival were part practical and part an enhancement to worship. In 1956, the Vicar of Edington realised that he would need to do something fairly imaginative to find funds for urgent repairs to the fabric of the 14th century building. He and a Cambridge friend gathered a group of

Cambridge choral scholars and four trebles in Edington where over the course of one extended weekend they sang one service a day, re-establishing the principle of music sung within the context of the liturgy for which it was written. Thus the Festival of Music within the Liturgy was born, envisaged *“as a festival in which God is worshipped through beauty – beauty of sight, shown or seen in stone or ceremony, beauty of sound, made or heard in the word sung or spoken”*.

The festival has flourished, and today lasts for eight days at the end of August, from Compline by candlelight on the Sunday evening to Eucharist on the following Sunday morning of the Bank Holiday weekend. A theme is chosen, which provides the structure for both complex and beautiful music and for a week of stimulating sermons. There are no concerts but four services a day, sung by choirs under three of the UK’s top choral directors, music before the evening service played on the church’s Harrison and Harrison organ by a leading organist, new commissions, and the regular live broadcast of the midweek Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3.

Chris Lewis

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Inspired to Read:

Jane Austen

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife – possibly the most well known of all opening sentences to novels, and a fitting introduction to this month's article.

The Inspired to Read book group decided to use our November meeting to reflect on Jane Austen: why she is still so popular today, 250 years after she was born with her books still in print? And why do her stories (or at least some of them) continue to appeal to modern audiences?

Austen completed six novels and left a number of shorter works, several of them incomplete. While we know something of her life, Austen scholars have long been frustrated by the fact that her sister, Cassandra, destroyed nearly all of her personal correspondence, and other members of her immediate family seem to have been selective when writing the early biographies. They took care to present Jane, the daughter of a clergyman, as having led a content and fulfilled life, at the heart of a loving family, but one only has to read her novels, with their carefully observed critiques of the values and expectations of the society in which she lived, to realise that such insight must have arisen from some first-hand understanding. The quotation at the top tells us so much about eighteenth century society, with its emphasis on status and the importance for women to marry well, while also illustrating Austen's skill at writing beautiful prose. *Pride and Prejudice* is probably her most popular book for modern readers, and it is the basis for so many adaptations, re-imaginings and sequels, to say nothing of the countless websites devoted to analysis and commentary. The 1995 BBC adaptation with Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle continues to be the benchmark by which all period



dramas are measured, even though there have been several others since, and we are promised another one in 2026. Last year there was a somewhat controversial adaptation of *Persuasion*, and the 2020 version of *Emma* was not universally popular, despite a star-studded cast and some beautiful cinematography! Austen has something for every generation, and her continued popularity must be, in part at least, due to her stories having an appeal and a relevance to modern readers.

However, it must be said that not all her books have achieved such lasting appeal. *Northanger Abbey*, with its young heroine imagining herself in a Gothic mystery, such as were popular in the eighteenth century, is probably not an engaging read for today's more sophisticated adult audience, although I am sure there are some devotees of the *Twilight* series who might enjoy it – somehow Gothic and the supernatural never quite go out of fashion, and personally I find the inaction of Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* rather tedious. I re-read that book recently and decided the character I most warmed to was the supposed villain, Henry Crawford – and the unsympathetic, larger than life aunts also contributed to my reading right to the end. However, I also re-read *Persuasion* (as well as watching the 1995 film adaptation), and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It is, of course, Austen's final work, and in Anne Elliot we have a heroine who is more mature and has the ability to value people for their intrinsic worth, not merely for their relatively superficial social standing. We see her refuse to attend a function with her well-connected relative, Lady Dalrymple, in order to honour a prior engagement with her schoolfriend who has fallen on hard times; the naval officers who go to live in the Elliot ancestral home may not have a pedigree that goes back through many



generations, but they are honest, hard-working people who have earned their elevated status, and Austen clearly approves of them.

The final verdict of the book group was that Austen certainly deserves

a place on our 21st century bookshelves, and when I sit down over the Christmas holiday to re-watch the entire 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* series – 6 hours- I am unlikely to be alone!

The book group's next meeting will be on:

Wednesday 7th January when we will meet to plan our programme for 2026.

If you would like to join us, please get in touch with Rosemary:
rosemarymccormick@hotmail.com

Rosemary McCormick



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SERVICES ROTA FOR DECEMBER 2025

Date/Week	Services	Readings	Duties for the 10am service			
			Readers	Prayers	Sidespersons	Chalice
Sunday 7 December Second Sunday of Advent	8.45am Zoom Service 10.00am Holy Communion	Is 11:1-10 Ps 72 Rom 15:4-13 Matt 3:1-12	N McCormick S Caden	Rev Seamus	B Essex K Gurr M Smitherman	J Davies
Sunday 14 December Third Sunday of Advent	8.45am Zoom Service 10.00am Holy Communion	Isaiah 35:1-10 Canticle: Magnificat James 5:7-10	J Arnall-Culliford S Smith	J Caudwell	D Bardgett A Crook	C Holland
Sunday 21 December Fourth Sunday of Advent	8.45am Zoom Service 10.00am Holy Communion	Isaiah 7:10-16 Psalm 80:1-8, 8-20 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:19-end	E Gilbert A Barr-Sim	A Henderson	J Bruges J Davies	A Crook
Wednesday 24 December Christmas Eve	3.00pm Crib Service 11.00pm Midnight Mass (no Pew Sheet)	Isaiah 9:2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
Thursday 25 December Christmas Day	8.45am Zoom Service 10.00am Holy Communion	Isaiah 62:6-end Psalm 97 Titus 3:4-7 Luke 2:1-20	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
Sunday 28 December Holy Innocents	8.45am Zoom Service 10.00am Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31:15-17 Psalm 124 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 Matthew 2:13-18	R McCormick C Harrison	A Crook	M Veakins W Jennings	J Davies
Vicar: Revd Seamus Hargrave Reader: Janet Caudwell		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 No December Julian meeting				

SERVICES ROTA FOR JANUARY 2026

Date/Week	Services	Readings	Duties for the 10am service			
			Readers	Prayers	Sidespersons	Chalice
Sunday 4 January 2026 Epiphany	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Isaiah 60.1-6 Psalm 72(1-9) 10-15 Ephesians 3.1-12 Matthew 2.1-12	C Holland S Smith	Rev Seamus	M Smitherman A Crook	C Holland
Sunday 11 January Baptism of Christ	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Isaiah 42.1-9 Psalm 29 Acts 10.34-43 Matthew 3.13-end	C Harrison N McCormick	J Caudwell	W Jennings K Gurr	A Crook
Sunday 18 January Second Sunday of Epiphany	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Isaiah 49.1-7 Psalm 40.1-12 1 Corinthians 1.1-9 John 1.29-42	E Gilbert A Barr-Sim	L Bushell	D Bardgett J Bruges	J Davies
Sunday 25 January Conversion of Paul	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Jeremiah 1.4-10 OR Acts 9.1-22 Psalm 76 Acts 9.1-22 OR Galatians 1.11-16a Matthew 19.27-end	S Caden J Arnall- Culliford	J Bruges	C Holland M Veakins	C Holland
Sunday 1 February Candlemas	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Malachi 3.1-5 Psalm 24. (1-6) 7-end Hebrews 2.14-end Luke 2.22-40	B Essex R McCormick	Rev Seamus	J Davies K Gurr	A Crook
Vicar: Revd Seamus Hargrave Reader: Janet Caudwell		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 27 at 11am Julian meeting				

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